

## Unto Others – Future Testament – by Rob Steele

### Another 6000 Years Later

#### Chapter 1

The desert seemed endless, but Doctor Linda Jane Kingrow knew that it would, in fact, eventually end. Just beyond the mountains was the great chasm formerly known as The Andreas San. On the other side of that was rumored to be an ocean.

Technically, she *knew* the ocean was there, even though most who tried to cross the chasm did not survive to return. She did know one of her professors, Doctor Cinos, returned. He said the ocean was magnificent. To see that much water in one place above the surface! He said it took almost four days to traverse the entire perimeter.

The most perilous part was, of course, the chasm itself. Her history lessons show that it was once just a "fault," but after the Great War, almost 4000 years ago, a device called a nuclear weapon was used to cause everything west of the fault to separate not just across the area called California, but the entire continent. He says the only way across is to make passage is to fly, which most countries have outlawed.

Nothing was the same after the war. There used to be something called a computer network. That was gone. Airplanes? Outlawed after a group, history recalled them as Republicans, although she believed that could be incorrect, captured several major flying devices, possibly called cars, history is sketchy on that, and crashed them into government buildings killing millions.

But it is really hard to tell just what happened. Doctor Kingrow is a historian and no matter how much she studied, she knew that short of time travel, it may not be possible to tell what happened all those years ago.

At least, she believed that until three weeks ago. A messenger from a city near something called Salt Lake delivered a message from an archaeological dig. A discovery has been made that could change the entire planet.

The unveiling of a library of immense size and copious quantity of books was the discovery of a lifetime. But for Doctor Linda Jane Kingrow, one of the few who could read the old languages, it was the discovery of several lifetimes. Without hesitation, she booked the next train to Salt Lake.

She did find the name rather ironic. Most water these days was only found in underground springs or lakes. And salt? Who would want to drink salt? Lake implied water at some point, didn't it? Although Doctor Cinos did say that the water in the ocean was salty. Perhaps the ocean, at one point, stretched to this part of Utada. Maybe one of the books would shed some light on that.

The trip would take only three days from her home in Toronto, the oldest city remaining on the planet. The Great War destroyed most of the major cities of the planet. New York still existed, although it had recently been discovered to have once been on the east coast of the continent, as opposed to the midlands. And why it was called "New" York was beyond her capabilities of understanding. The city was thousands of years old. Surely the adjective "New" was outdated.

Most travel was done by rail trains, which still used steam-power. She had learned that the steam engine was a terribly old technology despite recent history. It had only been about 200-years since the end of what some called the "SteamPunk"-era. The term was very unusual but it made some sense. For most of the time since the Great War, all engines were powered by steam. It led to some fairly unusual methods of transportation that she had actually traced back to pre-War times, although not in the way they had been used during the steam-punk times.

Most prevalent was the steam engine that also powered a dirigible. While it was a very efficient method of transportation, it also caused some horrific accidents when the balloon did not land on its rail counterpart properly.

Many personal vehicles were also powered by steam. Almost all factories were as well. In the early days it was even considered environmentally friendly, unless you had hair that could be frizzy, then it was a nightmare.

Over 3000 years of unbearable humidity led to almost 2000 years of people with shaved heads, including the women. Her studies showed that most people over the age of ten did not have hair on their heads.

She sighed to herself and ran her hand through her long, blonde, curly hair. She couldn't imagine living in Toronto's winters without hair. The cold had to be intolerable. Not many people had the genes to allow hair to regrow after so many generations. She wasn't a geneticist, so she couldn't quite figure out how shaving your head at age ten led to so many following generations of early aged bald people... but there it is.

She knew she drew looks because of her hair, even if it was starting to gray. Perhaps it was because it was gray? Perhaps it was the way it seemed to contrast sharply with her dark skin? Among a world full of hairless people, anyone with long hair was going to stand out- especially in the desert of Utada.

Earlier in the trip while in the dining car, she had overheard a couple telling their son about how the steam engine worked. He asked why the engine didn't use the leaden-mouse. Doctor Kingrow wasn't an engineer but that question had crossed her mind on more than one occasion.

The steam-punk age ended when someone named Scott O'Brien discovered that if you put a white mouse on a piece of lead and let it run about a bit, it generates a fairly substantial electric charge.

The only cost was the cheese needed to sustain the mouse, which strangely did not require water after the process began. The only by-product of this electrical charge was not pollution, but yogurt.

The father told his son that he had come up with a great question and quickly changed the subject. / *don't know either*, she mused as she returned to eating her yogurt. How is it that young children come up with the best questions?