

# Chaordia - A Novel Of Transformation Ch. 11

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Because of climate change a man wants to transform an old farm into a new colony

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It was a long drive home. My dad took over the driving somewhere in Massachusetts and Glenn was able to nap. Alice was asleep on my shoulder. I also dozed off, but kept waking up to see where we were. My dad was quiet and listened to a jazz station. Glenn woke up and continued driving when we got closer to New York where bumper to bumper traffic brought us to a stand still. It took us an hour and a half to reach the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and it was already close to midnight. Five lanes of cars, buses and trucks were crawling in both directions, all of them with exhaust coming out of their tailpipes. I couldn't believe all of the headlights, and red taillights, and people sitting in their cars, vans and trucks polluting the air. I remembered all of the trucks we saw at the Mapleland Truck Stop and wondered what would happen if we eventually did run out of oil? What would happen to all of these cars? What would happen if people couldn't drive to work, or stuff couldn't be delivered to the stores and factories? What if food couldn't get to supermarkets and there were empty shelves? I remembered Glenn's comment, "What would happen to Wal-mart?" I thought about Alan Bigelow's the worst is yet to come talk at the library and how if things didn't change soon, there would be no chance of preventing more and more storms like Hurricane Sandy, or droughts that had been happening for several years in the Midwest. I thought of all the skyscrapers and malls that used tremendous amounts of energy just for air conditioning in the summer and fuel for heat in the winter—also hospitals filled with sick people. What would happen if there wasn't fuel for heat and electricity or back up generators? I knew the drought was putting farmers out of business and making food prices high. I thought about the big oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and what a disaster that was. They say they cleaned it up and there would be no long term damage to the water, but I couldn't imagine how they could know that. And now the Tar Sands drilling on Indian land in Canada and the huge pipeline they wanted to build to Texas was happening. I didn't know a whole lot about it except that it was dirty and was polluting the water in the area, and the Native American, "Idle No More" movement was trying to stop it from stealing and destroying their land. Glenn had talked about people from Occupy Wall Street going to block the pipeline because it was so potentially dangerous to the environment and would only add more carbon. Already people were tying themselves to trees as a barricade and refusing to move. I wondered if I could ever do anything like that. Alice still had her

head on my shoulder, sleeping, while I looked out the window and thought about all the traffic and what was happening. She held my hand while she slept and I liked that. One time, my dad turned and asked for the bag of pretzels and noticed her hand holding mine. Now, he knew something had changed in our relationship at the farm, but knowing him, I knew he wouldn't make a big deal about it, even though it was a big deal. Finally, Glenn dropped us off at our house and said he would be in touch in a day or two. Earlier, my dad said it wasn't really necessary for him to go back to the farm to make his plans. He would make up some preliminary sketches. That disappointed me, because I wanted to go back and find out what the council decided, but then he said he felt this project was much more than what he was doing and finding out more about White Elk's vision would be important. Still, we had no idea what the council would decide. Would they be against White Elk's vision and then what? Would Glenn be able to do what he wanted? How could he become a separate colony and be independent of the government? Would there be a struggle with the Indians? I know Alice wanted to go back because she didn't want to leave in the first place. So it was all set. We would go back on Saturday. A lot depended on when Glenn's mother could go. I was eager to meet her. I knew she wasn't well but remembered Glenn saying she was seventy-two and that she really wanted to see the farm, even if it was falling apart. I wondered how she would do "roughing it." When Glenn dropped us off, he said he would take Alice home. I had hoped she would stay over again, but she had worn the same clothes for two days and had to go to school tomorrow, and also her mom was already upset that she went so far away. While I grabbed my sleeping bag and backpack out of the back, Alice came