



# Novels By Russ Fine

## April, 2025

Spring has finally arrived, and I will not miss winter at all.

I've been working on my 14th novel for the last eight months and it will be available in May. The title is *The Artifact*. So, this month I decided to attach an excerpt from it to the newsletter instead of a short story.

The last three Frank Carver novels are a continuous story (*Dreamscape*, *McBain's Redemption*, and *New Terra*) so I released a hard cover edition that contains all three novels. It is available on Amazon and at my signing events.

For those of you who have been reading my newsletters you know that I previously owned a bakery and café called Cheesecakes Plus More. Although we specialized in cheesecakes we also made cookies. One of our most popular cookies were Butter Pecan Turtle Bars and the recipe is attached to this newsletter.

Please note that all my newsletters are available on my website.

As always, if you have any comments or suggestions regarding my novels please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you.



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### Book Signing Events

**April 10 - 12**

**11:00 - 4:00**

**Kroger**

**9161 Middlebrook Pike**

**Knoxville, TN 37923**

**April 24 -26**

**11:00 - 4:00**

**Kroger**

**9225 Kingston Pike**

**Knoxville, TN 37919**

## Preface

Brian Nelson had loved archaeology since he saw his first Indiana Jones movie. He had an almost insatiable desire to learn about ancient human civilizations, and was currently working on obtaining his master's degree in archaeology. As part of the program he was sent to Turkey to do field work and was assigned to work at Göbekli Tepe. A site that many archaeologists believed is the earliest known human habitat and was constructed at about 9500 BCE.

Brian wasn't expecting to find the Ark of the Covenant or the Holy Grail like Indiana Jones did, but he dreamed he would find something important. He had been patiently using a small shovel and brush to clear away the sand at the dig site when his shovel struck something that made a metallic sound. Using his brush to carefully clear away the sand and loose dirt surrounding the object he uncovered a highly polished two-inch square black metallic object. He knew the people who inhabited Göbekli Tepe had no knowledge of metallurgy, so he instantly realized that his dream had come true. He stood up and walked over to the manager of the operation and said, "Paul, I found something that you have to look at immediately."

"What is it?"

"It appears to be a solid metal object about two inches on each side."

"That's impossible. Are you sure it wasn't something someone dropped?"

"Yes, sir. I've been digging there for the last three days and I've cleared away about eighteen inches of soil, rock, and sand."

"Okay, show me."

The two men walked over to where Brian was working. The metallic object was immediately obvious because it reflected the bright afternoon sunlight. They climbed down to where the object was located and both men looked at it. After almost a minute Brian asked, "What do you think it is?"

"I have no idea. I've never seen anything like it before. It couldn't have been made by the residents of Göbekli Tepe." Paul put on a pair of gloves and reached down to pick up the object, but was unable to lift it. He tried to push it, but it wouldn't move. His first thought was that the object was long and Brian had only uncovered the top of it. So, he picked up a brush and began to clear away some of the sand around the base of the object. It only took a few seconds to realize the object was sitting on the ground. He was confused and tried to move the object again with his fingers, but it wouldn't move. He picked up Brian's shovel and tried to dig underneath the object, but that proved to be futile as well. It appeared the object was resting on solid rock, but that was impossible because the entire area appeared to have been buried in loose dirt and sand when the settlement was abandoned.

"It looks like it's too heavy to move, but there's no way anything that small could be that heavy," Paul said. "Let's clear away more of the dirt around the object."

Paul and Brian worked for the next half hour slowly clearing away the soil around the object. When they were finished, about three inches of the ground around the object had been removed. They now realized that the object rested on highly compressed soil, not rock.

Brian said, "It looks like that object must be so heavy that it compressed the ground under it. But I don't understand how an object that small could be so heavy."

"I think you're right. But as far as I know, there's nothing on Earth that's that heavy."

"Are you saying the object is extraterrestrial?" Brian asked.

Paul didn't answer immediately. After a few seconds he said, "Let's not jump to conclusions. I think we have to get the object to a lab where it can be studied."

"Do we have anything here that can lift it?"

"I don't know, but if we don't I'll get whatever we need."

There was no heavy equipment at the dig site and it quickly became obvious they had nothing that could even budge the object. Paul contacted his superior at the German Archaeological Institute, explained the situation, and requested a crane to move the object. The person he spoke with thought he was either crazy or drunk. So, Paul sent him several pictures of the object. Two hours later he received a message stating that a crane would be there within two days to move it. Then the object would be loaded on a helicopter and taken back to the institute for study. They also told him not to discuss the object with anyone not directly involved in the project.

