

AMERICAN ALGORITHM

AMERICAN ALGORITHM

a novel

by

michael a. kominsky

AMERICAN ALGORITHM

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Michael A. Kominsky,
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Dedication

*“History is not the past. It is the present. We are our history.
The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, and
history is literally present in all that we do.”*

- James Baldwin

AMERICAN ALGORITHM is the second in a series of three novels contained in the AMERICAN ENTROPY TRILOGY. It is a cautionary parable: A long day's journey in to light from FANLANDIA.

It is humbly dedicated to the great apologists and fearless advocates past, present and future, for social justice, the rule of law as embodied in the U.S. Constitution, and protecting the endangered, and ever more fragile American democracy from enemies, foreign, and increasingly domestic.

The AMERICAN ENTROPY TRILOGY, through fictional depiction, attempts to remind and reinforce the lessons of history, replete with inspirational, courageous acts of heroism, oftentimes against great adversity including extraordinary personal sacrifice and physical harm, to advance the cause of freedom, justice and equality.

To name just a few cited herein, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Luxemburg, Emma Goldman, Rosa Parks, and Mario Savio.

A Special Homage to those who have made the supreme sacrifice, including Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Robert F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Medgar Evers. And, countless others of common, but far from ordinary folks, for untold acts of courage and personal grace, in the cause of justice and equality through peaceful non-violent civil disobedience.

Lest we forget, to flourish, indeed survive the vagaries of the future, history is a living, breathing entity—one that requires constant scrutiny.

Special thanks to Dr. Shoshonna Zuboff “The Age of Surveillance Capitalism”(2019), Andrew Marantz, “Antisocial”(2019), Kurt Andersen “Fantasyland”(2017) and “Evil Geniuses”(2020), Edward Snowden “Permanent Record”(2019), and Jon Meacham “The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels” (2018).

Because I have significantly relied on the above non-fiction texts as source material, while not customary in works of fiction, out of deference and my profound gratitude to the authors I have footnoted credit as the source, where and when applicable.

For a more comprehensive understanding of the topics/issues and thesis explored in AMERICAN ENTROPY, I heartily recommend those books along with others contained in the Bibliography.

Many are also available as audiobooks as well as print, and eBook.

Preamble

The AMERICAN ENTROPY TRILOGY, is a series of three sequential novels:

AMERICAN AMNESIA Book 1: 1900 - 2000

AMERICAN ALGORITHM Book 2: 2000 - 2004

AMERICAN ANARCHY Book 3: 2008 - 2024

In AMERICAN ENTROPY, the term Entropy is used in the context of a measure of the disorder or randomness in a closed system, in particular, the gradual, not necessarily inevitable, steady deterioration of a system or society to collapse.

Admittedly, a literary primal scream, it is my hope that in some small way I may have contributed to an awareness and better understanding of the tremendous positive potential of the internet for promoting socially beneficent innovation, and empowering and promulgating democratic ideals.

But, that it must not go unsaid, it's well past time to break the glass, sounding a shrill siren, warning of the long-term pathological consequences of:

- Existential global threat to humanity of widespread deliberate distortion of facts and disinformation promulgated on the essentially unregulated, uncurated internet¹ through opaque social media algorithms and artificial intelligence;
- Unregulated/unfettered corporate surveillance capitalism², aided, enabled and abetted by the U.S. Government³;
- Existential global threat of neo-liberalism/fascism to democratic forms of government;
- Radical right nativistic nationalism and alarming rise of populism and domestic violent extremism in America; and
- Anthropogenic Climate Change causing catastrophic Global Warming.

The origin of the title AMERICAN ALGORITHM, derives from the complete proliferation and increasing predominance of virtually every aspect

1 Kurt Andersen "Fantasyland"(2017) ; Andrew Marantz, "Antisocial"(2019)

2 Shoshonna Zuboff "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism"(2019)

3 Edward Snowden "Permanent Record"(2019)

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of distinctly American culture by the computer-driven Digital Age, which utilizes algorithms to instruct the CPU(Central Processing Unit), essentially the brain of every microprocessor controlled device, including computers and “smart phones” etc. (see Etymology – Algorithm; Artificial Intelligence *infra*)

While as a novel it strives to entertain, it's primary *raison d' etre*, frankly is to inform. It is inspired by the eternal literary verity:

Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth.
- Albert Camus

So in someways, this is my Russian Novel—a dark, Slavic melancholy morality play, panoramic in scope with lots of characters over an ambitious time line. My contemporary take on Leo Tolstoy's epic novel “War and Peace”...as may have been told by Mel (nee Kaminsky) Brooks.

Grandiose? Perhaps. Middlebrow? Probably. Pedantic? Sure. It's a gift.

This is not a drill...

Etymology

Entropy [en'tro-pe]

noun: pl. en-tro-pies

- A measure of the disorder or randomness in a closed system.
- A measure of the loss of information/facts in a transmitted message.
- Inevitable and steady deterioration of a system or society.
- e.g., Global warming and irreversible pathological consequence of the destabilization and destruction of ecosystems and its inhabitants.

Amnesia [am-kneez-eya]

noun

- A defect in memory, esp one resulting from pathological cause, such as brain damage or (internet induced) hysteria. In this context as a metaphor for the failure of contemporary American society to be cognizant and indeed, heed the lessons of history.

Algorithm [al-guh-rith-uhm]

noun:

- Any method, procedure, or set of instructions for carrying out a task by means of a precisely specified series of steps or sequence of actions;
- The hierarchical sequence of steps; in a typical computer program; in automating a manufacturing process to replace human labor; and/or to execute a detailed comprehensive political/social re-engineering long-term strategy.
e.g. As in the gradual, long term relentless and comprehensive cabal by radical right Libertarians/neo-liberals to gradually erode government regulation and taxation favoring political and economic policies that promote free-market unfettered capitalism and further concentration of wealth of the Dynastic wealthy.

Anarchy [an-er-kee]

noun

- A state of society without government or law.
- Political and social disorder due to the absence of governmental control:
- Lack of obedience to an authority; insubordination: confusion and disorder:

Fantasia/fantasy. [fan-tuh-see, -zee]

noun, adjective: plural fan-ta-sies.

imagination, especially when extravagant and unrestrained.

- *A capricious or fantastic idea; a conceit.*
- *An imagined event or sequence of mental images, usually fulfilling a wish or psychological need.*
- *An unrealistic or improbable supposition.*
- *e.g., A fantasy conspiracy theory that Donald Trump actually won the 2020 presidential election.*

Fan [fæn]

noun:

- *An ardent, sometimes bordering on fixation, admirer of a pop star, film actor, celebrity worship.*
- *A devotee of a sport, hobby, political doctrine, etc.*
- *e.g. A fervent supporter of ex-presidential candidate Donald Trump and the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement.*

Landia [lan-de-uh]

noun, adjective:

- *A fictional or metaphorical place relating to the person or thing being suffixed*
- *e.g., FANLANDIA*

Artificial intelligence (AI) [ahr-tuh-fish-uhl in-tel-i-juhns]

noun:

- *Intelligence demonstrated by machines, unlike the natural intelligence displayed by humans and animals, which involves consciousness and emotionality. The term "artificial intelligence" or AI is often used to describe machines that mimic cognitive functions that humans associate with the human mind, such as learning and problem solving.*
- *Using complex sometimes self-generating sophisticated computer program code, or algorithms, to facilitate machine learning to perform menial to highly complex mental and physical tasks like manufacturing, formerly performed by humans.*

Cabal [kuh-bal]

noun:

- *A small group of secret plotters, as against a government or person in authority.*
- *The plots and schemes of such a group; intrigue.*
- *e.g., Since the 1970s, the efforts of American Political Action Committees (PACs) of the far right neo-liberal political faction executing a cabal using precise comprehensive long-term algorithms and massive infusions of "dark" money to lobby/influence congress to promote unfettered free-market capitalism.*

Neo-liberal [neo 'lib rl]

adjective:

- Favoring political and economic policies that promote free-market unfettered capitalism, governmental deregulation, and reduction in government spending including social programs like Social Security Insurance (SSI) Syn. Libertarianism)

noun: neo-liberal

- Also a somewhat pejorative term of art used by progressives for adherents of neo-liberalism.

- e.g., Under neo-liberalism the growing extreme disparity of wealth in America.

Surveillance Capitalism [ser-vey-luhns][kap-i-tl-iz-uhm]

noun:

- An economic system centered around the commodification of personal data with the core purpose of profit-making, by advertising companies, led by Google, using personal data to target consumers more precisely. While industrial capitalism exploited and controlled nature with devastating consequences, surveillance capitalism exploits and controls human nature with a totalitarian order as the endpoint of the development.

- “Behavioral surplus” of detailed personal meta-data intentionally collected about users of the internet by Google, Amazon.com, Facebook.com, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit and other social networks⁴.

4 Shoshonna Zuboff “The Age of Surveillance Capitalism”(2019)

Prequel

“I’m mad as hell...and I’m not going to take this anymore!”
– Howard Beale

Wednesday, November 9, 2016 1:15 AM

“I’m mad as hell...and I’m not going to take this anymore!” shouts Howard Beale erupting during the middle of his newscast in a beige rain coat, his wet, gray hair plastered to his forehead.

Because I was so disgusted by the flagrant demagoguery, the outright mendacity and obfuscation during the rancorous national election campaign I was desperately seeking some touchstone of reality, some validation of the legitimacy of my anger, indeed rage, that I was not just being consumed by some hormonal mid-life meltdown. Not just a fleeting moment of rage...but a Whole Howard Fucking Beale Year...of a steaming pile of equine excrement.

So, I was about half way through the timeless political parable for about the 10th time, the 1976 film *Network* brilliantly written by Paddy Chayefsky, when I paused my DVR to check on the lopsided margin of victory Hilary Clinton (D) held over Donald Trump, the (R)epugnant nominee for president of the United States.

In the film, Beale, the anchorman for the UBS Evening News, struggles to accept the inequities of the world he reports. It concludes with the murder of Beale on national television; a voice over darkly proclaims him “the first known instance of a man who was killed because he had lousy ratings”. It is the beginning of his transfiguration into a mythical cult hero, now an enduring totem crying out against social injustice. A film classic—both a commercial and critical success winning four Oscars. Good stuff and my go-to balm when I begin to doubt my grasp on political reality.

I had just finished viewing this eerily prescient scene, now more relevant than ever, which perfectly captures and distills the algorithm if you will, of the theology of neo-liberal corporate hegemony. Arthur Jensen, President of UBS is reciting the Sacred Scripture of the Holy Corporate Gospel to Howard Beale, giving him his marching orders⁵:

JENSEN

You have meddled with the primal forces of nature, Mr. Beale, and I won’t have it, is that clear?! You think you have merely stopped a business deal...that is not the case!

5 Film—*Network* (1976): Directed by Sidney Lumet; Written by Paddy Chayefsky
Produced by Howard Gottfried and Fred C. Caruso

The Arabs have taken billions of dollars out of this country, and now they must put it back. It is ebb and flow, tidal gravity, it is ecological balance! You are an old man who thinks in terms of nations and peoples. There are no nations! There are no peoples! There are no Russians. There are no Arabs! There are no third worlds! There is no West!

There is only one holistic system of systems, one vast and immane, interwoven, interacting, multi-variate, multi-national dominion of dollars! petro-dollars, electro-dollars, multi-dollars!, Reichmarks, rubles, rin, pounds and shekels! It is the international system of currency that determines the totality of life on this planet! That is the natural order of things today! That is the atomic, subatomic and galactic structure of things today!

And you have meddled with the primal forces of nature, and you will atone! Am I getting through to you, Mr. Beale?...

(pause)

You get up on your little twenty-one inch screen, and howl about America and democracy. There is no America. There is no democracy. There is only IBM and ITT and AT and T and Dupont, Dow, Union Carbide and Exxon. Those are the nations of the world today. What do you think the Russians talk about in their councils of state Karl Marx? They pull out their linear programming charts, statistical decision theories and miniMax solutions and compute the price-cost probabilities of their transactions and investments just like we do.

We no longer live in a world of nations and ideologies, Mr. Beale. The world is a college of corporations, inexorably determined by the immutable by-laws of business. The world is a business, Mr. Beale! It has been since man crawled out of the slime, and our children, Mr. Beale, will live to see that perfect world in which there is no war and famine, oppression and brutality.

One vast and ecumenical holding company, for whom all men will work to serve a common profit, in which all men will hold a share of stock, all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused. And I have chosen you to preach this evangel, Mr. Beale.

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HOWARD

(humble whisper)

Why me?

JENSEN

Because you're on television, dummy. Sixty million people watch you every night of the week, Monday through Friday.

So, I tuned to the election coverage on lefty MSNBC to check on the overwhelming, indeed humiliating Electoral College margin of victory Hillary Clinton, America's historic first female president, held over Donald Trump—Putin's Poodle, the Buffoon with the Bottle Blonde Bouffant.

At last, the demonstrable triumph of truth over demagogic trope! *Hurray and Halleluiah!*

Hillary Clinton (D): 227

Donald Trump (R): 304

Donald Trump is projected to be the
45th President of the United States!

W-T-F! That's right...*What The Fuck!*

A NOTE TO THE READER

The AMERICAN ENTROPY TRILOGY is a series of three books, intended to be read in chronological sequence starting with the first book, AMERICAN AMNESIA. The manuscript was originally written as one, very large, and frankly rather unwieldy *magnum opus* of over 1000 pages. Basically a door stop.

Because of the technical limitation of publishing-on-demand of a maximum of about 800 pages, after some reflection, I have decided to create three separate books, to enable and facilitate the publication of the print copy in trade paperback, for those of you who still enjoy the traditional method, the tactile sensation of actually holding the book in hand. I get it.

The Kindle eBooks offered on Amazon.com are essentially virtual copies of the print versions of the books, and have no such page count limitations, and have therefore been consolidated into one eBook, that includes (eventually) all three of the titles, which of course has the net effect of being able to offer the entire AMERICAN ENTROPY TRILOGY as an eBook at a lesser price than if sold as a print *a la carte*.

However, to facilitate the reader who may elect to begin reading the individual eBook or print series either at the second book, AMERICAN ALGORITHM, or perhaps at the third book, AMERICAN ANARCHY, I have included the same Preamble, Prequel and Intro in all of the books to provide background and context to enable the reader to have a more comprehensive understanding of the prior books, which the storyline, plot and characters are built upon and referenced in subsequent books.

Please note that in the print versions, and individual eBook titles, chapter headings in the Table of Contents of AMERICAN ALGORITHM and AMERICAN ANARCHY, have two chapter numbers. Beginning with AMERICAN ALGORITHM, the first number is the chapter number for the particular book.

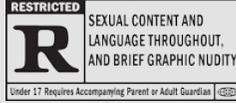
In the following example in the individual eBook title, and print copy Table of Contents of AMERICAN ALGORITHM, the number in parentheses represents the next chapter after the last Chapter, or Chapter 43, of Book One, AMERICAN AMNESIA:

- Chapter 1 (44) –

It is my hope that this chapter naming convention, and repetition of the Preamble, Prequel and Intro I have utilized, will not cause any unnecessary confusion, and will in fact facilitate the reader in providing better continuity and comprehension of the overarching thesis of the AMERICAN ENTROPY TRILOGY.

Thanks. mak

Intro



This content contains scenes that some readers may find disturbing....which hopefully may make them “mad as hell.”

Reader discretion is not advised. Intended for mature, thinking and empathetic audiences.

It contains scenes of a graphic nature, strong language and depictions of wanton social and political deceit and obfuscation by some very rich, very smart, and very evil people—Evil Geniuses⁶.

I go by Koz. Michaelangelo Kozlov—to my close friends, Mickey, or MAK. To my Ex, ATM.

I'd like to tell you a story, more of a parable really, the true facts of which are so unbelievable, as to defy even fictional plausibility.

Sorry, but it's not a feel-good story with a Capraesque *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* ending....not yet anyway—that's where you come in. Because only you and other percipient, willing and proactive voters ultimately may get to re-write the dark denouement from the current horrific seemingly inevitable apocalyptic ending. Or not...

It is a story that needs to be told as if the very survival of *our* planet ecosystems(ain't no planet B) and *our* democracy, indeed the soul of America⁷, depended on it...because it does.

Now, obviously I'm no Melville, but Herman and I do have a few things in common—one *very big* thing in particular, an exceedingly large, and *very angry*, hairless albino mammal, *Hawkus Shapirus*. More later on the corporate ship of fools of the doomed Pequod Inc. and my inevitable collision course with its tyrannical monomaniacal Captain.

It's a Long Day's Journey into Light, so let's get on with it.

6 Kurt Andersen “Evil Geniuses”(2020)

7 Jon Meacham “The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels”(2018)



But first, some background for context: My dubious gene pool is half-Italian, from the neck up, half-Russian, and the third half, according to my barely over 5 foot tall Russian Babuska, *zhiraf*, or giraffe. Christened after Michelangelo Caravaggio, the great Renaissance painter and rascal of Milano, Italy, by way of my maternal grandfather, Michael Caravaggio of South Philly. Also, birthplace of *moi* and the Italian Stallion, Rocky Balboa, Patron Saint of Philadelphia. *Yo Adrian!* On the paternal Kozlov side, the Cossacks of the Don region of the Ukraine and Southern Russia, the pre-revolution Tzar's barbarous mercenary militia.

Both branches of the rather tall family tree sprouting inveterate Philly Philanderers, begs one of life's more persistent questions. Does a uh...*bad* apple always fall not very far from the tree, to perfectly mangle a metaphor?

Since my internet *nom de guerre* is the *portmanteau* kozmick, naturally it's Kozmick Productions. Yea I know, a little too cute by half. Just about what you'd expect, from a narcissist.

If all fiction is essentially, a lie, then it would seem to me that a good storyteller, must first be a good liar. If that's the requisite *bona fides*, standing at six and a half feet, uniquely qualifies me to tell tall tales. After 1985, I had been a professional propagandizer—a *fixer*; at times, I admit bordering on the pathological. First producing banal "soap" commercials for the top 10 Broadcast TV markets, including The Big Apple and *El Lay*, then evolving into the highly lucrative infomercial political "documentaries". Selling soap or political lies, the process is all the same. It's all about branding.

But the Big Bucks had flowed into Kozmick Productions on two year cycles from campaign ads for so-called elections. Since the Kennedy-Nixon era, TV had become the increasingly dominate medium for political advertising—from the 70s, exponentially so. Why? Because it works. Big time. Statistically, the best ROI, Return on Investment, per dollar spent per vote bought. Nationally, about sixty percent of all advertising and marketing \$\$\$\$ are spent on TV, mostly negative attack ads. Predominately on broadcast networks, but increasingly on satellite networks, like CNN and from 1997, obscene ad revenues in particular for ultra-right wing Fox "News" Channel, and now mostly the internet.

Which in turn creates an inherent moral hazard for content purveyors to create and encourage "news" fraught with rancorous polarizing conflict which drives up viewership ratings and the CPM (cost per thousand viewers for ad time), and the new gold standard, the precisely granular metric of internet mouse-clicks. Not only do the Networks make huge profits, but Google, Microsoft, Twitter and especially Facebook have their snouts deeply buried in the trough at the obscene profit pig pen of ad revenue.

In my past life, representing mostly Fortune 500 clients, like Big Oil, Big Tobacco and Big Pharma intent on shaping the discourse of the *vox populi*. A merchant of doubt, I had specialized in the dark art of manufacturing consent, creating hundreds of poisonous position campaign ads and “documentaries” with a tendentious, often polemic political Point of View.

With no small degree of hypocrisy, like 60s radical leftist activist Jerry Rubin, one of the Chicago Seven...Yippie turned stockbroker, we had sold-out. Hanging a hard, very right turn in the 80s, drunk on Uncle Milty Martinis—an Endless Happy Hour of Milton Friedman free-for-all economics. First, reinvented as Reagan Democrats, then by slow accretion, like many of the increasingly prospering counter-culture Rads, the more money we made, the more Republican we became.

That was how we had made the big bucks all those years, and we had made no excuses for the obscene wealth and luxury that we had enjoyed that accompanied our dubious moral transformation.

The Big Ad and PR Agencies, could charge exorbitant rates for the “creative” and on top of that, receive about a 15% commission on all media placed, on radio, TV and print, on millions of \$\$\$\$. So about six months before the actual election, during primaries, because we had become *very* good at what we do, we had started getting calls from the Big Five national ad agencies, cueing up for production work. Mostly writing and producing :30 TV ads, our niche, the specialty of the house—nuanced euphemisms for borderline slanderous, but still exceedingly effective; “*Are you lying now...or were you lying then? Do you still beat your wife?*” kinda stuff.

My job description: Hitman for the Media Mafia—assassin of character. A mercenary paladin—have camera will travel. With the rationalization ‘*Just responding to the invisible hand of the market*’, like the rest of media we’d had our snouts deeply submerged in the trough. We justified our Piranha participation with, *Hey...if we don’t, somebody else will pick up the obscene amounts of money just laying on the table*. And by the way, it had made us a very comfortable living.

That is, until about a month after September 11, 2001, when a spectacular petroleum pipeline explosion causing multiple deaths and millions of \$\$\$\$ in damage to a pristine place less than a mile from my home, literally rocked my world. At the time, I had absolutely no idea of the cause or origin. My first impression was, because of the magnitude and the obvious involvement of some kind of petroleum accelerant, perhaps it was the aftermath of a commercial jet crash. But a gas-filled time-bomb-pipeline? Impossible you say? Out of the realm of possibility? *Ha!*

Home is Moody Seaport, situated on the Puget Sound in the Northwest corner of Washington state, nestled up against the border with British Columbia, Canada. Formerly a blue tarp, duct tape logging and commercial fishing town, like many other affordable working class coastal communities, was now involuntarily being invaded and gentrified into a tony

maritime enclave, forcing out working class families with spiraling real estate prices and property taxes.

The country was still reeling, financially and emotionally, with an acute collective case of PTSD. The bottom had fallen out of the economy overnight. My pal and business partner Ad Hoc, “Hawk” Shapiro and I were just finishing up the final cut on a client's video, one of the few projects that hadn't been canceled, in our post-production suite when the big

KA-B-O-O-OM!

overnight literally exploded my mundane priorities. Near death experiences do have a unique way of focusing the mind. More on that later.

Up to 9/11, I was still very angry, bitter and had grown gratuitously cynical, from having lost everything I thought mattered most, including some people very dear to me—brutally murdered back in the 80s, when I was sucker-punched by Ms Kismet. *Okay, got the memo, enough already mit da Karma.*

But as the chaotic aftermath of 9/11 unfolded, frankly, it was the genesis of my epiphany, the opening of my eyes to the reality that I was nothing more than a propaganda pimp—a dissembler and purveyor of the same skewed, unreality that was driving the collective paranoia and fear mongering of the masses.

9/11 had more than cratered the economy and demolished the Dual Phallic Monuments erected to American Capitalism, massacring 3,000 mothers and fathers, sons and daughters on our home court. We were all now orphans in a cruel turbulent sea of capricious precarity. Violated in the unsuspecting super-saturated cyan morning sky of normalcy, in the sanctity of our own house.

Now and forever held emotional hostage by stochastic *jihad*. A testosterone laced attempt at a Grand Emasculation, a *macho* kick in the gonads, to render the Great Satan impotent. Was God asleep? Even Allah must have wept.

A Day of Infamy 2.0. The date now belongs to history as, *A Tuesday Mourning, the eleventh of never*, forever dismantling American Invincibility. The Western Deity of technology had empowered the powerless, the ignored. New rules. Welcome to the world of asymmetric warfare, the new equalizer against 'superior force'. The delivery of blow back with no small irony through the democracy, the off-the-shelf availability of technology. A technological Frankenstein released into the wild, against its Western Creator, inviting and inciting a simplistic Cineplex reality of Rambo revenge—the commodification of fear, paranoia and desultory payback. Big time.

Evil as a brand is created, competitively marketed, inanelly sold like soap, non-stop on competing cable *news* channels—in the process paralyzing our humanity, resurrecting the Crusades and spawning wholesale Islamophobia. The new normal.

Almost immediately, CASMO, Corporate Advertising Subsidized

Media Octopi, began inflicting massive sensory mayhem through a constant 24-7 carpet bombing of our senses. Great Balls of Fire, over and over again, shamelessly appropriating the solemn and sacred into a vulgar obscenity—all on the pretense of *news*. And in some perverse twisted way, those flying silver marvels, monuments to Western innovation, on 9/11 became the guided missiles of misguided Muslim misanthropes. Delivering Air Mail, a mega-business opportunity Special Delivery—a pandemic of paranoia and fear in perpetuity. Creating a windfall of profane profits to the sacred bottom line of Corporate Media and bogus justification for the unconstitutional mass surveillance of its citizens by U.S. Corporations⁸ and the American Government.⁹

Which, after a decade and a half, eventually created the perfect launching pad for the slow-motion *coup d'etat*, aka “election” of pretend president Donald Trump, reinforcing and pulling into painfully clear focus that I was a charter member of the Unreality Industry Incorporated. That I had personally contributed to stoking the fear, anger and collective sense of grievance of an emotionally supercharged essentially white male middle class that had been skillfully and cynically manipulated over the past several decades by neo-liberal puppet masters.

And, that “deep state” government was not the solution, but the problem—the cause for *all* of their problems and misfortune. I and my fellow propaganda practitioners had not only amplified that deafening, ubiquitous and incessant media cacophony, but had become expert enablers for cynical political advantage and power. And yes, money...lots and lots of \$\$\$\$\$. Big time. Eventually, making it pretty damn hard to look myself in the mirror. So to attempt to assuage some guilt I had now assumed the more lofty euphemism of “filmmaker”.

Driven by greed and avarice, thanks in no small part to my consummate Denialists accomplices, the once omnipotent American Arcadia, was now blithely teetering on the precipice of the 6th Mass Extinction from Climate Change.

To ascribe this devolutionary sea change in the culture, almost four decades in the making solely to Donald Trump, would be like attributing the existence of a national crime syndicate to a walk-on wannabe, a petty grifter(or a mutt—a Mafioso term of art).

More a symptom than a cause, like a gaudy Rolex knockoff, Carny Barker Trump was just a cheap shiny imitation of a Mussolini, a mugging self-aggrandizing caricature of a caricature. Fortunately for the world, not very bright but nonetheless like many charlatans, endowed with some serious NYC *chutzpah* and street-shrewd. And as also can be said of cockroaches, a hard coded, hard-shell self-preservation instinct.

8 Shoshonna Zuboff “The Age of Surveillance Capitalism”(2019)

9 Edward Snowden, “Permanent Record”(2019)

Psychologists and theologians tell us that many if not most of us innately yearn for a heroic figure, a savior like a Christ, to lead and comfort us as we deal with the inevitable vagaries and vicissitudes of life: *yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

A recidivist arsonist, Trump instinctively knew where all the latent, highly combustible emotional buttons of the disillusioned, left-behind white working class were—just begging to be punched. Billed as the “Billionaire of the People”, a rich oxymoron and even richer irony, as the draft-dodging sybarite doused an accelerant of populist vitriol and divisiveness on the already smoldering embers of real or imaginary grievance. Rekindling the hard-wired intrinsic need for humans to avoid pain, seek pleasure along with a yearning for simple binary answers to increasingly complex and persistent moral and legal questions.

Thanks predominately to the acceleration and sophistication of digital electronic media technology and the exponential growth of internet penetration over the last three decades, the door of opportunity had swung wide open for the unhinged, rabid Christo-Libertarian right. Now, indefinitely stuck ajar inviting the vulnerable masses, including the leadership of the putative persecuted, aggrieved Christian Nationalists to not walk, but sprint into the waiting open arms of the increasingly radicalized faction of the Republicans.

This set the stage to propel the Wizard of *Ooze*, initially as a pundit punch line, formerly a political agnostic and notorious hedonistic heathen, now reinvented as a born-again Christo-conservative and right to life advocate, to strut on to the national proscenium from stage right.

Showtime! The self-anointed most improbable Armani Messiah, was the demigod avatar, more an Orange Golden Calf, the evangelical Millennialists had been patiently praying for. So much for the First Commandment. The rest of the Commandments distilled and repurposed into the first two Amendments of the U.S. Constitution with a simpler, more pragmatic, transactional emphasis on the First—Religious freedom contorted into a Christo-Political hegemony of national and state government and judiciary, and the Second—Armed Christian Soldiers in preparation for the wishful, self-fulfilling prophesy of an Armageddon and with the help of a little divine destiny, The Rapturous Apocalypse.

The seductive appeal of a charismatic bad-boy celebrity, his vulgar anti-hero persona and bombastic demagoguery, was an ominous portent of the nascent “new normal”. Cynically and relentlessly marketed as a counterweight to the elitist latte liberal left, including “mainstream media” as the “enemy of the people”. Forget the fact that he had the dubious morals and business scruples of a Mafioso Don, ironically in this case “The Donald.” (No disrespect intended to *paisano* Dons like John Gotti)

So how, and more importantly, why in this purportedly hyper-democratic Information Internet Age, are America, indeed *tout le monde*, inexorably creeping seemingly unimpeded toward E^2 —Existential Entropy, environmental collapse and social oblivion—and a nightmare of neo-liberal/neo-fascist economic global hegemony?

Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, we are all now swimming in a sea of the surreal—and just below the surface a raging riptide, a lethal undertow of pervasive counter-factual FANLANDIA¹⁰.

But, before there can be any cogent, durable remediations proffered, the first step is to unwind just how in the hell we ended up stuck in this endless loop, non-stop horror movie, AMERICAN ENTROPY.

To that end, we'll have to hit rewind all the way back to the opening screen credits of this uniquely American horror flick, as the cast of nefarious characters and malevolent machinations of the Evil Geniuses¹¹ first begins to unfold:



10 Kurt Andersen “Fantasyland”(2017)

11 Kurt Andersen “Evil Geniuses”(2020)

Index of Main Characters

Michaelangelo Kozlov (Koz, Mick and MAK):

The main character, narrator and main protagonist throughout the entire trilogy of novels.

Ad Hoc Shapiro (Hawk):

Koz's best friend, confidant, business partner, and non-biological brother. Co-protagonist also present throughout the entire trilogy of novels.

Maria Caravaggio Kozlov (Pia):

Koz's mother, an artist, present throughout much of the entire trilogy of novels.

Annette Trudeau (Annie):

Love interest of Koz, who reappears multiple times throughout entire trilogy of novels

Byron Brawley:

Close friend and fellow student at UC Berkeley, and student social activist.

Charles Washington (C-Wash):

Close friend and fellow student at UC Berkeley, and leading student social activist.

Mario Savio (as himself):

Close friend and fellow student at UC Berkeley, and a leading student social activist.

Sora Eagle Feather:

Love interest and biological mother of Koz's son, Michael.

Michael Ahiga Eagle Feather Kozlov (Mikie):

Son of Koz, born out of wedlock to Sora Eagle Feather. An ancillary protagonist who reappears multiple times throughout entire trilogy of novels.

Chief Leonard Eagle Feather: (Chief)

Chief of the Navajo reservation, father of Sora Eagle Feather, and grandfather to Michael Eagle Feather, who reappears multiple times throughout entire trilogy of novels.

Marla Dyson (Marly):

VP at ACT Inc. and love interest of Koz, who reappears multiple times throughout the entire trilogy of novels.

Jason Mahoney (Jace, Captain Ahab):

President and CEO of ACT Inc. and main antagonist of Koz present throughout the entire trilogy of novels.

Trey Mahoney:

Teenage gay son of Jason Mahoney, young friend and mentee of Mick.

Ernest Porter (*Negrato*, *Blackie*):

Ancillary main antagonist and foil of Jason Mahoney who appears throughout much of the trilogy of novels.

AMERICAN ALGORITHM: 2000 - 2004

*You are entitled to your opinion. But you are not entitled to
your own facts.”*

- U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

- Chapter 1 (44) -

“Fate leads the willing and drags along the reluctant.”
- Seneca

Moody Seaport, Washington State

October 10, 2001 Thursday 3:10 pm -.5 Kilometers from Ground Zero

Jessie Allison has been racing around all day in preparation for tonight's VIP affair. It's a beautiful Indian Summer day, so she opts to park the requisite *au courant* Range Rover SUV of the *arriviste*, and take the convertible, a 2000 BMW 323Ci, to pick up her twin daughters Meghan and McKenzie from the prestigious and very exclusive Arcadia school.

The twins love riding in the backseat with the top down. They squeal with delight as their father Jack, District Attorney of Cascadia County, takes a corner hard, experiencing the lateral “Gs” of a roller-coaster. Because the Beemer, with the 'DA BMR' plate is Jack's toy, she seldom gets to drive it.