around and stood with me. My dad had his stuff and was talking to Glenn and Tammy near the front. While we were out of sight, Alice put her arms around me and we hugged. We kissed and I could feel her strength, her energy, her caring, and wished she didn't have to go home. When we stopped kissing, Alice gazed into my eyes. "I love you, Alex." "I love you, too." I had never said those words to a girl before, and though we had been best friends for over two years, this was a new beginning, not just of our relationship, but a new beginning in my life. It's hard to explain. I couldn't believe this was happening to me. "See you tomorrow," Alice said, squeezing my hand, then hopped back into the van and waved from behind the closed window. My dad waved goodbye to Glenn and Tammy when they drove off. "Well, here we are, home sweet home," he said, as I followed him up the winding brick walk to our front door. "Wow, I couldn't believe the ending of Daughters of Atlas," Tim said when he saw me by my locker. "And when Julie was in the jungle on top of that mountain in the Caribbean that was once part of Atlantis, that made it seem there really was an Atlantis." "Right, that really surprised me, too. I'm glad you read it, now you know why Alice and I are so excited. Wait until you read the third book, Children of the Dream and all of the kids from the first two books meet. I don't want to tell you more, but you will really be inspired to fight the Bendula like I am." "It seemed so real. Gabe wants his sister, Piari to read it and sent it to her from his computer," Tim said. "But listen to this. That guy Lou was outside of school on Friday and said Elizabeth really wants to meet with us again. He said it's important. He gave me her phone number and we should call and tell her when we're coming." "Wow, we should go as soon as we can. I wonder what that's about. What else did he say?" "Well, I learned he's a musician. When we were standing by my car, he

saw my tuba case, and then we started talking about music. We didn't talk too long, but he said he played blues guitar in Chicago. He called it Delta Blues because he grew up in Mississippi and used to play in juke joints. I didn't know what that was." "Wow, he's a Delta Blues musician," I said. "I know about juke joints. That's my favorite kind of music. I've been trying to learn to play blues, but I'm not that good at it. That's wild that he's an old blues musician. I wondered if he will give me lessons." "I like playing the tuba in the school orchestra, but The Cookers is my real passion," Tim said. "We had a great gig at the college the other night. Any way, we have to find out what Elizabeth wants to tell us. Now that I know more about Atlantis, I can't wait to find out." "Wait until I tell you about our weekend in Vermont," I said, feeling weird standing in the crowded hallway thinking about being with White Elk in his wigwam and meeting Sun Dancer and Morning Star. The conflict between Glenn's legal ownership of his farm and the Indians thinking it was their sacred ground made school seem so unreal, so irrelevant to what was happening in my life. When the buzzer went off for first period, I told him I would tell him about the Indians we met at lunch and then looked for Alice, but either she hadn't arrived at school, or was taking the day off. I took out my cell phone and was about to text her, when I got a message from her saying she just had a huge argument with her mother and would get to school later. I wrote back that Tim said Elizabeth wants to meet us as soon as possible. I also said I found out that Lou was a blues musician and how excited I was about learning that. Later, in Mr. Fahy's history class, I got a text from her saying she had googled Abeneki Indians and was learning a lot. I wrote back that I'm going to do the same. After I closed my phone, I tried listening to Mr. Fahy droning on about how King Henry wanted to divorce his queen and marry his mistress. It sounded like a soap opera--one that I didn't really care about. Gabe came up to me after that class and asked about our trip to Glenn's farm. I told him I didn't know where to begin, but something amazing had happened. "I'll tell you at lunch. It's too crowded and noisy now." He told me he had started the first chapter of Children of the Dream and can tell the Jesse's character is really important. "He was Jesus. Amazing." Then he said he wanted to go with us to meet Elizabeth and that Tim told him about our last visit and that the Bendula are real. I took my seat in the last row next to the window in Mrs. Goshen's Physic's class and wished that I could just go to the library and read about the Abeneki Indians, but I had to sit through another forty three minute period learning, well not learning, but hearing her explain something