The crane and an operator arrived in the morning two days later on a large flatbed truck. The operator walked over and looked at the object he was supposed to lift. He asked Paul if this was some kind of joke. Paul assured him that the object was much heavier than it looked. The operator maneuvered the crane into the proper position and he fitted it with a small scoop that had a hydraulic jaw that could cut through the compressed dirt under the object. The jaw was lowered into place and the operator closed it. Then he began to lift the object still not believing that object was heavy enough to require a crane. But he quickly changed his mind when he started to lift it. The crane, which had a five ton capacity, began to strain slightly due to the weight of the object. The operator guessed the tiny object weighed at least two tons.

Paul had his people construct a crate to transport the object. The crate was made with two inch thick wood and was one foot square and ten inches high. The bottom of the crate was lined with a high density foam. Paul placed the crate on the front of the truck bed. The crane operator slowly swung the scoop over to the crate. Then he lowered it so it was about four inches above the crate and opened the jaws. The object fell into the box and completely crushed the foam underneath it. The truck bed dropped a couple of inches as well.

When Brian found out the object was going to Germany to be examined, he asked for permission to go there and assist in the examination. Since he was the one who discovered it, his request was granted. After the crane was loaded back onto the truck Brian got into the truck cab along with crane operator. The trip to the airport took about an hour. There was a large helicopter waiting that would bring Brian and the object to Germany. A forklift was used to pick up the crate and place it into the helicopter's cargo compartment. Like the crane operator, the helicopter pilot could not believe an object small enough to fit in the crate that was being loaded into the helicopter could be that heavy. However, when he felt the helicopter drop several inches after the crate was loaded he realized that there was no way he would be able to fly the helicopter safely with an object that heavy in the cargo compartment. So, arrangements were made to bring in a cargo plane to transport the object to Germany.

# Chapter 1

The following morning Brian and the object arrived at the German Archaeological Institute. Prior to the object's arrival, a stainless steel table was constructed to hold the object. A fork lift was used to put the crate on the table and the sides of the crate were removed. Then the foam that surrounded the object was removed as well exposing five sides of the object. Anton, the lab technician, placed a digital scanner over the object and all five of the exposed surfaces were scanned at one thousand times magnification. Brian and Anton examined the scans and they were amazed with the results. The surfaces were completely smooth and no blemishes of any kind were detected.

Then they measured the object and it was a perfect cube, each side was exactly 6.37 centimeters. To determine the weight of the object, a forklift to raise the table and place it on a scale was used. The table was weighed before the object was placed on it, and it weighed 86.7 kilograms. With the object on the table it now weighed 1664.2 kilograms. The weight was not exact because the object still rested on the bottom of the crate, so they estimated that the object weighed about 1657 kilograms.

The next thing they tried was to remove a tiny amount of material from the surface of the object so it could be analyzed. Anton tried to use a small hardened steel tool with a sharp point to scrape the surface of the object, but the object was obviously harder than the tool. So then he tried a diamond tipped tool and that failed as well.

"I have no idea what this thing is made of, but I'm positive it wasn't made from any material found on Earth," Anton said.

"Do you think we should try heating it?" Brian asked.

"I would like to find out if it is magnetic and what its electrical properties are first."

Anton and Brian checked and the results were confusing. The object looked like it was metallic, but it wasn't and it didn't conduct electricity.

"Since the object isn't metallic, I think we should try some other kind of imaging," Brian suggested.

"We could try using an MRI scanner. There's a portable one at the local hospital."

"Can you bring it here? If it's portable, it has to be easier to move than the object."

"Yes, I'm sure about that. I'll call the hospital and ask them if we can borrow it for a few hours. I think we should stop calling it the object. It's obviously an alien artifact so we should call it what it is, an artifact."

Four hours later the scanner was set up and a technician from the hospital was ready to begin the scan. The three men put on sound proof ear muffs and the technician started the test. Instantly the artifact began to glow, and a few seconds later it was too bright to look at. Then the glow faded and a hologram appeared above the artifact. The hologram appeared to contain some kind of text. As they watched, the image changed and continued to change about every twenty seconds.

