

DOMAIN

PREP TESTS for State Boards

The following has been developed for teachers utilizing **DOMAIN** as part of their classroom curriculum. Alten novels have a natural progression in reading levels **DOMAIN** is suitable for grades 11-12 as well as accelerated readers in 9-10th grades.

The purpose of these PREP TESTS:

1. Help students improve reading comprehension using passages of a novel they are familiar with and interested in.
2. Help students develop their writing skills.
3. Serve as a useful tool in prepping students to take State Assessment Tests, familiarizing them with format.

Suggestions for Use:

Six (edited) chapters from **DOMAIN** have been included, organized in the order they appear in the story. This allows teachers to sporadically test students while they are reading the novel. Writing assignments are intended to provoke thoughts as well as develop writing skills. These chapters include:

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Answer Keys:

Because students also have access to this website, ANSWER KEYS will be provided ONLY to registered Adopt-An-Author teachers. To receive your answer key, e-mail Steve Alten at Meg82159@aol.com

My goal is to continue to assist teachers while encouraging students to read. I invite and encourage your feedback and suggestions. I also encourage you to spread the word about the program and novels among your fellow teachers.

–Steve Alten, Ed. D.

DOMAIN
PREP TEST FOR STATE BOARDS

In this chapter, Dominique, on the first day of her internship
in a mental ward, meets Michael Gabriel.

Chapter 1

September 8, 2012

Miami, Florida

The South Florida Evaluation and Treatment Center is a seven-story white concrete building with evergreen trim, located in a rundown ethnic neighborhood just west of the city of Miami. Like most businesses in the area, the rooftops are rimmed in coils of barbed wire fencing. Unlike other establishments, the barbed wire is not meant to keep the public out, but its residents in.

Florida State graduate assistant Dominique Vazquez sits before her new internship advisor, Dr. Antonio Foletta, as he revisits her file.

Foletta's sleepy eyes look up. "I have you in mind for a special assignment, but I need to be absolutely certain that you're up to the task."

Dominique energizes. "Try me."

Foletta removes a thick brown file from his top desk drawer. "The resident I want you to oversee is a patient of mine, an inmate from the asylum where I served as psychological services director."

"Who is he?"

"Ever hear of Professor Julius Gabriel?"

"Gabriel?" The name sounded familiar.

"Wait a second, wasn't he the archaeologist who dropped dead during a Harvard lecture several years ago?"

"Twelve years ago." Foletta grins. "After three decades of research grants, Julius Gabriel returned to the States and stood before an assembly of his peers, claiming that the ancient Egyptians and Mayans had built their pyramids with the help of extraterrestrials--all to save humanity from destruction. Can you imagine? The audience laughed him right off stage. He probably died of humiliation." Foletta's cheeks quiver as he chuckles. "Julius Gabriel was a real poster child for paranoid schizophrenia."

"So who's the patient?"

"His son." Foletta opens the file. "Michael

Gabriel, age thirty-six. Prefers to be called Mick. Spent the first twenty-five years of his life working side by side with his parents in archaeological digs, probably enough to turn any kid psychotic."

"Why was he incarcerated?"

"Mick lost it during his father's lecture. The court diagnosed him paranoid schizophrenic and sentenced him to the Massachusetts State Mental Facility where I served as his clinical psychiatrist, remaining so even after my promotion to Director in 2006."

"Same kind of delusions as his father?"

"Of course. Father and son were both convinced that some terrible calamity is going to wipe mankind off the face of the planet. Mick also suffers from the usual paranoid delusions of persecution, most of it brought about by his father's death and his own incarceration. Claims that a government conspiracy has kept him locked up all these years. In Mick Gabriel's mind, he's the ultimate victim, an innocent man attempting to save the world, caught up in the immoral ambitions of a self-centered politician."

"I'm sorry, you lost me on that last bit."

Foletta leafs through the file, removing a series of Polaroids from a manila envelope. "This is the man he attacked. Take a good look at the picture, Intern. Make sure you don't let your defenses down."

It is a close-up of a man's face, brutally battered. The right eye socket is covered in blood.

"Mick tore the microphone from the podium and beat the victim senseless with it. Poor man ended up losing his eye. I think you'll recognize the victim's name. Pierre Borgia."

"Borgia? You're kidding? The Secretary of State?"

"This was nearly eleven years ago, before Borgia was appointed U.N. representative. He was running for Senator at the time. Some say

the attack probably helped get him elected.”
“What about Mick’s mother?”

“She died of pancreatic cancer while the family was living in Peru. For some reason, her death still haunts him. Once or twice a month he’ll wake up screaming. Vicious night terrors.”

“How old was Mick when she died?”

“Twelve.”

“Any idea why her death still creates such trauma?”

“No. Mick refuses to speak about it.”

“So when do I meet him?”

“Right now. He’s being brought to a seclusion room so I can observe your first encounter. I told him all about you this morning. He’s looking forward to speaking with you. Just be careful.”

* * *

Foletta and Dominique ride the staff elevator to the seventh floor. An African American security guard is speaking to one of the nurses at the central station. The seclusion room is to his left.

Michael Gabriel is sitting on the floor, leaning back against the far wall facing the window. He is wearing a white tee-shirt and matching slacks, his physique appearing surprisingly fit, the upper body well defined. He is tall, nearly six-four, two-hundred and twenty pounds. The hair is dark brown, a bit on the long side, curling at the fringes. The face is handsome and cleanly shaven. A three-inch scar stretches across the right side of the jaw line, close to the ear. His eyes remain fixed on the floor.

“He’s cute.”

“So was Ted Bundy.” Foletta says. “I’ll be watching you from here. I’m sure Mick will be quite charming, wanting to impress you. When I think you’ve had enough, I’ll have the nurse come in and give him his medication.”

“Okay.” Her voice quavers. Relax, God dammit.

Foletta smiles. “Are you nervous?”

“No, just a little excited.”

She exits the station, motioning to Marvis to unlock the seclusion room. The door swings open, stimulating butterflies to take wing in her stomach. Pausing long enough to allow her pulse

to slow, she enters, shuddering as the double click seals the door behind her.