After picking up the girls she's running late. Afternoon traffic is starting to get heavy.

She punches in her husband's mobile number, “Honey I'm stuck in traffic here...so frazzled, I forgot the wine...don't have time to stop and pick it up. Can you stop on the way home from work?”

“Dammit, Jessie...I've got so damn much on my mind getting ready for this evening. Why the hell did you leave this to the last minute? I shouldn't have to tell ya this is a B-F-D for me...us. Just handle it!” John says with a bite.

“Okay. Okay, sorry. Just thought...never mind. If I take the shortcut...the Moody Creek overpass, I can probably bypass some of this traffic.”

“And pick something with an expensive sounding French name, with a cork.” he says dripping with condescension. *Click.*

She could not have anticipated the road construction zone at the overpass, or...

She is immediately stuck in the afternoon bumper to bumper traffic idling on the middle of the overpass that crosses Moody Creek. Impatiently drumming her fingers on the steering wheel, she is waiting for the light to change. *Dammit, this light is taking an eternity. I've got so much to get done before tonight.* But the forces of fate are silently starting to compound.

Picking up her children from school is a pleasant diversion from running errands and frantic shopping all day for tonight's important affair. She listens distractedly as the girls, immaculately dressed in identical brightly colored floral print jumpsuits, with matching day packs share with great

gravity, the daily minutiae so breathlessly important to a sixth grader.

"Mommy do you know what that Maya Tarnowski did today?" says Meghan.

"Well I'll tell ya mommy, she brought her lunch in a *paper bag*, a yucky paper bag!" chimes in McKenzie finishing her sister's sentence as twins often do.

"Which she folded up to take home. And she was wearin' some like *sooo* yesterday totally uncool...like Walmart thing," Meghan finishes.

"Well, not everyone is born with a proper sense of fashion, in some it must be cultivated, dear," Jessica patiently counsels.

"Mommy...what's a Muslim? Amber Ashton said that Maya's mom is a Muslim, and that all Muslims are terrorists," McKenzie says.

"Hmm...well, Muslims don't believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior as we do. Even though they're different from us and don't believe in the Bible like we do, I don't think *all* Muslims are terrorists. I work with Maya's mom and I don't think she's a terrorist," Jessica says.

"Oh. Uh...mommy does that mean that they can't go to Heaven like us?" Meghan says.

"Well according to the Bible...yes, dear," Jessica says.

The girls drone on about Trevor this, and Tyler that, but her mind is elsewhere, as she ponders tonight's *haute cuisine* bill of fare intended to duly impress the Executive Director of the Washington State Republican Caucus.

Her husband, John "Jack" Allison is young, handsome and bright—and nakedly ambitious. With his high conviction rate, he is carefully honing a politically appealing "no-nonsense" tough on crime reputation. He and Jessica, and their twin daughters, strike an inviting camera-ready All-American conservative Christian family image. He is being groomed for Washington State Senator, *the first, but necessary step, of many toward becoming a serious mover and shaker in Washington state politics* counsels ExDir, Jake Rossitor.

Jessie, is a ready for prime-time beauty—tanned, long legged, athletically lean with lustrous long blonde hair and wide-set luminous indigo eyes. The full package. A tenured Professor of Humanities at Moody University, where she herself graduated, she has a graduate degree in Greek Classics—her Master's Thesis was on Aristotelian Tragedy.

Both Jack and Jessica come from families of considerable wealth, prestige and privilege. A small-town golden-boy quarterback used to getting by on his looks, his family's considerable wealth flowed from the plains of Wyoming *black gold oil bidness*. Having flunked out of Princeton, eventually a graduate of conservative University of Wyoming, his checkered and unremarkable academic achievements eventually led him to Seattle University Law School, where he barely qualified for admission, which in time would lead to meeting his future wife Jessica and settling in Moody Seaport where she was in grad-school and ultimately professor. He has chosen to practice

criminal law as a DA, a traditional gateway to higher public office in 'big fish-small pond' Moody Seaport. He is a driven man—with aspirations one day to be Governor of Washington.

Her family amassed their huge fortune the old-fashioned way—they inherited it. During the Great Depression her predatory paternal grandfather, a distant cousin to Joe Kennedy Sr., the patriarch of the Kennedy's of Hyannis Port, had bought up hundreds of distressed commercial properties in foreclosure for pennies on the dollar; prime real estate in urban centers, like New York City and Chicago.

The light finally turns green, as the cars in front of her begin to creep forward...

KA-B-O-O-OM!

Jessica's reverie is abruptly interrupted by a deafening explosion, violently shaking the overpass and the eight cars traversing it. Startled by the explosion, the driver of the car ahead, brakes hard skidding to a complete stop. Jessica slams on the brakes, nearly rear-ending him. Because she's accustomed to driving the Rover with an automatic tranny, she neglects to depress the clutch, the engine sputters and dies. The twins are immediately quieted, then in unison, begin crying hysterically. The driver of the car ahead is now scanning the horizon for the origin of the blast, turning his head, first to the left then, when his attention becomes fixed to his right, the pungent smell of burning rubber as he floors the accelerator.

As she turns her body to reach behind her to try to comfort the girls with a mother's touch, the driver of the car behind is now frantically honking the horn, first intermittently, then a constant, irritatingly loud din. *How rude! Okay buster calm down. I think I'll just take my time...teach him some manners.*

She is now looking to her right, up Moody Creek, when her eyes are assaulted by a vision that can not be possibly be real. A massive angry ball of fire is rolling toward the overpass, directly at them. A fire-breathing malevolent Medusa, like something from an end-of-the-world sci-fi movie. But the reality of this surreal mirage of mayhem, the speed and the size of it, as it roars inexorably toward them is validated by the extreme heat blast that precedes it.

She frantically shoves the stick shift into neutral, and turns the key. Nothing. Paralyzed with fear, she is too terrified to look up, but her peripheral vision senses the impending fireball racing toward them. The constant, offensive blare of the horn unnerves her. It is getting closer. Closer. She is now in full panic mode. She turns and releases the key, again nothing. Nothing. But, in her panic she has forgotten that the clutch pedal must be depressed before the ignition can engage the starter motor.

Jessica knows that their only hope now, is to get her and the children out of the car. But traveling nearly 60 miles per hour, within seconds, before Jessica can even release her own harness, the voracious Monster has pounced upon them. The last sounds that will be heard are the blaring horn over the snarling roar of the ravenous Beast. Jessica and her perfect twins, their shoulder harnesses still fastened—this is how they will be found, frozen in place, after the fiery tsunami has washed over them, incinerating every thing and every one in its path.

For many years later, almost nightly, John Allison would bolt upright, sheets soaked with sweat, haunted by the same endless loop horror movie of his beautiful wife and two darling twins helplessly watching the wall of fire as it descends upon them. Torturing himself with the same question: *If only I hadn't...if Jessie had not taken the shortcut...that deadly shortcut.*

Was it just bad luck that had snatched my promising future and my beautiful family? How could my omnipotent God allow this to happen?

Or was it just Miz Kismet, teasing one miniscule thread of the implacable unraveling of the Grand Tapestry? Endlessly repeating Greek Tragedies like Nemesis, the Greek mythological spirit of divine retribution against those who succumb to hubris and greed, playing itself out again, as Professor Jessica Kennedy-Allison had expounded in her undergrad Humanities lectures, so many times

- Chapter 2 (45) -

*DoubleSpeak: First they steal the words,
then they steal the meaning.*
- George Orwell in his book 1984

Moody Seaport, Washington State

October 10, 2001 Thursday 3:08 pm -.5 Kilometers from Ground Zero

So, it's just about a month since the attack on the Twin Towers of Power, and it's coming up on the second anniversary of the WTO, The Battle in Seattle of November 1999. The whole week before, there had been very heavy social network traffic, buzzing with activists postings. Social justice advocates planned to trek to Seattle *en masse* from all over the U.S. to disrupt and attempt to stymie the conference through non-violent civil disobedience. Because Seattle is only about an hour and a half away, we had decided to 'spec it'—as an indy news stringer.

After viewing some of our powerful *verite* in-the-trenches footage on national broadcast news, we were contacted by an ad agency representing a consortium of NGO Big Business PACs to produce a doc. Not normally a good ideological fit, but because of post 9/11 collective anxiety and mass uncertainty, the bottom had fallen out of the economy, literally overnight with many clients canceling production work.

The phone was so dead, a few times a day, I'd pick it up to listen for dial-tone just to confirm it was still working. The job was not exactly our cup of tea, more like hemlock, but because we had bills to pay, and a mortgage etcetera, we reluctantly bent our increasingly malleable scruples to stay in business. So, we took the job. Besides, the money was *very* good.

As a business operator, during slow economic times, it's amazing how basic economic survival can so easily twist one's high-minded principles, insinuating itself into every facet of American business life, and indivisibly by extension one's personal life. In commiserating with our contemporaries, it seemed that the only organizations with money, indeed lots of money to spend on production were, as always, the far right conservative PACs.

It was supposed to be a seemingly harmless political position piece, to create a new snappier melody for the same old tired libretto. The intent was to enter it into some of the national film festivals in the category of documentary, including SIFF, the Seattle International Film Festival the city where the first major shot had been fired in opposition to Globalism, and the WTO, the World Trade Organization. We didn't figure there was a chance in hell SIFF would even consider it, so it seemed like a safe proposition, that no

nobody we really cared about would even see the damn thing, thus preserving our *simpatico* progressive image with some of the more liberal NGOs and PACs. So this was to be billed as *the real story* behind the Battle in Seattle that exposed the dark and sinister forces of the anti-American, unpatriotic radical left.

The title of this one hour shameless infomercial is "Globalism—the New Capitalism—Get on the Train or Get Out of the Way". The client, who refers to abortion rights advocates as 'baby killers', does not do nuance.

So it was time to play offense. They decided to go "all-in" while they still owned the White House, since trade policy, free or otherwise, delegated and controlled under the powers reserved to the Executive Branch, nominally, that would be Dubya's job. The film would devolve into a zealous and relentless jeremiad for International Free Market Capitalism, which some of the leading liberal elite intellectuals, lefties like Ralph Nader, Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn deemed tantamount to domestic imperialism.

Where to start? When in doubt, wave Old Glory while sprinkling a few, now Faux News coined epithets, like 'liberal' and 'socialism', hurled like a cat spitting up a hairball. So what started out as a relatively innocuous documentary, as the wave of client change orders started coming in from the rough cut, evolved to a rather strident ultra-right tract. But there was no turning back now for us. Out of a professional ethic, we needed to see it through. The worst negative rap a small production company can suffer is that it did not meet the standards of the client. The client is *never* wrong even when they are a total jackass. The production community is relatively small, and bad news, like being considered *hard to work with*, especially when it is promulgated with the help of your competition can travel literally at the speed of light. In our business, reputations are like pianos—hard to lift and easy to drop.

So for the client it was gloves off. Time to spin the colossal WTO PR disaster into some Socialist anti-Capitalism UN-American narrative that would have legs.

Me and my partner, Ad Hoc Shapiro, aka Hawk, were just finishing up the online edit at our production facility in Moody Seaport. Aside from the obvious derivation, from Hoc, the Hawkster also sports a considerable aquiline beak—*not a big nose...just a small face*, he explains.

"Koz...man, don't *even* want my name linked with this dog. If Daddy ever saw a Shapiro connected to something like this, he'd probably disown me...again," Hawk says in his incongruously high almost *castrato voce*.

"Hey Hawk, it's not *that* bad. So I take it you have some fundamental...ideological disagreements with the content of the message?" I say.

"You could say that. To paraphrase da man, Marshall McLuhan, 'the medium *is da ma-ssage*' of this shameless radical right screed," Hawk says.

"Well don't hold back, man. Whattya really think?" I ask.

"Man...the only question I have for you, is how come you *don't* have a major problem with it?"

"I didn't say I agree with it. But hey, it's a livin'. It's payin' the rent and keepin' us a float at least until the economy turns around and it'd be bad, no *very* bad for *bidness* if we didn't finish it. But if I'da known what we were gettin' into with all the change orders and such, and the extremist POV, yea, I probably would have passed on it. The good news is that I doubt any major film festival would even consider this shameless tract," I say.

"*Jezus* man, now that the right is emboldened by the recent Coronation of the witless Dauphin, King George the Younger, they ain't wastin' any time," Hawk says.

"Yeap...gotta admit they're pullin' out all the stops, way over the top. And Dubya's the perfect foil, for the *tres* far right agenda of "Bush's Brain", Carl Rove, the *Maestro* of Mean," I say.

"Doublin' down on the mass jingoism from 9-1-1 "

"And the Battle in Seattle." I add.

"Amazing. That Rove could sell an ex-frat-boy town clown, a notorious party-hearty guy, some BS burning bush, pun intended, religious conversion," says the Hawkster.

"Born again...and reinvented. So I take it you're not enthralled with our new Commander in Chief?" I say.

"An affable dunce," Hawk says.

"So...not buyin' his *faux* John-Wayne complete with the macho saunter?" I say.

"Not on yer life, Pilgrim," doing an uncanny Duke. "Sometimes your laser-like logic is just...stupefyin'," Hawk says.

"Tsk tsk...just a lucky guess. As the Texans say, 'all hat'. Well, I would have to concede that he's not exactly, a uh...towering intellect compared to the smarts of the previous prez, Bubba Clinton," I say.

Moody Seaport's a tony maritime enclave strategically situated on the Puget Sound in the Pacific Northwest, Washington state, about 50 miles South of YVR airport Vancouver B.C. and about 100 miles North of SEATAC airport, Seattle.

It was dubbed from the eponymous first mate James Paul Moody of the maiden and only voyage of the "unsinkable" luxury-liner, The Titanic. Moody was a young Junior Officer who heroically perished with over 1,500 souls in the frigid waters of the Atlantic on that April night of 1912. He had selflessly declined to board a lifeboat to make room for some steerage class women.

Formerly known as Cascadia City, 'the City of Subdued Excitement', it was renamed as an homage to honor the heroism of the Mayor's nephew. It is

now the home of the Moody University "Fightin' Titans", the Titanic Bookstore, Titanic Tiny Tots Daycare, Titanic Body Sculpting and Weight Loss Clinic, not to forget the Iceberg Bar and Grill, billed as *your last stop before going home*. You get the idea.

It seemed a brilliant strategy at the time—a masterstroke of marketing by the City Fathers to capitalize on the *zeitgeist* of romantic fascination of the heroic self-sacrifice of young Moody on that 'Night to Remember'. Perhaps even becoming a magnanimous magnet to attract 'the right kind of people' to settle and develop Cascadia City. To transform it from just another backwater lumber mill, commercial fishing town with all the enchantment of a Rotarian Destination Resort, to an upscale Arcadia by the sea.

But a series of calamitous bizarre local disasters, only added to the 'Moody Blues' of melancholia from the dark, rainy interminable winters, with the only half-joking shibboleth 'the Repository of Repressed Emotion'. There were some of the pallid Moody Moon-tan Elders, that believed perhaps the name of the town would have been better left unchanged.

The most recent of which was the massive escape of chlorine gas from the local paper mill in 1989, in which some middle-management genius thought it would be the highest and best use of resource, to capture the gas used in the manufacturing process of paper, store it in large railroad tankers, and sell it. A brilliant example of the economic efficiencies and maximization of capital resources, that was '*perfectly safe*', they had told the City Fathers. A position they steadfastly championed, even after the sirens at the mill began screaming the warning of the escaping lethal poisonous chlorine gas from tankers cars that had '*somehow derailed, a regrettable and unforeseeable, therefore unpreventable accident.*'

Twelve people died, and thousands of were sickened, with some nearer to ground zero, requiring long-term hospitalization for permanent respiratory damage. "Bhopal Light", a variation on the theme of the '84 Bhopal India chlorine gas escape—which ultimately killed almost 19,000 with severe respiratory injury to over 550,000 "unlucky" innocent men, women and children. Had Moody Seaport inherited the curse of The Titanic? Or was this just another tragic example of man's unsinkable capacity for hubris?

Sorry...some obvious Attention Deficit issues here. With my dyslexia, a potent cocktail for cognitive dysfunction. As you may have already noticed, I'm easily distracted. Not good in my line of work. Gawd...I hope they find a dyslexia for cure...soon.

Now...where was I?

Okay, so we're in the final stages of tweaking and fine tuning the production in time to get it on FEDEX overnight for submission to the SIFF.

Hawk is running the non-linear video editing software. His thick meaty hands and knotty fingers, belie his dexterity, flying unerringly over the keyboard with the casual virtuosity reminiscent of another masterful Canuck

keyboard artist, the brilliant Canadian pianist Glen Gould.

I am manually sliding the audio level fader on the sound board, for ambient audio track 2, while watching action on the huge preview monitor, a process called 'sweetening' the audio. I am momentarily distracted by the glare of reflection, the glistening sweat of the back of Hawk's immense shaved skull. Absent a neck, it begins at the ears, at the massively developed trapezes muscles which only serve to accentuate a large dent, a divot. It is adorned with an angry-looking six inch transverse scar garnished with a very realistic tattoo of a zipper, with a crude cursive inscription, "*in case of a seizure, open here*", a souvenir of the Free Speech Movement protests at UC Berkeley in 1964, where we had first met.

The day before, had been anything but typical. On that Thursday morning in early December, the UCB campus was crackling with political fomentation—lots of FSM speeches, student protests, chants and placards.

A twenty-two year old philosophy major, a charismatic orator named Mario Savio had just given his now legendary impromptu impassioned "Bodies upon the gears" speech at Sproul Hall.

On our way over to the Student Union to commiserate with some fellow activists, the oppressive unmistakable pungent odor of eye burning tear gas, still lingering. Suddenly a crowd of about fifty students, were running pell-mell towards us from Sather Gate, being pursued by cops in riot gear, brandishing batons. Two cops had cornered one totally defenseless guy, straddling him, they were whaling on one Ad Hoc Shapiro, mercilessly with their batons with no indication of let-up. Sensing the potential lethality of the blows, my roommate and I exchanged a wordless "*oh shit, bad idea, but I guess we better stop this*" glance of affirmation and intervened, the genesis of a lifelong friendship with Ad Hoc Shapiro.

So, we're about five minutes into the film, where the protestors have overturned cars and buses, torched SPD police cars, good stuff, lots of folks, many with black ski masks, manically racing around with anti-WTO banners and signs, screaming slogans like "Down with Capitalism!", and my personal fav "TAX-iderm the Rich!" looking every bit like violent anti-capitalist, anarchists thugs with fire and smoke and explosions—lots of orange explosions made even more dramatic against the ink black night sky.

"Back up 60 seconds...and hit record."

"Okay...audio track 2...pre-roll, five-four-three," says Hawk, then a silent two-count, with a hand cue signaling the in-point.

I am slowly ramping the fader up, to emphasize the incredibly loud noise from the chaos and pandemonium...

KA-B-O-O-OM!

The deafening roar of a massive explosion much, *much* louder than the audio. The whole room shudders and shakes reverberating about 30 seconds with secondary shock waves and more explosions. The windows rattle—the lights are flickering.

Oso, a mixed Great Pyrenees-Newfie, my constant companion is startled from his sprawled slumber, in his customary spot usually near, more often under my feet. He springs up to his full stature of over three feet, nudges my right leg with his huge white Great Pyrenees head seemingly grafted on to his enormous black Newfoundland body, and starts to whine, then his signature *basso profundo* "what the hell is goin' on?" bark. *Yeap, well said, boy.*

"Now *that's* what I call realistic sound effects," says the Hawkster.

"I'm not that good *goddammit!* Something's happened! Something very big and very bad...maybe a fore shock of *The Big One*. Let's check it out!" I say.

We scurry outside, with Oso in tow. Immediately we see a huge plume of black smoke, angrily bellowing skyward already several hundred feet high. It is very close...scary close, maybe half a *klick*, or kilometer.

"What the fuck could cause such a massive explosion?" says Hawk.

"Gotta be some kinda accelerant...gasoline...maybe a commercial jet cratered. It's close...real close...let's get over there. There's gotta be some serious casualties...see what we can do to help. And throw the cameras into the truck," I say.

We sprint to the pick-up, and as I open the passenger door Oso automatically leaps into his accustomed place, the passenger seat. I pull him out by the collar, to the rear tail gate, where with a muffled whine of disapproval, he effortlessly jumps into the rear bed of the truck. Hawk throws the video camera, and a digital still camera into the crew cab. I am barely able to jump in, before Hawk slams it in drive, burning rubber as we race toward the now huge black ominous plume. In less than 3 minutes, we are at the entrance of a public park which appears to be ground zero of the blast, Moody Falls Park.

We skid to a stop in the parking lot. The classic Depression Era stone bridge with graceful arches that traverses the stream, just past the waterfall normally viewable, is barely discernible in the roiling oil-black smoke. As we open the truck doors, the intense heat of the fire assaults us, like stepping into a blast furnace. The sooty smoke is now starting to engulf us—we're having a hard time breathing. We can now hear a series of not-so-distant secondary explosions. I'm beginning to wonder if this is such a good idea. I look at Hawk. He just shakes his head.

"Let's get the hell outta here man, before this whole thing blows...there ain't nothing we can do for anybody in that," yells Hawk over the roar nodding toward the fire.

"Okay...guess you're right. Poor bastards. Whatever caused it, like 9/11...fire's a lousy way to go, man," I shout.

Then, as a hopeful afterthought, straining to see, fighting through the stinging tears of my smoke-filled eyes, I think I detect some movement on the bridge. Then it disappears in the smoke. Then it appears again. Yes, there's someone on the bridge, coming towards us, moving very slowly, carrying something.

"There's some movement on the bridge...someone might be alive," I yell.

I throw open the door, and start to run toward the bridge when suddenly out of the smoke a car comes barreling out of nowhere. Tires squealing, it barely misses me as I leap out of the way, its brake lights are the last thing I can make out as it speeds off, casting a ghostly red glow on to a wall of dense black smoke.

I run toward the bridge, coughing and choking. Just as I get there, I can see this charred black mass, staggering like a drunk, very slowly toward me, carrying something unrecognizable in its arms.

When I am within about 20 feet from this thing, I can begin make out that it is a human figure, or what's left of it, skin hanging from its bones, no hair and where a face used to be, an indistinguishable charred black mass. The mass screams out something I can not decipher, but I know that it's not English.

"*Sera don nee!...sera don nee!*" it yells.

"What-the-hell happened?" I yell over the roar of the fire.

Then, a rapid long string of words that I do not recognize.

"I can't understand you...can you speak English?" I shout.

"In the name of Allah...I..." it cries back.

Then as I get closer, it collapses in a heap as the charred mass in its arms falls to the ground in front of it. I am close enough now that I can make out the forms. In front of me is the charred obviously lifeless body of a young child and from what remains of the jeans and sport shoes, expensive Air Jordan's probably a boy. I immediately realize there is nothing that can be done for it.

I kneel down beside the other charred mass, which I can now barely discern is a young man, now laying on his side, writhing in pain, screaming in agony, third degree burns over most of his body.

His body is so burnt I can not even find an undamaged location to grab on to...to try to move him.

He screams, "*Allahu-u-Akbar!*" There is a long exhale, as his body goes limp. Then the unmistakable death-rattle.

KA-B-O-O-OM!

The concussion of the shock wave of a huge secondary explosion catapults me backwards 15 feet into the air. I land flat on my back with force of a platform high dive into an empty pool, on to a huge mid-river boulder knocking the wind out of me, hitting the back of my head hard.

Although I am completely disoriented and immobile, I now have the vague sensation of being underwater, face down. The icy cold water of the stream snaps me back to semi-consciousness, but I still can not move. I become aware of a tugging on my right pant leg, pulling me backwards forcing the cold water up my nose, and down my throat into my lungs. I am now half on the shore, with my face still in the water, when I am flipped over like a dead fish, and dragged completely out of the water. Gasping for air, coughing and sputtering, I force open my eyes and see Oso's immense white head, whining, his huge pink tongue slapping against my face.

As I push him away, I hear Hawk's familiar falsetto voice, "Oso, good boy...back off now boy, I've gott'em."

Then I have the sensation of being effortlessly lifted up like large stuffed Panda Bear, walked up the river bank, then being gently laid out in the back of the truck with my head laying on the open tailgate. I briefly pass out.

Like one of my 60s bad LSD trips I'm devoid of any situational awareness of my surroundings, my desperate attempt to reconstruct what happened is futile. The intense heat, the cloying smell of burnt flesh, dominate my consciousness. Every breath feels like a blow torch turned on my lungs.

Like a getaway driver at a bank heist gone very bad Hawk floors it. In a daze, laying on my back, I am starting to see a few patches of brilliant blue sky. My left ear pressed against the hard-steel bed of the pick-up amplifies the din of squealing tires—the high rpm whine of the engine drowning out the ambient pandemonium.

Then the surreal sensation of a lightness of being, as an eerie equanimity washes over me, floating ever upward, looking down at the inferno. But my mystical migration is rudely interrupted by Oso's, half-barking whimper in my right ear. Then, again with the big wet sandpaper tongue lapping my mug summons me back to reality, activating the deep primal instinct to survive—evincing in me a sense that it is not yet time. Then, a slow fade to black.

Its appetite for death and destruction momentarily satiated, The Monster, re-gathers itself, accelerating down the creek toward the unsuspecting populace of downtown Moody Seaport.

As It greedily races unimpeded down Moody Creek, through the car-laden overpass, and ultimately to the Moody Bay estuary, with no warning other than a rumbling, some would later describe as a bestial growling. It will engulf several buildings down by the waterfront. "Spontaneous combustion" is

the technical term of art used by the Fire Chief Ted Frawley. His hair, somehow perfect, dressed in his official polished brass-buttoned department best normally reserved for parades and awards ceremonies.

Within less than two hours after the initial blast, in front of a hastily assembled cluster of microphones, tangle of wires and TV cameras, the ceaseless click and flash of cameras punctuates the Chief's "media moment" debut. Mustering his most serious game face for the cameras, he obliges the media—the unspoken duty to provide disaster reality TV worthy of prime-time.

Behind a practiced expression of empathetic gravity, barely able to conceal their prurient lust for a good "if it bleeds, it leads" story, "*Spontaneous combustion levels town*" will become the lead line sound-byte of the perfectly coiffed broadcast carbon-copy news anchors and eye-candy anchoresses. Within three hours, sleepy little Moody Seaport is massively invaded by legions of ravenous mass media, dozens of huge semi-trailers each with several satellite dish uplinks.

By the time the gasoline finally burns itself off, several hours later in the Bay, 26 innocents will have been senselessly killed and scores injured, some of whom months later would still be hospitalized with horrific second and third degree burns.

- Chapter 3 (46) -

*Purple haze all in my brain...
Lately things just don't seem the same
Actin' funny, but I don't know why.
Excuse me while I kiss the sky.
-Purple Haze - Jimi Hendrix*

Moody Seaport, Washington State
October 12, 2001 Saturday 10:36 PM
An ICU hospital room at St. Paul's Hospital

My eyes seem super-glued shut as I struggle to open first the left with not much success, then the right, with a lot more effort I have a little more success and manage to get it only half open, only to see through the dried gritty detritus of mucus, a blurred image—a massive face peering down at me—no hair anywhere, no eyebrows, a huge watermelon of a cranium. It's Mr Clean. It is my worst nightmare. I have awakened trapped in some beyond banal TV soap commercial. I now fully appreciate Joyce's, *history is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.*"

"Does your face hurt you...it's killing me," says the Hawk, in a bad attempt at humor and a worse attempt at a Groucho Marx impression about two octaves too high.

"Only hurts when I laugh...not much danger of that with your tired *shtick*," I'm barely able to whisper, each word scrapping out of my throat like a wood rasp on my larynx.

"*Waaater...waaater...*" I plead, like a febrile survivor from the clutches of Death Valley.

Hawk pours me a glass with a straw.

I toss the straw out, and down the whole glass. "*Mo-o-re...*" I say. I chug another glass, which now allows me to speak above a whisper, "What the *hell* happened?"

"A gasoline pipeline blew, man. Secondary blast...you got some serious air...and hang time," says Hawk in his normal soprano high pitch register. Despite his enormous bulk, after the merciless beating he took in Berkeley, in which his larynx was crushed, his voice has remained incongruously high pitched; when excited, rivaling soprano Rene Fleming hitting a high 'C'.

As I try to focus my eyes, I can begin to make out the vague outline of my surroundings. The first thing I notice is the tubes, lots and lots of tubes

and wires, too many to count, emanating from both sides of the bed, all terminating at the same nexus in various orifices and bandaged appendages of my body. Ordinarily, not a good sign.

As I instinctively struggle to sit up, Hawk's massive paw gently but firmly forces my head back against the pillow.

"Where's *Osito*? He okay?" I ask.

"He's fine...when you did your double back-layout, and landed on the boulder, you slid into the creek...he beat me to ya. Jumped right in that icy water, with those webbed paws, swam about thirty feet in nothin' flat...hauled you out by your pants," says Hawk.

"That's my *booooy*. Where's Big Dawg now?"

"He's in the truck...hospital rules prohibit animals in the patient's rooms," says Hawk.

"Obviously they make exceptions."

"Hardy har har...you're a riot, Alice...a regular riot," Hawk says a la Ralph Cramden.

Then like a scene from Hitchcock's *Birds*, The White-coats start appearing, first two, then three and four, like scavengers, staring at me curiously like some sort of road-kill.

One of The White-coats, who seems to be the alpha of the flock, says, "*Mister* Kozlov, can you hear me okay? I am Doctor Khan, your Neurologist."

Now I know I'm in deep bird do-do. The only time anyone ever calls me *Mister* is when I am about to get reamed. Like the time I made the Dean's List, that would be the other Dean's List at UCB or my dance with the Draft Board back in '65.

Doctor Khan is a fifty-ish, short slight man with an olive complexion, deep-set coal black eyes under dark bushy eyebrows and thick unruly raven hair. After detecting a slight sing-song quality of his speech, I decide he's probably East Indian. Obviously not a central casting white-coat candidate for one of big tobacco's infamous "*Seven out of ten doctors recommend Menthol Kool cigarettes*" adverts.

"Hey Doc, Mister Kozlov's my old man. Like I'm *the Koz*...or Mick, if like...you're into the whole familiar bedside manner thing. So am I a serious candidate for last rites?"

"As you wish, Mr the Koz...and yes, you had a very close call," the Doc says.

"Okay. So, level with me...what's up Doc?"

"You have sustained a serious concussion from major trauma sustained from severe dorsal cranial impact," Doctor Khan says.

"Hey doc...a little less with the sustains...and cut to the chase," I say.

Whereupon Hawk does a hand puppet reenactment with one hand slowly rising up into the air, and then after rotating palm up, pausing dramatically, comes crashing into the other hand with a loud slap of the two huge slabs of meat, then sliding off, complete a with wily coyote crash and burn sound effect.

"Degree of difficulty, 3.6...but as you probably already know, the Russian judge scored you very low," says Hawk.

"Ha! Yea...my old man one of the judges? Ruskies...a tough crowd," I say.

Doctor Khan is not amused by the puppet show, although I do detect a fleeting smirk from the one Cute Lady White Coat. But the Doc is all business now, and says in a very ominous tone, mustering his gravest doctor face.

"This is the kind of injury that you must take very seriously. We still do not know if you have sustained brain damage...there is much more testing that needs to be done, EEG, CAT scan, and MRI before we can definitively diagnose the extent of your neurological damage, if any."

Again with the *sustains* and way too many of God's Waiting Room acronyms, just short of DOA.

This draws a synchronous and sagacious nod from the flock of White Coats, perched behind Doctor Khan, apparently *da Big Bird*.

"Brain damage? Well hell...the way you were talking, I thought it might be something like...*serious*. Since sixteen, like I've been brainin' my gourd on door jambs. So where do we go from here, Doc?"

Again, no response, not even the scintilla of a smile from the Doc, and nothing from Cute Lady White Coat, whose face seems to momentarily darken.

"Mr Koz, I don't think you and your colleague here appreciate the gravity of your situation. I was hoping that you would start cooperating and taking your predicament more seriously. Okay? The most important thing is that you get some rest. I'm going to administer some medications that will relax you and calm down your brain activity...so the imaging tests can be completed."

"Good luck with that Doc...might wanna double the recommended dosage," Hawk cuts in.

"You'll need to get a great deal of rejuvenating rest, and avoid getting into a state of excitement or worse, agitation by trying to recall the events that led to this injury. In short, little or no talking...until I believe you are ready. Despite their considerable, frankly bordering on rather aggressive persistence, I will not permit you to be interviewed by the local police or the FBI...certainly not the media which is very intent indeed on speaking with you," Doctor Khan says.