about momentum that I knew when I was a kid playing with trains. She said the next test was going to be on the last two chapters and would count for half of our grade. Since I was already flunking, it didn't really matter to me, but I saw everyone tense up when she said that. I felt so out of it looking around at the others listening to every word, taking notes, asking questions, looking scared. I took out my cell phone and googled Abeneki Indians and started reading how they once lived in Vermont and New Hampshire, how treaties had been broken and they were forced to live in Canada. When I read that, I wondered about Sun Dancer and Morning Star going back to find their roots, and how White Elk said that so much of how their people lived was lost. I read that most of the Abeneki Indians lived in several small towns near Montreal and dressed like everyone else and that alcoholism and drug use was a big problem. I remembered how Morning Star said she was drunk a lot and thought about committing suicide, and how her brother finding her in

that diner in Boston was a turning point. I wondered what would happen if White Elk died. Would Grey Fox become Chief? What would happen to White Elk's vision? What would happen to Glenn's vision? When the buzzer went off, ending the class and interrupting my thoughts, Mrs. Goshen called me to her desk just as I was about to leave the room. When I stood there, she looked at me. "Alex, you have to start paying attention if you want to pass this class," she said, putting a paper clip on some papers. "You were a million miles away today. What's going on with you?" I didn't know how to answer. What could I say that would make sense to her? So I said, "I've more important things on my mind than Physics." "I want you to know that a lot of teachers are concerned about you. You used to be such a good student and now you're about to flunk out." "I know," I said, surprised to hear that other teachers were concerned about me. "I'm interested in other things and school seems irrelevant. Why can't I learn what I care about and not what the State thinks I should know in order to get into a good college? Most of what goes on here is listening to you teachers and spitting it back on a test. It's not really learning." She listened to me, nodded. "I see. I understand, but this is how the system works." "Why can't we be talking about what is happening in the real world? Why can't we be learning how to stop climate change and what it's going to be like in our future?" I asked. "If you want to know what's going on with me, now you know. This school is preparing us for a world that won't exist in twenty years unless we change how we live." She took off her thick horn rimmed glasses and took a deep breath. "I don't know what to say, Alex except we are concerned about you." I thanked her for her concern and left for my next class, Algebra Two, another course I was flunking. Just as Tim, Gabe and I sat down at the table in the back of the lunch room Alice came in and found us. She had her reddish hair tied in two braided pigtales that hung over the front of her shoulders the way Morning Star's hair was yesterday. She sat down and kissed me on the cheek. Alice made it seem natural which was good, but Gabe and Tim's eyes widened, then they looked away. I started telling them about Glenn's farm and how these three Indians came out of the woods and asked why we were there on their sacred ground and the conflict we discovered about ownership. I told them about meeting White Elk and smoking the sacred pipe. "Wow, you guys actually met with the Indians. That's wild." Gabe said. "What do you think will happen?" Tim asked. Gabe kept interrupting and asking questions about how they were living in wigwams. It turned out he had been studying about Native American religious beliefs and ceremonies and had attended a workshop during the summer in the Adirondacks, but didn't think any tribes were still living like that. He mentioned our town, Bay Shore was where the Setalcott Tribe lived; that they were one of thirteen tribes that lived on Long Island. I didn't know anything about them. He knew that land ownership was something that the Natives found incomprehensible. He said, "Did you know that our town was bought in 1669 for several axes, four muskets, gunpowder and, some steel bladed knives?" "Wow, I didn't know that," I said, then told him the Abeneki tribe did the same thing with the French before Vermont became Vermont, but they were forced to move to Canada. "We're going back there next week. We're going to find out if the council approves of the idea of working together." "Wow," Gabe said when he heard that. "That would be a miracle if that happened." "Something strange is happening," I said. "It's hard to explain, but it all started when Alice asked Sun Dancer if he knew about Atlantis because he said something about the

