



# The Totems of Abydos

*John Norman*

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## **The Totems of Abydos** John Norman

In a far-off future, two anthropologists—gross, powerful, dissolute Emilio Rodriguez, and aspiring, young, naïve Allan Brenner, who, unbeknownst to himself, carries ancient genes of a sort no longer welcome on Home World—have been assigned to conduct a study on Abydos, a deeply forested wilderness planet of little note whose only evidence of civilization is a single enclave: small, rough, dingy Company Station, a fueling station occasionally utilized by star freighters.

Within the forest, some days from Company Station, are the Pons, a group of small, simian-type organisms that seem near the crossroads between animal and rational creature, between nature and culture. They would appear to constitute an ideal object of study with respect to the origins and foundations of civilization. How it came about, so to speak, that something once emerged from the lair, or cave, that was so radically different? What lies at the beginning?

The results of the study have already been politically prescribed on Home World, that the Pons are to shed light on humanity, that it is, in its original and unspoiled nature, polite, sweet, kind, deferent, diffident, social, noncompetitive, and innocent. Both Rodriguez and Brenner have a trait in common, however, which may explain why they have been sent—exiled, in a sense—to such an out-of-the-way locale. Both seek the truth. They enter the forest.

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