

PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

Drone over Stanford worries Eddie

MIRANDA and Eddie walked through the Stanford campus, so Miranda could visit the landmarks of her childhood and undergrad years, some now changed, some the same.

They looped around old Lake Lagunita, which was now dry, no longer a lake.

They both remembered this as a wet lake from when they were kids. Miranda and Eddie and her brother Tom, now two decades dead from a drug overdose, used to come here and skate flat rocks; and sometimes at night jump in and swim, which was against regulations.

That was a time when security was much less strict.

“Here come the drones,” said Eddie. “It’s finally happening.”

This is part 34 of a 48-part fictionalized serial, written by John Angell Grant.

Miranda wasn’t sure what this meant. But she was learning not to prejudge a street person like Eddie because sometimes when it seemed that he was not making any sense, it turned out he was making quite a bit of sense.

Occasionally she saw Eddie as a canary in the cultural coalmine, warning people about the future. Or as the mythological Cassandra, foreseeing impending conflict, as people ignored and ridiculed her.

Eddie pointed upward toward the sky. Miranda looked up. She could not believe her eyes. A small drone aircraft was flying 25 feet over their head.

“Yes,” continued Eddie, “It has finally happened. They are watching us Miranda.”

“Be careful about what you say,” Eddie continued, as they both eyed the hovering drone, “Unless you want to go down shouting about your rights and your freedom and your privacy; which is natural and noble; and some people will do that; and they will go down in flames shouting for their freedom; like the stories of some of the great liberators of this country and other countries; and who knows if those stories are true or not; but they fit into the history books in ways that Big Brother and the controlling forces want them to; so sometimes fairy tales turn into history.”

Miranda and Eddie both looked at the drone. Could this be real? Or

was Miranda suddenly in an Escher painting?

It was a surreal moment. She surveyed the lake.

On the far side, perhaps 100 yards away, stood two young men, who looked like Stanford students, holding a control panel. Immediately Miranda understood.

“Eddie,” she said, “Those guys. They are students. This drone is their project. They are flying it over the lake and testing it out. They are hovering it over us.”

Eddie gave the two young men the finger, from across the lake. Slowly the drone rose higher, and departed back across the dry lake towards its designers.

More tomorrow.