The seclusion room is ten by twelve feet long. An iron bed is bolted to the floor and wall directly in front of her, a thin pad serving as a mattress. A solitary chair faces the bed, also bolted to the floor. A smoked panel of glass on the wall to her right is the undisguised viewing window. The room smells of antiseptic.

Mick Gabriel is standing now, his head slightly bowed so she cannot see his eyes.

Dominique extends a hand, forcing a smile. “Dominique Vazquez.”

Mick looks up, revealing animal eyes so intensely black that it is impossible to determine where the pupils end and the irises begin.

“Dominique Vazquez. Dominique Vazquez.” The resident pronounces each syllable carefully, as if locking it into his memory. “It’s so very nice to. . .”

The smile suddenly disappears, the pasted expression going blank.

Dominique’s heart pounds in her ears. *Stay calm. Don’t move.*

Mick closes his eyes. Something unexpected is happening to him. Dominique sees his jaw line rise slightly, revealing the scar. The nostrils flare like an animal tracking its prey.

“May I come closer, please?” The words are spoken softly, almost whispered. She senses an emotional dam cracking behind the voice.

Dominique fights the urge to turn toward the smoked glass.

The eyes reopen. “I swear on my mother’s soul that I won’t harm you.”

Watch his hands. Drive the knee home if he lunges. “You can come closer, but no sudden movements, okay? Dr. Foletta’s watching.”

Mick takes two steps forward, remaining half an arm’s length away. He leans his face forward, closing his eyes, inhaling--as if her face is an exquisite bottle of wine.

The man’s presence is causing the hairs on the back of her arms to stand on end. She watches his facial muscles relax as his mind leaves the room. Water wells behind the closed eyelids. Several tears escape, flowing freely down his

cheeks.

For a brief moment, maternal instincts cause her defenses to drop. Is this an act? Her muscles recoil.

Mick opens his eyes, now black pools. The animal intensity has vanished.

“Thank you. I think my mother must have worn the same perfume.”

She takes a step back. “It’s Calvin Klein. Does it bring back happy memories?”

“Some bad ones as well.”

The spell is broken. Mick moves to the cot. “Would you prefer the chair or the bed.”

“The chair’s fine.” He waits for her to sit first, then positions himself on the edge of the cot so that he can lean back against the wall. Mick moves like an athlete.

“You look like you’ve managed to stay in shape.”

“Living in solitary can do that if one’s mind is disciplined enough. I do a thousand push-ups and sit-ups everyday.” She feels his eyes absorb her figure. “You look like you work out as well.”

“I try.”

“Vazquez. Is that with an s or a z?”

“Z.”

“Puerto Rico?”

“Yes. My. . . my biological father grew up in Arecibo.

“You said your biological father. You felt it important to distinguish him as such. Who’s the man you consider your true father?”

“Isadore Axler. He and his wife adopted me. I spent some time in an orphanage after I left my cousins. Iz and Edith Axler are wonderful people. They’re both marine biologists. They operate a SOSUS station on Sanibel Island.”

The penetrating eyes cut her off. “Why did you leave your cousin? Something traumatic must have happened for you to have ended up in an orphanage.”

He’s worse than Foletta. “Mick, I’m here to talk about you.”

“Yes, but perhaps I’ve also had a traumatic childhood. Perhaps your story could help me.”

“I doubt it. Everything turned out fine. The

Axlers gave me back my childhood and I’m--”

“But not your innocence.”

Dominique feels the blood rush from her face. “All right, now that we’ve established that you’re a quick study, let’s see if you can focus that amazing I.Q. of yours in on yourself.”

“You mean, so you can help me?”

“So we can help each other.”

“You haven’t read my file yet, have you?”

“Not yet, no.”

“Do you know why Director Foletta assigned you to me?”

“Why don’t you tell me?”

Mick stares at his hands, contemplating a response. “I like you, Dominique. Do you know why I like you?”

“No.” The fluorescent bulbs perform a moonlight dance in his eyes.

“I like you because your mind hasn’t become institutionalized. You’re still fresh, and that’s important to me, because I really want to confide in you, but I can’t, at least not in this room, not with Foletta watching. Do you think we could talk in private next time? Perhaps down in the yard?”

“I’ll ask Dr. Foletta.”

“Remind him of the facility’s rules when you do. Would you also ask him to give you my father’s journal. If you’re to be my therapist, then I feel it’s of vital importance that you read it. Would you mind doing that for me?”

“I’d be honored to read it.”

“Thank you. Would you read it soon, perhaps over the weekend?”

The door swings open, the nurse entering. The guard waits outside, watching at the doorway. “Time for your medication, Mr. Gabriel.” She hands him the paper cup of water, then the white tablet.

“Mick, I have to go. It was nice meeting you. I’ll do my best to have my homework done by Monday, okay?” She stands, turning to leave.

“Dominique, the relatives on your mother’s side. They’re Quiche Maya, aren’t they?”

“Mayan? I--I don’t know.” He knows you’re lying. “I mean it’s possible. My parents died when I was very--”

His eyes look up suddenly, the effect disarming. “Four *Ahau*, three *Kankin*. You know what day that is, don’t you, Dominique?”

“I—I’ll see you soon.” Dominique pushes past the guard, exiting the room.

* * *

1. According to Dr. Foletta, Mick Gabriel believes he is the ultimate victim. This refers to:

- A. Mick’s belief that he has is an innocent man merely trying to save the world from doom.**
- B. Mick’s incarceration, following his father’s death.**
- C. Mick’s ultimate attack on Pierre Borgia.**
- D. Mick’s eleven years in solitary.**

2. Why does Foletta refer to Ted Bundy?

- A. Ted Bundy was also trying to save the world.**
- B. Ted Bundy was also a cute lunatic.**
- C. Ted Bundy was also his patient.**
- D. Cannot be discerned from the reference.**

3. Mick’s expression suddenly changes when he confronts Dominique, because:

- A. He is taken by her beauty.**
- B. He is taken by her mind, which has not been institutionalized.**
- C. He is taken by her maternal instincts.**
- D. Her perfume is the same as his late mother’s.**

4. Mick assumes Dominique had a rough childhood because:

- A. She spent time in an orphanage.**
- B. She knows what 4 Ahau, 3 Kankin refers to.**
- C. She refers to her parent as her “biological father.”**
- D. She blushes at his references.**

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In this chapter, a mysterious deep-space signal is detected by Earth's largest radio telescope.