old ways." "Did he know about Atlantis?" Tim asked. "No, he had never heard of Atlantis, but that his grandfather, White Elk, the Chief remembered stories told to him that had been passed down about how thousands of years ago, how people came from the sea from a land that was no more and they brought what they called the old ways and that's how they lived until the Europeans came to New England." We were all silent when I said that, puzzled, wondering if there was any connection between Atlantis and the Native Americans, but there was no way of knowing. When we finished eating Tim pulled out the piece of paper from his pocket with Elizabeth's phone number on it. "When do you think we can go and find out what's so important?" Tim asked. Alice took out her cell phone and dialed the number on the paper. We were all eager to find out what was so important and hoped we could go there after school. "Hi, Elizabeth, it's me, Alice. I just got your message." Alice nodded as she listened, concentrating on what she was hearing. "Okay, we'll see you then. Can't wait, goodbye." She closed her phone. "Four o'clock this afternoon." "What did she say," I asked. "Just that she needs to talk to us; that's it." Tim put his tuba in the trunk of his car so that Gabe could sit in the back with me. When we drove up to the house, it was a sunny afternoon, and we could see the beautiful grounds with several gardens, many bushes and tall maple and oak trees towering over the large stone house. When we rang the doorbell and it opened, Lou was wearing faded jeans held up with black suspenders and a white dress shirt open at the top. "Elizabeth is waiting for you upstairs," he said, holding the door open. His smile revealed his gold front tooth. We followed him up the carpeted stairway. Gabe and I stopped for a moment and looked down at the center hall. "This is such a cool house," Gabe said. "Wait until you see her room," I said, catching up with the others. When we entered, Elizabeth was sitting at her desk writing on an old typewriter. She stopped as soon as she saw us. A pile of papers were stacked next to the typewriter and I wondered if she was writing a book. She told us to take a seat, then picked up her cane and slowly made her way to the maroon chair. Alice, Tim and I sat on the same couch, but Gabe sat on the floor in front of us. She wore a long black dress that came well below her knees and the same black shawl she had on the other night. On the table next to her was a bowl of mixed nuts, but what surprised me was when Lou brought over the chair from the desk and sat with us. I swallowed and clenched my fists waiting for someone to say something. Elizabeth looked at Gabe and he introduced himself, "Hi, I'm Gabe, "I just read Daughters of Atlas. " Elizabeth turned to Alice, "Oh is that one of the Atlantis books you told me about?" "Yes, it's part of the trilogy," Alice answered. "That's where we learned about the Bendula." "I read the books too," Tim said. "It's weird that you know about the Bendula and you never read these books." "I know about the Bendula, too," Lou said, "and I never read these books you're talking about." "How do you know about the Bendula?" I asked, but before he could answer I added, "Tim says you play blues guitar." "Yes, I do," Lou said. "But that's another story." "I love the blues. I would love to learn how to play blues on my guitar." "Maybe one of these days, you can bring your guitar by and we'll sit in the kitchen downstairs and I'll show you some chords," he said. "I started playing when I was way younger than you are. Played the violin too, but it was the guitar that got me." "So what did you want to tell us?" Alice asked Elizabeth. "That's why I asked Lou to join us," Elizabeth said. "I told you the other night that Lou is a special friend and though he drives me where I need to go and helps an old

woman living in this big old house, he's not a servant, just so you know." "It was my lucky day when I met Elizabeth in that homeless shelter that Thanksgiving," he said. "Funny how life happens, let me tell you." "What do you mean?" Alice asked. "I remember Elizabeth said she heard you humming this melody that she heard during World War Two in London." "Yeah, that's what happened. I was doing the dishes and humming this old melody I learned from my violin teacher when I was a kid in Chicago," Lou said. "So she asked me about it and I told her how my grandmother wanted me to learn the violin instead of the guitar, so when I was eleven or twelve, I started these lessons with an old man who was from Budapest in Hungary. He had a thick accent and I couldn't understand him and he couldn't understand me, even though we were both speaking