Now he's got my full attention, even for a barely shy of a clinical A-D-D., with 'neurological damage' complete with a sprinkling of 'major' and 'severe' and '*gravity*', the forces of which is what got me here in the first place.

Upon hearing 'police' and 'FBI' I look quizzically at Hawk, "FBI?"

"Say da secret wuyd and winna hun'd dollas, FBI, congradulations Mr Koz. Howbout a big hand for our lucky contestant!" says Hawk flashing his bald eyebrows, again with the Groucho "You Bet Your Life" routine. There is no applause, not a smile, not even a smirk from the choir of White Coats. Cute Lady White Coat manages a fleeting roll of her eyes, then in a millisecond it is gone. Very tough crowd.

"I'm going to give you an injection...you will lapse into a very deep and rejuvenating sleep for at least 12 hours, then we'll reevaluate your brain sine waves to see if they are calming down somewhat," Doctor Khan says.

As Doctor Khan is preparing the syringe, two men march through the door, the first, a Fast-Food-Fastso poured into a sausage of a Uniform, with pretentious dark aviator sunglasses that might have been cool maybe 20 years ago, and the obligatory motorcycle cop mustache framing an arrogant smirk that reeks of attitude from across the room.

What is it with these officious Barney Fife small town cops? Forget the cop-donut cliché, this super-size specimen of a walking Winnebago has obviously graduated to the "hard stuff"—a daily diet of at least two Double Whoppers with cheese, with extra mayo, a bucket of French fries, washed down with Giant 64 oz. Big Gulp. He is followed by a Short Suit, a rooster in a rumpled cadet-size J-C Penny's suit with shiny elbows—a classic high school PE coach type, with the requisite crew-cut. *What? No clipboard and whistle?*

Seeing the men enter, Dr Khan says, "I have already instructed you men. You can not have access to my patient, until I feel he is in a satisfactory enough condition to answer your questions, until it is approved by me you will be prohibited from access, is that clear? Now please leave."

"Yea, sure Doc...but..." Short Suit starts to say.

Suddenly Hawk glides between me and the two men with the silent lightning speed and grace of Bruce Lee. Hawk—more than even a blood brother could ever be, who would lay down in traffic for me, and I for him, is now on maximum protective alert, involuntarily, unconsciously the ropey vascular sinew of his considerable muscle mass is starting to tense into full readiness—full attack dog mode.

"What do you *not* understand about *leave*? Lemme translate it for ya...get the *hell* outta here. Now!" says Hawk.

Both the men, momentarily taken by surprise, retreat a few steps back, then the Uniform, regaining his composure, probably out of habit, rests his right hand on his baton. He looks like a one-man-band-of mayhem, with all manner of other deadly police regalia adorning his Sam Browne belt. Quickly, a little too quickly, he takes a step forward and starts to say something.

"I'm..." he barely gets it out.

"Don't!" I yell knowing what's coming.

But, it's too late. Hawk closes the ten feet separating the men from him in one giant stealthy movement, the only audible sound is a collective gasp from the Choir of White Coats witnessing a human lethal weapon being unleashed. Hawk, now has the Uniform on his back, his one hand clamped on the wrist of the hand now clutching baton, the other, vise-like, around his neck. The Uniform's face is now starting to cycle through the rainbow starting with red ending at blue. The ghastly sight of the whites of his bulging eyes, as they roll back into his head, draws an audible shriek from the Cute Lady White Coat. Apparently not the kind of stuff an intern usually sees on residency rounds. The room grows very silent, as the Choir along with the good Doctor Khan are standing motionless, speechless, in a synchronized jaw-dropped trance.

The Short Suit now draws his foot-long elephant gun of a service revolver from under his suit coat, screaming "Call off your dog *goddammit!* That's a Cascadia County Sheriff that he's attacking and I'm a Federal Officer, FBI. Tell him to stand down!" brandishing his weapon toward Hawk while flashing his badge from his breast suit pocket with his other noticeably shaking hand.

"Release Hawk! Release! " I command Rottweiler man.

Hawk, upon hearing "release", starts to loosen his grip on the neck of the Uniform, enough for the Uniform to force out a loud gasp for air, the only sound in the room. Slowly some color starts to return to the contorted face of the Uniform.

"*Platz brav! Platz! Gute Hund*, Hawk...I'm okay," I reassuringly say, just loud enough in German, so Hawk can hear *Down boy! Down! Good dog*.

Hawk hearing my words of reassurance, slowly releases the Uniform and in one effortless cat-like movement springs to his feet, landing about five feet away in a perfectly balanced 'crouching tiger' stance, staring down on the Uniform as if he were dog feces he had stepped in.

Another collective sigh of relief from the Chorus, the deafening sound of awkward silence, signifies to me that it would probably be a good time for me to defuse the situation with a little of my not-so-legendary humor. Sensing that I am dealing with two career cop caricatures who have been watching too much Reality Cop TV, I decide to proceed slowly, tactfully, so they can keep up.

"Uh," I eloquently start out. Sensing they are still following me, I continue my clinical dissertation on PTSD.

"As you may have noticed, my colleague Hawk here, has some issues with authority figures in uniforms, especially uniforms wielding batons. Oh...and for future reference, I might mention that he has a highly developed sense of protectiveness, in particular toward me," I diplomatically proffer.

I then nod to the Short Suit, whose hand has now stopped shaking, indicating that it's his turn to speak since the Uniform is still laying on the floor gasping for air, I shouldn't be expected to carry the whole conversation, especially in my fragile condition.

Nothing. Total silence, except for the Uniform now sputtering obscenities as he struggles to his feet while adjusting his Sam Browne, frantically searching for his sunglasses, probably in an attempt to mask the fear and humiliation still present in his eyes from being effortlessly pinned on his back by Rottweiler-man.

My impeccable sense of timing tells me to forge ahead.

"It might help relieve some growing tension that I'm starting to experience, counter-productive to my healing...if you were to stow that cannon away," I say while melodramatically throwing my bandaged head back, mopping my brow with the back of my hand, which draws another fleeting eye roll from Cute Lady White Coat. Scarlet O'Hara *eat ya haart out*.

The Uniform, now upright, is desperately trying to regain his composure and his imaginary control of the situation. As he re-affixes his aviator glasses, the frames bent in the scuffle, he's the only one in the room unaware that the glasses rest comically askew on his face, he says nodding at Hawk, "I'm going to arrest this...this menace...this pit bull...for assaulting a police officer and..."

"Rottie...actually," I correct him.

"Huh...what the...?" Uniform muses.

"We like to think of Hawk as more of a Rottweiler. The wide head, indicative of a much more intelligent breed, and I might add, possessed with an uncanny discerning judge of character...before deciding to eat one's face," I say.

The Short Suit, slowly, with practiced affectation holsters his Dirty Harry .357 Magnum. Hmm, the shorter the cop, the longer the gun. Very Freudian.

Lightly grasping the quaking-with-anger shoulder of the Uniform, Short Suit says "Office Gillespie, I'm sure this uh...incident is just an unfortunate misunderstanding. Perhaps it would be more productive for the investigation if we were to try to put this regrettable incident behind us...all of us."

"You see, gentlemen, my colleague's perhaps by some standards somewhat extreme reaction to Officer Gillespie here...to his seemingly threatening gesture triggered the fight or flight response not so uncommon to those carrying the curse of PTSD...from past traumatic incidents of police brutality," I explain.

"Lemme translate for you two morons. PTSD...Pig Traumatic Stress Disorder," adds Hawk with a wicked smile, indicating he's not yet quite done with the Uniform. Mr Nuance.

This causes the grasp on the shoulder of the Uniform to escalate to more of a restraining maneuver.

"Unfortunate term of art, that...Pig, retained from our early days of activism in the 60s. I do apologize for my colleague's insensitive reference to your noble profession of public service," I tactfully add.

Hmm. Everything you need for the famous Mexican Standoff scene in the Magnificent Seven, except for Mexicans, but then the *bandito* masterfully played by Eli Wallach, was a Polish Jew from Brooklyn.

In the Unreality Industry, especially the commercials and political propaganda stuff we had been shamelessly grinding out in the past as hired guns for the Media Mafia, like Hollywood, reality was a commodity that was bought and sold, and was seldom what it was tendentiously manipulated to be.

I cast my best wan gaze toward the good Doctor Khan, nodding. He along with the rest of the Choir is transfixed, still trying to process the last 5 minutes fraught with lethal mayhem. When someone physically witnesses violent, lethal behavior in the flesh, they are always amazed by the visceral violation of their senses, the sickening loud sound of colliding muscle and bone of the bodies, the ferocity of the groans, grunts of exertion by the combatants, and the vicious rapidity of movement, like two lions in mortal combat. Hollywood's depiction of violence void of the ambient scent of testosterone is just a cheap ersatz facsimile, because deep down inside you realize, "it's just a movie."

"Uh, Doc...when I nod at you, that's your cue to talk, to say something...preferably doctorly," I say.

This snaps him out of his trance and clearing his throat, "Uh...yes," hearing his own voice a full octave above normal, he starts again, an artificially full octave below his normal register, "despite the recent turn of events, which in fact may have caused a harmful serious stress response uh...including to Mr Mick here, I remain convicted that I will not allow Mr Mick to be available to answer any more of your questions, until I feel his medical condition is sufficiently satisfactory to do so," Doctor Khan admonishes.

"While you're coddling this...this person, those *goddam-terrsts* could be plotin' to blow up another city. And I dun-giva-shit about all this medical bullshit, I..." the Uniform starts to say when he's interrupted by the Short Suit.

"Officer Gillespie, since the FBI is the lead agency in this investigation, I'm going to have to ask you to wait outside while I confer with the good Doctor here to examine our options for proceeding with the investigation," says the Short Suit.

- Chapter 4 (47) -

So spake the grisly terror...
- Paradise Lost - John Milton

Well, there it is. *Terrsts*. So that's what all the fuss is about.

The Uniform gives one last futile attempt at intimidation of Hawk, with a jut of his jaw, and through the risible, crookedly perched sunglasses he unleashes the practiced ten second cop dead stare, then pivots and struts out of the room. More playground posturing. Men *will be* boys. Lady White Coat, is now visibly trying to stifle her laughter, tears streaming down her face. It is then, that I decide she might be worth getting to know—always was a sucker for a looker with a highly honed sense of the ironic.

Again with the automatically flashing the badge, "I am Federal *Special* Agent Charles Cunningham, working out of the Seattle FBI district office."

"Well how *special* for you. Got dat already...move on!" Hawk says impatiently still coming down from his adrenalin high.

With a patronizing smile, Suit continues, "Due to the preceding uh...encounter with Officer Gillespie, I feel that I should clarify the hierarchy of jurisdiction and authority of this investigation. Let me take this opportunity to make it perfectly that Officer Gillispie's role is essentially to provide local knowledge, support and logistics *only*."

"What a shame. I thought Jethro there and Hawk we were on their way to having a *very* powerful male bonding experience," I say.

"So Super-sized Sherlock, out there is basically what, a caddy?" the Hawkster says.

"For lack of a better term, correct. Any further contact and information that you can provide should be made directly with me. Some of what I am about to tell you, must not be released to the media, for fear of causing a panic. In our preliminary investigation, we have sufficient reason to believe that the explosion that you gentlemen witnessed, may have been an act of terrorism against the '*merican* Homeland."

We believe that a person or persons plotted to explode the Cascade Petroleum Pipeline to cause widespread property damage, and the death of many innocent '*mericans*'. The primary known suspect is one Hassan Mohamed Tehrani, of Iranian and Islamic origins whose Canadian passport indicates his current address was in Vancouver British Columbia.

His car was located in the parking lot of the scene. We have positive ID on his burnt cadaver, found in close proximity to the initial point of ignition of the pipeline, probably by a small explosive charge detonated by a remote

device, like the cell phone found on his body.

We're still working on the forensics of the detonation device and explosive medium. We have confirmed that he was an Electrical Engineering major at UBC Vancouver, and quite capable technically of engineering an I-E-D...an improvised explosive device, for remote detonation. Our records further indicate Tehrani was detained and interviewed at the Peace Arch Crossing onto U.S. soil by an alert U.S. Customs and Immigration Officer about one hour before the blast, who detected an unusual degree of nervousness and suspicious behavior. But, regrettably, without sufficient legal grounds, he was released after about a half-hour of questioning," the Short Suit says.

"And this has what to do, if anything, with us?" says Hawk.

"You and Mr Kozlov are material witnesses to the aftermath this heinous crime. We understand that you witnessed the presence of another vehicle, that just after the initial explosion, would have appeared to be trying to flee the crime scene. Since Mr Kozlov was apparently almost struck by that vehicle, we believe enlisting the cooperation of you and Mr Kozlov, would be our best hope in attempting to identify the license plate, make, model and year of that vehicle to identify its occupant or occupants as possible accomplices," the Short Suit says.

"Uh...Chuck. You heard the Doc. *Mr Mick* ain't in *no* condition to talk to *you*...end of story. Full stop. And as far as me cooperating with the cops or the Feds? Got a better chance of winning the lotto...*without* buyin' a ticket," says Hawk.

The patina of politeness now gone, the pasty smile evaporates, as he tries, unconvincingly, to summon his best J. Edgar Hoover game face, with contrived earnestness, "This is a matter of utmost National Security. There could be many lives at risk. I had hoped that you would voluntarily cooperate, but if you will not, I can compel your testimony with a court order. So I would strongly advise you to reconsider your position, or..."

Just about then his patience wearing thin after overhearing all this verbal jousting, the Uniform swaggers back in, "Enough of this *bullshit*...let's just take this falsetto albino to the slammer for assaulting a police officer."

"Well, well, if it isn't the Supersized Barney Fife makin' mit da big wuyds. Not bad. Here's your new words for the day. *Intentional infringement of civil rights*," Hawk says.

"Unless you start *fully* cooperating and I mean *right now*...you'll be hearing from the Justice Department, and I personally will be recommending filing charges against you and this...hairless albino gorilla in a man-suit for obstruction of justice," the Suit says.

"And here's few more words to make your day. Simon, Gabriel Shapiro, and my personal fav, *punitive damages* for attempted intimidation and threat of retaliation under color of police authority," I say.

The Short Suit, turning pale, says, "Uh...*the* Simon Gabriel Shapiro?"

"Bingo...Chuckles! Yeap...S. G. Shapiro, the *one and only*, also known as Sui Generis Shapiro alias Daddy," says Hawk through a derisive smile framing his pointy mouse-teeth. A dream come true. I had always secretly yearned for the opportunity to use that old Borscht Belt throwaway uh...tautology "*I believe you know my attorney Mr Shapiro?*"

Now, even the mere mention of the name S. G. Shapiro inspires an uncommon fear and more than an equal measure of loathing among U.S. government law enforcement and lawyers, most especially the Justice Department, who have felt the wrath of his sword, meting out his firebrand sense of Constitutional justice.

He is a legendary lion in U.S. Con Law. Having given a legal woodshedding to the U.S. Justice Department lawyers in front of the Supremes on many occasions. President Bush, 41 nominated him Chief Justice of United States Court of Appeals, Second Circuit to attempt to preempt him out of circulation, only to have the nominations "Borked" by the Senate, which only succeeded in pissing him off even further. A bane and boil on the backside of those in the U.S. government, who would attempt to *trample on the constitutional rights of the powerless*, he lived to take on "Uncle Sammy". He makes William Kunstler, the legendary lawyer for marginalized social outcasts, including the Chicago Seven look like a pusillanimous pussycat.

He is also the father of one Ad Hoc Shapiro, my pal. Literally conceived by his Papa for the sole purpose to perpetuate the name of the great legal legacy of the famous Shapiro's of New York. Impressive pedigree—his mother, Bridgette Fontaine was Canadian from Francophone Montreal, a ballerina in the Canadian National Ballet, who when performing in NYC, met the beguiling and dashing S. G. who literally charmed her tutu off. As a child Hawk often summered in Montreal, with French his second language. At least four generations of lawyers—all very successful and all *very* wealthy. So Hawk's *raison d'etre* was the last clear biological chance for the aging legal giant to perpetuate the Shapiro Brand.

In early American juris mythology it is rumored that it was Simon Shapiro The Elder who, in what would become de facto precedent for the American Indian Treaty tradition, negotiated with the Indians on behalf of the Pilgrims, to trade the aboriginals for food and sustenance in exchange for the worthless shiny brass buttons and belt buckles of the notoriously parsimonious proto-capitalist Calvinists, enabling the Pilgrims to survive the first winter at Plymouth Rock. They would later repay the Indians for their generous largesse by seizing their land without fair compensation and infecting their relatively pristine vulnerable immune systems with all manner of deadly European microbes. Lawyers—the second oldest profession.

So A. H. Shapiro, breezing through law school without breaking a sweat, was dutifully following the August family tradition of a career in the law, a scary smart legal savant, another *Sui Generis*, with a sobriquet sometimes derisively whispered, never to his face, "A Boy Named Sui",

because even though he was this massive man-child, he had taken ballet class as a college elective, and was smitten in particular with the strength, grace and pure athleticism of the legendary Mikhail Baryshnikov, principal dancer for the Kirov Ballet of Leningrad. This meshed nicely with his study of the balletic martial arts of Karate and Tae Kwon Do. When the trajectory of our impetuous idealistic youth fortuitously, violently collided with the vicious blows of a cop's baton, he was third year at UC Berkeley Boalt School of Law.

It was supposed to have been a peaceful non-violent SDS demonstration for the First Amendments Free Speech Rights of students on the UCB campus in 1964. He was well on his way to *summa cum laude*, of course specializing in Con Law, when the campus cop scrambled his considerable brains with that baton.

The gratuitous brutal beating that Hawk sustained to his skull caused the onset of unpredictable bouts of inexplicable rage and erratic violent behavior, occasionally followed by epic epileptic *gran mall* seizures. End of Law School. End of Family Tradition. And almost End of Story, as he spiraled into a deep suicidal depression from having disappointed his not-so understanding, demanding Daddy.

That was when I took him under my wing, to try to distract him from his crippling self-destructive depression. Wholly unsympathetic to the "excuses" proffered by Hawk, the "law school dropout"; it would ultimately result in the death of the legendary, prestigious family brand, and an uneasy peace with protracted episodes of silent estrangement between the Hawkster and S. G.

According to an ancient Chinese proverb, the person whose life you have saved is indebted to you for the rest of their days but moreover, you through the act of saving their life, are now responsible for their life. Or, the Judeo-Christian flavor—being your brother's keeper. So for over thirty years, I had been Hawk's brother and keeper and now, whether I liked it or not, I was going to be the charge of this man-child who could do a 'Rubic's Cube' in Guinness Book record time, but couldn't figure out how to pay his cell phone bill on time.

"Okay...smart guys play your cutesy little games, have your fun...go ahead and lawyer up. But this isn't over," sputters The Short Suit, as he does a hasty about face, and stomps out of the room, with the Uniform in tow.

"Uh...that *really* went well. Apparently Chuckles and Jethro do not share our appreciation for playful and if I do say so myself, exceedingly clever *bons mots*...a trifle too nuanced?" I say.

"And why do I get the feeling that neither of them was impressed with our *nonpareil* command of daytime TV Trivia?" Hawk says.

Doctor Khan, now sensing the final flourish of this bad vaudevillian farce, does a volume check by clearing his throat, "Uh...hem" then seemingly

satisfied with timbre and amplitude, desperately attempting to regain control of his carefully cultivated omniscient doctor persona, seizes command of the situation with, "Okay gentlemen now that we are, *hopefully*, through with the theatrics, I must insist that we forge ahead here. Mr Mick, I'm *now* going to give you this injection of a very powerful drug to induce a deep coma-like sleep. I must warn you that some patients report side effects ranging from mild euphoria, to the equivalent of an episode akin to a what you might call an LSD bad...uh journey, I believe is the term of art."

"Okay...Doc. Look, could ya give us just a minute here, in private, we've got a few things to discuss, before you knock me out. Can you come back in about an hour?" I say.

"*Mister Koz*, as your doctor, I must warn you that unless you are willing to follow my instructions explicitly, I cannot guarantee that your capricious behavior will not exacerbate your injuries," he turns to leave, as he is walking out, "Okay. *One* hour," says Dr. Khan over his shoulder.

"*Sheez...what* grouch," Hawk says a la Ed Norton from *The Honeymooners*, while holding up the front page of the local fish wrap, The Moody Seaport Sentinel. The huge bold headline reads, *Terrorist Attack kills 26, Scores Injured*. He then flips the paper below the fold, and gestures a la Vanna White, to an article, "This is from the local paper the day after the blast. It went AP and UPI, including The Vancouver Sun," Hawk then begins to read:

Local Man Injured While Heroically coming to the aid of victims of Terrorist Act.

Michaelangelo Kozlov of Moody Seaport was seriously injured on October 10th, while trying to go to the aid of victims of the pipeline blast at Moody Seaport Falls Park, said his business associate, A.H. Shapiro who was with him at the scene, when he "rushed head-long into the fiery maelstrom", he told this reporter.

Mr Shapiro related the fact that Mr Kozlov narrowly missed being struck by a car, fleeing the scene at a high rate of speed just after the blast. It is believed by authorities that the occupant(s) of that vehicle may have been accomplices to the terrorist's attack, in which it is alleged that the prime suspect is a Mr Hassan Mohammed Tehrani, of Vancouver BC., reportedly deceased from injuries sustained in the explosion. He is alleged to have detonated a bomb using his mobile phone, that ruptured the gasoline pipeline, causing the massive explosion.

Mr Shapiro stated, "because of the heavy smoke and low visibility", Mr Kozlov was not able to discern any further information about the identity of the car or the possible co-conspirators. Mr Kozlov was the last person to talk to Mr Tehrani before he expired at the scene.

Authorities are eager to talk to Mr Kozlov.

Mr Kozlov is currently in Intensive Care at Saint Paul's Hospital with a severe concussion and possible traumatic brain injury stated his physician, Doctor Khan. His condition remains guarded but stable, he told the Sentinel.

"Downright heroic," says Hawk.

"Homeric, even...tisk...tisk," I say air-drumming my fingers.

"Man, I hate these *goddamn* hospitals, breeding grounds for staph infections. Seems like a lotta people enter hospitals vertical and leave horizontal, red-tag on the big toe. I'd like ta pull all these *friggin'* wires 'n tubes outta me and like *tout suite*...like *pronto* blow this place."

As I am expounding philosophical, I notice a man and woman, patiently standing in the doorway, for how long, I have no idea. Both appear to be in their mid-fifties. He is very dignified looking, tall and erect, with thick wavy gray hair, the strong chin and the deep-set smoldering eyes of an Omar Sharif, wearing a black well-tailored suit, a starched collar white shirt and black tie. She is quite a bit shorter, with mournful, kind eyes, full-figured, but dressed in a flattering elegant black tailored pants suit with sensible but expensive shoes—understated *haute couture* that shouts elegance and money.

"*Mee-ster* Kozlov?" he asks.

"Who wants to know?" snarls the Hawkster.

"That depends. If you're here to tell me I've just won the Super Mega-millyon lotto, uh...that *would* be me," I say.

"*Mee-ster* Kozlov, I am Doctor Amir Tehrani and this is my wife, Donya. We are the parents of Hassan Tehrani, may we please come in and talk with you. I promise you we won't take up much of your time, we would deeply appreciate any time you could spare us. As you know our son, Hassan, is being accused of a heinous crime of terrorism. We understand you talked to our son before he...*ascended* and we..."

I interrupt him, "Dr and Mrs Tehrani, is it? I'm very sorry, but what was said was in a language that I could not understand. It sounded Middle Eastern, to me. So I don't think I can be of much help to you. I am so sorry for your loss...now if you'll please excuse us, we have some business to take care of," I say.

Donya Tehrani steps forward, now close enough to the bed to touch me, with tears streaming down her face, "*Mee-ster*: Kozlov, our son is *no* terrorist...please if you could just give us a few minutes...we think he came down to Moody Seaport to see a friend, a lady friend that we had forbidden him to see any longer," when she is interrupted by the husband, "Donya...do not beg. You are causing me humiliation in front of these gentlemen. Thank you for your time Mr Kozlov. We won't take up any more of it. Come Donya,

we must get back to Vancouver before the border shuts down for the night."

She stands there motionless, just staring at me. The pleading eyes of a crestfallen mother of a fallen child. It doesn't matter what the child may have done—a serial murderer—it is always the same in any culture, in any language, the loss of child is unbearable. And always...always with the—*but he's a good boy.*

I look at Hawk, he looks at the forlorn Mrs Tehrani, back to me, shrugs, then nods his huge head.

"Okay...I guess we can give you few minutes," I relent.

She smiles with gratitude, "Thank you so very much. The girl's name is Jennifer something...he never did tell us her last name because our son was afraid Amir would contact her family and make a scene. All we know is that she is a student at Moody University. Because she is not a believer, we had insisted that he stop seeing her. He said he would honor his parents wishes. We thought it had ceased...apparently we were wrong. When we were contacted by the RCMP uh, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that was investigating this in British Columbia we told them, about this Jennifer, they said it didn't matter. The U.S. government had proof that he was there and that there was conclusive evidence of a sophisticated bomb that caused the explosion, had been planted not far from where his car was parked. If you could remember anything...anything at all that he said when you found him, it might help us to find the truth...or even something about the car that might lead us to her. We think she was there...and she would be able to tell us what really happened on that horr-ible afternoon," she says.

"I wish I could remember but...", before I can say another word, Hawk abruptly says to the man, "Leave us your contact info and if we think of anything, we'll get back to you."

"Thank you so very much for your kindness in indulging my wife," the dignified Doctor Amir Tehrani says handing Hawk a business card out of an expensive Moroccan leather billfold from his vest pocket.

"Exceeding thank yous...to you Mr Kozlov. We wish that Allah graces you with a rapid and complete recovery and we look forward to hearing from you...*As-salamu alaykum,*" Donya Tehrani says gently patting my wrist.

After they exit the room, "What the hell was *that* about, building up false hope in that poor distraught woman. We don't know anything about that car. You said it yourself in the newspaper that there was too much smoke to make out anything about the car," I say.

"*Au contraire mon ami*...that's not exactly what I said. What I did say was that because of the heavy smoke and low visibility, *Mr Kozlov was not able to discern any further information about the identity of the car;*" Hawk says with that impish smile.

"So did *you* see something?" I say.

"Nope...not at the time but..." pausing dramatically "that new Sony Digital DSR-200 video cam sure did. I had it set on low light, high-gain...just like daylight," he says.

"You mean you were rolling the whole time and never told anybody including the cops and FBI...including me?" I say.

"Yeap...and yeap. And by the way, I just told you," he says with that impish man-child smile.

"*Goddammit* man, that's withholdin' evidence, obstruction of an investigation etcetera *and* etcetera. Man...if they find out, you're talking serious hard time in Toto-land Leavenworth," I say.

"Koz, there's something that stinks about this whole terrorist narrative. That this kid...a very wealthy grad student at UBC who apparently had everything to live for, would do something like this. Like man, some things just don't compute. So I didn't want the Feds to confiscate the footage until we had a chance to look into it a little. Besides, I didn't like that Fatso cop's attitude. He's got some major anger management issues...very unbecoming," he deadpans.

"Ah...maybe you could give him some pointers?" I say.

"Well actually..."

"*Have* you been watching Dr. Phil again on Oprah?" I say with feigned accusation, "so what's buggin' ya about this deal, man?" I say

"Busted. No...*but seriously folks*, when you jumped out of the truck, behaving as the trained professional that I am, I instinctively shouldered the camera...and was rolling just when that car almost had your lunch. I panned with it as it raced out of the parking lot, and got a decent shot of the rear of the car before it disappeared. So, I did a frame capture of the car, loaded it into Photoshop and *voila*, through the magic of digital sharpening and enhancing, I got a pretty clean image of the car, enough to be able to make out the plate number, and the make of the car, late model red Corvette. Washington state plates with a local dealer license plate frame...*Cascadia Chevrolet*," he says.

"Yea...I take your point. Highly unlikely...a 'terrorst's' nest, in North Cascadia County, Islamic anyway. And driving a Corvette? Not your typical terrorist's profile...or ride," I say.

"And get this, with a personal plate...*S-U-P-R-M-A-N*? I don't think so...and there's something else that stinks about this whole deal. If it happened the way the Feds say it did, how could an alleged terrorist, who is an electrical engineer be stupid enough blow himself up, using a remote detonation device? Not buyin-it. And why would he be carrying that young boy in his arms? What...terrorists remorse?" he says.

"Hmm...yea, again, pretty thin...definitely malodorous," I say.

"One other thing...I had the highly directional shotgun microphone mounted on the camera on. I got all the audio between you and the kid. There's a lot of background noise, the roar of the fire etcetera, but I loaded it into the

computer, Audacity, the open source sound editing program, and ran it through a bunch of high pass filters and was able to remove lot of the low frequency background noise, the rumbling and roar of the fire etcetera. If we were to play the cleaned up audio for Hassan's peeps, I'll bet they could tell us what he said to you before he died. Might tell us something," he says.

"Certainly more than we know now. Maybe after I get outta here, we can get Hassan's father to listen to it. Under no circumstances do I think they should ever see the video. Just too horrific to see the aftermath of your kid being barbequed alive. I don't think the mother could handle even hearing it...her kid's dying words. Dump the audio off the computer on to one of our portable MP3 players. If he's open to it, we'll run it up to Van City and have him listen to it...maybe translate it," I say.

Again, in the doorway, I see a man standing there, motionless, shoulders hunched over, just staring downward. Amazing what a little national press can do for a gal's popularity. He is maybe in his early thirties but it is hard to tell because of his disheveled appearance. With a three day beard, and dark circles under his reddened eyes, he's sporting a Tommy Hilfiger designer jogging suit, that looks slept in, bedroom slippers and a Rolex. His morning hair is all over the place, lank and oily.

I start to crack-wise with a " I am sorry no more autographs tonight...Elvis has left the building," but I reconsider because of his obviously emotionally drained and defeated appearance.

Hawk starts to say something, uh...Hawkish, but I wave him off.

"Can I help you?" I say.

There is a long pause, then he looks up at me with his eyes tearing up, with the obvious anguish and grief of someone who is going through a living hell, and just catatonically stares at me. For almost a full minute, the room is silent except for the buzzing and humming of the medical monitoring devices. Then he does the zombie shuffle towards us, coming to an unsteady stop, reeking of alcohol. He begins moving his lips, but no discernible words come out. Finally, he clears his throat, wipes the tears from his cheek with his sleeve, and says in a very low voice, barely audible, "My name is John Allison...I am the District Attorney of Cascadia County."

"Can you speak a little louder Mr Allison, my hearing is not quite back to normal from the explosion. Can we get you some water?"

He shakes his head no.

"What can I do for you, Mr Allison?" I say.

Now seemingly more composed, and a little louder, "I'm sorry to bother you...but I just had to come here tonight...could not sleep...haven't slept for two days. I don't dare close my eyes tonight...for fear of the images that haunt me...of my wife and my two girls being killed...no...burned alive, from the...explosion. I am not here in my official capacity as DA. I...I...just need to know how da hell this could happen...how something like this could *ever*

happen to my children...and my wife, the love of my life...to try to make some sense out of it. What kind of god is this Allah, that would command his followers to wage war...to slaughter innocent 'merican women and children? How could my Lord Jesus and Savior, allow this evil thing to happen. Am I being punished? Tell me how this could...*why...why*, what kind of insanity caused the loss of my family...and shattered my life forever?"

A palpable pall of grief hangs over the room, rendering both Hawk and I speechless.

Finally, "Mr Allison, we're so very sorry for your loss...but unfortunately, we probably do not know much more than you. All we know, at the moment, is what the news has reported...that it was an act of terrorism. Honestly I can't remember much about what happened because of the head trauma," I say.

Hawk quickly adds, "An alleged act of terrorism."

John Allison just stares at us blankly, then says, "Okay...I...I just came here tonight...because I could not bear to be alone in our bed. Her lovely scent still on the bedding from makin' love that morning...a beautiful bright sunny morning...so full of promise. And her closet full of clothes and shoes...so many shoes, impossible to ever fill. Staring at the empty beds of my precious little girls. No more kiss goodnight from Daddy...gone...all gone, everywhere I look...toys and dolls...all over the house, ghostly reminders. I thought that somehow connecting with someone who survived this...this...might in some strange way help me to connect with my family. I know it doesn't make any sense, but...I...I won't take any more of your time."