Chapter 5

When Cornell's College of Engineering first conceived of the idea of building the world's most powerful radio telescope, they searched for years for a site that offered a natural geological depression possessing the approximate dimensions of a giant reflector bowl. The site had to be under U.S. jurisdiction, and, since the dish would not move, the location also had to be as close as possible to the equator so the moon and planets would appear almost directly overhead. Their search led them to the limestone karst mountain range of northern Puerto Rico, a lush, isolated terrain featuring deep valleys surrounded by towering hills that would shield the telescope from outside radio interference.

Completed in 1963, with upgrades in 1974, 1997, and 2010, the Arecibo telescope appears to first-time visitors as an enormous alien structure of concrete and steel. The 1,000-foot-diameter dish, made of almost 40,000 perforated aluminum panels, hangs concave side up, filling up the entire crater-shaped karst sinkhole like a giant, 167-foot deep salad bowl. Dangling 426 feet above the center of the dish is the telescope's Azimuth arm, Gregorian dome, and secondary and tertiary dishes. This 600-ton spider web of steel is held aloft by 12 cables attached to three immense obelisk-shaped support towers and numerous anchor blocks located around the perimeter of the valley.

Constructed within the mountainous limestone hillside overlooking the telescope stands Arecibo's lab, a multi-storied concrete structure housing the computers and technical equipment used to run the facility. Adjacent to the lab is a four-story dormitory containing a dining room and library, as well as a heated pool and tennis court.

Arecibo's behemoth telescope was designed to be used by scientists in four separate fields. Radio astronomers use the dish to analyze the natural radio energy emitted by galaxies, pulsars, and other celestial bodies as far as ten million light-years away. Radar astronomers come to Arecibo to bounce powerful beams of radio energy off objects within our solar system, then record and study the echoes. Atmospheric scientists and astronomers use the telescope to study the Earth's ionosphere, analyzing the atmosphere and its dynamic relationship with our planet.

The last field of study involves the SETI program, or Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence. SETI's goal of locating intelligent life within the cosmos uses a twofold approach. The first is to send radio transmissions into deep space in the hopes that, someday, an intelligent species will receive our message of peace. SETI's second approach uses the Gregorian dome and its two smaller dishes to receive incoming radio waves from deep-space in an attempt to discern an intelligible pattern, proving that we are not alone in the Universe.

Astronomers refer to the task of hunting for radio signals in the vastness of space as searching for a needle in the cosmic haystack. To simplify the search, Professor Frank Drake and his colleagues in Project Ozma, the founders of SETI, concluded that any intelligent life existing within the cosmos would (logically) have to be associated with water. With all of the radio frequencies to choose from, astronomers hypothesized that an extraterrestrial intelligence would broadcast its radio signals at 1.42 gigahertz, the point on the electromagnetic spectrum at which energy is released from

hydrogen. Drake dubbed the region the waterhole, and since then, it has been the exclusive hunting ground for all interstellar radio signals.

An adjunct of the SETI project is SERENDIP, or the Search for Extraterrestrial Radio Emissions from Nearby Developed Intelligent Populations. With telescope time expensive and difficult to come by, SERENDIP simply piggybacks its receivers to the big dish during all observations. The major limitation for these SETI scientists is that they have no say in what they are listening to, their targets chosen for them by their host.

* * *

Kenny Wong stands on the concrete and steel overlook situated just outside of the lab's huge bay windows. The disgruntled Princeton graduate student leans against the protective railing and stares at the tangle of metal and cable suspended over the heart of the big dish.

Lousy NASA. It's not enough that they cut our funding, now they have to hog telescope time to locate their damn probe. . .

"Hey, Kenny--"

Piggybacking is an utter waste of time if we're not even tuned into the waterhole. I might as well hit the beach, for all the damn good I'm doing here--

"Kenny, get in here, your equipment's giving me a headache!"

"Huh?"

The grad student rushes into the lab, his pulse racing as he hears a sound he has never heard before.

"That damn computer of yours has been beeping like that for five minutes." Arthur Krawitz removes his bifocals and shoots him a nasty look. "Disconnect the darn thing, will you, it's driving me crazy."

Kenny pushes past him, hurriedly typing in commands to activate the computer's search and identification program. The SERENDIP-IV program can simultaneously examine 168 million frequency channels every 1.7 seconds.

Within seconds, a response flashes on his monitor, taking his breath away.

CANDIDATE SIGNAL: DETECTED

"Oh my God..."

Kenny races for the spectra-analyzer, his heart pounding in his ears. He verifies the analog signal is being recorded and digitally formatted.

CANDIDATE SIGNAL: NON-RANDOM

"Jesus Christ--it's a real signal! Arthur, I gotta call someone, I've got to verify before we lose it!"

Arthur is laughing hysterically. "Kenny, it's just the Pluto probe. NASA must have gotten it back on-line."

"What? Oh, crap!" Kenny collapses in a chair, out of breath. "God, for a second there--"

"For a second there, you looked like Curley from the Three Stooges. Just sit there and calm down while I contact NASA and verify, okay?"

"Okay."

The physicist strikes a pre-set key on his video communicator, placing them directly on-line with NASA. Dr. Armentrout's face appears on his monitor. "Arthur, good to see you. Hey, thanks for helping us out."

"Thanks for what? I see you're already back on-line with the PKE."

"Negative, we're still dead as a doorknob. What made you think that?"

Kenny rushes over. "NASA, this is Kenny Wong with SETI. We're picking up a deep space radio transmission. We thought it was the PKE."

"It's not coming from us, but keep in mind the Pluto probe uses an uncoded carrier. Plenty of pranksters out there, SETI. What's the frequency of the signal?"