Brian instantly recognized the text as Sumerian. He yelled, "Stop the test. We have to record these images."

Anton asked, "Did you recognize the text?"

"Yes, it's Sumerian. I can't read it, but I'm sure someone here can."

"I'll set up a camera to record the images and then we should start scanning again."

Brian said, "I hope the images start over from the beginning. I wouldn't want to miss anything."

Twenty minutes later the camera was set up and the hospital technician started the scan again. None of them could read the images, but it appeared that each image was different.

Anton made a call and found out that one of the professors at the institute could read Sumerian. She was an American and her name was Helen Bristol. Anton called her and asked her to come to the lab as soon as possible.

When Helen walked into the lab a half hour later she asked, "Okay, I'm here. What's so important?"

Brian said, "This." Then he pointed to the artifact.

Helen bent down to get a closer look at the artifact and asked, "What is it?"

Brian answered, "We don't know. I found it a few days ago at Göbekli Tepe. It was obviously not made by the residents, since they lacked the necessary skills. The artifact is a perfect cube, the surface is harder than a diamond, and it weighs about fifteen hundred kilograms."

"Is this some kind of joke?" Helen asked.



“No, it’s not a joke. Since the artifact doesn’t conduct electricity and isn’t magnetic, we decided to scan it with an MRI. When we did a hologram appeared above it. The hologram contained a series of images that contain Sumerian text. I recognized the text, but I can’t read it. We’re hoping you can. Anton recorded the images, but you can see them for yourself. Anton, Turn on the scanner again.”

Anton turned on the scanner again and Helen watched the images that appeared above the artifact. Helen watched the images for a few minutes and said, “That is the most amazing thing I have ever seen.”

Anton said, “We recorded the images for a half hour. We don’t know if every image is different or it’s a series of images that is repeated. Come over to my desk and I’ll play the images for you.”

Helen sat down at the desk and began to study the images. A few minutes later she said, “As I said before, this is amazing. I need some software that I have in my office to do a complete translation, but so far it looks like the beings who built the artifact have been coming to Earth for thousands of years observing the animal and plant life. Can you give me a copy of the file, Anton?”

“Yes, of course. But you have to promise to let me know what you find.”

“I promise.”

Brian asked, “Can I assist you? I’m working on my master’s degree in archaeology. That’s why I was at Göbekli Tepe. I really want to stay involved.”

“Yeah, I think that’s an excellent idea. How soon do you want to get started?”

“Now would be good.”

“Okay, let’s go.”

Anton handed Helen a thumb drive with file on it. Helen said, “Thank you.” Then she and Brian left the lab and went to Helen’s office.

Helen copied the file from the thumb drive to her hard drive and put the thumb drive into a small safe next to her desk. Then she opened the file and they began to scan images. They discovered there were twelve distinct images in the file.

“I have software that will translate the text to English, but it’s very slow. It will probably take an entire day to decipher the file. Let’s go get something to eat. By the time we get back maybe the first page will be done.”

Helen started the translation process and then they walked to a nearby restaurant. After they sat down a waiter came over to the table and handed both of them a menu. Then he said something in German and left. Brian opened the menu and was surprised that the menu was in German and English. “The waiter said he’d give us a few minutes to look at the menu. I eat here quite often and everything is good.”

“How long have you been a professor here?” Brian asked.

“I’ve been here for seven years. My father was a colonel in the Air Force and he was stationed in Hamburg when I was born. I lived there until I was seven. So I learned to speak both German and English. I’ve always been fascinated by early human civilizations and I knew I wanted to work here. So, after I received my master’s degree from Brown University I applied here for the doctorate program. I was accepted and after graduation I stayed on as an assistant professor. I became a full professor three years ago. I’m sure you realize how important this discovery you made is, don’t you?”

“Yeah, I do. That’s why I want to stay involved. It’s probably the most important archaeological artifact ever found. It obviously proves we’re not alone in the universe, but I think most people believe that already. It also proves we’ve been visited by aliens in the past. I suspect they did a lot more than just observe what was happening on Earth.”

“What do you think they did?”

“You’ll probably think I’m crazy, but I think they may have created the human race by genetically modifying the DNA of some primates.”

“I don’t think you’re crazy. I’ve never believed that humans evolved from apes as Darwin suggested. I have real difficulty believing that humans are the result of natural selection. I always thought we were the result of intelligent design. Your discovery may be the proof I’ve been looking for. I’m curious about what made you want a career in archaeology. It’s an unusual choice.”