John Allison, then slowly turns, head down, hunched over like a hundred year old man with the weight of the world on his shoulders, and drags his concrete feet out of the room.

"Poor bastard. All that stuff about Allah and innocent American civilians...and *his* Jesus? Probably not a particularly good time to bring up the Crusades...for *Chrissakes*?" Hawk says.

"Ya think? Maybe a trifle insensitive. After I get outta here, we definitely need to take a little drive up to Van City BC," I say.

Just about that time the good doctor Khan strolls into the room snapping his surgical glove cuff to get our attention. The squirting syringe would have been enough to get Hawk's undivided attention. Now wearing a no-more-doctor-nice-guy mischievous, determined look on his face, "*Mister Koz*?"

Seeing the needle, Hawk who is afraid of no man, unless he's wearing a white coat with a syringe in his hand, says, "Just leavin' doc, see ya Koz...sweet dreams."

Before I can even object, seizing the element of surprise he deftly inserts the needle of the syringe into the IV tube already connected to the vein in my right arm. Bingo. Almost instantaneously, I begin to feel the effects of

the drug. Lights out. Suddenly, it's velvet black night. Like a runaway eighteen wheeler, I'm careening ninety miles an hour down a steep, winding, mountainous highway of 100 miles of bad road...faster...and faster, sliding tires squealing louder and louder with no headlights and no brakes. Maybe the Doc had it right. A *very* bad journey uh... trip would not do it justice.

Then, with the house lights dimming, the movie starts, making Francis Ford Coppola's masterwork surrealistic Apocalypse Now, the definitive anti-war film, look like an episode of the Muppets.

An incoherent tortured montage of...

The young Hassan Tehrani pleading with me, screaming in agony, helplessly watching him die a horrific death.

The limp lifeless body of the horribly burned little boy.

The cloying smell of burnt flesh still stubbornly lingering in my nostrils

- Chapter 5 (48) -

Moody Seaport, Washington State - October 15, 2001 10:25 am
A hospital room at St. Paul's Hospital

"How long have I been...out?" I ask still half-groggy from the battery of coma inducing sedatives.

"On and off...a coupla days. Lots of tests. CAT and every other acronym scans of your gourd and gray matter. Like up, down, sideways, continuous...and often," Hawk says.

"Find anything?" I say.

"Nope. Nada. Coulda told 'em not to bother...save a lot of time and money... 'cause ain't nothing up there to find...like a *tabula rasa* man," Hawk says grinning.

"Ha...ha...a regular riot, Alice. Make yourself useful and pour me some water. My mouth's like the Gobi desert," I say.

I chug two glasses.

"More...could sure do with a pint of Guinness right now," I say.

"Slow down man...that'll be our first stop after we bust ya outta here."

"Speaking of which...get my clothes will ya. I'm blowin' this germ factory, like yesterday man," I say.

"Not so fast...you're hooked up to like 10 different *apparati*...not to mention a catheter in *Monsieur* Wilson drainin' into a diddy bag on the side of the bed," Hawk says.

"Jesus," I say, reaching down to feel the tube leading out of the covers.

I throw the sheet back to expose the catheter.

"Like...this *really* sucks man."

"Uh...yea? That's the general idea," Hawk says.

I reach down and tug on the end of the exposed catheter.

"Ouch...that hurt. I want this thing outta me...now!" I say.

"Hey, go easy man. It's a Foley catheter, so first we gotta release the fluid from the balloon which keeps it from sliddin' outta your bladder...like this," Hawk says deflating it.

"So, how do you know about all this stuff?" I say

"From experience, when I was in that coma for few weeks in Berkeley in '64? So anyway, there are two schools of thought on this

procedure. "A" you can slowly try to slide it out...one agonizing millimeter at a time...or "B" which I personally prefer....just yank it out...get it over with, like this," he says grabbing on to it and yanking it out in one continuous motion.

"Oww! *Goddammit* man...that *really* fuckin' hurt!" I scream wildly swinging both fists at his massive bicep in retaliation, tears streaming down my cheeks while scissor kicking my legs in pain.

"Done. Trust me the other way is more like death from a thousand paper cuts. *Awh*...did my big brave Koz get an *owie*?" he says laughing his high pitched man-child giggle.

"Don't *even* try to pretend that you didn't enjoy doing that."

Silence...just that familiar mischievous smirk framing an over abundance of mouse teeth.

"I thought so...don't just sit there grinnin'. Help me get all these wires and tubes disconnected...before the Doc comes in," I say.

We just get everything disconnected, when the alarm on the heart monitor starts screeching, bringing in a nurse running at full speed.

"And just *what* do you think you're doing?" she sternly says.

"What's it look like? I'm checkin' outta here...and don't try to stop me or I'll sick my Rottweiler on ya," I say.

Hawk then turns to face the nurse and starts savagely barking and growling, baring his teeth.

A blood curdling scream leaps from her mouth, as she runs out of the room yelling, "Doctor! Doctor! Stat! Stat!"

"Well said. Oso would be duly impressed with your rabid response. Now...let's blow," I say.

Even though my legs are a little shaky from several days of being completely sedentary, I get dressed in record time. We are standing at the elevator, when door opens with Doctor Khan stepping out, his deep set coal black eyes staring at us under his bushy black eyebrows knitted with incredulity.

"Hi Doc...just on our way out. Thanks for all the uh...hospitality. Bye," I say breezily as we step past him into the elevator.

As the elevator door slowly closes on a truncated, "But...you..." and as it begins to descend Hawk says, "Did the Doc seem somewhat at a loss for words?"

"Hmm...not so much as a single 'sustain'. The word that springs to mind uh...quizzical?"

"Puzzled...even," Hawks says scratching his head in mock confusion.

When we get down to the hospital parking lot, my huge dog Oso who is poised on the front seat of the truck, eyes patiently fixed on the entrance to

the hospital, spies me.

"Oso...come here boy! Come to papa bear!" I yell slapping my chest with both hands.

He immediately starts barking frantically, jumps out the passenger side window his big body barely fitting through the opening and races over to me, rising on his hind legs, he puts his massive webbed paws on my shoulders, almost bowling me over, barking and whining, lapping my face with his huge pink sandpaper tongue. I sink my hands into the thick fur, grabbing his huge head shaking it side to side, then give him a big hug.

"*Osito!* Man, did I ever miss you, big boy!"

Oso

In was in the late fall of 1999, that I was hiking and taking pictures of the fall colors on Mount Baker at Artist's Point, when I came upon a huge dog, a mixed breed with a pure white head and solid black body. His massive white head was caught in the under-brush. He had no tags, nothing but a blue bandana around his neck which was caught on a limb of one of the branches, and when he tried to move, it choked him. His coat was dirty and matted with brush and debris, he looked like his owner hadn't been very attentive to his needs. He was just lying there, exhausted, tongue hanging out, panting wildly. I freed him, and gave him some water from my canteen, his big tongue lapped up 3 cupped handfuls. For about an hour I tried to find his owner. No luck. So I decided to leave the Big Dog, certain the owner would connect with him. But the dog followed me back to my pick-up truck at the trail head. There were no other vehicles at the trail head, but I figured the owner would come back, so I decided to leave him at the trail head.

I said to the Big Dog, "Guess this where you and I part company, big boy...your owner should be along shortly looking for ya."

But when I opened the door to get in, the dog, maybe 150 lbs. standing three feet high, effortlessly just jumps into the front seat, walks over to the passenger side of the seat, sits down with front paws on the dashboard like some impatient person and stares forward. I get in the truck, and look at the dog, who turns to me, and starts barking, "*Man, like let's get movin'...andale!*" "Sorry boy, not movin' fast enough for ya, huh?"

So I take the Big Dog home, where he devours about a pound of fresh ground-round. I give him a much needed bath, and brush out his thick black body coat, then his all white massive head, including his ears, which he loves. With a full belly, clean and content, he soon falls fast asleep on the floor of the living room. But within a few minutes the dog's legs start twitching—nightmares, whining in his sleep. Not a good sign.

About midnight, in the upstairs master bedroom, the creaking floor boards from the weight of footsteps, alarm me that someone was in the room. I

instinctively reached for my 9mm handgun which I keep in a special holster on the headboard of the bed, ever since that night in Tahoe when Marla and I were setup to be killed in an explosion...in what was supposed to look like an accident. Sadly, Marla had not survived it...dying in my arms. And even after fifteen years, that terrible night is revisited countless times in nightmares. Even though, I *know* who ordered the hit...I still don't have enough definitive proof...as I want to make sure that the main perpetrator, J. Murdoch Mahoney, can't lawyer up and wriggle off the hook because of inadequate circumstantial evidence if ultimately I decide to turn it over to the law. Unless I take care of it with my own hands, which I must admit is a personally more appealing resolution. But in the meantime there's a high probability that Captain Ahab still has some unfinished business with *moi*, to silence me, due to my knowledge of some very damaging facts about him that only I, Marla and Pauly Berman knew—both now dead. Pauly from natural causes, a protracted and painful end from leukemia.

I quietly chambered a round under the covers to muffle the sound. After my eyes adjust to the dark, in the dimly lighted room I can barely make out Big Dog walking around the room seemingly checking the perimeter, then he walks over to my side of the bed, and puts his huge head on the side of the bed next to my hand. I pet him briskly, and say, "that's a good boy..." whereupon he jumps on to the bed, stepping on me with his huge webbed paws, with the full force his full hulking mass narrowly missing my *cojones*... drawing an "*umphhhh*" from me, does a three-sixty and plops down on the other side of the king-size bed with his head on my lap next to my left hand. He nudges it with his wet nose until I place it on his massive head, as I holster the gun with my right. Within minutes, we both fall into a deep, contented sleep.

The next day I put an ad in the local paper in the lost and found pets section with a description and location found. Nothing, for about a week—now I'm getting very attached to this Big Dawg. I had bought him a collar and brushed him out almost every day...which he loves. About a week later, I get a call. The caller correctly identifies that the dog had a blue bandana and no tags, which only the owner could know.

When the owner comes to pick him up, he's driving a beat-up, old pick-up. I go out to meet him with Big Dawg. He is tall skinny, and unkempt, with long greasy stringy hair wearing a ball cap that's filthy, like the rest of his clothes. The owner seeing the dog, reaches into the truck for a thick rope with a slip knot for an improvised leash. He smiles revealing his yellow rotting teeth, and calls to him, "Here Bozo...come here boy...come to Sammy."

The dog bares his teeth slightly with a low half-growl bark. As the owner starts to walk toward him, he gets down low and starts barking ferociously, whereupon I grab him by the collar. It's all I can do to restrain him.

I say, "Looks like he's not real happy to see ya uh...Sammy."

The owner snarls back, "Hey that's *my* dog, man...let 'em go," and takes the end of the rope and starts slapping it hard, against the ground, as he moves toward the Big Dawg, like he's going to beat him. Now the dog is going crazy...barking bearing his teeth.

"Stop right there, man...he's not buyin' it and neither am I," I said.

The owner yells, "Let go of my fucking dog...or..."

"...or what," I say.

Sammy takes a step closer and telegraphs a wild right hand, which I easily block, grab his arm, and put it behind him, with him yelling obscenities.

"So Sammy...just how much pain are you willing to endure before you shut the hell up?" I say, giving it just enough pressure until he becomes quiet.

"Okay...that's better. Now let's see if we can facilitate a little attitude correction, without you ending up with a broken humerus," I say.

"Humorous? This aint fuckin' funny, man. That fuckin' dog is worth a lot of money...you can't just take him. I'll call the fuckin' cops and tell them you stole my dog...and that you assaulted me...you *muthafucker!*" Sammy screams.

Sigh.

I walk him around to the back of his truck, "Somehow I get the feeling that you *really* don't want to call the cops...just for starters looks like your registration tabs are about 2 years past due...and maybe there's a few warrants out on you...traffic and probably assorted other offenses," I say.

"Go *fuck* yourself...*fuck*-face." Sammy yells.

"Not a particularly compelling uh...*prima facie* argument. Apparently, what we've got *hiya*, uh...Sammy is a *failya ta communicate*," I say giving it my best Strother Martin as in Cool Hand Luke with a little more lift of his arm.

"Stop it, man...you're gonna break it!" Sammy yells.

"So here's what I propose. A little business proposition. I've got two crisp Benjamins. They're yours, if you get in that piece of shit pick-up and drive off, and forget about the dog...forever. Got it?" I say.

"He's a fuckin' Great Pyrenees man, he's worth a lot more than that," Sammy whines.

"Maybe half Great Pyrenees...the other half, with the all black body and webbed paws looks like Newfoundland. No matter. But if I call the Humane Society, they'll probably impound him...and you'll get nothing, 'cept maybe being prosecuted for abusing this animal," giving the arm just a little more pressure.

"Do we have an understanding?" I say.

"Okay. Okay...just give me the *fucking* money," Sammy says.

"And it ends here...and now? It's over...done deal?" I say.

"Okay...*goddamit*, just don't hurt my arm no more, man, I cut firewood for livin'. Come on man, please...just lemme go. Deal...okay?" Sammy whines.

"Wait here," I say. I bring the dog inside and get two crisp \$100 bills from my wallet, and a pen and paper and write out a bill of sale, and say to Big Dawg, "Stay here boy," which he does laying down on all fours.

I walk up to Sammy and say, "Sign here, and you get the two Big Benjjs."

Sammy hesitates.

"Don't even think about asking for more bread...you made out okay...better than you should on this deal," I say while conspicuously writing his license plate number on the bill of sale.

Sammy grudgingly signs it, snatches the two bills out of my hand, stalks off and climbs into his pick-up. As he starts it up, leans out the window, and flips the middle finger salute and peels out of the driveway, and is gone.

"*Geez*...what a grouch," I say to myself, and go back into the house where Big Dawg is waiting expectantly by door.

"Looks like I've got a new roomie, huh boy? Great Pyrenees...from the Spanish Pyrenees mountains, huh? Well, Bozo will never suit you. How 'bout something with a little more class...since you look half baby polar bear and half black bear...*habla espanol mi amigo*? Bear...*Oso*...or the diminutive, *Osito*. The Big 'O' for short," I say.

He barks like he understands every word, his tail wagging furiously—he lies down on his back and gestures his approval waving his front paws wildly.

"Okay...done deal. Now lets you and me go for nice long hike big boy...whataya say, *Oso*?" *Oso* jumps up and cavorts side to side, and follows me to my pick-up barking with joy, jumping up on my back almost knocking me down, then jumps into the truck to take his place riding 'shotgun', for a long, long time to come.

From then on, when anybody, including me exclaims, "Oh!"...or "So...", *Oso* responds with muffled woof, punctuated with a few tail slaps of his long fluffy tail. Eventually I trained *Oso*, so that if I say "Oh...So *now*," that is a code command to attack whoever is menacing me.

I build heavy-duty custom kayak, a *badarka* design with aluminum tubing ribs and heavy canvas hull, built for serious sea kayaking, fashioned after the Inuit design, 19 feet long with a double cockpit. I can paddle from the back cockpit, while my navigator *Oso* sits on his haunches, on special platform in the front cockpit. We spend many happy hours in it, fishing, swimming, camping and exploring the San Juans, Gulf and Charlotte Islands off of Vancouver Island.

- Chapter 6 (49) -

After the happy reunion with Oso, on the way back to Chez MAK from the hospital, we stop at the local Irish Pub, The Shamrock and Thistle downtown where I chug the first pint of Guinness in one long gulp.

"Aye...Pagan nectar...for the gods! Pour me another laddy...and keep 'em coming til I'm on me knees," I say to Jimmy Donovan the owner, leaving the signature white froth on my mustache.

"Got Guinness?" the Hawkster says appropriating the now-famous very successful drink-milk-campaign punchline while slamming down a pint 'o Guinness punctuated with a massive belch.

"So okay Hawk. Get me up to speed on what's been goin' on since I've been in never-never-land," I say.

"Well, man...while you've been doing a flawless impression of the dead man float, lots going on. First, if you're up to it, I think it's time to make a run up to Van City...to play that mp3 audio from the video I shot of you talkin' to the kid after the explosion...for his father Dr. Tehrani. See if we can get it translated and figure out what he said...just before he uh...*ascended*," Hawk says with air quotes.

"Okay. Good place to start. What else?" I say.

"Yea, I ran that license plate with a contact I have with Cascadia County Sheriffs on that Corvette that fled the scene...and get this. It's registered to Anthony Rogers aka Tony Rogers in Fernwood," Hawk says.

"Rogers...Tony Rogers as in the County Supervisor of Cascadia County. Mr Helmut Hair...the Don Juan of the San Juans?" I say.

"Duh Sherlock? With a vanity plate of S-U-P-R-M-A-N? A 2000 red Corvette. Not reported stolen. So we have to presume that the vehicle license plates also were not stolen and that the vehicle was being used with the knowledge and consent of Mr uh...Rogers."

"So I take it, if we connect his car to the explosion scene...it's not going to be such a *beautiful day in the neighborhood*, for Mr Rogers?" I say.

"Looks like it could it get less and less beautiful. 'Cause when I do a little research on Rogers online, I find out that he's married with two kids, a son Tyler who is a senior at Fernwood High and a daughter, a junior at Moody U...a Jennifer Rogers," Hawk says.

"Bingo. Smart money...Hassan's forbidden fruit. Has to be the same Jennifer the Tehrani's said was seeing their son on the Q-T. Curiouser and curiouser, man. Looks like we may want to have a little chat with Ms Rogers. Probably get more out of her if we get to her direct without involving the parents. I doubt that they even know anything about her presence at the scene

of the explosion, but once they do you can bet they'll lawyer up and we'll get nothing from her," I say.

"Further Google hits indicate Jennifer Rogers is a standout on the woman's volleyball team...with a handle of J-Rog. Lots of images of her in her uniform...spiking and blocking at the net. Looks like the quintessential All-American jock coed," Hawk says.

"Except for her little dark secret, the romance with her Muslim Montague, probably just a regular middle class Juliet. Can see how Supe Tony Rogers might perceive his daughter's affair with an alleged terrorist in a pipeline blast, as a politically CLE...Career Limiting Event, especially in Right-of-Rush-Limbaugh Fernwood. Okay. Maybe we can catch up with her after VB practice at the gym. Anything else? I ask.

"Probably. *Waaay* more," Hawk says.

- Chapter 7 (50) -

The next day after making an appointment with Hassan's father, Dr. Tehrani by phone, we head up to Vancouver British Columbia to play the mp3 audio of his son's final words before he died in hopes of getting a translation.

The border crossing at Peace Arch is backed up for an hour and half, before we finally get to the kiosk manned by Canadian border control. On the US side leading up to the crossing, it's crawling with border patrol, with some appearing to be US military in all black full battle gear, all carrying assault rifles, with side arms in robocop body armor.

"Citizenship? And where do ya live, eh?" the Canuck agent officiously asks obviously harried by the unrelenting volume of traffic and high state of alert.

We both reply US and Moody Seaport, handing him our US passports which he carefully scrutinizes, then enters the numbers into his computer.

"Your professions?" he robotically asks.

"We're independent filmmakers...and journalists," I say with my best winsome smile.

"Are you bringing anything into BC...and do you have any firearms or weapons of any sort with you?" he says.

"Nope...just our pens, which as you know are mightier than the sword," I crack.

Which causes kiosk-man to look at me with complete and utter disdain like I am soliciting a date with his sister.

"The purpose of your visit," he says with an icy stare.

"To visit a friend," I say realizing that recent post 9/11 is probably not the best time for me to crack wise or to be visiting an Iranian.

"Your friend's citizenship...and name?"

"I'd rather not say..." I say.

He hands back the passports and tells us to take the slip of paper with his notes, "Pull out of line, park the truck and go into the office with the sign over the doors which says 'Customs Inspections'".

"What's this about?" Hawk asks.

"I don't have time for this, eh! Just do as I say. Ask no more questions or I'll turn your ass around and refuse you entry. Next!" he says.

I turn toward Hawk, as he starts to say something, give him the look, waving him off as we pull over to the parking space by the Customs office.

"Geez...what a grouch!" Hawk says as we drive away from the line.

"*Phew*. Man...talk about post 911 paranoia. Gotta a feeling that maybe we shouldn't mention that we're visiting Dr. Tehrani? Let me handle the questions. Okay?" I say.

"Sure. I'll be the poster boy for laconic. Uh...a model of discretion...and if he questions why we're entering BC I'll just tell him...it's not like we're visiting the father of a suspected Iranian terrorist...who just blew up a pipeline...eh?" Hawk says.

"Again...just let me do *all* the talkin'," I say.

"Just sayin'," the Hawster says as he runs his meaty hand across his lips in a zipping motion.

The Canadian Customs Officer at the counter takes the slip of paper, reads it and says, "Give me your passports and the all the keys to your vehicle. And wait right here until I return. Then we'll have a little chat." the overweight, short Officer Grouch says with a bureaucratic officious power smirk then leaves, giving the keys to another guard who begins tearing the truck apart...presumably looking for terrorists hiding out under a tarp in the back of the truck.

He returns and says, "Step into this room and have a seat. I'll be with you after I check you out in our databases."

"How long is this going to take?" Hawk asks.

"Depending on what if anything that we find in your vehicle. And the more questions you ask...the longer it will take," he says over his shoulder as he pulls the door shut with a loud thud. We both sit down on gray metal chairs facing a gray institutional metal desk with an empty metal chair behind it.

"Hmm...feels like we're waiting for the boy's vice principal to bust us for smokin' in the head. Well so much for reputed Canadian courtesy. I think..." I start to say when Hawk grabs my hand and motions with his head at small closed circuit TV camera mounted high on the wall, the red LED blinking.

I nod back in affirmation, and say "these border guys are so efficient...and thorough, wouldn't you agree?"

"And professional...don't forget these are trained pros in the art of detecting terrorist threats. I feel safer already knowing they are guarding our vulnerable Northern border against attack by those mean ol' terrorists," Hawk says.

Five minutes later Officer Grouch returns, waddles over to the chair across from us, plops in it, and with no preamble or introduction just stares at us for a full minute without saying a word. An ersatz attempt at the dead-eyed cop pants-wetting stare—from watching too much US cop TV. Sorry, it just doesn't translate into Canuck Cop.

Finally, Hawk says, "Okay...I confess. I was the mastermind behind the 911 attacks on the Twin Towers. Please. Just...no more silent treatment. I'll

tell ya anything ya wanna know."

"A coupla Yankee smart asses, eh? Okay let's get down to it. What is the purpose of your trip...and the name or names of the person or persons you're visiting."

"We're going up to meet a dear friend of ours...who wishes to remain anonymous...but he's very famous in uh..."

"...the Catskills," Hawk interjects.

"Yea...that's it. Yea...da Catskills. And he's in Vancouver only for just a short time," I say.

"This person have a name? And we're going to check it out," Grouch asks.

"Sure...but I'm not at liberty to divulge it. He's here incognito...domestic tranquility issues," I say, winking, my mind racing to summon some plausible name that can't be verified.

"Okay. Maybe your friend, Mr Clean here who seems to be in a confessin' kinda mood, can help me out," Grouch says.

Again with long steady cop stare directly at Hawk for another full minute. The only sound the labored breathing of the obese Officer Grouch.

"Go on...get the rubber hoses, 'cause you'll have to beat it out me. You'll *never* get me to rat out you dirty screws," says Jimmy Cagney.

Nothing. Just a long continuous stare for another full minute.

"Johnson. Raymond C. Johnson. There...ya satisfied? Now that you've humiliated me in front of my friend. I'm a broken man. But please...just no more silent treatment. Okay?" Hawk whines cradling his head in his hands giving the performance of lifetime.

"Johnson? Never heard of 'em. Who the hell is *he*, eh?"

Hawk then quickly raises his head abruptly terminating the masterful broken-man scene with a big smile, and begins bobbing his head, waving his index finger like a metronome, side to side to some imaginary inaudible beat in cadence with, "Ooooh...ya don't gotsta call him Johnson. You can call 'em Ray...or you can call him R J...or you can call him Jay...but ya doesn't gotsta call 'em Johnson...Hotcha," doing his best Borscht Belt, one-trick pony Billy Seluga vaudeville *schtick*.

Officer Grouch abruptly stands causing the chair to screech on the floor, jabbing his finger at Hawk and says, "You smart ass...I'm..."

Just about then another officer sticks his head around the door.

"Hey Norm...the truck's clean, eh," he says and disappears.

Officer Grouch pauses, takes a deep breath looking skyward for patience, then "Okay...you ass wipes are wastin' my time here...if we didn't have such border backlog. You two clowns can leave now...get the hell out of my sight before I change my mind," then storms out the door.

"Geez...I'll tell ya. I don't get no respect," says the now Rodney Dangerfield.

"But, ya gotta admit, Canucks are just *so* damn cute when they get angry..." I say.

"Precious..." Hawk says.

By the time we're done with the dance at the border it's close to noon. We pull up to the Tehrani home on Pinecrest in Shaughnessy, Vancouver's home to the city's very rich with large detached estates, some are heritage properties from the pre-1950s many which are gated on several acre parcels. Old money.

I press the intercom button, announce myself and the massive wrought iron gate slow creaks open revealing a long tree-lined horseshoe driveway leading up to a colonial style mansion complete with two large columns framing the massive front portico. As we approach the entrance, the massive solid oak door slowly creaks open. *Tara...mit* gargoyles, yet

We are wordlessly ushered in by a young Asian woman in classic maid attire to a large study, where we find Mr and Mrs Tehrani standing. The study looks more like the Vancouver public library with floor to ceiling dark mahogany book cases, with many large original oil paintings of landscapes, presumably of Iran, and a life-size painting of the patriarch himself gazing pensively into the distance, along with elegant very expensive Persian rugs adorning the floor.

They come toward us, with Dr. Tehrani offering his hand, and the missus offering a stately nod with a tentative smile.

"Would you gentlemen care for some coffee...or tea?" Mrs Tehrani graciously offers.

"Thank you, but no. We won't stay very long. Crossing the border as you well know is now a nightmare of delay and we'll want to head back as soon as possible," I say.

"You said over the phone you may have some new evidence that may shed some light surrounding the circumstances of our son's death. Could it possibly provide proof of our son's innocence?" he says.

"Yes...that is a *possibility*...but *only* a remote possibility at this stage of our investigation. But until his words are translated initially by you, and then perhaps validated by an independent third party translator, we cannot be certain if it would have *any* exculpatory value. In fact, it may even incriminate your son even further. Eventually, in either case we will be required by law to tender it to the authorities. As of now, they do not know of the existence of the recording."

"And why, may I ask, have you withheld this from your authorities?" he asks.

"Because frankly we are becoming increasingly concerned about the level of objectivity of the investigation and we did not want it to be seized and sealed before we could investigate it further," I say

"I see. Please be seated," the elegantly dressed perfectly coiffed, urbane Dr Tehrani says gesturing to a sofa.

We both take a seat, sinking deeply into the massive Cordoba brown soft leather sofa, which in our normal casual attire, leaves me feeling like we should have come in the entrance for deliveries.

"Thank you doctor. May I ask what your title of Doctor confers?" I ask.

"A PhD in mathematics...I'm a professor at UBC. I teach particle physics," he casually replies devoid of any ego.

"I see. And may I ask how long you have been living in Vancouver?"

"My wife, children and I immigrated to Canada in 1980 to escape the repressive Islamic theocracy of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. My family was very prominent in politics under the Mohammad Mosaddegh regime...the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 until 1953, when our government was overthrown in a *coup d'état* orchestrated by the British Secret Intelligence Service and the American Central Intelligence Agency...installing a puppet regime of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi...the Shah. We were able to escape with...shall we say with most of our assets intact, before the purge of many even remotely potential political dissidents by the Ayatollah was started in 1980," he says matter-of-factly, without any perceptible bitterness toward America.

"Thank you. Dr Tehrani, before we begin, I feel that I must prepare you and Mrs Tehrani for what may be an exceedingly difficult experience for you both. We have been able to resurrect a recording of the conversation that I had with your son...right after the explosion...just before he uh...passed away. Mr Shapiro my associate here, it turns out, had the camera rolling when I encountered your son. The video is too horrific to view.

But we have lifted off the audio in which your son and I are talking over the roar of the fire. The quality is less than perfect. We have been able to remove much but not all of the disruptive background roar. We think it may be intelligible...hopefully, enough for you to provide a translation of, sadly, your son's last words spoken to me in your native language. If you think you feel up to it, I would like to play it for you using our portable mp3 player, with high quality headphones for maximum fidelity. I would strongly advise that Mrs Tehrani *not* listen to the playing of the sound clip...as it may be very traumatic indeed for a mother to listen to," I say.

"With Allah's help, I believe that I can endure it...please proceed," he says.

Hawk stands up, removes the mp3 player from his coat pocket, and moves the Bose headphones from around his neck up to his ears. He plugs the

headphone jack in, and pushes 'play' to check the volume levels, which he adjusts. He then says, "Okay...it's cued up at the beginning. Dr. Tehrani, may I place the headphones on you, sir?" Hawk says.

"Yes...you may," he says.

Hawk carefully positions the headphones on Dr. Tehrani and says, "Okay...I'm going hit play...tell me if the volume level is okay," Hawk says hitting the play button with normal recorded header slate of *testing one..two...three...test..test.*

"Yes...I can hear that very clearly...the loudness is fine," he says very loudly.

"Good. On the player, the icon with the arrow pointing to the right is the play button. The buttons to the left and right are rewind and fast forward respectively. To repeat a portion of the clip, press the rewind button momentarily, then hit the play button again. Here, I'll let you control it. Again, I must prepare you that this is probably going to be very traumatic for you to hear...your son's last words. If at any time you want to pause it just hit pause button with the two vertical lines or the square stop button to re-cue from the beginning," Hawk says handing the player to him.

"Thank you...I think I've got it. Shall I begin?" he asks.

Mrs Tehrani sits down on the sofa next to me, and with her trembling very moist right hand grasps my left hand very tightly.

"Anytime you're ready Dr. Tehrani. But I'd suggest you listen to it all the way through the first time...then we can go back and replay the parts that need translation. Please proceed," I say turning my head meeting Mrs Tehrani's kind, plaintive eyes, giving her hand a light squeeze and a token smile. She's already beginning to tear up.

Hawk takes out a pad and pen from his coat pocket and is now poised to make notes.

Dr. Tehrani over-forcefully presses the play button.

Within about 15 seconds, his eyes also begin to tear up, but he stoically perseveres to the end of the clip which lasts less than two minutes total but in the deathly silence of the room, seems like an eternity.

His eyes meet Mrs Tehrani's. He shakes his head from side to side with tears copiously pouring from his eyes down his cheeks, darkening his white starched shirt front with tears of anguish. Mrs Tehrani's already tight grip grows tighter, digging her finger nails into the back of my hand.

"Are you alright Dr Tehrani?" I ask.

Removing the headphones to his neck he says, "Yes...but I think I need a glass of water."

Hawk pours him a glass of water from a pitcher on the coffee table in front of us.

Dr. Tehrani drinks the whole glass in one long continuous motion, then looks at his wife and says several sentences in his native language, which she acknowledges, smiles faintly, and releases the death grip on my hand. Dr Tehrani takes a silk handkerchief from his suit lapel pocket, and deftly with great dignity wipes the tears from his cheeks.

Hawk and I look at each other quizzically.

"I'm so sorry gentlemen...I did not mean to be rude. I just told my wife in Persian, that our son died a hero...trying to prevent it," he says through a faint smile of a father's pride in his son's bravery. I guess it's the same emotion that a father would express in any culture...in any language in acknowledging that his son died heroically.

"Dr Tehrani...can you please be more specific. We need to have every word spoken in your native tongue translated, if we're going to have any chance whatsoever of convincing the authorities of your son's innocence," I say.

"Yes...of course. I will play it again from the beginning and translate each word," he says, pressing the rewind, and re-cuing the clip from the front.

Dr. Tehrani then repositions the headphones and proceeds to methodically translate every word, giving the context and idiomatic meaning, as Hawk furiously takes notes.

"Praise be to Allah...I knew our son is no terrorist!" says the tearful mother of Hassan Tehrani.

- Chapter 8 (51) -

After returning from our meeting with the Tehrani's in Vancouver, the reality of what really happened on October 10th is starting to come into clearer focus. At about two in the afternoon the following day, we head over to Moody U. to see if we can connect with Jennifer Rogers after practice at the woman's V-Ball gym. We have to assume she was with Hassan just before the explosion. She's the key to providing some answers to the crucial unanswered questions, which at this point we can only speculate as to the answer. And she is the only eye-witness that can testify as to what really happened, that is if we can get her to cooperate.