"Standby." Kenny returns to his computer and types in a series of commands. "Oh, geez, we're at 4,320 MHz. God dammit, Arthur, that microwave band's way too high for any Earth-based telecommunications or even a geosynchronous satellite. Wait, I'll feed the signal through a speaker so we can listen."

"Kenny, wait--"

A piercing high-pitched tone screeches from the speakers, the searing blast of sound shattering Arthur's bifocals while causing the bay windows to rattle in their frames.

Kenny pulls the plug, rubbing his ringing

ears.

Arthur is staring at the fragments of glass in his hands. “Unbelievable. How strong is the signal? Where’s it coming from?”

“Still calculating the source, but the strength is off my puny scale. We’re looking at a radio brilliance about a thousand times stronger than anything we could transmit from Arecibo.” A chill runs down Kenny’s spine. “Geez, Arthur, this is it--this is the real thing!”

“Just calm down a second. Before we end up looking like the Stooges of the new millennium, get on-line and start confirming the signal. Start with the VLA in New Mexico. I’ll contact Ohio State--”

“Arthur--”

Krawitz turns to face the video com. “Go ahead, Jeremy.”

A half-dozen technicians have crowded around a pale-faced Dr. Armentrout. “Arthur, we just confirmed the signal.”

“You confirmed--” Krawitz feels light headed, like he is living in a dreamworld. “Have you targeted a source?”

“Still working on that. We’re running into a lot of interference due to the--”

“Arthur, I’ve got a preliminary trajectory!” Kenny is on his feet, very excited. “The signal’s originating from the constellation of Orion, somewhere in the vicinity of Orion’s Belt.”

* * *

6. Which of the following was NOT a requirement to build Arecibo's giant radio dish?

- A. The location had to be near the equator.**
- B. The United States had to control the territory.**
- C. The site had to be near a power plant.**
- D. The site had to be part of a natural depression.**

7. Which of the following is NOT a field of study for Arecibo?

- A. Radar astronomy.**
- B. The search for aliens.**
- C. Radio astronomy.**
- D. The Hubble-Arecibo telescope.**

8. SETI founder, Frank Drake, determined they would search the cosmos for signals at 1.42 gigahertz because of its association with:

- A. Human life**
- B. Oxygen**
- C. Water**
- D. Radio signals**

9. Before a non-random radio signal can be announced, it must be:

- A. Confirmed by other sources.**
- B. Listened to extensively.**
- C. Traced to its source.**
- D. Brought to the media's attention.**

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In this chapter, Dominique's father, Isadore, and his fishing buddies investigate the source of the mysterious sounds originating from the Gulf of Mexico.

Chapter 11

Gulf of Mexico

9:22 P.M.

A tapestry of stars covers the cloudless night sky. Carl leans on the transom, organizing his tackle box for the third time today. Rex is below, cleaning up dinner, while Iz listens to the undersea acoustics from the pilothouse.

"*Manatee*, come in."

"Go ahead, Ead."

"I've been listening on SOSUS. The noises are getting louder and faster."

"I know. Almost sounds like a runaway locomotive."

"Iz, I think you ought to leave the area. Iz?"

The sonic *screech* torches his ear canal like a white-hot poker. Iz flings the headphones from his head in agony and drops to one knee, feeling disoriented, the ringing in his ears unbearable.

"Rex! Carl!" He hears only a muffled echo.

An unearthly green light causes him to look up. The interior of the pilothouse is aglow with an iridescent emerald shimmer radiating from the water.

Rex pulls Iz to his feet. "You okay?"

Iz nods, his ears still ringing slightly. The two men stumble over the scuba gear and join Carl in the stern, too focused on the brilliant light to notice the smoke coming from the amplitude modulator's sizzling electronics board.

God almighty. Iz and his two friends stare dumbfounded at the sea, their faces glowing a ghostly green from the ethereal light.

The *Manatee* is bobbing along the surface of a circular swatch of luminescent sea, at least a

mile-in-diameter. Iz leans overboard, stupefied by the surreal visibility created by the incandescent beacon originating somewhere along the sea floor, some two-thousand feet beneath the boat.

"Iz, Rex, your hair!"

Carl points to their hair, which is standing on end. Rex fingers his ponytail, sticking up like an Indian feather. Iz rubs a palm across his hairy forearm, registering sparks of static electricity.

"What the hell's happening?" Carl whispers.

"I don't know, but we're moving out of here." Iz hurries back to the pilothouse and pushes the engine's POWER button.

Nothing.

He pushes three more times. He checks the radio, then the GPS navigational system.

"What's wrong?" Carl asks nervously.

"Everything's dead. Whatever's glowing down there has short-circuited all of our electronics."

Iz turns to see Rex pulling on his wet suit.

"What are you doing?"

"I want to see what's down there."

"It's too dangerous. There could be radiation."

"Then I'll probably be safer in my wet suit than you guys will on-board." He fastens the straps of the vest holding his air tank, checks his regulator, then slips on his fins. "Carl, my underwater camera's by your feet."

Carl tosses it to him.

"Rex--"

"Iz, thrill-seeking's my hobby. I'll snap a few quick shots and be back on-board in five minutes."

Iz and Carl watch helplessly as Rex slips over the side.

“Carl, grab an oar. We’re moving the boat.”

* * *

The sea is so visible that Rex feels like he is swimming toward the underwater lights of a deep swimming pool. He hovers six feet below the hull, feeling totally at peace, his body and escaping air bubbles immersed in the soft, emerald-green glow.

Movement above his head causes him to look up. *My God...*

Rex blinks twice, staring incredulously at the grotesque creature that has attached itself lengthwise along the center of the Manatee’s keel. Thirty-five feet of willowy tentacles flow from a caterpillar-like girth of gelatinous goo. No less than one-hundred bell-shaped stomachs traverse the creature’s cream-colored, rope-like body, each digestive aperture containing its own hideous mouth and poisonous, finger-like projections.

Incredible. Rex has never seen a live specimen before, but he knows the creature is an Apolemia, a species of siphonophore. These bizarre life forms, which can grow upwards of eighty to one-hundred feet in length, inhabit only the deepest waters and, as a result, are rarely seen by man.