“You’re going to laugh when I tell you. It was the movie Raiders of the Lost Ark. I wanted to be like Indiana Jones.”

Helen did smile, but she didn’t laugh. “My interest in archaeology came from reading adventure books which is quite similar to how you became interested in it.”

They continued to talk during the meal, but they were anxious to get back to Helen's office. As soon as they were done they walked back quickly. When they arrived there was a single page in the printer. It was only one paragraph. It said, "We have been coming to your planet to study the plants and animals that were present there for about four hundred thousand of seasonal cycles. Your planet has an amazing amount of diverse plant and animal life, far more than other planets we have studied with a similar environment. We were very interested in the primates we found. They are similar to animals on other planets we have studied, but they were much less intelligent. We decided to increase their intelligence. We had done this before on other planets very successfully. So, we took a male and female from several different primate species back to our home planet. After several thousand seasonal cycles, the primates we modified were much more intelligent than their ancestors. They were now capable of learning simple tasks and we decided to give them some basic knowledge that we felt would enhance their ability to survive after returning them to your planet. They were taught how to use fire and the wheel."

After reading the paragraph Brian asked, "How could the translate program create a perfect English translation?"

"It uses AI to create the final translation. That's why the process takes so long, but the results are worth the wait. It's still not perfect. I would assume that 'seasonal cycles' are 'years'."

"Is this the translation of the entire first text image?"

"Yes, I believe it is."

"It would be nice to know more about the beings that left the artifact in Göbekli Tepe for us to find. It was obviously put there with the expectation we would find it and read the message. But there has to be more to it than just a device to leave us a message. There must be a reason it weighs over fifteen hundred kilograms," Brian suggested.

"I'm sure you're right. Hopefully, we'll know more when the entire message is translated. It's late and I'm tired. I think we should continue this in the morning. Do you have a place to sleep?"

"I was supposed to see the Dean and he was going to assign a bed someplace for me to sleep, but I think he probably left for the day."

"That's okay, you can stay with me. I have an extra bedroom and I'm sure you'll be more comfortable there than you would be in one of the dorms."

"Thanks, I appreciate that. I'm a very light sleeper, and when I've had to sleep in a dormitory environment I never seem to get enough sleep."

"Okay, grab your luggage and lets go."

The drive to Helen's apartment only took a few minutes. She lived on the eighteenth floor of a high rise apartment building. She opened the door and Brian followed her inside. The apartment was quite large. Brian followed Helen out to the terrace and she asked, "Do you like the view?"

"It's fantastic. I could spend hours out here."

"I often do just that. Let me show you your room."

Brian followed her down a short hallway and she opened a door on the right. "This is your room. There's a king size bed, a big closet, and a private bathroom. I'm sure you'll be comfortable here."

"Yeah, I'm sure I will. This sure beats sleeping in a dorm."

"I usually get up around 6:00 and go for a three mile jog. Would you like to join me?"

"Uh, jogging isn't my thing. Is it okay if I pass?"

"Sure, there's also an exercise room on the second floor if that interests you."

"I might use that later, but I haven't slept for two days, except for a short nap on the flight here."

"Okay, get some sleep. I'll see you in the morning."

"Okay, goodnight."

Brian got up the following morning a few minutes after 7:00. He took a shower, got dressed, and walked to the kitchen. Helen was already there drinking a cup of coffee. "Good morning. Did you sleep well?"

"Yeah, I did."

"Do you want something for breakfast? There are some fresh croissants."

"That sounds great."

"Help yourself. I'm going to take a shower and get dressed. Then we'll go to my office to see what was translated overnight."

“I’m really anxious to see that.”

“Me too.”

When they arrived at Helen’s office they walked to the printer and found a single sheet of paper with three paragraphs on it. “When we returned to your planet we discovered that the climate was changing. Our plan was to return each of the primate groups we modified to the area where they were found. But there were large sheets of ice moving southward from the northern part of the planet and the temperature had dropped significantly. Some of the original habitats were covered with ice. This was a problem because in the process of modifying the primates they lost most of their body hair and we were concerned they might not survive in their original environments due to the cold. We decided to bring them to areas where the temperature was warmer and food was more readily available. After leaving them we left your planet and we did not return for twenty thousand seasonal cycles.