M U is an old highly rated mid-sized four year land grant university. It's a beautiful campus situated on a hill with a commanding Westerly view, overlooking Cascadia Bay and many of the San Juan Islands.

We decide to look up an old friend of mine from our UC Berkeley days, who was also deeply involved in student activism and FSM demonstrations. Ivan Tarnowski, aka 'Ivan the Terrible' because of his fearless dedication to the cause for civil rights and his moral and physical courage in relentlessly confronting the 'establishment'.

I had heard that he was a professor at Moody U, so this provided a good excuse to finally look him up.

He was about two years ahead of me and had been close friends with Charles Washington and Mario Savio at UCB. Tarnowski had been a veteran of social activism, having been on the Freedom Rides in the early sixties in the deep South.

I had met him during the Sproul Hall sit-in, in December of 1964 at UC Berkeley where Mario Savio had delivered his iconic *'put your bodies upon the gears'* speech on the steps of Sproul. His sobriquet of 'I-T-and-T' was an ironic spin of the acronym, the antithesis at the time, of one of the most powerful multi-national corporations in America, International Telephone and Telegraph. The personification of the enemy establishment.

In March of 1965, he had also marched with John Lewis and Charles Washington in the deadly "Bloody Sunday" march from Selma to Montgomery Alabama, where John Lewis the young Chairman of SNCC, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Charles had been brutally beaten to death. It was supposed to have been a peaceful non-violent demonstration for voters rights until the Alabama State Troopers turned it into a blood bath, unleashing attack dogs, tear gas and billy clubs on the unarmed and defenseless demonstrators.

C-Wash never regained consciousness. This incident sparked national outrage leading to the eventual passage of the Voter Rights of Act of 1965. His

tragic death devastated all of us, in particular Ivan and Mario Savio.

Tarnowski had split to BC Canada in the late sixties to avoid the Vietnam war draft. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter had granted unconditional pardons to hundreds of thousands of men excluding deserters, who had evaded the draft during the Vietnam War, by fleeing the country. It was rumored that on his way South to his home in San Francisco, he discovered charming Moody Seaport, stopped for a beer, met a coed beauty while wandering aimlessly around the campus. He eventually enrolled at M U getting his graduate degree in environmental studies from the prestigious Huxworth College of the Environment.

A Google search tells me he's now Doctor Tarnowski with a PhD in Environmental Studies and Chair of Huxworth, with his doctoral thesis on the effects of the unchecked human consumption of fossil fuels on the atmosphere, or the Greenhouse Effect.

"Is the professor in?" I ask the secretary at the office of Dr Ivan Tarnowski.

"Do you have an appointment?" she replies with some apprehension after sizing up Hawk's massive muscular bulk and hairless alien planet Mongo appearance and my towering frame—obviously not students or from academia.

"No. Just tell him that an old friend of C-Wash is here to see him," I say.

"Can I tell him what this is about?" she says coolly as she picks up the phone poised to punch in 9-1-1.

"Tell him we're looking for some fellow travelers to start a revolution...and heard that he was available," Hawk says.

"I'm very sorry, but Dr Tarnowski is a very busy man...and without an appointment," now intently focusing on the keypad on the phone when she's interrupted by, "What is it, Greta? Are these gentlemen giving you a hard time?" Ivan the Terrible says with his familiar NYC edge from the open doorway of his office, then looking up at us, finally with an expression of utter disbelief, "C-Wash...revolution...of course, Mick? I don't believe it, man!" he says with a big grin.

"Yeap...Ivan, tis the former Berkeley B-ball Bad Boy, now inhabiting Moody Seaport. How the hell are ya, brother?" I say holding my open arms out to my side.

I-T short and compact—now balding with a goatee, but still has the intense blazing gray eyes under bushy black eyebrows. He's dressed chic professorial with tortoise shell glasses with rose colored tint, complete with a soup-stained red and blue striped tie open at the collar. He's in blue oxford button down, rolled shirtsleeves, revealing no minor middle age spread with the bottom buttons of his shirt severely challenged.

He ambles around Greta's desk, walks up to me, and gives me a big bear hug lifting me off my feet, his head barely reaching my chin. Pulling back

we clasp hands as he says "*Goddammit* Mick...great to see ya again brother," tears welling up in his expressive eyes.

"Yea, man...been a long time. Too long," I say, then nodding toward Hawk, "This massive hulk of humanity here is my pal Hawk Shapiro....he was at UC with us in '64."

"Hey, Hawk, pleasure man," I-T says smiling extending his hand to Hawk.

"Same here," Hawk nods shaking hands.

"Hey...come inside my office. We got some serious catchin' up to do," he says.

We follow him into the office, with Hawk closing the door behind us. We take a seat in front of his desk. He slides in behind his desk placing his right Birkenstock with black and gray argyles on the edge of the desk, leaning back with his hands behind his head. Behind him a wall of numerous plaques, framed awards and assorted degrees. A long way baby, from Haight Asbury...and Sproul Hall sit-in paddy wagons.

"We can't stay too long. We've got some business to take of here on campus. But we'd love to connect with ya later, man...over a few beers after we're done," I say.

"Yea, sure man...it's a deal. But what brings you to our humble little university?" he asks.

"Well, we're chasin' down some leads on this pipeline blast. We just happened to get pulled into this mess. More on that later. You may recall the article in the local birdcage liner, about our involvement?" I say.

"Michaelangelo Kozlov's heroism blah...blah...blah," Hawk says.

"So that was *you*, Mickey? *Jezuz* I didn't connect the names. I guess I've always known you just as Mick...not sure I ever knew your last name. Some serious shit huh, man? If I recall you spent some time in the hospital...you okay?" I-T asks.

"Yea...I'm fine. Got my bell rung pretty good...but I'll survive," I say.

"So you're living in Moody Seaport now for how long?" he asks.

"Yea...several years now...doing video production, documentaries and indie films," I say.

"Ah...so the paper said it was an act of terrorism. How are you involved?" he asks.

"An alleged act of terrorism," say Hawk.

"I don't understand Mick...you mean the causation may not have been what the papers said? By the way, we lost one of ours in the blast, one of the best and brightest, a tenured professor, a mom with her two kids, blown away. Jessica Allison. She was highly respected in her field, bright...and a real beauty. Whatta terrible waste man," he says.

"Yea...when I was in the hospital her husband John Allison paid us a visit. Poor bastard's a broken man. Ivan, the statement *don't believe everything you read in the papers* was never more *approprié* man. So, anyway Ivan we're going to have to get going here pretty soon. We're trying to connect with a possible witness to the blast who is unknown to the authorities at this point...a student...a Jennifer Rogers," I say.

"I know who she is, don't know her personally but I hear she's a good athlete...and an excellent student, by all accounts a great kid. What's the connection?" he asks.

"Perhaps we'll know more if we can talk to her. We're going to try to catch her after volleyball practice. Ivan it's very important that no one knows our business here. There are a lot of unresolved questions, and frankly we feel the Feds and local law are rushing to judgment on this...that the investigation is making some very premature assumptions as to the causation. So, can we trust you to keep this in strict confidence? And can ya tell us where the girls' gym is?" I ask.

"Yea...sure...on both accounts," he gets up opens the door and says, "Greta, can you run a copy of the campus map off...circle our location, and circle the girl's gym. Thanks."

"Thanks Ivan. So when and where can we meet after we're done?" I ask.

"Okay. How about five at the Irish Pub, The Shamrock and Thistle...on Commercial?" he says.

"Know it well...a little too well. The time should work. I'll call your office if we're going to be delayed. Got a card?" I ask.

"Yea...sure," he says removing a card from the card caddy on his desk, scribbling some numbers on the back, "my home...and cell phone," he says handing it to me as we stand up to leave. I give him one of my personal cards with my cell phone.

"Hey Mick...did you get taller or did I get smaller?" he says giving me his hand again smiling broadly.

"Uh...I-T...all I can tell ya pal, is that I did *not* get taller?" I say.

"Was afraid of that...and it's *Doctor* I-T now," he says puffing out his chest with that familiar ironic smirk. "See ya tonight. Nice meetin' ya Hawk," the always affable I-T says as he walks us out the door where Greta is waiting with a copy of the campus map.

By the time we find our way to the girl's gym it's almost three. The door to the front of the gym is unlocked, so we enter the lobby, and take the stairs to the grandstands where we hear the sound so familiar to former gym rats like myself of squeaking sneakers on the hardwood floor mixed with some yelling and whistle blowing along with omnipresent faint scent of years of accumulated perspiration.

We take, what we hope is an unobtrusive seat, one level up from gym floor. The girls are doing a hitting and blocking drill, with the coach, a middle-age lady with short mannish hair and masculine physique who looks like she could still play, yelling alternating words of encouragement and exhortation.

Hawk points out Jennifer Rogers and in a low voice, "She's the tall blonde with long ponytail, third in the line getting ready to hit."

I nod, not wanting to draw any attention to us. She's quite tall, maybe 5'10" and rather slender, but with a nice figure with a pleasant roundness in all the right places. Her body language projects an aura of disinterest...of not wanting to be there, as she's staring down at the floor with her hands on her hips, looking totally disengaged. When it's her turn to hit, she lackadaisically passes the ball to the setter, who makes a perfect two hand set about three feet back from the net. She takes two steps, gets almost no air, and hits the ball into the middle of the net. When she lands, her head is down, shaking from side to side. Coach blows the whistle.

"J-Rog what the *hell's* that supposed be. What's wrong with you, girl? You haven't been here for a few weeks now. First league game is just a week away. Are you hurt or ill or something?" she yells.

"Sorry coach. I'm uh...coach, I can't do this right now. I...I...just can't!" she says breaking into tears running off the floor into the locker room.

"Alright ladies...take a blow...and hydrate. I'll be right back," she says following Jennifer out to the locker room.

All the other girls on the team are now buzzing with gossip. We're close enough to hear the cackling speculation by a few of her teammates.

A few minutes later, coach comes back into the gym, blows the whistle and says, "Okay ladies...gossip session is over. J-Rog's going to take an early out today from practice...some personal issues that *do not* concern you. The rest of you get your butts in gear...league play starts next week. So wind sprints...line up on the end line," she hisses.

They line up, the coach blows the whistle, "Move it...come on ladies show me something! Move it! Move it!" she exhorts.

That's our cue to leave the gym and wait downstairs in the lobby by the door that says locker room above it. We hang back about 50 feet from the door in the lobby keeping the door in sight.

About five minutes later, Jennifer Rogers comes out the door, fully dressed, her oversized gym bag hanging from her shoulder, head down walking dejectedly toward the parking lot. She's so preoccupied she does not even notice us standing there, or realize that we are following her. We trail her outside to her car. When she gets to her car, she throws the gym bag on the hood, lays her head on her arms on the roof of the car and starts sobbing, her whole body convulsing.

I tell Hawk to hang back so she won't be alarmed by his massive presence and walk over about 10 feet behind her.

"J-Rog..." I say quietly so as not to startle her.

She quickly looks up in my direction, her eyes all red and puffy, snot pouring out of her nose, her face even contorted in pain, still beautiful, and says, "Who are you? What do you want?"

"Jennifer, my name is Mick Kozlov. I'm here to try to help you." I say.

"What do you mean *help* me?" she sobs.

"Jennifer...I know about your loss...about Hassan Tehrani and that day at Moody Falls Park. Maybe I can help you...if you'll let me," I say

"You know *what* for instance?" she says now squarely facing me.

"Well for starters, I know that you and Hassan were lovers...and that he loved you very deeply...so much so that he risked alienation and isolation from his family to be with you on that day," I say.

"How...how could you possibly know this? *Any of this?*" she says stridently.

"Jennifer...I was there. You almost hit me with your father's car, a red Corvette, when you sped away from the scene. I was the last one to speak to Hassan before he died," I say.

"Oh *God*...I just can't take any more of this!" she says and starts to collapse. I barely get to her in time to break her fall. She's fainted probably from exhaustion of not being able to get any rest, and the stress of the intense bereavement.

"Hawk, get over her, quick man!" I yell.

Hawk's quickly there kneeling down beside us.

"Check her gym bag for some water," I say.

He dives into the bag and comes up with a bottle of water and hands it to me.

I unscrew the top, and placing her still unconscious head on my lap, pour some water into my other hand and gently stroke her cheeks and forehead with my wet hand. Her eyes begin to flutter, then one eye opens, seeing me bending over her she's startled, and tries to sit up. I gently restrain her.

"What happened?" she says surrendering back into my lap.

"You passed out on me...just lay still here for few minutes...take some deep breaths, okay?" I whisper to her.

Her eyes spot Hawk—she gasps.

"Don't blame you for being scared...sometimes I scare myself when I look in the mirror. I'm Hawk...and we mean you no harm, Jennifer. Mick here, and I, at the moment just want to make sure that you're okay. So just relax...whenever you're ready...we're here to help you...through all this," Hawk says waving his meaty hand vaguely in the air.

"Please help me up," she says.

Hawk and I each take an arm and ease her up to her feet so that she is now facing us.

"Who are you? Why do you want to help *me*?" she asks.

"Jennifer...I think we need to have a talk...but frankly this is probably not the best time or place to do it. We are willing to answer all your questions...but not here. Your team mates will probably be coming out pretty soon from practice. As Hawk says, we mean you no harm. But we believe you may be the key to understanding what *really* happened that horrific day at Moody Falls Park. We also believe that Hassan Tehrani *maybe* has been unjustly accused of being a terrorist...of causing the explosion, and..." when I'm interrupted.

"My God...what a nightmare. I loved him...more than life itself. I can't bear the thought of this any longer. It's not true...none of it, that he caused the explosion. What do you want me to do?" she pleads.

"Okay Jennifer, we believe you. We believe that there may be another plausible explanation for the explosion. And that *maybe* somebody who has a lot of resources and power...and it goes without sayin'...money, that they may want to prevent the truth...and themselves from being exposed, probably at any cost. But we have no proof...yet. That's why we need to talk with you. And since you are the only eye witness, I do not want to alarm you, but you may be in danger," I say.

"*Danger*? What kinda danger?" she asks.

"Again, we shouldn't discuss this any further here. If you're willing to trust us, we're supposed to meet a dear old friend at the Irish pub...The Shamrock and Thistle, downtown at five. Someone I think also might be able to help you, Doctor Ivan Tarnowski. Can you follow us there? We can talk there without drawing any attention. Besides, I think we could all use a drink...I know I could," I say giving my best reassuring avuncular smile.

"Professor Tarnowski...from the U? I've heard of him...from some of his students that he's a good guy. Okay, I uh...guess so...but I'm so torn. If this comes out my father won't be very uh...*understanding*. After 9-11, I was forbidden to ever see him again...*or else*. My little *terrorist* he called him. I...I guess I'm just going to have to trust you. I don't have many other options, do I? But I'd like to go back to my place first...to shower, change clothes and pick up my phony I-D. I think I could use a drink too. I'll meet you there around five, okay?" she says.

"Are you sure you can drive okay? I can drive you over in your car and wait for you," Hawk says.

"Thanks. But I think I'll be okay. Honestly...I guess I'm glad in a way that this is going to come out...it's been tearing me apart. For the first time I have a sense of relief and hope...that I'm not dealin' with this alone," she says.

"Okay...if you're sure, here's my card with my cell phone number. Call if you're going to be delayed. Can you give me your cell phone number?"

I write it down in my small spiral notebook. "See ya at five, okay?" I say.

"Okay. I'll be there," she says throwing her duffel bag in the front seat, climbs into her car and drives off with the semblance of a faint smile on her beautiful youthful face.

Laying the highly directional, very sensitive Sennheiser ME66 shotgun microphone on the front seat, The Black Mamba starts up his black Suburban, and slowly, innocuously pulls out to follow Jennifer Rogers.

For the last week, since the call from NPI VP Howard Roland, he's been in Moody Seaport, tasked to ensure that the lid doesn't come off.

He's been following Kozlov around ever since he left the hospital, with the hope of finding out how much he knows about the pipeline explosion. Kozlov and that nosy bastard Jew, Shapiro have already been up to Vancouver to visit the parents of the kid...not a good sign. He begins to suspect that Kozlov may be on to something...from talking to the kid's parents. He's already nullified that threat vector. By pretending to be an advocate for their accused son, amazing how easy it was to gain their confidence...to penetrate their defenses, then once inside their perimeter, capitalizing on the element of surprise. That's when the Black Mamba is most lethal.

But through the miracle of technology, from almost one hundred yards away, parked in the gym parking lot where he has followed Kozlov, he has been able to monitor the conversation between Kozlov, Mr Clean and Jennifer Rogers.

His suspicions are now confirmed. Jennifer Rogers was there...an eyewitness. The good news. Apparently she's the *only* living survivor who knows what really happened...what caused the explosion and could testify to it first hand. But up to now, other than Kozlov, she has confided in no one.

If she's allowed to be heard, the whole lid will be blown off this thing. No telling how deep...or how high it will go. Pulling a single thread, until eventually the entire quilt of conspiracy becomes completely unraveled.

While following Jennifer Rogers from a safe distance, Ernie Porter speed dials Howard Roland on his secure satellite phone.

"Porter here. Can ya'll tawk?" he drawls.

"Yea, sure *Negrato*. What's up?" Roland says.

"God news...bad news. Which da ya'll want first?" he asks.

"Shit, man...do not *even fuck* with me. I've been walkin' on eggs for the past few weeks...just get to the *goddamned* point," Roland says.

"Okay, Howie...losing our sense of humor are we? Anyway that busy-body Kozlov and his pet albino gorilla may be on to something. They've located, apparently the one surviving eye witness who was there at the time of the explosion. Must have been the driver of the car that sped away from scene that almost hit Kozlov. Somehow they've identified the driver. They've just

connected with her. They intend to meet with her later this afternoon, probably to get her story...knowin' Kozlov's investigative background, wouldn't be surprised if he recorded it," he says.

"*Shit!* So okay...what's your recommendation?" Roland says.

"Well Howie...it should seem obvious to even you. Just to be safe...termination of the threat vector. But it's your call. I can tell ya that once you cross that line, there ain't no turning back. And it's going to cost you...*mucho dinero amigo,*" Porter says.

"*Goddammit* man, that's a whole 'nuther level. We're talkin' uh...murder here, right? *Jezus!* Okay. Uh...can you make it look like an accident...like that Injun squaw in New Mexico? *Shit* man...if the coverup's exposed...we are all royally fucked," Roland says.

"Whattya mean *we*, whitey?" *El Negrito* says laughing mockingly.

"You asshole...you enjoy fuckin' with me don't ya. Just do whatever it takes...we're in so *goddam* deep now. *Fuck it!* Get it done, and pronto!"

Click

A pleasure. And to think I even get paid for doin' this. Is 'merica a great country or what?

Oh...and those rugheads in Vancouver...that one's on the house...payback for 9-1-1...fuckin' terrorist hadji bastards," *El Negrito* muses.

We get to The Shamrock and Thistle about a quarter to five and take a table way in the back where we can talk undisturbed with Jennifer Rogers. We figure it would be good to have Ivan Tarnowski there as an independent witness. Plus, since he's a member of the faculty, maybe he can put Jennifer more at ease, and perhaps direct her to some mental health resources available at the university. We know we can trust I-T...but we'll make sure that he's on board about what's going down before we start debriefing Jennifer.

While waiting, we order a coupla pints of Guinness. About ten minutes later, Ivan the Terrible walks in. I stand up and wave. He smiles broadly, and comes over to the table.

"Whattya drinkin', I-T?" I ask.

"That Guinness looks pretty damn good," he says.

I get the bartender's attention by pointing downward, waving my hand for another round all the way around. He nods.

I-T takes a chair, "So...Mick, tell me what you've been up to for the last, what...almost forty years?" I-T says.

"Love to I-T...but what's the rush? Actually, there's been a development since we left you. Remember I told you we were going to try to find Jennifer Rogers on campus? Well we got lucky."

The bartender arrives with three pints of Guinness.

"Mud in yer eye, mates!" Hawk says with a brogue as we clink glasses, each of us taking a long pull.

"Funny...with your last name, wouldn't have guessed you're a mick," says I-T wiping the foam off his upper lip with the back of his hand.

"The O'Shapiro's...of da County Bronx," I say

"Net result's the same...being screwed up 'cause of Catholic guilt...or Jewish self-loathing, eh...my *mensch-y matey's*?" Hawk says.

"Ivan, again, what I am about to tell will have to be held in strict confidence, okay?" I say

"Jesus Mick...sounds really serious. But okay...if you say so. Shoot," I-T says.

"This afternoon, beyond any reasonable doubt, we were able to confirm with Jennifer Rogers, who is the sole surviving eyewitness to the pipeline explosion, that Hassan Tehrani, was her boyfriend with whom she was to rendezvous...a lover's secret tryst at Moody Falls Park," I say.

"So...that terrorist theory *maybe* becomes totally bogus, then? And that would mean what?" he says.

"Yeap...up in smoke, literally. And that means that *perhaps* some very powerful people would prefer that the truth did not come out. So it's time to look for MOM," I say.

"Your mother, what's she got to do with it. She like some kinda Agatha Christie?" Ivan says smiling.

"M-O-M...motive, opportunity...and last, but not least...means. Considerable big bucks means," Hawk says.

"Ah...so I guess you'd have to ask, who'd have the greatest motive to want to cover this up? Or...*cui bono*?" I-T asks.

"Translation?" I say.

"Latin...a legal term. Who benefits...or who stood, to gain from a crime, and so might have been responsible for it," Hawk says recalling from his Berkeley law school days.

"Or...who has the most to lose...which usually means follow the money, baby. But right now we've got no proof...just suspicions. Nothing that would hold up in court. So we're hopeful that Jennifer can start to nail some loose ends down for us," I say

"Hey, Koz...it's already about five-fifteen. Maybe you should give Jennifer a call...to see if she's still going to meet up with us?" Hawk says.

Ivan and I spend about an hour catching up. After a few beers, he's just getting warmed up and with great passion, begins to outline his work. He promises to send over a copy of his Doctoral Thesis on climate change.

"Mick, if you actually read it...that'll make three...counting my wife and I. It's a three hundred page scientific tome with the light-hearted title of "The Anthropocene—The Coming of The Sixth Mass Extinction." Not exactly good bedtime reading, but a great doorstop," I-T says.

While discussing climate change, his whole demeanor changes. His intense smoldering gray eyes penetrate your soul, reminiscent of the Ivan the Terrible that I remember from the 60s when he was taking on the corporate establishment.

"So what you're sayin' is, that unless some drastic changes are made in policy...of consumption of fossil fuels for energy...were basically doomed. Unfortunately, a recurring theme in my life...I'll explain later. Like a ship of fools on the Pequod Inc. sailing under a mono-maniacal nut-case Captain Ahab...inexorably toward a final rendezvous with the whale," I say.

"Yea...except in your little analogy, Captain Ahab is the corporate oligarchy...the captains of industry and technology...and the whale is the catastrophic and calamitous effects of centuries of unfettered unregulated capitalism. Massive dumping of CO2 into the atmosphere of Gaia, to borrow chemist James Lovelock's term for Mother Earth. In short leading to the eventual devolution of civilization as we know it...the return of a second and even more extreme Dark Ages, man." he says shaking his head side to side.

"Jesus! Hey bartender three Johnny Walker's...up, " I say.

"Make em doubles...'and don't be stingy, baby,'" yells I-T

"Or to quote Vizzini from the Princess Bride...*inconceivable!*" Hawk says with a perfect Wally Shawn lisp.

"And to paraphrase Bette Davis as Margo Channing, 'Fasten your seat belts, it's going to be a bumpy...uh century'," I say.

"Or three," I-T adds.

"Hey, I hate to be the one to change the topic from such a fun and uplifting thread as mass extinction etcetera...but it's almost six. Looks like Jennifer's a no-call...no-show," Hawk says.

"Yea...probably should call her again. *Jesus...*I've already left three voice mails," I say.

At little after ten that evening, Hawk and I are sitting around having a few beers, discussing Ivan Tarnowski's not-so-pleasant forecast for the future of civilization, when my cell phone rings showing Jennifer Rogers on the caller ID.

"Jennifer...are you okay? I've been trying to call you all afternoon and this evening? I say frantically.

"Who is this?" a man's voice asks.

"Who wants to know?" I ask.

"This is Detective Jimmy Hadley, with the Moody Seaport police department," he says.

"This is Mick Kozlov. What's this about Detective?" I ask.

"What was your relationship to Ms Rogers?" he asks.

"Was? She's an acquaintance," I say.

"How long have you known her?" he asks.

"Just met her this afternoon...why?" I ask

"I'm calling you from her cell phone...the inbound call log shows five calls from you, with several voice mails, which I cannot access without her PIN...yet. Why were you trying so hard to reach her?" he asks.

"Well...we were supposed to have met this afternoon at five...downtown at an Irish pub. She never showed...or called. So I was concerned about her," I say.

"Did she seem overly distraught...or depressed when you last saw her?" he asks.

"Yes...at one point she was upset...but less so when she left. What's this about Detective...is she okay?" I ask.

"Do you know what she may have been so upset about that she would try take her own life? Were you romantically involved with Ms Rogers?"

"Jesus...no, I had just met her. What are you saying...is Jennifer alright?" I ask

"I'm sorry to have to inform you that this evening, about eight thirty, when her father could not reach her on her cell phone, he stopped by her apartment. He discovered his daughter's body in the bathroom...naked with the shower still running...dead from an apparent suicide. She apparently had hung herself from the shower head with a waist tie from her bathrobe. The M-E thinks she probably died around five this afternoon," he says matter-of-factly.

"My gawd...Jennifer...dead. I can't believe it. Are there any signs of foul play?" I ask.

"Why would you ask that, Mr Kozlov? And you haven't answered my question, why do you think she was *very upset*?" his cop curiosity now fully aroused.

"Detective...she *was* very upset, but I do not think it rose to the level of her wanting to take her own life," I say.

"Okay...I'll have some more questions for you. I think it would be better if we discussed this in person. Are you available tomorrow morning, say around ten...at your home?"

"Sure...not a problem...here's my home and busines address..." I say.

"No need...I'll already have it, and a lot more. See you tomorrow morning. Ten sharp," he says.

Click

The streaming shower water drowns out the sound of the door, as it slowly, warily swings open to her apartment. Then the screech of the sliding rings as the shower curtain is ripped open—the last sound Jennifer Rogers will ever hear.

Jennifer Roger's cell phone just rings, and rings...and rings...

"Man...you're white as a ghost. What the hell was that all about Koz?" Hawk asks.

"Jesus...that was a detective from the local police. They found Jennifer Roger's body...dead...in her apartment...from an apparent suicide, this afternoon. They say she hung herself...in the shower, man," I say.

"Suicide my ass, man! When she left she actually seemed relieved and eager to help us. A bunch of *Bolshoi*. Not buyin' it. *Goddammit* man, I feel responsible for the death of that beautiful young girl. I shoulda insisted to drive her to her place and wait. I just had a bad feeling, man. I'm just sick about it," Hawk says shaking his head.

"Yea...me too, man. *Shit!* So...under the circumstances a suicide...probably not plausible. But *if* and that's a big if, she didn't kill herself...and we can prove it, you know what that means, my Dear Watson?" I say.

"Yea...the stakes just went up an order of magnitude. We're talkin' murder...a whole new ball game," Hawk says.

"And from here on out...different rules of engagement. *If* they're desperate enough to kill an innocent young woman who they perceived as a threat...then I doubt that they'll stop there. Then anybody they might even remotely perceive as a threat to expose their not-so-little cabal, is also at risk for grave bodily harm...or worse. Including *moi et vous*." I say.

"*No shit* Sherlock?" Hawk says.

"So how the hell did they find out that we were starting to unravel this thing...we didn't even know for sure until this afternoon that Jennifer Rogers was a witness. Somehow...it had to be revealed this afternoon, or they would have taken her out sooner. Musta followed us to the gym...waited outside in the parking lot, then followed her to her apartment. *Shit!* We got complacent and sloppy...and let our guard down. And it cost that beautiful young girl her life. That won't happen again," I say.

"I'm going to resurrect those 9 millimeters. Clean 'em up and load up the clips...with few back-up clips. So what are we going to tell the cops tomorrow man? Just how much should we tell 'em, like "...*oh by the way we don't have any proof, but...we think Jennifer Rogers may have been murdered by the same folks involved in a massive cover up conspiracy over that pipeline*

blast...and oh, that it wasn't no fuckin' terrorist attack?" Hawk says.

"Yea...right. Probably should keep our cards close to our vest...at least until we can get some hard evidence before we take it, if ever, to the cops and the Feds," I say.

The next day, over breakfast, our normal morning ritual while Hawk and I are watching the morning Canadian Broadcast news on CBC which is carried by the local cable company, the lead story is:

This morning, a prominent Vancouver Physicist and his wife, Doctor and Mrs Amir Tehrani were been found dead in the study of their home in the exclusive Shaughnessy area of Vancouver. They apparently had been dead a few days before being discovered by the maid. According to a source close to the investigation under the condition of anonymity, who gave CBC this exclusive. They had been shot in the back of the head, execution style. There were racist anti-Muslim epithets scrawled on the wall presumably in their blood with references to terrorism...and nine eleven. Local residents many of the Muslim faith are unnerved, fearing additional reprisals against Muslims.

The Tehrani's were the parents of accused terrorist Hassan Tehrani who died when he allegedly blew up a petroleum pipeline in Moody Seaport, Washington state on October 10, 2001. The RCMP is treating it as a hate crime with possible vigilante retribution for the son's alleged act of terrorism as a motive. There are no known suspects or persons of interest at this time the RCMP source said.

More later on this evening's news, with a special in depth report from the scene with our very own Mindy McClain. You won't want to miss...Slayings in Shaughnessy.

In other news, in part because of the high oil productivity of the Alberta tar sands, the Canadian economy is exhibiting very strong positive growth trends with the Looney rising sharply against the US dollar on reaction to the positive news...

And now the weather...

"My gawd, man. Doctor and Mrs Tehrani murdered. *Jezuz Christ!* Can't be sure...but five should get ya fifty *yen*...got to be related to our investigation. Poor people...they just wanted to know the truth about their son. Man...we could be dealin' with some very, very bad people here...and gettin' in further and further over our heads each day. If it is true, who the hell are these sociopaths...capable of such ruthless murder of innocent victims?" I say.

"Koz...are you thinkin' *like* I'm thinkin'?"

"Gawd...I hope not." I say

"No I mean that we were the last people to see both the Tehrani's and Jennifer Rogers alive. That their phone logs can connect us to them...both on the day of their murders, man?" Hawk says.

"Yea...and they'll have a record of our border crossing when we went to see the Tehrani's...on the same day they were murdered," I say.

"Hmm...won't take an Inspector Poirot to connect the dots. That people just seem to turn up dead when we talk to them. Not good," Hawk says.

"So this detective Hadley's supposed to be here in about an hour. He didn't say that he intended to take recorded statement. But...what if does?" I say.

"Nope...no deal. Ya know even though I didn't finish law school at Berkeley, before that campus cop scrambled my brains, there's a few things I do remember. The most important that comes to mind is the right against self-incrimination aka, the Fifth Amendment, and the second relevant thing is that they have to Mirandize you before asking you to give a statement under oath that could possibly be used against you in a court of law," Hawk says.

"So...how do we deal with this detective? If I now refuse to cooperate...he's going to start getting even more suspicious. Right now I think he's proceeding on the notion that Jennifer committed suicide...but that I may have been the source, or at least contributory for her reasons for doing so. But if I try to stone-wall him he may try to push harder...eventually they might even connect the Vancouver murders to us." I say.

"Yea...but one thing that I'll always remember Daddy Shapiro telling me. *A lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client...*and that goes double for a lay person. So I think we should do this. You act all cooperative. Answer his questions truthfully...as if you have nothing to hide. And this is important...that your mindset projects exactly that. Answer his questions directly. If he resorts to long pauses...he's messin' with ya...wait him out. And do not...I repeat...do *not* volunteer any information that is not directly responsive to his questions. These coppers are trained at perceiving deception...with body language etcetera. Just tell the truth...and never, *ever* say I have *nothing* to hide And don't forget to breathe," Hawk says.

"Okay...the truth...and nuthin' but. Got it. What else?" I ask.

"If he asks you to give him a statement under oath...he'll first have to read you your rights under Miranda. He's got to have some pretty strong probable cause to do that...something maybe we don't know about. That's where we have to draw the line...for both you and me. We shut it down...and tell him under advice of counsel...blah...blah...blah. At that point advise him that we are represented by S. G. Shapiro...aka Daddy.

"Has he got a ticket to practice in Washington state?" I ask.