The light must have chased it to the surface.

He snaps several pictures, remaining at what he hopes is a safe distance from the creature’s poisonous stingers, then releases air from his BCD vest and descends.

The surreal lighting gives him the strangest sensation of falling in slow motion. Rex scissor kicks at sixty feet to slow his descent, the pressure building within his ears. He pinches his nose and equalizes, surprised to find the pain getting worse. Then, looking down, he notices something rising at him from the luminescent void.

Rex smiles and extends his arms as thousands of Volkswagen-size air bubbles ascend all around him.

Sinus cavity pain forces him to refocus. A dull baritone roar fills his ears, causing his face mask

to reverberate and tickle his nose.

Rex Simpson stops smiling as he registers a gut-wrenching feeling in the pit of his stomach, a feeling similar to being suspended at the summit of a towering rollercoaster just as it begins its downward plunge. The roar gets louder.

It’s an underwater earthquake!

Two thousand feet below, an enormous section of the limestone sea floor collapses in upon itself, revealing a gaping tunnel-like aperture. The sea begins swirling as it is sucked into the growing hole, the torrent drawing everything into its plunging vortex.

The emerald green light intensifies, nearly blinding him.

* * *

Iz and Carl have managed to paddle the Manatee to the perimeter of the brilliant patch of sea when an unseen force seems to grip the stern, dragging the fishing boat backward. The two men turn, horrified, the sea now churning in a great counter-clockwise vortex.

“It’s a whirlpool! Paddle faster!”

Within seconds, the Manatee is caught, moving backwards along the outer edge of the maelstrom.

* * *

The powerful suction has clamped onto Rex’s body with frightening strength, dragging him into deeper waters. He kicks harder, the pressure building in his ears as he struggles to release his weight belt with one hand and grab onto the flailing rubber hose behind his head with the other.

The belt slips off his waist, disappearing in the intense light. Rex fingers the buoyancy control device and squeezes the handle, inflating his vest.

His descent slows but does not stop.

An unfathomably strong current suddenly wrenches him sideways as if he is being sucked out of a plane. He is lurched sideways, the current threatening to rip the regulator and mask from his face. He bites down hard and grabs his precious mask, twisting futilely against the unrelenting turbulence.

The sea drops open beneath him. He stares one-hundred stories below into the blazing green eye of the vortex, a hole in the sea whose centrifugal force now pins him against the inner wall of its widening, churning funnel.

Rex's heart pounds wildly in fear. The grip on his torso increases, tearing at the velcro straps, all that prevents the air tank from being torn from his vest. He closes his eyes, sickened, as the whirlpool whips him along its interior wall at a dizzying velocity, all the while sucking him deeper into its mouth.

I'm going to die, oh, God, please help me—

His face mask cracks. A vice-like pressure squeezes his face. Blood pours from his nostrils. He gags, then squeezes his eyes shut as tightly as he can, screaming into his regulator as his eyeballs are pulled away from their optic nerves, bulging out of their socket.

A final scream is obliterated as Rex Simpson's brain implodes.

* * *

The monstrous G-forces created by the funnel of water has impaled the *Manatee's* hull against the steep, swirling walls, tearing sections of the boat away with each revolution. Centrifugal force has pinned Carl Reuben's unconscious body against the back of Iz's legs, crushing the terrified biologist against the fiberglass transom.

Iz grips the guardrail in front of him with two hands. The whirlpool is roaring in his ears, its dizzying speed pushing him toward unconsciousness.

He wills his eyes open, focusing them on the source of the green light. Death is minutes away, the thought somehow both frightening and comforting.

The brilliant beacon suddenly dulls. Iz cranes his neck forward, leaning precariously over the transom. He sees a gurgling, tar-like ooze spew forth from an enormous hole within the sea floor. The black substance belches--Iz can smell its sulfurous, rotting stench--then finishes blanketing the emerald glow as it continues to rise within the funnel of water, darkening the still churning sea.

Iz closes his eyes, forcing himself to think of

Edie and Dominique as the maddening torrent pushes the *Manatee* down into its spiraling vortex.

God, let it be quick.

Carl reaches up. He squeezes Iz's hand as the black ooze rises to greet them.

The boat strikes the thick, tar-like substance and flips, bow over stern, tossing Iz and Carl head-first into the mouth of the inky maelstrom.

* * *

11. Select the correct order of events:

- I. Whirlpool forms.**
- II. Black ooze appears**
- III. Emerald light from below**
- IV. Underwater earth quake**
- V. Screeching sound over radio**

- A. V, I, IV, III, II**
- B. IV, V, III, I, II**
- C. V, III, I, II, IV**
- D. V, IV, III, I, II**

12. The *Apolemia* was hovering beneath the boat because:

- A. It was attracted to the bait.**
- B. It was chased topside by the emerald light.**
- C. It was hunting.**
- D. It was after Rex.**

13. The MOST appropriate name for this chapter would be:

- A. Death in the Gulf.**
- B. Siphonophore: Denizen of the Deep.**
- C. The Mayan Doomsday**
- D. Isadore's Death**

DOMAIN
PREP TEST FOR STATE BOARDS

In this chapter, two spelunkers happen upon a gruesome discovery.

Chapter 19

8 December 2012
Gunung Mulu National Park
Sarawak, Federation of Malaysia

Sarawak, situated on the Northwest coast of Borneo, is the largest state in the Federation of Malaysia. Gunung Mulu, the largest national park in the state, covers 340 square miles, its landscape dominated by three mountains--the Gunung Mulu, the Gunung Benarat, and the Gunung Api.

The Gunung Api is a mountain formed out of limestone, a geology that not only dominates the entire state of Sarawak, but also its neighboring island of Irian Jaya/Papua New Guinea, and nearly all of southern Malaysia. The weathering of this limestone landscape by the slightly acid rainwater has led to remarkable surface sculptures and underground formations.

