The Story of Metal Mates: The Zodiac

The story I am about to tell you is true. In the fall of 1976 I was attending the Polytechnic Institute of New York as a freshman engineering student. I was required to take a calculus course which began at 8:00 AM sharp. To be late to one of these lectures was a recipe for disaster – so I always made an effort not to be tardy. My morning commute was always a difficult venture. I had to leave at 6:00 AM rain or shine – to catch a 6:15 bus which took me to the train station. From there I would catch a downtown Brooklyn-bound train and by 7:30 I would, along with hundreds of other commuters, snake my way out of the underground tunnel system up to the street level where I would walk about twenty minutes to take my seat in the classroom on campus – usually ten minutes early.

On one of these morning commutes, there was apparently some repair work being done to the train track that was my usual route, and the train was diverted to a nearby station on an adjacent line – one that I was not familiar with. Trying not to panic, I stepped off the train and quickly attempted to navigate my way up to the street, where I would then be able to do my best to make it to the lecture on time. Looking back, now over thirty years later, I can honestly say this was one of those "twilight-zone" experiences. I remember it was dark, dank and maze-like. I remember the heavy iron girders holding up the world above. I remember it was cold and wet. I remember thinking I would be late for class. I can't remember hearing any noise, or seeing any people to follow, but without too much effort, almost instinctively or by sheer luck, I managed to walk through a series of dimly lit corridors where I was able to recognize what was obviously a stairway leading up to the street.

The glorious rays of the morning sun were poetically beaming down into the dingy dungeon-like cavernous stairway and as I approached the entryway I became even more drawn to this spectacle of light. The rays of light were becoming more prominent, and – there – as I grew closer, suddenly on the side of the wall, just above my own height were these glowing golden figures. The figures were inset into the concrete wall, behind what appeared to be a thick piece of protective transparent material – like the glass you see at a bank teller station. I was amazed at these dazzling odd concoctions. What *were* these things? I stared at this vision in the wall – motionless – in a trance, in awe. Time suddenly became meaningless. I truly felt this was some type of divine gift I was receiving. Thoroughly dazed, and after a final eternal evaluation, I eventually made it to the classroom.

Later that month I made several attempts to retrace my steps to locate this magnificent exhibition but was unsuccessful. I never forgot, nor will I ever forget, that somewhat Biblical encounter. To this day, I can't really say whether the whole episode was just a vision-like dream or a fantasy created by a very tired engineering student.
I ultimately received my engineering degree and ten years later, between Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day in 1986, I tried to reproduce what I thought I saw that special morning. That is how Metal Mates, the Zodiac, came to be created. I am satisfied with the results.

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