"Nope...but he won't know that right away at least. Maybe if he does some research, he'll figure out that Daddy would probably eat the local DA's lunch and give it some serious thought. It'll at least buy us some time to find local counsel," Hawk says.

"Won't come cheap," I say.

"Never does. Lawyers gotta eat too."

"Thought they eat their young," I say.

"That's just considered hors-d'oeuvre. Okay...because Jennifer's father has some serious local juice as the County Executive, Hadley to score some brownie points with the Exec, may press you to admit that you were involved in making daddy's little girl unhappy, intentional infliction of emotional distress...blah...blah...thus causing her to commit suicide. To assuage his own guilt re her and Hassan...perhaps to lay the groundwork for a big civil suit later on. That's easily refutable, Hawk says.

"Hmm...if you cut us...do we not bleed?" I say.

"Right...probably not a good time to play the victim card, uh...Abie. Geez, you just met her that day. How much emotional damage could you possibly inflict on a woman in just one day's exposure? On second thought...strike that argument. In any case I'm not aware of any *criminal* statute that could prosecute you for being an arrogant, predatory asshole with women's emotions," Hawk says.

"Gee thanks pal. So what do I tell him when he asks me about our relationship and why we were going to meet later on?" I say.

"Okay...excellent question. You're startin' to think like a lawyer," Hawk says.

"I *beg* ya pardon, *suh*...I resents da *allegation*...and I resents da *alligator*. By the way do you know why lawyers break for dead skunks on the highway? Professional courtesy," I say

"Yea...hardy har har...I get it. You're a regular riot Alice. Lemme think. Okay...tell him uh...that you're a documentary film maker and that we were interested in doing a documentary on high achieving student athletes in woman's athletics at Moody U...and that Professor Tarnowski, an old friend, recommended that you talk to her. Our visit with him is easily documented with his secretary Greta. Then call I-T and give him a heads up in case he checks it out further," Hawk says.

"Okay...sounds like a very plausible, magnanimous narrative...consistent with my character. I can sell that. Also, that I'm very sensitive and caring towards woman's inequality issues," I say.

"Don't *even* try to spin that one on, pal. If he asks you for woman's character references, he'll bust you like a cheap *pinata*," Hawk says.

"Oops," I say.

"So...the big question is, if in fact Jennifer Rogers *was* murdered to make it look like a suicide...then is the murder of the Tehrani's connected?" Hawk says.

"For the sake of argument, let's assume they are. The points of connection are that both the murders were committed very soon after we connected with the victims. *Shit*...we must have led the murderers right to the Tehrani's! Which would mean we've probably been under surveillance the whole *fuckin'* time. Somebody's got to be following us around, cleaning up and destroying any evidence that would discredit the terrorist's narrative. *Goddammit*...we 'teed' 'em up for the bastards! And those three vics were our only potential leads that we had so far, to prove that the explosion was not an act of terrorism. Hawk, these guys? *Not* amateurs, man."

"Yea...maybe way above our punching weight. So...where do we go from here, man. Now we got nuthin' in the way of witnesses...or evidence. All we got is the video and audio from the explosion...and the translation notes from Dr Tehrani in my handwriting," Hawk says.

"Yea...but who ever is tracking us doesn't know that. If they are led to believe that we've got recorded statements or some other evidence, they might try to make a move on us. So maybe we need to dangle some bait on the hook...to try to draw them out. Got any ideas?" I say.

"Back to M-O-M. Let's start with motive...who's got the most to lose? Time to follow the money, and..." Hawk says when there is a knock on the door.

"Show time," I say.

I get up and go to the front door to find a short, stocky *schlubby* guy in a crew cut, with a goatee, maybe thirty five, in a cast-off sport coat and tie with jeans. With him is a short woman dressed in civies, tope woman's pants suit. She's matronly, with broad shoulders, and a thick unfeminine tree trunk body. Her hair is cut short in a boyish bob. She's wearing little if any makeup, carrying hard-shell briefcase.

"Detective Jimmy Hadley...Moody Seaport police. This here is my partner Detective Rhonda Pirelli." He says, both of them robotically flashing their badges.

"Come on in...let's go back into my office where we can talk," I say flashing them by best disarming winsome smile. They follow me back to the office where the Hawkster is sitting in an arm chair behind the coffee table.

"This his Hawk Shapiro, my business partner...he will be sitting in on the interview," I say.

Hawk does not stand, but just nods.

Both detectives nod back...all business.

"Would you care for coffee?" I ask. Mr Hospitality.

"No thanks...just had some," Jimmy Hadley says.

"Care to have a seat on the sofa?" I graciously offer with a sweeping gesture.

They take a seat on opposite ends of the sofa. I sit down behind my desk.

Jimmy Hadley just looks around...then fixes his eyes on me for about ten seconds, then finally says, "Mr Kozlov we have a few questions we'd like to ask you about your relationship with the deceased, Jennifer Rogers"

"Okay," I cleverly answer.

Detective Pirelli takes out a spiral notebook, and conspicuously flips to a new page, pen eagerly poised in expectation of an incriminating utterance.

"We are here to try to ascertain the events that lead up the death of the deceased, which in the absence of any other compelling evidence, at this time is being treated as self-inflicted. We understand from interviews with her teammates, and her coach, that for about the past few weeks she has been extremely emotionally distraught," Hadley says. He stops there, for about ten seconds staring into my eyes searchingly...looking for any kind of a reaction. I meet his gaze by first staring back at him then to Pirelli adding my best disarmingly charming smile, adding a wink....*forgive some sinner, and wink your eye at some homely girl*, I recall from H. L. Mencken's tombstone.

Her face reddens...probably construed as some sexist pig oink. Oops...reminding me not to stray to far from the script.

"How long had you known Ms Rogers?" he asks.

"As I told you on the phone...I had just met her...that day," I say.

"And how would you characterize the nature of your relationship with her?" he asks.

"As a recent acquaintance." I say not volunteering anything.

"Were you romantically involved with Jennifer Rogers?" asks Pirelli staring at me intently.

"No. I had just met her that day," I say.

"What occasioned your meeting?" Hadley says.

"My partner here and I make documentary films. We are always on the lookout for compelling human interest narratives. A friend of mine...on the faculty of M-U, suggested that we might want look into doing a short piece on the uh...relatively under-exposed, girl's athletic program. He felt that there were some very impressive student lady athletes...both athletically and academically, and he felt that it would be a nice project for us...and in the process give them a little good publicity and media exposure. As a place to start, my friend mentioned the name of Jennifer Rogers as possibly a good candidate for an interview, as she was a good athlete, and an exceptional student," I say.

"The faculty member's name?" Hadley asks.

"Professor Ivan Tarnowski," I say.

Pirelli is now furiously taking notes.

"And you never had any contact with Ms Rogers before yesterday...physical or otherwise...including email, social or dating networks?" Hadley asks.

"No." I again shrewdly reply...that'll show 'em.

"Mr Kozlov...did you know that Jennifer Rogers was twelve weeks pregnant when she died?" Pirelli asks staring intently into my eyes for some kind of a visceral response.

"No...I did not." I say meeting her gaze unflinchingly for several seconds, but the tragic revelation does unnerve me internally.

"And you had never had *any* sexual relations with Ms Rogers and you are not the father of her unborn child. I remind you that a simple DNA test could conclusively identify the paternity," Pirelli says.

"Unequivocally no. And I would remind *you* that that question infers groundless accusations which as far as I can tell have not even a scintilla of factual basis. If you continue along this line of questioning I will terminate this interview forthwith and refer the matter to my attorney for all future interviews, along with a formal and forceful legal response for attempting to intimidate me with groundless slanderous accusations against my character," I bluff.

"Okay...no need to get all legal on us. Do you have any suspicions as to who the father might be?" Pirelli says, causing Hadley to shift uncomfortably in his seat realizing that in her misandrous feminist zeal, Pirelli may be stepping over the line...and taking him with her.

"I do not. Now that I've answered all your *germane* questions, unless you have any further *relevant* questions...I have nothing further to add. This interview is hereby concluded," I say standing up.

"No...nothing further...at the moment. But we might want to interview you again later as the investigation proceeds. Thank you for your cooperation Mr Kozlov," Detective Jimmy Hadley says, standing up, nodding his head toward Pirelli that they are done. She opens her mouth so say something...but Hadley gives her the look and she stifles it, and stands up petulantly grabbing the briefcase.

"I'll walk you out," I say coolly as I lead them out the front door without another word spoken between us.

I return to the office where I find Hawk pacing back and forth.

"Pregnant. *Jesus*. Man...whoever is behind this...if I can get my hands on them...just for two minutes, they'll wish they were dead, man," Hawk says tearing up.

"Yea...that's a tough one. But it's important we keep our heads here, man...whoever is out there would love for us to get angry and careless...and start making mistakes. Do not forget for a New York minute that we're

probably also on their hit list. Okay?" I say.

Hawk just nods in agreement then leaves, "I need to go for a long walk, man..." he says over his shoulder.

I pick up the phone and call Ivan Tarnowski's cell phone, after three rings he answers, "Hey, Mick...what's up man?"

"Ivan...Detectives Hadley and Pirelli from the Moody Seaport PD just left here after questioning me about Jennifer Roger's death," I say, filling him in on her death, with my version of his role in my connection with Jennifer Rogers.

"Jennifer dead...my *gawd*...how tragic, man. What the hell's going on?" Ivan says.

"Man...all I can tell ya is that Hawk and I are all over it. But frankly, the more we dig...it's beginning to look more and more like a major conspiracy. A massive and now, very violent coverup. With some serious resource behind it. Stay tuned for further developments. Can I trust you keep this quiet...and back up my story about Jenifer with cops?"

"Sure...no problem, Mick. Got your back. By the way...Sanjana, my wife would like to meet you two reprobates from my past life...have you over for dinner," he says.

"Okay...sounds great. And thanks," I say

"I'll get back to ya on the date. Talk later."

Click

- Chapter 9 (52) -

October 10, 2001 Thursday about 2pm

U.S./Canada from British Columbia - Border crossing station - Peace Arch Crossing - Blaine WA.

Due to heightened security after 911, the border wait going South to the U.S. from Vancouver British Columbia is at least an hour longer than usual—cars are backed up over 3 miles. Behind the wheel alone, in a 2001 Silver Mercedes C240 Sedan is a 22 year old college student at the University of British Columbia, with olive skin, thick raven hair and dark coffee eyes.

Hassan Tehrani is impatiently waiting in the excruciatingly creeping line to cross into Washington state, to clandestinely meet up with his young coed girlfriend, a student at Moody U, in Moody Seaport, Washington. When he finally gets to the Peace Arch crossing kiosk, he hands the U.S. I.C.E. agent his Canadian passport from British Columbia.

"What kind of name is Hassan Tehrani?" the U.S. agent says.

"It's Persian," Hassan says.

"Where's that, Persian? What rughead country is that?"

Hassan replies, "It is Iran."

As a smile slowly forms on his face, the agent just stares at him, he then yells some code number, keeps Hassan's passport, and tersely says, "Uh...that would be the *same* Iran that kept over 50 Americans hostage for over 400 days, from 1979? Pull out of line to that designated parking area, just to your left. Your passport will be returned after the screening process...or maybe not. Leave your keys to the car, including the trunk and the glove box, in the vehicle."

As Hassan pulls into the parking stall, two burly Border Patrol guards, with hands resting on their holstered guns, immediately order him out of the car, and with one officer under each arm, briskly march him into the main building, like he's some kind of criminal...or terrorist. With no response to his entreaty to explain what's going on, they then half-walk and half-drag him to a windowless interview room.

It is very hot in there, the air is dank and stale, it stinks with B.O. The walls are filthy, a pale penal green. There is nothing but a steel institutional gray table with a chair on either side, directly under a big bank of flickering florescent lights—constantly buzzing. Without a word, they loudly slam the door and leave. After about 20 minutes of just sitting there, with the extreme stress and oppressive heat, he is already in a full sweat. The same two uniformed U.S. Customs agents, both still wearing guns, enter the room.

The one officer ceremoniously places a portable cassette tape recorder on the table. The second agent is standing behind him the whole time out of Hassan's vision...so close, he can feel his hot breath on the back of his neck. The first agent, a short stocky guy with a buzz-cut, with small mean pig eyes, takes a chair at the table across from Hassan, and continues to stare at him without saying a word for about a minute—it seems like an eternity.

Finally, he says, "*Mister* Tehrani, my name is U.S. Customs Officer Harold Bingstad, and that's Officer John Hardin. We have a few questions we'd like to ask you...do you mind if I record this interview?"

Hassan says, "What's this about officer...have I done something wrong?"

"No...not that we know of...yet," he says with a smirk

"Do I need to have an attorney present for this?" Hassan says.

"Well, that's your right to have an attorney present...but of course we would have to detain you until your attorney was able get here. If you waive the right to an attorney, anything you say, might be used against you in a court of law. So, unless you have something to hide...if you want to be on your way, I would strongly advise you to proceed with this recorded interview," he says.

"Don't you have to have a reason to detain me? I have done nothing wrong. I was just trying to cross the border for an appointment...which I am very late for now that you've kept me here for over a half-of-an-hour...for as far as I can tell, no valid reason," he says.

"Now you listen to me, *Mister* Tehrani...we can make this as hard as you want it to be. If you don't start cooperating...like right now, *Mister* Tehrani, we might begin to get suspicious of your intentions to come into these United States. Do you *understand* what I'm saying here?" he says.

Hassan is becoming very anxious. They must have the heat turned way up in the room, it seems like 100 degrees in there. His shirt underarms are soaked with sweat—he senses that the officers can also detect the scent of fear from his strong, rank body odor. Finally, he relents, because he doesn't want to keep his girlfriend waiting any longer and because he thinks they might try to contact his father. This would alert him that Hassan is seeing his "infidel" American girlfriend, which had been strictly forbidden under Islamic Sharia law by the orthodox Islamic autocratic father. Forbidden fruit.

"Okay...but I really have to get going...so please hurry this up. How long will this take?" Hassan says.

"We make rules here. We're gonna take our time...as long as takes to get to the truth," the agent says.

He then over-deliberately depresses the record button, "This is U.S. Customs Agent Office Harold Bingstad. It is Thursday October 10th at 2:15 pm. This recorded interview is being conducted at the U.S. Border crossing at Peace Arch, Blaine Washington. Present in the room is Officer John Hardin, and the interviewee, Hassan Tehrani....spelling Tehrani..."T" as in

uh...Terrorist, "E" as in Edward,"H" as in Henry, "R" as in Robert, "A" as in uh...*A-rab*, "N" as in Nora and "I" as in Ida.

"Mr Tehrani, is this recording being made with your full knowledge and consent?"

"Well... I guess so..." Hassan says

"Yes or no."

"Okay. Uh...yes," Hassan says.

"And are all the answers you are about to give true and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief?" the agent says.

"Yea, uh...yes,"

He says, "Do you wish to have an attorney present for this interview?"

"I guess not. Uh...no," Hassan says.

"State your residence address for the record." he says

"1408 East Broadway, Vancouver, British Columbia," Hassan says.

"The purpose of your visit to the U.S...business or pleasure?"

"To see a friend," Hassan says.

"Your friend's name and address?" the agent says.

"Why do you need that? I don't feel comfortable giving that information," he says.

"You either provide that information, correctly and accurately, which I can assure you will be checked out, or you will be refused admittance into these United States, now and in the foreseeable future. Do you understand?"

Anticipating where this is going, and that they may check on his answers, he uses a fabricated internet date site screen name of "A-Rog." using her middle name, instead of Jennifer.

"Okay...Allison Rogers, Moody Seaport, Washington...I don't know her street address," Hassan says.

"Your relationship with this Allison Rogers?" he says.

"I don't see what the nature of my friendship has anything to do..." he is cut short.

"I'm not going to tell you this again. Answer all my questions...and truthfully, or you *will* be refused admittance to the US. Am I making myself *perfectly* clear?"

"Okay. Okay...a friend. I met her on an internet dating site. This is our first date," he says.

"Her phone number for verification purposes?"

"I don't have any more info than that...because we set up this meeting online with email. The dating site doesn't even give personal email addresses...and for security reasons, most women who date online don't give

out their phone number before the first meeting," Hassan says.

"Okay...we'll come back to that question after you have had a chance to reconsider your answer...remembering that failure to be truthful to a U.S. law enforcement officer is a separate and punishable crime," he threatens.

"Your occupation in British Columbia?" he says.

"I am a graduate student at UBC, uh...University of British Columbia...an Electrical Engineering Major," Hassan volunteers.

When he sees the agents eyebrows fleetingly raise, he realizes he has made a big mistake, by volunteering too much information. A long pause ensues. Both men are sizing each other up, searching each others gaze, like a game of chess, trying to anticipate the next five moves of the other.

Finally, "So you would have a knowledge of electronics, electrical circuits, like timers and the like?" the agent says.

"Yes...I guess so...but..." he is cut short again " How do you feel about United States? What is your opinion of what happened on September 11th, 2001?" the agent says.

There it is. Finally, it is now confirmed. Because of his name, features and coloring, his ethnicity is assumed to be Middle-eastern, and because he has admitted to being Iranian, the agent in the kiosk knee-jerk profiled him as a potential terrorist threat to America. Now he is really beginning to worry—he starts sweating even more profusely with beads of sweat now sprouting on his entire face. The other agent's hot breath on the nape of his perspiring neck accentuates his anxiety.

"Like most Canadians, of which I am citizen and have been since birth, I am deeply saddened by the events of 9-1-1. It was a heinous and cowardly act...and because many will be tempted to brand all Muslims as potential terrorist, it is the worst possible act that could have been committed in the name of Allah. I think America is a great country...I have the utmost respect for its people, and the culture," adding a cringe-worthy patronizing, "...and of course, its government." Agent Bingstad momentarily flashes a superior smile, tantamount in chess to a "check". He's got him on the run, keep up the pressure, and it's just a few more moves for "check mate".

Just as agent Bingstad begins to open his mouth, there is a knock on the door. A head peers around it, and says, "We've gone over the car with a fine tooth comb...nothin'...like zippo. The boss says to cut him loose...we need you two out at the crossing, to deal with the heavy volume. *Now!*" the door slams shut. Seeing that agent Bingstad's attention is distracted from him momentarily, Hassan glances at his Rolex, it's 2:28. He's already a half-hour late, with a minimum half-hour drive time left. He realizes that unless he leaves immediately he has no chance of meeting up with Jennifer. The interruption gives him time to gather his faculties. With his car having been meticulously searched, and coming up empty, he is emboldened by the prospect that they don't have enough probable cause to detain him any further. He decides to go

for it.

Removing a small spiral notebook from the inside pocket of his expensive tailored sport coat, and selecting a red felt pen arrayed with several other pens in his engineer's pocket protector, he elaborately flips to an empty page, stares at the badge of Bingstad, and begins furiously scribbling notes while consulting his watch. He decides to go "all in" with his bluff—no turning back now. "Now...unless you intend to charge me for something...Agent Bingstad and uh...Agent Hardin, is it? I suggest we terminate this interview right now. Or you *will* be hearing from our attorney....for violation of my civil rights, including unlawful detention without probable cause and racial profiling...for starters. And that *is* for the record...on the recording at 2:29 pm. Am I making myself *perfectly* clear?" Hassan says slowly and loudly to ensure that it is clearly recorded.

Agent Bingstad just stares at Hassan, realizing he has lost the advantage of surprise and intimidation—a stalemate. His face flushed with anger, he finally says into the recorder, "That concludes the interview on Thursday October 10 with Hassan Tehrani. It is 2:30 pm."

Click.

"Now that that thing is turned off. The next time...you little Hadji smart ass...you might not be so lucky. You're in our computer system now. So every time you cross the border, you'll be flagged for an interview. And I promise you, that I will make it a point to take a *very* personal interest in your border activity. You're free to leave. Now...get the *hell* out of my sight," Agent Bingstad says in a menacingly calm voice dripping with malevolence. Then, both agents arrogantly cop-strut out of the room.

Badly shaken, on rubbery legs, Hassan finds his way back to his car. He finds his passport thrown on the passenger seat. The backseat is askew and the side trim panels on the doors have obviously been removed, but not put back in place properly. His hand is shaking so badly, after several tries, the key finally finds the ignition, but for a few seconds too long, as the engine catches, the starter motor screeches against the flywheel.

His nerves shot, he fights the urge to vomit, as he speeds South to rendezvous with his forbidden fruit. He makes record time, and arrives at the parking lot of Moody Falls park at 2:55pm just as Jennifer Rogers is starting to pull out the parking lot in her father's 2000 red Stingray Corvette.

He intercepts her. She slides into the familiar backseat of his car with him. They wordlessly embrace for over a minute....his body still shaking from anxiety, and anger over the draconian interrogation tactics.

- Chapter 10 (53) -

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13 - King James Version

October 10, 2001 Thursday 3:00 pm - Ground Zero

Josh and Wayne both have their eyes glued on the minute hand of the big black numbered clock in Mrs Rawlston's sixth-grade class, at J.P. Moody Elementary. Josh's foot is impatiently tapping the floor, as he looks admiringly at his new Nike Air Jordan's the envy of his classmates. The big hand is excruciatingly poised at the twelve, when suddenly, the bell rings, ordinarily the sweetest sound in the world for any happy healthy young lad. For these two best friends, it has rung for the last time...

Despite Mrs Rawlston's futile injunctions, the boys leap from their desks and sprint for the classroom door.

Once outside, like two day-is-done care-free cowboys, they blithely mount their high-end mountain bikes, poised in the bike rack like waiting stallions, a young boy's ultimate symbol of independence and mobility.

"Joshie...let's head over to the falls...see if Glen's having any luck fly-fishin' today," Wayne says.

"Okay man...race ya!" Josh says.

Hooting and whistling, they pedal, joyously, laughing all the way toward their favorite after-school playground Moody Falls Park. They are at the parking lot to Moody Falls Park in less than 3 minutes. An old beat-up '76 Ford pick-up is incongruously parked near a 2000 blood-red Chevrolet Corvette Fastback, and a new Silver Mercedes Benz with British Columbia plates, with the closed side windows fogged up.

"Glen's truck is here....he's probably fishin' his favorite spot....just below the bridge," says Josh.

"Okay...looks like Hassan's here too...the silver bullet. Let's go say hi...see if he's got any more cool new tunes on his MP3 player for us," says Wayne.

"Nah...they look busy, we'll do that later. Let's catch up with Glen," says Josh

"Yea...he and Jen won't be going anywhere....for quite a while," Wayne says with a wry grin.

"Hey, what's that smell, man...smells like gas...seems to be coming from the falls?" says Josh.

As they lock up their mountain bikes in the rack, Wayne says, "Let's check it out...see if we can find Glen."

The boys make their way across the bridge, then down the steep slope to a trail that parallels the stream, and start walking away from the bridge. The stream is waist deep in places. The current is fast as the boys continue looking for Glen.

"Hey, there's Glen's tackle box...but I don't see him. He'd never leave his tackle like this, with all of those hand-tied flies," says Josh.

"He's probably got a big one on the line and he's playing him downstream," says Wayne.

They leave the trail and slide down to the edge of the stream to the tackle box. As they near the edge of the stream, the gas fumes are now becoming very strong. What they could not know is that young Glen McCauley has been overcome by the noxious gasoline fumes—passing out, filling his waders with water pulling him below the surface to the bottom of the creek, drowning him. The boys are now giddily laughing, starting to feel a high from the fumes.

"Hey...I saw this guy on America's Funniest Home videos, throw a match on his barbeque after he used gas to start the coals. *Ka-blewy*, man, funnier n' hell. Blew the barbie about ten feet straight up in the air," says Josh.

"Whoa, that musta been cool...like the Fourth of July," says Wayne.

"Hey...got any matches?" says Josh with a sly grin.

"No...but I've got a Bic lighter. But Joshie, I don't sink hit's a very good idea...seems like a lot of gas," says Wayne starting to slur his words like a drunk.

"Aw man...common...it'll be a blast," giggles Josh with a Norman Rockwell big toothy grin.

"Yea...zat's what wurries me," says Wayne.

"Don't be chicken, Wayno *braack braaack braack*...gimme dat ting," says Josh as he snatches the lighter out of Wayne's hand.

Just then the boys hear someone yelling from a distance coming from the bridge.

The man screams through his cupped hands but they cannot hear his words over the roar of the water.

As the man gets closer he can barely make out the flickering flame of the lighter poised in Josh's hand. He frantically screams, "NO! Don't do it!...NO!"

The man, racing toward the boys, watches helplessly, as if time stood still, as the lighter tumbles in slow motion from Josh's outstretched hand toward the gas filled stream of death. He has just enough time to dive behind a

large boulder on the trail, before the waiting time bomb of high-octane jet fuel...patiently, hungrily awaits its *raison d'etre*—ignition, as the lighter innocuously cartwheels toward the senseless obliteration of two innocent, unfinished lives. The two pals lock eyes, with unspoken recognition of their imminent incineration, they clasp hands.

KA-B-O-O-OM!

A massive, ear drum shattering explosion. Then...all white.

Peering from behind the boulder, the man witnesses the huge fireball traveling at over sixty miles per hour, through the overpass bridge, eventually to the estuary where the stream meets Moody Bay.

- Chapter 11 (54) -

Two households, both alike in dignity. In fair Verona, where we lay our scene. From ancient grudge break to new mutiny, Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. From forth the fatal loins of these two foes.

A pair of star-cross'd lovers...

-The Prologue - Romeo and Juliet

1596 - William Shakespeare

October 10, 2001 Thursday 3:01 pm - Moody Falls Park: Ground Zero

Anxiously drumming her fingers on the steering wheel of her father's 2000 Corvette with a 'Moody U Alumnus' decal emblazoned on the rear window, Jennifer Rogers, a pretty junior at Moody University, has been waiting patiently in the parking lot for the arrival of her lover. Since September 11th, they have not been able to enjoy their normal afternoon secret lover's tryst at Moody Falls Park.

Both families of the young lovers agreed on one thing, probably the only thing, that Hassan and Jennifer should not, indeed would not be allowed to continue this love affair—a foolish infatuation with no possible future. They had pleaded, cajoled and finally threatened the lovers, to cease this senseless romance, that they were, perhaps prophetically, 'playing with fire'. Hassan was supposed to have met her here by two o'clock.

She turns the key of the ignition, and the powerful engine rumbles to life. Looking over her right shoulder, she slides the shifter into reverse, when suddenly a Silver Mercedes shimmering in the late afternoon light, skids into the space to the left of her. The driver, a well dressed handsome young man in his early twenties, with wavy jet black hair and large deep-set luminescent black pearl eyes climbs into the rear seat of the SUV. Once inside, the other rear side door springs open. Jennifer, turns off the ignition, and immediately throws open her door and scrambles into the beckoning open door of the SUV. Once inside, they passionately embrace, and kiss deeply, holding on to each other tightly as if it will be for the last time. Finally, they release each other enough to be able to talk.

"I'm so sorry that I am so late, Jen...I was terrified that you might leave before I could get here," says Hassan.

"What happened? I was just about to leave, my car's in the shop, so I have to get the car back to my father, before he gets suspicious. After 9-11, he'd kill me if he ever found out I was seeing you again," says Jen.

"The US Customs Border people detained me...and gave me the third degree for almost half an hour. More like he'd kill me...literally, if my own

father didn't first. They forbid me to use my cell phone to call you...my Father had U.S. calls blocked on my calling plan so I couldn't call you or receive your calls," Hassan says.

"But why would US Customs do that to you? I don't understand," says Jen.

"Since 9-11, the world has changed Jen...and not for the better for anyone with an Islamic sounding name or worse, appearance. Once inside the interview room, with no windows, the one agent interrogated me like uh..."

Jen interrupts, "Do you smell gasoline?"

"Yea, it's really strong too. I'd better check it out, maybe they did something to the car," says Hassan.

Hassan gets out of the car and his senses are immediately assaulted by the intense smell of gasoline coming from the direction of the stream. As he looks toward the bridge, he notices two young boys whom he immediately recognizes as Josh and Wayne. In the past three months, he had struck up a casual friendship with boys, while waiting for Jennifer to arrive. He had let them download some of his music from his new cutting edge MP3 player. They were great kids, and very interested in what it's like to live in another country—Vancouver BC.

Hassan runs back to the SUV, jumps into the back seat and grabs Jen's hand.

"Listen to me...there's something very wrong going on out there...it smells like it's coming from the stream. That much gas, is very dangerous...it could blow any minute! I just saw Josh and Wayne crossing the bridge going toward the stream. I have to try to warn them. I want you to get back in your car and wait for me there. If something happens, don't wait for me...get out of here *as fast as you can!*" says Hassan, now breathing in very shallow rapid breaths.

"But I can't leave without you. I love you Hassan. I love you so much I couldn't stand to live without you," says Jen.

"I know, dear one. I love you too...more than life itself, but I've got to try to stop those boys...they're very young. They have no idea of the danger of the situation. Promise me, Jen...you have to promise that you'll do as I say if something happens....please Jen!" pleads Hassan.

"But...okay, I guess I promise...but please hurry back! I'm already sick with worry," says Jen.

"It's probably nothing, but I have to go. I love you, Jen," says Hassan.

Hassan, cradling her face in both hands, gives Jen a deep kiss, then slides out of the car, and starts running toward the boys, yelling. "Hey you kids...get away from there!"

Soon it will not matter if the boys ignored or did not hear him over the roar of the falls.

Jen dutifully, climbs behind the wheel of the Corvette and waits for what seems like an eternity, as has often been confided from others, that during times of great stress, time seems to be frozen in place. In real time, it is less than a minute before her life will never again be the same.

Overcome by the guilt of escaping...of survivor's guilt, of leaving her love, and the overwhelming, unrelenting grief of the loss of the love of her life, tragically, her own life will also be, prematurely abbreviated.

Hassan continues to run after the boys, as they cross the bridge then walk down the slope of the bank to the trail along the stream. He is now on the trail, trying desperately to get their attention over the roar of the white water. They seem to notice something, stop, and slide down to the edge of the water. The smell of gas is now overpowering...after running, and inhaling the gas fumes, he is feeling lightheaded, having a hard time breathing. The boys stop by the water's edge—he can hear them laughing. Then suddenly, something catches his attention, in Josh's hand, the faint flicker of a flame.

"NO!...Don't do it...NO!" Hassan screams.

Then he watches helplessly as the flaming lighter cartwheels toward the water. He dives behind a big boulder on the trail, just as the stream erupts into an inferno, then the massive explosion.

KA-B-O-O-OM!

The shock wave of the blast throws him against the boulder, rendering him senseless. For about 30 seconds he is disoriented. When he finally regains his senses, he is bleeding, profusely from his temple from the shock of the blast driving his head into the rock. His vision is blurred by the blood now streaming into his eyes. He wipes the blood away with his sleeve, enough to be able to see, that one of the figures is moving, screaming in agony.

He runs to the boys and immediately sees that one of them is beyond any help. He bends down and picks up the other boy, and cradling him in his arms starts to run back toward the parking lot, when there is a second blast, throwing him to the ground. His clothes are now on fire. He can feel his own skin melting. He tries to avert his eyes from the white bone material now exposed on his arms and legs. Where was once his luxuriant thick black mane on his head is now smoldering wisps of smoke. Somehow, by sheer will and adrenalin, he manages to stand up. He continues on...staggering, one agonizing step at a time, he refuses to release what is left of his now completely still young friend in his arms, until finally he makes it to the bridge.

Jen having felt the first blast, is now terrified. She is torn. Should she leave Hassan down there in that inferno, or should she keep her promise to escape? Suddenly the second explosion galvanizes her will and she knows that there is no hope for anyone caught down there in that burning hell. She is riddled with indecision...paralyzed with fear.

For almost five minutes...her body trembling. Finally, crying hysterically, but keeping her promise to her dear one, she throws the shift lever into reverse. The front windshield is covered with a black gooey film. She can barely see well enough to discern the exit to the parking lot. She turns on the windshield washer, but it only makes matters worse forming a gooey black sludge on the windshield. Now committed, she forces the shift lever forward and floors it. The big powerful engine just spins the rear tires in place—an eerie whining high-pitched screeching, the smell of burning rubber—until finally the rear wheels catch, pinning her against the seat, as she is propelled forward by the powerful G forces of acceleration.

Suddenly, out of the roiling black smoke, she vaguely senses the motion of a figure in front of her, but out of panic, she presses the accelerator even harder to the floor. The last split second the figure jumps out of the path of the screaming Corvette. As she approaches the exit, she breaks hard to make the sharp left turn. The brake lights cast a ghostly dancing pall onto the smoke, making it seem to come alive with a red-tinted malevolence.