Mid-way up the side of the Mount Api, pointing skyward like a field of jagged stalagmites, is a petrified forest of razor-sharp, silver-grey limestone pinnacles, some of which tower more than 150-feet above the rainforest. Below ground, hollowed out from the limestone geology by subterranean rivers, lies a labyrinth containing more than 400-miles of underworld caverns, representing the largest limestone cave system in the world.

* * *

Honolulu graduate student Wade Tokumine has been studying the Sarawak caves for three months, collecting data as part of his master's thesis concerning the stability of the world's underground karst volumes. Karst is a topography created through the chemical weathering of limestone geology containing at

least eighty percent calcium carbonate.

Sarawak's network of subterranean passages are composed entirely of this vast network of karst.

Today's journey marks Wade's ninth visit to Clearwater Cave, the longest underground passage in all of Southeast Asia and one of only four Mula caves open to the public. The geologist leans back from his seat in the longboat, shining his carbide light at the alabaster ceiling of the cavern. The beacon cuts through the darkness to reveal a myriad of stalactites dripping with moisture. Wade stares at the ancient formations of rock, marveling at Nature's design.

* * *

Four billion years ago, the Earth was a very young, hostile, and lifeless world. As the planet cooled, water vapor and other gases were sent skyward in violent volcanic eruptions, creating an atmosphere high in carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and hydrogen compounds, conditions similar to those found on Venus.

Life on our planet began in the sea as a soup of chemicals, organized into complex structures--four basic amino acid chain molecules--animated by an outside catalyst, perhaps a bolt of lightning. The animated amino acid double helixes began to replicate themselves, leading to a single celled life. These organisms quickly rose in abundance and began depleting the oceans of its fast-food carbon compounds. Then--a unique family of bacteria evolved to produce a new organic molecule called chlorophyll. This green-tinted substance was able to store the energy in sunlight, allowing the single-celled organisms to create high quality carbohydrates from carbon dioxide and

hydrogen, releasing oxygen as its byproduct.

Photosynthesis was born.

As planetary oxygen levels rose, calcium carbonate was withdrawn from the sea and locked up in rock formations by marine organisms, drastically reducing the planet's atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide. This rock-limestone--became Earth's storehouse for carbon dioxide. As a result, the levels of carbon dioxide stored in sedimentary rock is now more than 600 times the total carbon content of the planet's air, water, and living cells combined.

* * *

Wade Tokumine aims the beam of light along the dark surface waters of the cavern. The subterranean stream is laden with 10 times the concentration of carbon dioxide. This part of the carbon cycle occurs as a result of the dissolved CO-2 reaching its saturation point within the limestone. When this happens, the carbon dioxide precipitates out as pure calcium carbonate, creating the stalactites and stalagmites that now proliferate the Sarawak caves.

Wade turns around in the longboat to face his guide, Andrew Chan. The Malaysian native and professional spelunker has been leading tours through Sarawak's caves for seventeen years.

"Andrew, how much farther to this Virgin passage of yours?"

The light of the carbide lamp catches Andrew's smile, which is missing two front teeth. "Not far. This section of the cavern craps out ahead, then we go on by foot."

Wade nods, then spits out the stench of the carbide fumes. Only thirty percent of Sarawak's caves have been surveyed, most of these remaining inaccessible to all but a few of the more experienced guides. When it comes to charting unexplored passages, Wade knows Andrew is second to none, a caver exuding a strong case of "booty scoop lust," an incurable psychological condition common among 'Speleo-boppers.'

Andrew guides the longboat to a ledge, holding it steady so Wade can climb out. "Better put your brain bucket on, lots of loose rock

ahead."

Wade fastens the helmet to his head as Andrew ties one end of a very long coil of rope known as a hog to the boat, tossing the rest over his shoulder. "Stay close. It'll get a bit narrow. There's plenty of sharp popcorn sticking out along the walls, so watch your clothes."

Andrew takes the lead, guiding them through a pitch-dark catacomb. He selects a tight, inclined passage and enters, allowing the hog line to feed out to mark their route. After several minutes of steady climbing, the passage squeezes to a claustrophobic tunnel, forcing them to crawl on all fours.

Wade slips on the wet limestone, tearing the skin along his knuckles. "How much farther?"

"Why? You getting entrance fever?"

"A little."

"That's cause you're a keyboard caver."

"What's that?"

"A keyboard caver's someone who spends more time reading the Caver's mailing list than actually going--hold on. Whoa, what's this?"

Wade crawls forward on his belly, squeezing in next to Andrew to take a look.

The tunnel has opened to a massive sinkhole. Looking up, they can see stars still glimmering in the early morning sky, the surface a good 75-feet above their heads. Andrew shines his light below, revealing the bottom of a massive hole, another thirty feet down.

A luminescent amber glow casts bizarre shadows from within the pit.

"Do you see that?"

Wade leans forward to get a better look. "It looks like there something glowing down there"

"This doline wasn't here earlier this morning. The roof of the cavern must have just collapsed. Whatever's down there probably fell straight through and landed in that pit."

"Maybe it's a car? Someone could be trapped down there."

Wade watches as his Malaysian guide reaches into his backpack and pulls out a Knobbly Dog, a rope ladder made of a single length of wire, the rungs threaded through the middle.

“What are you doing?”

“Stay here, I’m going to climb down and have a look.” Andrew anchors one end of the ladder to the ledge, then allows the Knobbly Dog to unravel into the dark recesses below.

The sky above has turned grey by the time the Spelunker steps down into the pit. The early morning light barely penetrates the darkness and swirling wisps of limestone dust.

Andrew stares at the inanimate creature dwarfing him in the subterranean pit. “Hey Wade, I don’t know what this thing is, but it ain’t no car.”

“What’s it look like?”

“Like nothing I’ve ever seen. It’s huge, like a giant cockroach, only it’s got big wings and a tail, with a bunch of weird tentacles sticking out all over its belly. It’s balancing upright on a pair of claws. They must be pretty hot, because the limestone’s sizzling beneath them.”

“Maybe you ought to get out of there. Come on, we’ll call the Park Rangers--”

“It’s okay, the thing’s not alive.” Andrew reaches out to touch one of the tentacles.