“When we returned we found that most of the northern portion of your planet was covered with ice. We also found that only two groups of the primates we modified still survived. The two remaining groups were placed on the planet a considerable distance from each other. But now they were a single group, they had mated with each other, and the resulting offspring appeared to have the best traits of both groups. We did not want to interfere with their natural development, so we decided to have no physical contact with the intelligent primates until they would be able to interact with us without fear. We continued to make trips to your planet to observe their development. The climate began to warm and the ice which covered the northern portion of your planet began to recede. As the ice receded, groups of the modified primates moved north. The primates that moved northward began wearing simple clothing to keep warm. They built small structures to protect them from the still somewhat harsh environment. They began tending plants to provide food for the group and they made simple weapons that enabled them to hunt animals for food.

“We decided that their civilization was at a point where we could now interact with them. They were similar in appearance to us, although we were taller and thinner. They had developed a spoken language and we decided to help them create a written version of their language. That language is what we used to write this message.

“We left the device that is displaying this message in a place we felt it would be found after your civilization progressed to the point where you became interested in your history. We believe that since you are intelligent enough to decipher this message, it is time for your species and ours to meet.

“The exterior of the device is made from a material that cannot be damaged by any mechanical action or heat, but it will dissolve quickly in seawater. To begin the process a male and female must touch the surface of the device with a thumb at the same time. Then put a container of sea water in a large open area with a clear view of the sky and place the device into the container of seawater. By the following day the device will have become a small building. The building will open only when the same male and female touch the entry pad on the building. No other person will be permitted to enter. After entering the building they must follow the instructions on the display.”

“Is that the entire message?” Brian asked.

“Yes, I believe it is. What do you think we should do?”

“I think you and I should touch the artifact with our thumbs and then we should fill a bucket with sea water, put it in a large open area, and drop the artifact into it. Then tomorrow you and I will walk into the building the artifact created and follow the instructions inside.”

“You have no idea what will happen. We could be hurt or killed. Are you willing to take that risk?” Helen asked.

“Yeah, I am. The beings who created the artifact are obviously far more advanced than we are. If they wanted to harm us, they could have done so easily. I think their goal is to meet us so they can find out if their efforts were successful.”

“I suppose you’re right. I was about to say we would be the first people on Earth to have an encounter with an alien, but that’s wrong. Obviously the people living in Göbekli Tepe met them thousands of years ago. In any case, I’m anxious to meet them.”

“Yeah, me too. So, do you think we should get the seawater we need and follow the instructions?” Brian asked.

“Yes, let’s go get a few liters of sea water. I’ll get some containers and we can drive to Lubeck. It’s on the Baltic.”

The drive to Lubeck took less than an hour, and during the drive back to her office Helen began to think about the situation. She felt she had an obligation to let Dr. Schmidt, the head of the archaeology department, know what they found, but she was concerned that he would instantly take control of the artifact. She realized she wanted to be part of this adventure. So, she decided they would follow the instruction when they returned to the institute and then wait and see what happened after the artifact was placed into the sea water before she said anything to him.

When they returned to the institute they went to the lab where the artifact was being kept. Brian and Helen walked over to it. They looked at each other and Helen asked, “Are you sure you want to do this?”

“Yeah, I’m sure.”

They both placed a thumb on the artifact. Instantly the artifact began to emit a faint blue light.



## Butter Pecan Turtle Bars

**350 Degrees**

2 Cups flour  
3/4 Cup light brown sugar  
1/2 Cup butter, softened (1 stick)  
1 1/2 Cups pecan halves

### Caramel Topping

3/4 Cup light brown sugar  
1 Cup butter

Mix together flour, brown sugar, and butter until crumbly. Spread evenly into lightly greased 9 X 13 baking pan. Cover evenly with pecan halves.

For topping put brown sugar and butter in a sauce pan. Heat to boiling over medium heat stirring frequently. Boil mixture for 1 minute then drizzle evenly over pecans. Bake for 20 minutes. Caramel will spread out and become bubbly.

Immediately cover with 12 ounces of semi-sweet chocolate chips and spread evenly over the surface of the cookies. Allow chocolate to set (about 1 1/2 hours).

Using sharp knife cut along perimeter of cookies to separate from pan. Turn pan upside down over cutting board. Cookies should fall out of pan. Using sharp heavy knife cut into 1 1/2 inch squares.