English." "I told you that Lou had just been brought to the homeless shelter by the police after being arrested for being drunk," Elizabeth said. "Yeah I was in a bad way," Lou said. "I was playing the blues in this joint on the Southside and was drinking a lot and got into a fight with some white guy over a woman I had my eye on. Well, he was friends with the owner and I ended up on the street and told never to come back." "So what about the violin teacher and the melody you learned?" Alice asked. "Well, I took violin lessons because my grandmother wanted me to. She said the violin was the way to be somebody, that's what she wanted. She said the guitar and the blues would only bring me grief, and she wanted me to forget where we came from. That's why we left Mississippi. My mom was fifteen when she had me and we went to Chicago to get away from being dirt farmers. My mom did her best to raise me, but it was my grandmother who tried to pull us up out of the Mississippi mud." "So your teacher was from Budapest," Alice asked, then turned to me. "That's where Solomon and his twin brother were from in Twins of Atlantis and started having dreams when they were thirteen." "My violin teacher's name was Victor, and one day he played me this old song he knew. He told me he learned it from his violin teacher when he was a child in Budapest and that it was very old. Victor wanted me to learn the song, but I couldn't get it right. I gave up on the violin, but that melody always stayed with me, don't know why. But when Elizabeth heard me humming it in that homeless shelter, she asked if I knew anything about Atlantis. I said I didn't. At first I had no idea why she asked me about Atlantis, but then I told her I remembered my violin teacher, Victor, telling me how he learned it from his violin teacher in Budapest. He was very old when I took lessons from him. He said it was an ancient melody his mother used to hum to him when he was a young boy and that it came from Atlantis. That's the first time I ever heard of Atlantis. He said he loved the melody and started playing it on his violin and that's how I learned it. Isn't that something how it got passed along all that time?" "I'm not sure I followed your story," I said. "But it sounds like when he heard it from his mother, he kept the melody alive when he started playing it." Elizabeth interrupted. "And I heard a violinist playing it a café in London and remember his name was Victor. We went to the cafe after leaving the bomb shelter during the war, and that's where I met those women who also had memories of Atlantis." "It had to be the same Victor that was my teacher in Chicago," Lou said. "Crazy ain't it?" I glanced at Gabe sitting on the floor, and I could tell by the way he listened to Lou that the story fascinated him. It also fascinated Alice, who listened with her mouth open. "So, Elizabeth heard you humming something that you learned in Chicago when you were a kid," I said. "And she heard someone playing the same melody

in a café in London." "Right," Lou said, "Ain't that something?" We were all quiet after hearing that story. Alice looked at me, our puzzled eyes meeting. "Ever since that Thanksgiving when I volunteered at the homeless shelter where my daughter Emily worked, Lou has lived here. That night, he had his guitar and took it out and played that song for me in the kitchen. He hummed it and played it, but there was something in the way he played it that made me want to be his friend and give him a home and it's been eleven years." When she said that, she looked at Lou, then at us. "Where did you go this past weekend?" she asked. "There is a reason I'm asking." "We went to a farm in Vermont with a guy named Glenn," I said. "He's hiring my dad to design the buildings for this project he's doing. Why do you want to know?" "The Bendula are watching him," Elizabeth said. "Really, the Bendula, how do you know that?" Alice asked. "Glenn knew the FBI was watching him because of his involvement with Occupy Wall Street," I said. "What's his project?" Elizabeth asked. "I hope you don't mind my asking." Alice took a deep breath and glanced at me. "Well, it's kind of wild, but it was his grandfather's farm and he wants to start his own colony there and learn a new way of living. He's upset and ashamed of what this country is doing to other people around the world, and he's also really concerned about climate change and the world we are passing onto kids our age." "I see," Elizabeth said, glancing at Lou, then back at us, "His own colony?" she repeated, "Interesting." "But there is a big problem there," I said. "When we were there, we met a tribe of Native Americans called the Abenekis, and they think it's their land and not Glenn's. They said they have taken back land that was stolen from them centuries