A neon-blue, electromagnetic shock wave slams him backwards against the far wall.

“Andrew, you okay? Andrew?”

“Yeah, man, but this sonuva bitch is packing a serious charge. Oh, hell--” Andrew jumps back as the creature’s hydraulic, mechanical tail rises, reaching up toward the sky.

“Andrew?”

“I’m leaving, man, you don’t have to tell me twice.” The guide starts climbing up the ladder.

The amber orb along the side of the being’s upper body begins flashing, darkening to a crimson hue.

“Come on, climb faster!”

White smoke pours out from beneath the creature’s talons, filling the vertical shaft.

Wade feels himself getting dizzy. He turns around and slides, head-first, down the slick tunnel as Andrew pulls himself up and over the

ledge.

“Andrew? Andrew, you behind me?” Wade stops his inertia and shines his light back up the tunnel. He can see the guide, lying face down in the narrow crawl space.

Carbon dioxide!

Wade reaches back and grabs Andrew’s wrist. He drags him down through the crawl space as the rock around him grows hotter, scorching his skin.

What’s happening?

Wade stumbles to his feet as the passage widens. He hoists the unconscious guide onto his shoulder and staggers toward the longboat. Everything seems to be spinning, getting hotter. He closes his eyes, using his elbows to feel his way along the sizzling limestone walls.

Wade hears a bizarre bubbling sound as he reaches the subterranean stream. Dropping to one knee, he rolls Andrew’s body into the longboat, then climbs in clumsily, nearly tipping them. The cave’s walls are smoking, the intense heat causing the underground river to boil.

Wade’s eyes are burning, his nostrils unable to inhale the searing atmosphere. He bellows a suffocating scream, thrashing about wildly as his flesh blisters and chars away from the bone and his eyeballs burst into flames.

* * *

14. The Geology that dominates Sarawak is:

- A. Acid rainwater**
- B. Limestone**
- C. Carbon Dioxide**
- D. Plants and trees**

15. Four billion years ago, conditions on Earth resembled:

- A. Mars**
- B. Mercury**
- C. Venus**
- D. The Moon**

16. Earth's primary storehouse for carbon dioxide is:

- A. Plants**
- B. Water**
- C. Marine organisms**
- D. Limestone**

17. The term "booty scoop lust" most likely refers to :

- A. A psychological condition that affects Sarawak natives.**
- B. A severe foot fetish**
- C. A desire to be a spelunker**
- D. A desire to search for aliens**

DOMAIN
PREP TEST FOR STATE BOARDS

In this, Julius Gabriel's final excerpt, he laments good and evil, God and the Devil, and the loss of his wife, Maria.

What a pitiful creature is man; born with an acute awareness of his own mortality--he is thus condemned to live out his puny existence in fear of the unknown. Driven by ambition, he often wastes what precious moments he possesses. Forsaking others, he overindulges his egotistical ventures in the pursuit of fame and fortune, allowing evil to seduce him into reaping misery upon those he truly loves; his life, so fragile, always teetering on the brink of a death he was not blessed with the ability to comprehend.

Death is the great equalizer. All our power and wants, all our hopes and desires eventually dies with us--buried in the grave. Oblivious, we journey selfishly toward the big sleep, placing importance on things that have no importance, only to be reminded at the most inopportune times how frail our lives truly are.

As creatures of emotions, we pray to a God whose existence we have no proof of, our unbridled faith designed merely to quell our primordial fear of death as we try to convince our intellects that an after-life must surely exist. God is merciful, God is just, we tell ourselves, and then the unthinkable happens; a child drowns in a swimming pool, a drunk driver kills a loved one, a disease inflicts a betrothed.

Where goes our faith then? Who can pray to a God that steals an angel? What divine plan could possibly justify such heinous an act? Was it a merciful God that chose to inflict my Maria in the prime of her life? Was it a just God who determined that she wallow in pain, suffering in agony until He finally got around to the heavenly task of taking mercy

on her tortured soul?

And what of her husband? What sort of man was I to stand idly by and allow my beloved to suffer so?

With heavy heart, I allowed each day to slip by as the cancer dragged Maria closer to the grave. And then one night as I sat sobbing by her bedside, she looked at me through sunken eyes, a wretched creature more dead than alive, and begged me for mercy.

What could I do? God had abandoned her, refusing her respite from the incessant torture. Bending down, my body trembling, I kissed her one last time, praying to a God whose existence I now both questioned and cursed to give me strength. Pressing the pillow to her face, I extinguished her last dying breath, knowing full well that I was extinguishing the very flame of my soul.

The deed complete, I turned, shocked to find my son, an unknowing accomplice, staring at me through the dark angelic eyes of his mother.

What heinous act had I committed? What brave words could I possibly muster to regain this child's lost innocence? Stripped of all pretense, I stood there naked, a weak, beguiled father who had unwittingly condemned his own son's psyche through an act which, only minutes before, I had believed to be both humane and unselfish.

Helpless, I watched my son bolt from our home and run into the night to vent his rage.

Had I a weapon, I would have blown my head off right then and there. Instead, I fell to my knees and sobbed, cursing God, screaming his name in vain.

In less than a year's time, my family's existence had been transformed into a Greek tragedy. Had God manipulated these turn of

events, or was He also just a spectator, watching and waiting while his fallen Angel manipulated our lives like some diabolical puppet-master.

Perhaps it was Lucifer himself, I rationalized in my grief, for who but he could have struck down my wife, then so deftly manipulated the sequence of events that followed? Did I really believe in the devil? At that moment--yes, or at the very least, the presence of evil personified as an entity unto itself.

Can something as intangible as evil be an entity? My tortured mind pondered the question, granting me a moment's reprieve from grief. If God was an entity, then why not the devil? Could goodness really exist without evil? Could God really exist without the devil? And who really begot whom, for it has always been the fear of evil that has primed the pumps of religion, not God.

The theologian in me took over. Fear and religion. Religion and fear. The two are historically entwined, the catalysts for most of the atrocities committed by man. Fear of evil fuels religion, religion fuels hatred, hatred fuels evil, and evil fuels fear among the masses. It is a diabolical cycle, and we have played into the devil's hand.