Hassan continues across the bridge, carrying the limp, charred unrecognizable torso. He refuses to drop it. He is now on the verge of collapse. Every breath is pure agony. His whole body is now throbbing with pain. Yet he continues to struggle...to stay upright. He has somehow mustered the courage through sheer force of will, but now can go no further, and collapses. Suddenly, through the black bellowing smoke, he spies some movement, just ahead of him.

"Sera don nee!...sera don nee!" Help me...help me, Hassan yells.

"What-the-hell happened?" the man yells over the roar of the fire.

Then, suffering unbearable pain as Hassan tries to explain to the man what happened, he lapses into his native Persian tongue, Farsi.

Kneeling down beside Hassan, the man yells over the roar of the fire, "I can't understand you...can you speak English?"

"Help...in the name of Allah...I..." Hassan whispers.

As he slowly begins to exhale for the last time, the intense pain is now melting away, he knows his suffering will soon be over. There is another very close loud explosion. The last earthy vision he will have will be this figure in front of him, levitating off the ground and disappearing into the smoke.

"Allahu-u Akbar!" God is Great, he defiantly screams.

Then...all white.

- Chapter 12 (55) -

October 10, 2001 Thursday 2:58 PM. - 21 Kilometers from Ground Zero

The Cascadia Pipeline Pumping Monitoring Station - Fernwood WA.

In a large very dimly lighted cinder block room, with no windows, the digital wall clock with the big red LED numbers flashing seconds is agonizingly advancing. It is eerily illuminated by the wall of computer monitors and the blue glare of a large back-lit LCD screen of a schematic depicting the path of the pipeline extending the entire length of a thirty foot wall, with each pump station displaying the constantly changing pressure and flow levels of almost 400 miles of petroleum pipeline.

"Thirty two more minutes and I'm outta here," Frank Gutowski whispers to himself.

Thursday is Frank's Friday. His normal days off are Friday and Saturday. In early October, the Salmon fishing for Coho is just finishing up, probably the last good chance to stock his freezer for the winter, so by this time of the week he's usually starting to methodically check the NOAA weather forecast and the tide tables for the next two days. Because it's against company policy to install any programs or browse the internet for fear of external cyber-security compromise on the two DEC VAX/VMS system monitoring minicomputers, he's browsing the internet with his personal notebook computer. To enable this, Frank temporarily removes the Ethernet cable to the VAX Cascad02 and plugs the Ethernet connector into his notebook computer.

The low tide will be extreme and early Thursday evening...which makes it a lot tougher to launch from a trailer, his sole joyful diversion, a 2000 C-Dory 22 foot cabin cruiser, at the municipal boat ramp. He will want to "get wet" this afternoon so he can head for the San Juan Islands, to be at the good fishing spots by sunrise, Friday morning. He decides to print out the tide tables and the Washington State Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Weekly Creel Report, about twenty pages.

"Damn...low tide is early and really low tonight," he laments to himself.

The two minicomputers, Cascad01 and Cascad02, are designed to provide redundancy, both of which would normally be online monitoring the various telemetry stations approximately every mile or so, on the up and down stream length of the pipeline for pressure and flow readings via a dedicated high speed data line interfaced with an internet connection to allow for monitoring and querying from remote locations by Sys Admin Frank Gunderson.

His co-worker, Tom Hyatt is a trainee, who has just completed his 30 days of training—"30 day wonders" they are called by the "veteran" employees. It's boring and tedious work, with not much pay, which results in a lot of employee churn. Both Frank and Tom have a family. Frank, a wife and a 10 year old daughter with major health problems and Tom a wife, two very young kids and a Black Lab. Because it is one of the few jobs that offers excellent group medical insurance coverage for dependents, even though the pay is relatively low, the medical insurance would otherwise be unaffordable for Frank. Frank is considered a veteran operator with only about 11 months of experience.

Neither one has ever been confronted with an emergency situation, even in training exercises, because it is the operational philosophy of the parent company, National Petroleum Inc. that because an accident is so unlikely due to the sophisticated automated monitoring and remediation technology, and because of the inherent employee churn, they can save money on training by starting with the premise that "nothing can go wrong". And in the unlikely event that it does, the system with its built-in redundancy is deemed highly "fault tolerant" or "unsinkable", and would automatically react quickly and properly to correct any anomalies that might interrupt the flow of the liquid alchemy.

Of the six such monitoring stations in Washington state, the Fernwood Station is the closest monitoring station about 21 Km about 12 miles, directly upstream from Moody Seaport, which are designed to monitor the status of the pipeline which delivers petroleum from Northern most Cascadia County, the Goose Point Refinery, to all points South, including high-octane jet fuel to SEATAC Airport, about 20 miles South of Seattle, and the Southern-most PDX Airport in Portland Oregon.

The over 400 miles of pipeline, of sixteen inch steel pipe, with an operating pressure of around 1000 Pounds per Square Inch or PSI, which can move the highly flammable and volatile liquid at about 50,000 GPM, or Gallons Per Minute. The factory wall thickness is nearly half of an inch, before inevitable reduction from the external rust and interior corrosion which naturally occurs each year. In some areas, like Moody Seaport, the original, direct buried steel pipe, has been in service for over forty years.

And like most aging infrastructure these days, unless something breaks...or something goes very wrong, to save money, there is little or no repair, scheduled maintenance, or replacement. Soon the residents of Moody Seaport, will become tragically aware that for all these years, they have been living, literally on top of a ticking time bomb of highly explosive jet fuel.

Tom Hyatt's normal shifts starts at 3:00 PM, which theoretically allows for about a half hour of overlap with the operator of the next shift to be fully briefed on the monitoring status of the previous shift.

"Hey Tom...I'd like to get outta here a little early this afternoon. I gotta pick up some fishing tackle at Yeager's sporting goods store...and I'd like

to get an early start before low tide hits. Mind if I cut out a little early? And maybe do me a favor and punch out for me at 3:30," says Frank.

"Geez, I don't know Frank...I don't want to get in trouble. You sure it's okay to punch out for ya?" Tom says.

"Sure man...we do it all the time."

Because he is new and eager to please his co-worker, and to be perceived as a good guy, "Okay...I guess 'd be okay...just this once," says Tom.

Before Tom can change his mind, Frank quickly folds up his notebook computer, but in his haste to leave, and his reverie about his fishing trip, he forgets to tell Tom that minicomputer Cascad01 is currently down for routine backup maintenance, which was supposed to have been completed before the end of shift, which Frank had forgotten to do because his attention was consumed by his searching on the internet for what kind of lure the Coho Salmon were hitting on in Puget Sound. Cascad02 is the only monitoring computer not occupied with maintenance tasks and the printer which normally prints system data readings real-time screen dumped from the big board display, has just a few pages left in the bin.

"See ya Sunday, Tom...and thanks pal," Frank says over his shoulder, as he hurries out the thick metal security door to his pickup truck with the trailered boat already hitched up.

- Chapter 13 (56) -

October 10, 2001 Thursday 3:02 PM.
Pumping Monitoring Station - Fernwood WA

Almost immediately, after Frank leaves, a loud audible siren begins to sound accompanied by a flashing animation graphic "alarm" alternating with "low pressure event" at the next monitoring station on the LCD wall schematic indicating a precipitous drop in pressure at Bayview Pumping Station which is the next monitoring system about 33 Km, downstream from Fernwood.

Suddenly the printer "out of paper" alarm sounds, after printing just one page of screen dump, which will mean that none of the data history of this horrific event from that point, would be recorded and logged by the printer, which is normally a hard copy back-up of the data sent to a text log file to the VAX online.

Tom's ears are now being bombarded by a cacophony of alarm noises, which he has never heard before. He frantically searches for the switch to suppress the irritatingly shrill siren alarm, but staring down at the control panel, now all lit up with flashing warning lights, with a vast array of illuminated buttons and switches, he can not remember which one turns the audible alarm off. The graphic animation on the wall persists, and now the graphic is cycling through colors of orange to red, then finally constantly red, with a new message flashing "dangerously low pressure level" and then "major critical system failure event in progress - contact system administrator immediately!" with the time and date flashing " 2001-10-10 - 15:03:23 hrs."

Because Tom is such a neophyte, he's very tentative about how to proceed. He is growing increasingly anxious. The screaming alarms are now making it more and more difficult to concentrate. He picks up the phone, looks at the white-board just to his right where "emergency contact phone numbers" are scribbled, barely legible, in the low light and from multiple erasures, and hastily punches in the mobile number of his boss, George Gunderson, the system administrator who's got the day off.

"I'm sorry the number you have reached is no longer in service, or you have dialed it incorrectly. There is no new number. Please hang up and try again." the recording matter-of-factly says, followed by a rude tone. "Reeeel helpful...thanks bitch," he says.

"Jezuz Christ...is that last digit a one or a seven?" Tom curses.

He hangs up, redials and this time punches in the last digit as seven. The phone after what seems like an eternity, begins to ring.

"This is George Gunderson, I'm not available at the moment, please leave a message and I'll return your call as soon as possible...have a nice day."

"George, this is Tom Hyatt at Fernwood. We've got a uh...situation here. The alarms are going crazy, the big board is displaying 'dangerously low pressure level' and then 'major critical system failure event in progress—contact system administrator immediately!' I don't know what I should do. Please call me back as soon as you get this...thanks!" Tom says, trying desperately to control the panic in his voice.

After what seems like forever, but is actually only about 2 minutes, the phone rings. "Hi Tom, George Gunderson here. Got your message. What's up?"

"George, there appears to be a critical system failure in progress...it looks to be South of here, at or upstream from the Bayview Monitoring Station...there's also very low pressure warnings downstream from me. I've never had to handle one of these...the alarms are going berserk. I don't know how to turn them off...it's driving me crazy and the big board is telling me to call the Sys Admin. Tell me what I should do."

"Tom...first thing...stay calm. Probably just another false alarm. First thing to do is to suppress the alarms. It's the red button on the upper right hand of the control panel...it should be flashing. Just press the button, and that should do it."

Tom presses the button, and the alarm from the big board mercifully stops, but the printer "out of paper" alarm is still beeping.

"Okay...the big board alarm is off, there's still another beeping sound, but at least I can hear you now. Now what do I do?" says Tom.

"Log on to Cascad02, and run the telemetry search program, select all sensors South of your location, which will tell you the status of the pressure sensors downstream from you. If there is a major anomaly in pressure, it will give an approximate location."

Tom logs on to Cascad02 and selects "Report Telemetry Sensors Status of Pipeline" from the on-screen menu. Tom runs the program, but an error message comes back, "Computer cannot connect to the network, please try again." Tom has no idea that the Ethernet cable has been left disconnected by Frank. He frantically tries again. Same result.

"George, I can't connect to the system...now what?" says Tom.
"Try Cascad01!" says George.

Tom goes to Cascad01 to log in, but the Monitor displays "Cascad01 is currently backing up data files. Do not disturb until this task is complete"

"Cascad01 is in Back up mode...now what...where are you? Can you get over here right away?" says Tom.

"Shit! Okay, uh...you've got to get on-line and check those telemetry stations...to determine if there actually is an escape event occurring in the system, where it is and how serious it is. The pressure relief valve upstream at Fernwood should sense the low pressure and automatically shut down the flow, but if it had, you wouldn't be seeing those very low pressure warnings

downstream from you...the flow would theoretically be zero if the relief valve did its job. In any case, to be on the safe side, you've got to get on-line and shut the flow down from your upstream location. Do you understand, Tom...it could be very serious," says George.

"I can't get the goddam Cascad02 to connect! What the *fuck* do I do now? Where are you George?" pleads Toms

"I'm just returning home from Division Office in Bellevue, took off from Lake Washington in the company pontoon plane...just now flying over Cascade Lake...to make a landing. I'm at about 2,000 feet, about a mile from Moody Seaport...so I can't possibly get over to you for at least another 45 minutes."

- Chapter 14 (57) -

October 10, 2001 Thursday 3:08 PM.

About two thousand feet above the Cascade Lake

KA-B-O-O-OM!

A huge explosion. The corporate de Havilland Otter single engine 'high wing' float plane is rocked by the concussion of the blast. George manages to stabilize the aircraft. He then looks down at the origin of the explosion. The flames are now even with his altitude. The black smoke he knows only too well can mean only one thing—a petroleum fire. He can feel the heat of the blast. He knows that the pipeline runs right through the area.

Tom says, "George...what was that noise...sounded like an explosion. Are you okay?"

"*Jezus Christ!* Tom...listen very carefully to me. I think we have a major catastrophe on our hands. Looks like the pipeline might have blown over here by Moody Seaport...by Cascade Lake. This is very serious. Do not...I repeat do not talk to anyone about this until I can get there...do not answer any questions. If you are contacted by the authorities or the media, all you are allowed to say is we are in process of investigating the matter, and can offer no comment at this time. Is that perfectly clear Tom?"

"Yes sir...but..." says Tom as the connection clicks off.

After hanging up on Tom, George Gunderson immediately calls the Western Division Corporate Vice President of Operations of Cascadia Petroleum Inc., CPI in Bellevue, Washington. Howard Roland VP from corporate headquarters for NPI in Houston is visiting Bellevue for a corporate golf tournament.

"This is George Gunderson, Sys Admin Cascadia Pipeline. This is an extreme emergency. Put me through to Howard Roland, VP...I repeat this is an emergency, I don't care what he's doing, even if he's in the middle of taken' a shit...get him to the phone. *NOW!*"

About a minute later after the call is patched to Howard Roland's mobile phone, "Hey Boy George...you still pissed off about last night's Texas Hold'em game? So what's so *goddam* important that you had to distract me at the *goddam* 17th hole at the *goddam* Country Club, when I'm up one hole headin' for number 18 for a 100 big ones. This fuckin' better be good *goddammit!*" Howard says chidingly.

"If my assessment is even half right, that hundred bucks is going to be carfare compared to what this thing may cost you in personal lawyer fees. I'd strongly advise you to skip the 18th, head straight to the clubhouse and turn the TV to CNN. Pretty soon now, the reports of a petroleum explosion in Moody Seaport Washington should be hitting the wires and airwaves. After today, none of us, including and especially you, may have a job. Looks like the Cascadia Pipeline blew about 3 PM this afternoon in a densely populated area of Moody Seaport. I personally witnessed it from the air...this is very big...and very bad. There's got to be major casualties, maybe triple digit fatals, and massive property damage. Remember the natural gas pipeline explosion in Carlsbad New Mexico in August of 2000...12 dead. From the looks of it, this could be order of magnitude," says George.

"Please tell me that you're just *shittin'* me...prankin' me for stickin' it to you for 90 bucks last night," says Howard.

"Cut the shit and listen up Howard...*and listen good!* We don't know what happened yet...but you know, as well I, pipelines, under Federal law, are considered to be a common carrier, absolute or strict liability those 500 dollar an hour lawyers call it, so we'd be presumed to be completely at fault, and 100% liable for all damages, actual and consequential, unless the proximate cause, and therefore the liability can be shifted or imputed to a third party. So I would strongly suggest you get somebody over there as-soon-as-fuckin'-possible to start shiftin'...before the NTSB locks it down.

Be-cause 'shit happens' ain't going to float as a defense. So it's time for major 'shit happens'...' cause if you could see what I'm seein', you'd be *shittin'* your pants as we speak. I'm flying over it right now, and as far as I can tell it happened near Moody Falls Park...a burning jet fuel fireball, barreled down the creek all the way down to Moody Bay...flames and black smoke billowing several thousand feet in the air already, man. Feels like a blast furnace up here even at 2,000 feet. Am I making myself abundantly clear here Howard?" says George.

"*Shit*...don't give any statements to the *goddam* authorities or the *goddam* media until I can tell you what the official corporate response will be. And tell all the *goddam* employees, involved and even uninvolved, to keep their *fuckin'* mouths shut if they want to keep their *goddam* jobs. We gotta get somebody out there...eyes on the ground...and from corporate over there to start working up some creative alternative liability narrative, at least to create some doubt to detract from the obvious, until we can buy some time. This is a *fuckin'* PR nightmare, especially with the Feds really lookin' down our throats at the safety issues of our proposed petro-pipeline from British Columbia, Canada into the US. I'll get back to you." Howard says.

Click.

October 10th @ 3:50pm
About 45 min after the explosion at Moody Falls Park

Howard Roland is about to make the worst call of his life, so far, to Corporate Headquarters, National Petroleum Inc., parent company of CPI, in Houston, Texas.

But his first call will be to Ernest Porter, President and CEO of SHOPS, Silent Hand OPs...or operations LLC, a turn of phrase on the father of free market capitalism, Adam Smith's "invisible hand" of the controlling forces of the marketplace in lieu of government regulation. The home office is strategically located in Chula Vista, California about 5 miles from the Mexico Border. The recently constructed multimillion dollar 400 square acre training facility for paramilitary troops is a convenient gateway for access to oil rich South America where many petro-corporations, and an occasional drug cartel, have need of his services.

Unlike the paramilitary equivalent of Blackwater Worldwide, founded in 1997, a private military company, most of the clients of Silent Hand OPs are non-governmental organizations, NGOs, large multi-national corporations, like the huge international energy and manufacturing conglomerates, who occasionally need clandestine "special OPs". Porter, who founded SHOPS in 1998, is an ex-caseworker, from the Special Activities Division, SAD, of the CIA, specializing in "black OPs". Formed in 1947 by the National Security Act, the CIA's mission was to obtain "through any means necessary" Signal Intelligence or SIGINT, including audio and/or video, and photography surveillance, and Human Intelligence or HUMINT, "to get eyes on" intel, and if possible, to compromise security of US political enemies, of which there was no shortage, according to the leadership of the CIA.

Porter, whose code name is Black Mamba from his Force Recon days, named after one of the most deadly venomous snakes in the world, the Black Mamba, They are known for their stealth, highly aggressive behavior, and ability to strike with deadly precision. They are also the fastest land snake in the world, capable of reaching speeds of up to 13 miles per hour. These fearsome snakes can strike up to 12 times in a matter of just a few minutes. On the circumference of his forearm, he sports a tattoo of three coils of a Black Mamba, with the long forked tongue flicking from the head spelling "*El Negro*" on the back of his right hand.

Because of his ability, like the Black Mamba, to move undetected in the dark recesses, to attack with surgical precision and legendary lethality, then quickly disappear into the darkness, he was particularly adept at Black Ops—liquidating perceived enemies of the US government. Eventually, he came to be known simply by his comrades in clandestine warfare as *Negro*...Blackie.

In addition to his extensive training, highly honed skills at staging accidental deaths of political enemies of the US government, because of his disarming, seemingly harmless good ol' Southern boy demeanor which he has consciously cultivated to gain the confidence of his unsuspecting targets, he was also particularly skilled at espionage: "Successful espionage is nothing

more than gradually getting somebody comfortable with betrayal."

"Can I speak to Ernie Porter, tell him this is Howard Roland VP Operations of National Petroleum Inc...tell him it's a major emergency."

"One moment please, I'll see if he is available," the voice says.

After about a minute, "Hey Howie...long time. How ya all doin', *amigo?*" says the always affable Ernest Porter.

"Been better, *Negrito*...much better. We've got a situation up here in Northwest Washington...Moody Seaport, about 100 miles North of Seattle. Looks like one of our pipelines blew...according to my Supervisor for that leg of the pipeline, George Gunderson. He witnessed it in the air while coming in for a pontoon plane landing on Cascadia Lake, about 1 mile from ground zero. He says it's bad...real bad," Howard says.

"Okay...stop right there...are you calling from your office land-line phone? If so, hang up...NOW! Call me back on your private cell phone...not your company Blackberry mobile...phone records can be easily subpoenaed...that will be one of the first things the NTSB will do as a matter of routine investigation. Multiple calls or calls of a duration longer than five minutes could raise a flag for follow-up. Call me back on this secure line, to my personal satellite phone, number...619-555-1345, any and all future calls will be done in this manner. And pick yourself up about ten throw-away prepaid mobile phones. Pay with cash only. Each time we need to talk, call me on a new phone, when we're done, take a very large hammer to it, and throw in the trash. Are we clear on that?" says Ernie.

"Yea, but..." says Howard.

Click.

Howard pulls out his personal mobile phone and calls the number back.

"Okay...Howie, what can I do for ya?" says Ernie

"George Gunderson, got a call about a half an hour after the blast, from an FBI agent out of Seattle, a Charles Cunningham. He told George that he believed that the explosion might have been an act of terrorism. He said he wanted to alert us for security purposes to ensure that all the other vulnerable legs of the pipeline, which runs South all the way to Portland, Oregon, were secured.

He said, after the explosion hit the wires, he got a call from a border agent...a Hal Bingstad, at the Peace Arch Canada border crossing on Interstate 5, that he suspected a fishy acting rughead might have been involved, that he had detained him at the border. But had to release him, about thirty minutes before the blast because a car search came up negative for any violations of contraband etcetera. He was driving a brand new Silver Mercedes Sedan, with Vancouver BC plates. I don't have exact plate numbers...but apparently first responders reported that a vehicle matching that description was in the parking lot at ground zero.

George thinks we need to get someone out there before the NTSB shows up, and prevents access as a potential crime scene. We need to make damn sure that when the NTSB does their typical nit-picky investigation that they conclude the cause was an act of terrorism," Howard says.

"Hmm...what does George think caused the blast?" says Ernie

"George, seems to think, that based on the early interaction he had with the pump station operator on duty at the time, a Tom Hyatt, who was pretty green...on the job about a month, that it could be a combination of mechanical malfunction of a pressure relief valve...and operator error, in dealing with it. The system is supposed to be fail-safe...with lots of redundancy, but apparently the network was down, and the operator on duty panicked and didn't know how to shut 'er down.

Because that pipeline has been in service for almost forty years, the wall thickness through corrosion etcetera is probably, in some places, about forty...and in some cases maybe thirty percent of original. Our most recent readings with a pipeline pig that inspects the line, indicated that the wall thickness at the explosion site was about thirty five percent of original.

If there is any kind of structural damage, like deep scoring from incidental construction, any kind of extreme pressure build-up, if not dealt with early could blow out the pipeline...the integrity of the pipeline obviously is only as good as the weakest place.

Can you get somebody out there...like yesterday...we need a pair of eyes on the ground. Neither George nor I should be seen out there...in case there was a system malfunction...we need somebody to do this clandestine like, so naturally, I thought of you...we've always been able to count on you in the past...like when you took care of some urgent business for us, in New Mexico....what, about 20 years ago?" says Howard.

"You know Howard...sometimes you gotta *really* big mouth. In the future...*nevaa EVAA*, talk about past assignments, especially if it involves a potentially capital offense. No statute of limitations...got it?" Porter says sending a chill down Rolands' back.

"Hey Ernie...sorry man. Yea, got it, man. You don't have to be so touchy about it," says Howard.

"Forget it. Okay...here's the deal. I couldn't get anybody up there...for at least 2 days. But I seem to recall that you hired, on my recommendation, Frank "Guts" Gutowski, about a year ago. Frank was a Special Forces guy in the Gulf War in 1990. A 'special ops' behind the lines kinda guy...whose mission was to disrupt and disable the enemy communication, using explosive charges etcetera. He's an expert in pyrotechnics. He came to work for me in 1992, when I was freelancin', before I founded SHOPS, doing the same shit. He was good...very good at what he did, but about a year ago, he decided he wanted out of the merc biz. Said he had a sick kid, a young daughter with serious health issues, and he wanted to spend some more time with his wife and family...she grew up in Cascadia County...lots of her family still there. I

hear the kid's still kickin'...but they're barely keepin' her alive with some major cutting-edge medical procedures and medications...very expensive. That's why he wanted a job with good medical coverage. If he'll do it...right now, he's your best shot at keepin' a lid on this," says Porter.

"Okay...but everything has to go through you...all payments and all contact...so that there is NO paper trail back to me or the corporation. Agreed? So here's what's on the line here. We've got a big pipeline deal cookin' from British Columbia, a transnational through several US states. It's under regulatory and environmental review in Canada and the US. We *can not*, I repeat, *not* afford to be at fault for a negligent system failure of this magnitude, especially with fatalities and major property damage. It could literally blow-up the whole *fuckin'* deal...*comprendooh amigoooh?*" says Howie.

"I'll get on it...but it ain't gonna be cheap, *mi amigoooh*. I'll get back to ya," says Ernie.

Click.

October 10th @ 7:53PM

About 4 hours after the explosion at Moody Falls Park

Frank Gutowski, is on his boat anchored off the San Juan Islands for the last 3 hours, to get an early start at fishing for Coho Salmon at daybreak, when he gets the call from Ernie Porter on his cell phone. He immediately turns the boat around, and heads back to the boat launch at the marina. He pulls the boat out of the water on to the trailer, and disconnects the boat trailer from the hitch on the truck and leaves it in the marina parking lot.

His boat has become his sanctuary. It's the only thing that gives him some semblance of pleasure and sanity. It is the boat and his unconditional love and commitment to his gravely ill young daughter Alicia May, the boat's namesake, that keeps him from just saying "*screw it...screw all of it...*" and bailing out of his home situation, including eating a bullet, as many of his Gulf War brothers in arms have done.

When he is alone, out on Puget Sound on his Sea Dory, all his personal problems, seem to fade away. The disharmony of his marriage, his daughter's tormented existence, and the stack of exorbitant co-pay medical and prescription drugs bills, he struggles to pay every month.

His first stop is at the Fred Meyer mega-market about 4 miles from ground zero. First he purchases two throw-away prepaid cell phones with cash. He then goes into the Home and Garden Department and purchases a 25 pound bag of harmless mulch, and 50 ft. of quarter inch nylon rope...making sure to pay for everything with cash. He then leaves the store, outside, out of view, he cuts a hole in the bag of mulch, big enough for a visible leak. He returns to the Home and Garden Department and tells the clerk that handled the earlier purchase, that he wants to exchange the leaking bag of mulch so it won't get all over his trunk.

"No problem," says the clerk.

He then puts the mulch back, and walks over the fertilizer section, throws a bag of ammonium nitrate fertilizer on his shoulder, and walks out the door with the bag on his far shoulder to obscure the clerk's view of his face—the clerk never looks up. He walks through the door with a "Thanks...have a good night."

He then goes to the gas station at Fred Meyer, and fills up a 5 gallon jerrycan can with diesel fuel, again paying with cash. He then drives home...telling his wife that the boat bilge pump had a malfunction, and he had to abort the fishing trip. Now that the bilges have had a chance to drain, he has to go back out to bring the boat home, but he'll first need to get some tools from the garage.

"Whatever..." Cindy says distractedly, still in her robe, pajamas and slippers, stretched horizontal on her Barco Lounger recliner, grazing on a giant bowl of potato chips perched on her considerable middle, chased by her third white-wine spritzer. The only light in the darkened room is the eerie flickering of the TV, reflecting off her dull eyes, as she stares trance-like at the evening re-run of her daily dosage of Oprah. The copious amount of white wine consumed daily is the only anesthetic that seems to numb the unrelenting monotony—her sense of futile desperation of feeling trapped in this never-ending nightmare as a full time care-giver who never can let their daughter out of her sight, because of the frequent daily epileptic seizures.

Frank and Cindy his wife of 12 years, have not been getting along since his full-time return from 'assignment' a year ago. After the birth of their daughter, once attractive and active, Cindy has "let herself go"...allowing her weight to balloon to over 200 pounds. The stress of the constant custodial care of their mentally impaired daughter, now almost 10 years old, and their attendant financial problems, has taken a heavy toll on the relationship. Alicia will never be able to fend for herself. For the rest of her life, she will need care. No semblance of a normal life, for Cindy and Frank...and no more children. And for Cindy's parents who live nearby, no 'normal' grandchildren to dote over.

Cindy and Frank...and now Alicia, like many families of all wars past, are considered unfortunate but oftentimes necessary collateral damage of the vagaries and vicissitudes of waging a "just American war"...oftentimes half-way around the world.

After years in the military, Frank who had always been articulate...and a good student before enlisting 'for the cause', had gone back to college and received his B.A. in English on the G.I. Bill, with the hope of maybe someday becoming a high school English teacher. But his occasional flashbacks caused emotional outbursts from PTSD triggered from any kind of stress, had rendered him unfit to be in any kind of a captive classroom situation. He had often mused over the unequal sacrifice, too often the ultimate sacrifice, that he and others of the mainly lower-middle-class all-volunteer

army had been asked to make in the name of American freedom and democracy.

While the children of the rich and privileged, including the sons of the hawkish U.S. Congressmen, George Washington's "impostors of pretend patriotism"—jingoist ideologues who had never experienced the horrors of war first hand, but were quite willing to glibly almost frivolously, send American's young warriors off to fight and die in foreign lands. They had sacrificed *nothing*. After his multiple tours of duty, and countless 'emergency' re-deployments he had come to realize that every "just war" in the end becomes just a war...for economic hegemony, in other words money and natural resources and in the case of Iraq, the "Black Gold" of petroleum.

It has only been in the last five years, that they have become aware of the fact from some independent scientific studies by NGO's that Cindy found searching the internet, of the pathological health effects Gulf War Syndrome. That Frank's repeated and continuous exposure to depleted uranium treated ordnance used by the U.S. military in the first Gulf War—that the exposure to weaponry impregnated with uranium, to enhance armor-piercing penetration capabilities, can cause genetic damage. Cindy is convinced that Frank's prolonged exposure to radiation "messed up his genes" and is responsible for their daughter's mental impairment, and myriad of other health problems. As a further consequence, Cindy is terrified of conceiving another child with Frank for fear of having another child with birth defects. The Veterans Administration has steadfastly denied any responsibility for consequential genetic defects, leaving them with a tremendous financial as well as emotional burden for long term care of their daughter.

Before leaving the house, he goes into Alicia's bedroom, seeing her fast asleep cuddled up with "Freddy", her Teddy bear, peaceful and quiet for a change. As he kneels down, his eyes moisten...he strokes her hair gently, kisses her always feverish forehead, and whispers. "I love you baby girl...you're daddy's little girl. I'll always be here for you."

He then gathers himself, goes into the garage, and digging through his army locker which he always keeps locked, finds his night vision goggles, and face-black, then slips on his dark gray and black night camo. He slides on two pairs of surgical gloves to insure there will be no transfer of traceable fingerprints, from the first pair. He then roots around and finds blasting caps, a ZEB/D/CU 30 capacitor blasting machine, and a custom circuit board which he had personally designed and built, both left over from his paramilitary tours of duty for Ernie Porter.

The circuit board can turn any ordinary off-the-shelf electronic device into a remote detonation device, using the capacitor-blasting machine, when fully charged with a hand crank provides the 600 volts necessary to detonate the blasting caps with a step-up relay connected in series to the blasting cap by the mobile phone, which provides necessary contact closure for detonation.

He pries open the "slave" phone, to expose the electronics. He files out a notch in the case to accommodate passage of the wires. He carefully solders the two wires to the phone circuit, which will not be connected to the blasting cap circuit until he's on site, to prevent accidental ignition.

He snaps the phone back together. Since the inception of the 1G analogue cellular network in the mid-80s and the digital 2G network in the 1990s, cell phones have been the detonation device of choice by asymmetrical warfare warriors...especially in Operation Dessert Storm, the First Gulf War in 1990—clean, safe, and relatively cheap. Compared to the previous relatively primitive technology, their reliability was unmatched, in the high ninetieth percentile for successful ignition of blasting caps. He has used it successfully many times in his mercenary "black ops" missions for Porter.

He then digs out an old green zippered generic army duffel bag—it will be untraceable. He lines it with a 4 mil black plastic trash bag, empties the fertilizer into the duffel, then pours the diesel fuel on it, mixing it in with his hands, insuring the fertilizer is evenly soaked with fuel. He wipes his gloved hands clean of the toxic diesel fuel, then changes gloves, again two pairs.

Working quickly, but confidently, as he had done so many times before, he imbeds the eight blasting caps wired in parallel every six inches to insure complete dispersion and detonation, he then connects the circuit board to lead wires. Finally, he ties off the top of the trash bag, to keep the deadly mixture from leaking.

He puts an ohm/voltmeter across the wires now coming out of the first prepaid slave cell phone, and calls it with the second prepaid phone to make sure it will receive his call, and that he gets a continuity reading indicating contact closure. Good to go. He enters the number into the auto-dial of the calling phone. He will leave the cell phone disconnected until he gets to ground zero. He throws the duffel bag in the back of the truck, the mobile phone into a day-pack on the front passenger seat and heads out for Moody Falls Park.