ago and they know about the old ways." "The old ways," Elizabeth said, "Really?" "They don't know about Atlantis," Alice said. "But White Elk is the Chief and very old, and he said his people have stories from a long time ago. The stories tell about people who came to this continent from the sea thousands of years ago and brought the old ways." "Interesting," Elizabeth said, narrowing her eyes. "I'm interested in what you are telling me. Very interested." "We're going back there this weekend with Glenn's mother who wants to use her inheritance to make Glenn's dream come true. It was her father's land, and she grew up there before she left for college in Ireland. That's where Glenn is from. Anyway, Glenn's grandfather left the farm to him, and it's in the will that he can't sell it. He said it's special." When I said that I saw how Elizabeth was looking at Alice and me. Her eyes widened. "It really is special," Alice said. "I felt something the moment I got out of the van. I mean, it's all falling apart and overgrown and the trees are taking over, but I know it's special, and Eric, Alex's father has some really great ideas for the land." "But what about the Indians?" Lou asked. "It's complicated," I said. "No one knows they're there, and they've been living on the land for over eight years trying to live the way their ancestors did, but what they don't know is the people who used to own it haven't paid the taxes for many years and now it's going to come up for auction and they may be forced to leave." "Yes, it's a collision between the Bendula and the old ways," Elizabeth said. "The same thing happened to my great grandfather's land," Lou said. "What do you mean?" Gabe asked. "What happened?" "Well, we didn't call them Bendula like on Atlantis, but it was the same after the slaves got freed by Abe Lincoln and the Civil War took over. People don't know the truth about that." "Wasn't it a good thing to have the slaves be freed?" Tim asked. "Well, it was chaos," Lou said. "Yeah the blacks were suddenly free after being slaves for three hundred years,

and then suddenly they're told you're free, but no one had any place to go and no money and didn't know how to be free. My great grandfather and grandmother were slaves in Mississippi and that's all they knew, but they were lucky 'cause their Master gave them some land to farm. They were sharecroppers. He gave them land so they wouldn't go north and join the Union army, but most of the slaves ended up starving and wandering and man, you can't just free people who don't nothin' about being free, it don't work like that." "But how do you know about the Bendula?" Gabe asked. "The lynchings. My grandfather told me about white men wearing these sheets and grabbing old slaves and hanging them for being black and free. They were called the Ku Klux Klan, but when I think back at what I was told, I knew they were the Bendula." "That's horrible," I said. "Well, how did you end up in Chicago?" Gabe asked. "I told you my mother had me when she was fifteen. I don't know who my father was, but my grandmother thinks it was the man who owned my grandfather's farm. They called him Master. We never knew for sure, but my grandmother took my mom and me to Chicago when I was eleven. I was already learning to play the blues, even when I took those violin lessons, but the guitar...that was my baby." I looked out the window and saw it was already dark. We'd been there talking to Elizabeth and Lou for awhile and forgot about time. My mind was swirling with all that we had talked about. "We better get going," Alice said, then looked at Gabe and Tim. "Are you ready to go?" "Yes but I don't know what to think about all I heard this afternoon," Tim said. Elizabeth looked at each of us when we stood up to go. She glanced at Lou, who also stood up to show us out. "Please let me know about Glenn's project on the farm and what happens to the Native Americans you met," she said. "This is all extremely interesting to me." "We will," Alice said. "We'll come visit and tell you everything." "Thank you," Elizabeth said. "And remember my warning." "What warning?" I asked. "The Bendula will try to stop Glenn and you are all in danger," she said. "Mark my words." Alice looked at me to see my reaction, my disbelief at what was happening to us, that we were now becoming involved with the Bendula. We faced Elizabeth but didn't say anything. Gabe and Tim stood behind us and heard her words. We were all silent. When we left, Elizabeth thanked us again for coming. Lou led us down the stairs to the front door. He turned to me. "The Bendula are watching everything, but that don't mean I can't show you some chords one of these days." "Great," I said. Just before he closed the big brown door, he said, "Hang in there. That's what's important."