Staring at the heavens, my thoughts turned to the Mayan prophecy, wondering in my delirium and grief whether it was the presence of evil that was orchestrating mankind's ultimate fall from grace, leading us toward the obliteration of our own species.

And then another thought crossed my mind. Perhaps God did exist, but He had chosen to take a passive role in man's existence, providing us the means to determine our own destinies, yet, all the while, permitting evil to exert a more active influence in our lives so as to test our resolve--verifying our aptitudes as we applied for entrance into His hereafter.

Maria had been taken from me, struck down in the prime of her life. Perhaps there was a reason behind the insanity of the moment--perhaps I was getting close to the

truth--that I was indeed on the trail of humanity's salvation.

Cursing the devil, I gazed at the stars, tears in my eyes, and swore, on the soul of my beloved, that neither heaven nor hell would stop me from resolving the Mayan prophecy.

* * *

A dozen years have passed since I swore that oath. Now, as I sit backstage, inscribing this final passage, waiting to be called to the dais, I grimace at the thought of facing my cynical colleagues.

Yet what choice have I? Despite my best efforts, pieces of the Doomsday puzzle remain missing and our salvation as a species lies in the balance. Failing health has forced me to pass the baton to my son sooner than I had hoped, placing the burden squarely on him to complete the marathon.

I am told that Pierre Borgia will be introducing me to the crowd. The butterflies flutter in my stomach at the anticipation of seeing him again. Perhaps the years have softened his anger toward me. Perhaps he realizes what is at stake.

I hope so, because I'll need his support if I am to convince the scientists in the auditorium to act. If they listen with open minds, the facts alone may be enough to persuade them. If not, then I fear our species is doomed to perish, as surely as the dinosaurs perished before us.

As the ushers beckon me to take center stage, I look at Michael. He nods his approval, his ebony eyes blazing back at me, exuding his mother's intelligence. Robbed of his innocence so many years ago, he has become introverted and distant, and I fear he harbors a hidden rage that my own heinous act surely fostered. And yet, I also detect a deep sense of purpose within my son, one that I pray will sustain him as he journeys down destiny's path, toward his ultimate salvation--and our own.

-- Final Excerpt from the Journal of
Professor Julius Gabriel 24 August 2001

DOMAIN
PREP TEST FOR STATE BOARDS

In this chapter, Dominique's father, Isadore, and his fishing buddies investigate the source of the mysterious sounds originating from the Gulf of Mexico.

CHAPTER 29

The Mayan ball court is gone.

Michael Gabriel is standing alone within an emerald vortex of energy, the tunnel-like cylinder revolving a billion revolutions a minute. He can feel the Guardian's electric-blue force field enveloping his body, protecting him from the devastating power of the wormhole.

To his left is a portal, its diminishing opening revealing the northern base of the pyramid. He can see Dominique, lying on the bottom two steps.

Weeping.

To his right is another portal. At its center point--a pinpoint of white light visible in the darkness of space.

A cool sensation washes over him, soothing his frayed nerves.

Guardian, was I successful?

Yes, Hunahpu. The two underlords of the Middleworld are dead. The portal is closing, the Death God denied access to your world.

Mick watches as the opening to his left continues closing.

Then the threat to humanity is over?

Yes. Now, it is time to choose. You can live out your days as Michael Gabriel, or continue on to Xibalba and fulfill your destiny as One Hunahpu--attempting to save the souls of our people.

The Nephilim. . . Mick recalls the frightened faces of the children on *Xibalba*, their souls locked in purgatory.

So frightened. So alone. . .

Sixty-five million years ago, the Nephilim survivors had *chosen* to remain on Earth--to save the future of an unknown species, hoping to save their people--hoping their genetic messiah would one day rise to return the favor.

Mick stares at Dominique, longing to hold

her, to comfort her. He imagines the life that circumstances have denied him since he was a child. Love. . . marriage. . . children. . . An existence of happiness. Enveloped in Dominique's warmth, never having to awaken in the middle of the night on the cold floor of a concrete cell, feeling so alone. . .

So empty.

The ultimate sacrifice. . .

You possess freewill, Michael. Choose quickly.

Tearing his heart away from Dominique, he turns to his right--and leaps.

* * *

Mick is hurtling head-first through a twisting funnel of what must be pure energy. Beyond the spectral tapestry of colors he can make out stars, shooting past him like tracers.

He looks over his shoulder and sees Earth, the blue world disappearing from view, the trailing cosmic string of the wormhole evaporating behind him, leaving the darkness of space in its wake.

The growing emptiness tears at his tortured soul.

Welcome, One Hunahpu. You have arrived.

I miss her, Guardian.

She is alive and well, the seed of our covenant growing within her womb, her destiny forever linked to yours.

A white light looms ahead, its shimmer growing larger.

Xibalba. . . Mick is suddenly filled with trepidation, the cold, lifeless fingers of terror infiltrating his mind.

What have I done? Guardian, please--I want to go back!

It is too late. Fear not, Michael, for we shall never forsake you. The destiny you have

chosen is the noblest of all. You have made the ultimate sacrifice for the errors of our past. In doing so, you have restored humanity to your species.

Now close your eyes and rest while we prepare you, for what lies ahead is evil --in its purest form.

UPON COMPLETING THE NOVEL:

20. Having read DOMAIN, are you concerned with the Mayan Prophecy?

If YES, briefly justify. If NO, why not?

21. Michael Gabriel's story continues in the DOMAIN sequel, RESURRECTION, by Steve Alten (TOR Books, Jan. 2004). A SNEAK PREVIEW appears on www.SteveAlten.com.

BEFORE READING the sneak preview, discuss the sequel might begin in relation to Dominique's pregnancy and Mick's plight.

21. Have you e-mailed the author?

22. Have you surfed the www.SteveAlten.com website?

23. Was the novel enjoyable?

24. Would you read more books by this author?

25. Do you think you will read books like DOMAIN on your own?

26. Other Comments?