Ground Zero - October 10th @ 11:14PM
About 8 hours after the explosion at Moody Falls Park

Frank parks his pickup about a half-mile from the main parking lot on the far side of the park. He throws the day pack over his shoulder, picks up the duffel bag and hikes into the park from the other side; through the woods, so as not to be detected. His heart is racing...his adrenalin is pumping, giving him that familiar rush. A seductive high of "hyper-arousal", like having the wild, uninhibited sex that he and Cindy used to have...before Alicia. All his senses are acutely aware. For the first time in over a year he feels completely alive...in control, the weight of all the family obligations completely recede. Adjusting his night vision goggles on his blackened face, he angles toward the parking lot. He is coming in from the opposite side of the creek—the ruptured

pipeline, on the other side.

He slowly scans the scene, seeing nobody around, he crosses the beautiful old stone bridge, which somehow has withstood the blast. *Don't make 'em like that anymore.* Couching low, as trained, to minimize his profile in the pitch black night, he is invisible as he soundlessly crosses the bridge, and makes his way to the pipeline. He follows the black charred vegetation up to a point where he can see the origin of the blast—a huge crater.

He slides down to the ruptured pipe. He is able to see the jagged edges of the pipe flayed outward. The forces causing the rupture were internal...no doubt about it. Roland's not going to like it...a clear system failure. No way the NTSB would attribute the proximate cause to an external event....unless. Having been briefed by "the boss" Ernie Porter personally...and his generous payday, means it's a VBD, a Very Big Deal. Cash money which he can desperately use to satisfy the burgeoning exorbitant health insurance co-payments and exotic outrageously priced medications for the treatment of his daughter.

He knows what he must do to complete his mission. He securely lashes the duffel bag to the top of the pipe with about five wraps of the nylon rope. He opens the duffel bag, charges up the capacitor detonation device by cranking the hand crank 20 times, connects the wires from the cell phone to the circuit board....and powers up the phone, silently praying, "*I hope no random-robo telemarketing asshole calls the number by accident.*" At least all *his* problems would be over; worth more dead than alive, the three hundred K life-insurance would at least allow Cindy and Alicia to live comfortably for the rest of their tragic, pathetic lives. The system is now armed and ready.

Ground Zero - October 10th @ 11:46PM
About 9 hours after the explosion at Moody Falls Park

Sitting in his truck, about a half-mile from ground zero, he pulls out the prepaid mobile phone, and auto-dials the prepaid mobile slave phone attached to the duffel bag of explosives.

Almost instantaneously....

KA-B-O-O-OM!

A smile begins to steal across "Guts" blackened face, *Mission accomplished...yea baby. I still got it! Back in the game...damn that felt good!*

Before driving home, he gets out of the truck, places the prepaid mobile phone on the ground and repeatedly crushes it with the heel of his combat boot, he then scatters the pieces in different directions into the roadside bushes.

Those people who are able to hear the blast, assume that it is just another one of those many secondary blasts that have been going on all day...just "pockets of unspent fuel igniting", the official Cascadia Pipeline spokesperson, George Gunderson, explains on the hourly local TV news briefings.

- Chapter 15 (58) -

After checking my email, I was cleaning out my Junk Mail folder where most of the spam usually ends up. As I was quickly scanning the subject lines as I usually do before deleting the messages just to check if that wealthy Nigerian gentleman who needed help moving hundreds of millions of dollars from his homeland, had sent me my commission check yet for \$2,320,000—US of course. Nope. But I did notice a curious subject line entry.

Your LAN-IP 24.12.33.14 has been hacked

Normally I would disregard such a message as spam, trying to lure me to some website that was trying to sell something, or worse, but this one correctly listed my IP, so I decided to open it.

*From: atsa_ee@hushmail.com
Date: Thursday October 17, 2001 2:15 AM
To: mak@kozmic.com
Subject: your LAN-IP 24.12.33.14 has been hacked*

your LAN has been hacked by malware. A Trojan horse has been installed on all you computers connected to your LAN which has complete access to all your files, including email. all of your keystrokes are being logged including your passwords for online banking etc.

searched everywhere for your PGP,(Pretty Good Privacy) public key>>>can't find it. have to assume that you are not using the encryption program>>>that puts anyone who communicates with you at risk.

if you want to know who is behind hacking your computers>>>etc., and why, for security of future correspondence, please install PGP. let me know when that has been done by reply email.

*totally delete this message right away from your client email computer *and server* after printing it out.*

use a computer that has not been connected to your LAN for future correspondence with PGP installed.

more later

@ eagle

I call Hawk over who is also checking his email.

"Hey man...take a look at this email I just received..." I say.

He comes over reads it, looks at me and says, "Looks credible to me...need to check this out further. Print out the email and delete it from your computer...also confirm it's been deleted from the ISP POP server. Then let me sit down and do some digging on your computer to see if there's any merit to it. If there is...somebody theoretically has got access to all our files including video and audio from the day of the explosion. Not good...definitely not good," Hawk says.

"Can you tell who sent it and where it comes from?" I ask

"Probably not...looks like an anonymous mail server...probably web mail using an encrypted browser...something like TOR," he says

"What do you make of the sender's handle...think it's some kind of clue as to their identity?" I ask.

"Well...could be a randomly generated hacker email address...but it doesn't look like it...not enough upper and lower case and special characters...might mean something in another language. I'll check it out further," cyber-Sherlock says.

"Do you have a computer that hasn't been connected to our LAN?" I ask

"Yea...got a couple old notebooks...not very fast but for email, they'll do the job. If there is a Trojan horse running on our LAN, they should be free of it, as they've never been connected to it," he says.

I print out the email then delete it from the computer which under my email settings automatically deletes it from the ISP email server. Yea, right.

"How long will it take you to figure out if someone's gotten into our nickers?"

"Maybe and hour...let me slide in there behind your computer." he says.

Hawks meaty fingers are a blur. He places a CD that he has removed from his voluminous library of CD's in the drive and copies several programs on to one of the hard drives, not the system hard drive, and begins running some diagnostic tests.

"Running a few of these programs should tell us within an hour if there's any malware installed...for a preliminary read...probably longer to locate the actual Trojan horse on the root directory where it's most likely hiding...and related log files...another coupla hours to set up an intrusion logging program. Now...let's just sit back and let them do their thing. In the meantime I'm going to dig out two of my old Apple notebooks...never networked with the LAN so we should be okay. If we do hook it up to the

LAN, doubtful the malware would be compatible with the Apple OS. We won't set them up for file sharing with the Window machines...but you and I can share files on the notebooks. I've already got PGP installed on both of 'em," he says.

About four hours later Hawk is looking at the reports generated from the programs, sagaciously stroking his chin.

"Yeap. Somebody's has definitely been able to compromise our security and log on to our LAN...they planted a Trojan horse malware alright. They've been snooping around even since we received the email. I've set up an undetectable monitoring program, so I could log their activity...to try to get their IP address to do a trace route, and figure out where they're coming from. But whoever it is...they're good...very good. They cover their tracks...just like the Indians...they leave no trace that they were ever there. From the log files, they don't seem to want to access our online bank accounts...yet. More interested in our email correspondence. Very sophisticated breach...and *very good* at covering their true identity. And get this...they also appear to be interested in perusing all the other hard drives and folders...even where all our pictures and video files are stored," Hawks says.

"Any ideas who it might be...and more importantly why?" I ask.

"With this level of sophistication...it's either NSA...or some hired contract Ruskie cyber criminal...essentially a hitman. Since the collapse of the USSR, the Russian Mafia has had to find new and creative ways to graft and steal...it's embedded in the culture. So they've discovered cyber crime...it's clean, little risk for getting caught or prosecution with minimal capitalization costs...and very, *very* lucrative. And with an over abundance of advanced mathematics majors...PhD equivalents...some of the best programming minds on the planet...with not many other options for them to scratch out a living. These guys mostly hangout in the dark recesses of the Deep Web," Hawk says

"Deep Web?" I ask.

"It's World Wide Web content that is not part of the Surface Web, which is indexed by standard search engines. Shouldn't be confused with the dark Internet, the computers that can no longer be reached via Internet, or with a Darknet distributed file sharing network, which could be classified as a smaller part of the Deep Web.

Most of the Web's information is buried far down on dynamically generated sites, where standard search engines cannot find it. Traditional search engines cannot *see* or retrieve content in the deep Web—those pages do not exist until they are created dynamically as the result of a specific search. As of 2001, the deep Web was several orders of magnitude larger than the surface Web. The one common denominator of most of the hackers is a deep distrust and cynicism of institutions in general and governments in particular. Unless of course, it's the NSA guys. But many of the NSA hires, young hackers some without even a high school diploma but brilliant cybernauts, were recruited because they know their way around the Deep Web," Hawk says.

"Preemptive hiring practices, eh? So these hackers operate well below the radar of traditional search engines. A whole layer...and level of cyber-troglodytes, who dwell in the subterranean recesses...like some dark radical cult of anarchists," I say

"Yeap...apt description...cave dwellers. More like house cats who seldom venture out of their little cyber-lairs into the light of day. They advocate the overthrow of pretty much all government institutions utilizing cyber warfare whose guiding mantra is to break something...anything, nihilist mystical anarchists offering no practical solutions. Sorta like highly devolved Ruskie mafia hitmen, only with fewer scruples...but with some serious cyber-game," Hawk says.

"So why are they so pissed off? Like what are they so friggin' angry and rebellious about?" I say.

"Like that famous scene from the "The Wild Ones" They would probably answer that question, with a *well whaddya got?* Instead of motorcycles, their vehicle of choice is microprocessors. Redefines cynical misanthropes, many on serious meds, man. But it's the one's off their meds you gotta worry 'bout," Hawk says with grudging admiration."

"So who do ya think these guys are that are *so* interested in lil' ol' *moi?*" I ask.

"My best guess is it's in the US...maybe NSA...or some cyber-snooping contract security corporation doin' their dirty work...or maybe both. If it was the Ruskie they'd be trying to log our keystrokes and access...and eventually drain our bank accounts online. Just to be safe...I've changed the passwords and moved most of the big deposits to a bank which can't be accessed online...leavin' a minimal amount in each, at least until we can get to the bottom of this," Hawk says.

"So maybe it's connected with this explosion of the pipeline at Moody Falls? Like the Feds are trying to figure out what we know...that we haven't told em? Can you tell when it started?" I say.

"Yea...it was sometime after the so-called terrorist event...no record of intrusion before that. Anyway, I moved all of our video and still images from the day of the explosion to a USB portable hard drive, then disconnected so it's not accessible on the LAN. I left a little honeypot...some other unrelated video and stills so they wouldn't suspect that we're on to them," Hawk says.

"What about all the existing computers on our network...anyway to recover the OS and data files from before we were hacked?" I say.

"Yea...I'm pretty sure of the earliest date of intrusion. I've got multiple secure off-line disk image clones on every hard drive, of all the computers, dating back at least a month before. I'll restore the backup on all the network client machines after we resolve who is behind this so we don't tip them off that we're on to 'em. Then I'll install a killer firewall, hardware and software...that even I couldn't hack," Hawk says smiling.

"So have you been able detect the inbound...or outbound destination IP that could give us a clue as to where they're comin in from?" I say.

"Like I said...these guys are good. But I'm better," he says without a trace of irony, "Each time they enter, it's from a different IP...when I query the IP database...it's from all over the world. So they're able to spoof their originating IP address. But if they're using a TOR anonymous IP, it'll be too slow for them to download any big files. Eventually, I'm thinkin' they'll want to go to a direct IP with enough bandwidth to download some of those huge multi-megabyte video files. So up to know, they've just been sniffin' around. They won't be able to tell what the video or stills are until they download them...then we might get lucky and get their true IP. From there I should be able to figure out the country...and maybe the region. If it's the Feds, I doubt if I'll be able to pin-point who the IP may be assigned to...but maybe if they get sloppy or complacent, we might...and I emphasize *might*, find out the general geographical vicinity," Hawk says.

"So help me out here, man. Who's this TOR dude?" I say.

"Not a who...a what, man...an open source program. T-O-R...an acronym for The Onion Router, which conceals its users' identities and their online activity from surveillance and traffic analysis by separating identification and routing. It encrypts and then randomly bounces communications through a network of relays run by volunteers around the globe. These onion routers employ encryption in a multi-layered manner...ergo the onion metaphor," Hawk, whose brilliant savant-like intellect does not suffer fools graciously, says with no small amount of exasperation in his tone at my relatively colossal lack of the rudiments.

"So who has access to this TOR?" I naively ask starting to enjoy watching Hawk's increasing frustration with my lame questions.

"Jesus man! Okay...okay. I can see I'm dealing with a real cyber retard," Hawk says closing his eyes and taking a deep breath like a parent desperately trying to summon the patience for dealing with questions of a three year old.

"Geez...what a grouch."

"Okay I'll break it down into elementary terms...even you can understand. Anybody can download it off the web...the good guys, bad guys and everybody in between since it's free under a BSD license...a family of permissive free software licenses. As a matter of fact, we should probably start implementing the use of it for some of our research so down the road, the Feds...or whomever can't figure out where we've been browsing by massaging our cookies...or peeking at the history, all of which are not retained by browsing with TOR. Only problem is that it's really slow compared to direct access," Hawk says.

Morphing into Jeffrey Lebowski, "This is a very complicated case, *maahn*. You know, a lotta ins, lotta outs, lotta what-have-you's. And, uh, lotta strands to keep in my head, man. Lotta strands in ol' Koz's head. Luckily I'm

adhering to a pretty strict, uh...drug regimen to keep my mind, you know, limber."

"Limber?...more like overcooked Linguine."

"Hey *maahn*...they like touch *my* cookies...there's like uh...such a thing as personal boundaries of like ya know...*inappropriate* touching *man*...that makes it like *very* personal. This aggression will not stand, man. The Koz does not abide!" I whine deliberately baiting him with inanity, which draws an eye roll and head shake of exasperation from the Hawkster.

I meet his ire with a big smile. Finally, when he gets it that I got him, but good, with a smile, pointing a finger at me releasing a cocked thumb a la Wiseguy Robert Deniro, "*You. You're good...you, uh...Dude...very good,*" then a fist bump.

The next day, I log on to my email account with the Apple notebook, and create a reply from the printed copy:

From: mak@kozwick.com
Date: Friday October 18, 2001 10:12 AM
To: atsa_ee@hushmail.com
Subject: RE: Your LAN-IP 24.12.33.14 has been hacked

Tell me more...

PGP is installed on this 'clean' machine.

Here's my public security key:

Version: PGPfreeware 6.5.8 for non-commercial

use<<http://www.pgp.com>>mQGIBDp1yy0RBADVlyDewVwltBs7HnHCG3bXlVUODFkn/00TdbM2SPnOAIkj4giBylOP7Mg+Hr5y7FIBvmpWx06In6JjNQiSbPshP5YHv57UfE79nEJdWuSTQt/7j7IJGkHYtBRHQMI AHMgT8IB5d3gFq52jSa8hw/ixMP09a0Rw8RP9+kOE4s9UrQCg/zVHIHswdc/mb50PjdeXwnjxQbkD/3lJYEz z8eUlFHB4rVaC1yRi2lLypf0DIMfQg5j9xBxY4odFJKyf22PeuAjp9roURRIbGIkIGH8eXF+Mav9OqEdD80JbEn1hZuaLk1RFk1XJjmfRdKXz+Q7JmRdbs3zXXav2cYwalgzEXT5kuXuNlThLTnLoEFop8Hl3xM4/PdqMBACkKhb07vPY5l429tdXqL00lE6LedlBW4FLjI534QgselsrUxq5U5y0Wg1Z//a6615QkyaMrpsHKfkLHdaPOVCs/WeG6eLwD/cUBEM1Y9Yb5DaB0njdB3Yxc8W23hpKjDanb7SbaSA16gBIWRlvrB/qU+MZAj+EXRDJmwMJq2y7QjbmV0aXZhIGNhZnRvcmkpgPG5ldG12YWNA b25lYm94LmNvbT6JAE4EEBEC AA4FAjpl1yy0ECwMCAQIZAQAKCRDFpFclYzXzSwiRAJ0S3djCkJJPuAlRyE+vWnfnhvJmDgCfTEBN2N6GlGWOMrOg1tQlZoWbd5q5Ag0EOnXLLRAIAPZCV7cIfwgXcqK6lqlC8wXo+VMROU+28W65Szgg2gGnVqMU6Y

:: AMERICAN ALGORITHM — m.a.kominsky ::

9AVfPQB8bLQ6mUrfdMZIZJ+AyDvWXpF9Sh01D49V1f3HZST
z09jdvOmeFXklnN/biude/F/Ha8g8VHMGHOfM1m/xX5u/2R
XscBqtNbn02gpXI61Brwv0YAWCv19Ij9WE5J280gtJ3kk

What's your public security key?

~mak

After a few emails back and forth obtaining private security keys, now that we are communicating in encrypted secure email, I receive this from @eagle :

ok>>>sounds like you've got some tech savvy on your end>>>i'm assuming then that's your partner Shapiro>>>and he's on board about the intrusion of your LAN and taking some remedial measures.

**but*>>>to be completely secure, from now on you'll need to do all your browsing, searches>>>*everything*>>>including online banking using TOR. if the bank server rejects your IP as an anonymous server>>>then go find another secured internet connection, like a friend, log on to your bank and go through the authentication protocol from then on you'll probably have to access it through that IP>>>or start over again with the bank from another IP.*

*acknowledge you are using TOR in *all* your internet use before we can go forward.*

@eagle

I look at Hawk whose reading the messages over my shoulder.

"Whattay think, man...look legit?" I ask.

"Yea...looks legit, alright. And, like whoever it is...and we can't be sure if it's a male or female, is highly fluent in tech...extremely thorough...and very cautious," Hawk says.

"Okay...so what's our response?" I say.

"See if you can tease some more info about him or her...to start off...the *who*, what and *why*...and if you can the *where*...but good luck with that," Hawk says.

I reply:

OK...now enough with the deep throat preambles. Who are you? What's your involvement in this? Why are you doing this? And where the hell are you?

~mak

Within 5 minutes @eagle replies:

deep throat? wtf is that?

look man>>>let's get some rules of engagement straight>>>like right now.

i'm offering some high-risk info to you>>>no strings>>>with no expectation for anything in return except that you bust this cabal wide open and take down the bad guys.

i'm stickin' my neck out a mile with this>>>some serious consequences for me if i get busted.

*but I gotta tell ya>>>you guys are in waaaaay over your head here. so here's how it has to go down>>>or not at all. i tell you *only* what *i* think you need to know about me etc>>>if that's not good enough for you then were done here. adios. period.>>>are we clear on that?*

@eagle

"Hmm...maybe a clue. Starting to think maybe it's a guy...with the attitude and *wtf*...let's assume so for now. Sounds like @eagle doesn't know who deep throat was...might mean he's too young to know about deep throat from the early 70s Watergate coverup. Maybe he's a young gun...but with the use of *cabal*, instead of the more common *conspiracy* could be he's semi-erudite...at least for a hacker. Back off for now...toss him a *mea culpa*....let's try to build some trust first...get some info from him on what he knows before we scare him off. Like who is behind this and why," Hawk says.

I reply:

Hey @eagle...sorry man...my bad.

Ok then...got it. You da man. Now from your original email...can you at least tell us who is behind hacking our computers...etc., and why?

~mak

@eagle replies:

okay>>> accepted.

don't have the time to break it down for ya right now. i'll get back to ya. maybe later tonight>>>maybe not>>>maybe never:)).

*only thing i can tell you for now>>be afraid>>be *very* afraid>>>you have *no* idea what shit you're gettin' in to>>>or what and who you're up against.*

later

@eagle

"Shit...think we ran him off?" I say.

"Nah. Don't think so...he's just establishing who has the power in this uh...relationship. Just *fuckin'* with us to make sure we know *he da boss-man*. He'll be back. Hackers are an arrogant bunch...it's almost a prerequisite. It's all about control. It's also a front...acting cocky. Usually they're socially inept and uncomfortable in conventional physical relationships so they tend to overcompensate. In the meantime I'm going to research the *asta_ee* email handle...maybe a clue there...or not," Hawk says.

Later that day, Ivan Tarnowski calls back with an invitation for dinner at his home for next Tuesday at seventy thirty.

"Sure...we can make it. Looking forward to meeting the missus that finally corralled the Terrible One...must be pretty special. What can we bring?" I ask.

"Oh yea...be prepared for the third degree. Bring somethin' red, white...or pink...with a cork in it...preferably earlier than 2001...something that won't clash with Tofu," Ivan says giving me his address.

Hawk comes in just as I'm hanging up. "Hey, dinner at I-T's next Tuesday. What kind of beverage would your epicurean palate recommend to wash down Tofu? I ask.

"Liquid draino," says Hawk a hopelessly incorrigible carnivore.

"Let me handle the wine...okay?" I say.

"Thanks for the warning on the bill of fare. I'll have dinner here before we go...then politely push the Tofu around the plate...if we're lucky they gotta dog, I can sneak it to under the table. May need you to provide a diversionary tactic to distract the missus so as not offend. Can you B-O-D...uh belch on demand?" Hawk says.

"Ah...not a problem...my peeps, on the Ruskie side are notorious belchers...a sign of appreciation and affirmation to the host, of a good meal," I say

"Don't matter with my peeps...they *always grepse*...good or bad," Hawk says.

"Just to be safe we'll take the omnivorous canine food processor *Osito* with us," I say. Oso, laying in his normal place under my desk at my feet, hearing his name gives a muffled bark, followed by a loud three thumps on the floor of his massive tail.

"Hey Koz. In checkin' on the possible language connection with the eagle and the email handle, doing a Google search I think I might have a clue about the language. Entering *asta* and *ee* along with *eagle*, I got a hit. *Asta*...may mean *eagle* in Navajo. If it is Navajo...then *ee* means feather. So it could mean *eagle feather*...or not." Hawk says.

"*Eagle feather*...*Jezus!*" the mere mention of the name sends a chill down my spine. A name I haven't heard for over thirty years.

"Koz...man, are you okay? Your face just blanched to pure white, at the mere mention of the name," Hawk says.

"Yea...man, that name...from my past Probably just a coincidence," I say badly shaken by hearing it.

Hawk leaves the room, back to his office.

My curiosity aroused, I do a Google search entering in the keywords, *eagle+feather*.

I get way too many hits talking about the species of eagle etcetera and who can legally possess eagle feathers...blah...blah...blah. When I do an advanced search with *exact word or phrase* I start getting some native American surnames, one of which Leonard Eagle Feather, Chief of a Navajo tribe on an Indian Reservation near Santa Fe New Mexico. The same gentleman who was the father of Sora Eagle Feather...aka Nora Feather, folk singer and songwriter and the love of my life in the early 70s. On a long shot I decide to enter an *exact word or phrase* for Nora Feather, and bingo...I get multiple hits. As I am scrolling down, I notice one in particular that is from a national AP press release from 1982:

Nora Feather, American Indian Folksinger dies in fiery automobile crash

The world of folk and social conscience music today is mourning the untimely, premature death of the beautiful Native American folksinger and songwriter, Nora Feather (nee Eagle Feather) 33, who died in a fiery single vehicle accident on a deserted highway in New Mexico on the night of December 23, 1982.

It is believed that she had fallen asleep at the wheel while returning from a special benefit concert held to protest the encroachment on a sacred native American burial ground by a proposed petroleum pipeline by energy conglomerate National Petroleum Inc, NPI. The New Mexico Highway patrol related that there was evidence at the scene of alcohol being contributory to the cause of the accident.

Born Sora Eagle Feather in 1948 on an Indian reservation in Santa Fe NM, she went on to become one of the most important and influential native American musical artists to emerge for the cause of the

American Indian. She and her father, a Chief Leonard Eagle Feather, a practicing attorney in New Mexico, were fierce opponents of the petroleum pipeline. Her later original songs advocated for social justice, in particular on American Indian land-use sovereignty issues. She is survived by her father and collaborator, Chief Leonard Eagle Feather, many aunts, uncles and cousins too numerous to list, and a son.

Jezus! Sora...dead! All these years and I never even knew it...and the way she died, in a fiery car wreck at only thirty-three. Gawd my heart is breaking in two.

My whole body is now shaking...cold and clammy with a flushing sensation in my face.

"Goddammit!" I yell. Oso, sensing that I am excited and upset is now up on all fours barking loudly. He comes up to me, nuzzling my leg with his big cold wet nose. The commotion brings Hawk to my office.

"What the hell's going on Koz?" Hawk asks.

Hawk stares at me. seeing that I'm emotionally drained with no color in my face, "Are you okay, Mickey?" he asks.

After about thirty seconds, "No, man...I'm *not* okay! Here...read this AP obit online about Nora Feather...from 1982," I can barely get out, my voice cracking with emotion.

"Jezus, man...Eagle Feather. Uh...wasn't that your ladies' name down in L.A. like...back in the 70s? Hawk asks.

- Chapter 16 (59)-

Santa Fe New Mexico - December 24, 1982 - 12:17 am.

It has been a good night for Nora Feather, nee Sora Eagle Feather. She had performed her original songs, to resounding applause with national press coverage for the anti-pipeline rally in Santa Fe on December 23, 1982.

After performing her last set of songs, she tells her father, the organizer and leader of the rally, Chief Eagle Feather and her 9 year old son Michael, that she's exhausted—she wants to get a head start home.

"Mother...is it okay if I stay a little while longer with my pals...I can ride home with grandfather. He's got some business to finish up with some of the elders of the tribe," Michael says.

"Okay, Mikie...but don't be too late," then she says something that he will always remember as if were yesterday. It will haunt her son for the rest of his life, "I love you son...never forget that...goodbye son," and grabs him, hugging him tightly, kissing him on the forehead. Then mussing his thick dark Indian hair—a traditional shoulder length brave-cut—she smiles that special smile of unconditional love that women reserve only for their children...and their lovers, climbs into the 1976 Ford pickup and drives off into the black desert night.

She's has been on the road about 15 minutes, driving South into the pitch black horizon on a remote desert two-lane road when she realizes there are absolutely no city lights visible. It's one of those spectacularly beautiful moonless primal desert nights, free of the artifacts of civilization. The sky is alive with millions of shimmering stars. The majesty of the moment, overcomes her with a deep sense of awe...and wonder.

But a deep chill slowly creeps from the nape of her neck along her spine. She feels an overwhelming sense of relative insignificance in the universe. Even though she has made this drive on this particular isolated stretch of highway countless times at night, for the first time, scanning the ubiquitous blackness around her, stirs a sense of inchoate vulnerability. She tries to ignore it...but...

She can feel the drowsiness beginning to overtake her. She glances at her trendy over-sized watch with big white numbers against a black face, on a wide lime colored wrist band—twenty minutes past midnight. She rolls down the window, and rests her chin on the door frame, the cool desert night air washes upon her face, streaming through her long thick ebony hair. A familiar song comes on the radio which always reminds her of *her* Mickey...and *always* congers a bittersweet nostalgia with wistful *what if* smile. In an effort to resist the descending veil of sleep, she turns the radio up loud and begins to sing a duet with Joni Mitchell.

*Well, I've heard of heart breakers
But you take the cake
Ladies' man
You could charm the diamonds
Off a rattlesnake*

*Ladies' man
Ladies bring it on over
When you give 'em the glance
They don't stand a chance*

*First, you unfold them
Then you pigeon-hole 'em
Ladies' man...*

Her mind begins to reflect on the events of the rally that evening. One of the elders, Raymond Running Bear, has been very vocal in his support for the pipeline, and has consistently opposed every move that Chief Eagle Feather and the other elders have made to fight the pipeline. He argues that it will provide much needed jobs and revenue for the tribe from lease payments. The Chief suspects that he's being paid off by the pipeline corporation. He confronts him but he vehemently denies it...*doth protest too much*. He is now convinced that the corporation, NPI has infiltrated at least one of the tribal elders.

I'm not surprised...there's big money in play here. It just shows ya how desperate...and dangerous these people are. But for Raymond to sell out his own people...for money? Leonard Eagle Feather had lamented, just shaking his head.

Bright headlights in her rear view mirror of an approaching vehicle behind her, overtaking her very rapidly, distract her reverie. Its headlights are on high-beam, which is almost blinding her from the reflection in the rear view mirror. She attempts to shield her eyes with her right hand on the mirror. She slows down with the intention of letting the vehicle pass her on the left. But the driver only slows, maintaining the same speed, right on her rear bumper. She stops singing and turns down the radio.

What's your problem? Probably some brave that's had a little too much to drink just trying to have some fun with me, as she speeds up, but the truck stays right on her rear bumper, as though the other vehicle is tethered to hers. Sora is now getting concerned. She considers pulling over to the side of the road, but the highway is so dark and deserted that she is afraid that if she stops, she might find herself in an even more vulnerable situation.

In the distance her headlights are shining on the overpass of the Interstate highway which crosses the road. Immediately she senses the other

vehicle pulling out to her left to pass her. A sense of relief washes over her. The other vehicle, a black late model Suburban with black tinted windows, pulls abreast and maintains the same speed. Sora, slows down...the other vehicle mimics her every move...every change in speed. As they approach the overpass, the other vehicle begins to drift toward her. The overpass, with a concrete abutment support, set back about 30 feet from the edge of the road is getting closer. Closer.

The other vehicle is now so close she can reach out and touch it. The passenger-side black tinted window slowly slides down. For the first time she can make out the driver. The interior light is on in his cab. He is not an Indian. He is a white man. He is smiling at her. Both his hands are on the steering wheel. On his right forearm there appears to be some kind of a spiral tattoo.

With the abutment closing fast, the right hand of the Black Mamba pulls the steering wheel hard right, making violent contact with Sora's truck. In a vain attempt to correct from the impact, Sora fights the steering wheel while slamming on the brakes, but it is too late, laying down about 100 feet of skid marks. The other vehicle rides her truck off the road, straight into the abutment at 40 miles per hour. Sora's truck crashes into the abutment head on, crushing the front of the vehicle around her legs, and compressing both the truck doors against the door frames, making them inoperable.

She is rendered unconscious by the impact. The other vehicle slows, makes a U-turn and then slowly circles around and pulls over to the side of the road next to Sora's demolished truck. The driver steps out, and casually walks toward the wreckage—he is carrying something.

Sora is beginning to regain consciousness, but she is still dazed. The hissing of escaping steam from the punctured radiator, is the only sound, piercing the black silence of night.

She begins to sense movement around the truck, then the strong smell of gasoline. Although she can barely see in the desert darkness, she realizes that someone is walking around the truck. *Thank gawd...someone to help me out of the wrecked cab.*

Sora is frantically trying to open the door to get out, but it is jammed shut from the impact. Her legs are trapped under the steering wheel and collapsed dashboard.

"Help me!...please...help me!" Sora cries.

She now hears footsteps and a sloshing sound, then the unmistakable smell of gas being methodically sprinkled on the wreck, some of it landing on her clothes from the passenger side broken window.

The man then comes around to her side of the truck, and begins to pour whiskey from a bottle on top of her head, all over her clothes and the interior of the truck. He drops the open bottle where it will be obvious and easily found. His lifeless, unblinking shark eyes meet hers.

She is now screaming, "*Help! Help me! Why are you doing this!?*"

He then pulls a disposable lighter out of his pocket and ignites it,

"Nothing personal...just business. Y'all have a nice night now, ya squaw bitch," the Black Mamba says icily, as he casually tosses the lighter onto the gas-soaked truck.

"Whoosh!" Within seconds the truck is engulfed in flames.

The heat is now becoming intense, with the flames licking at her legs, and arms.

Now screaming, "*Help! Oh...God! Help me!*"

Chief Leonard Eagle Feather and his grandson Michael are driving home into the ubiquitous black. There is little talk as both have had a very long and intense day. In the distant roadway they notice a flickering glow.

"Look grandfather...looks like a car is on fire!" Michael yells.

Leonard Eagle Feather instantly floors the accelerator for in his heart of hearts somehow, he knows that it's his daughter's truck.

As they get closer, Michael yells, "It's mother's truck! There's another truck..."

Leonard Eagle Feather frantically skids to a stop right beside the burning wreckage. He and his grandson are so consumed with alarm that they fail to make note of the license plate of the vehicle driving away.

For many years, Michael is repeatedly awakened with the same nightmare of the fiery death of his mother. Each time ending with the sound of his mother's screams of agony. The bright flames of the fire clearly illuminating the driver of the other vehicle. He's carrying something...some kind of can. Yes, it's a red gas can.

He's a white-man. The flickering firelight dancing on the dead expressionless eyes, that smirking face, are indelibly burned into Michael's consciousness, as the driver impassively looks directly at them, casually opens the door of the late model black Suburban and slowly drives off.

The intense heat immediately hits them. Her father jumps out of the truck and runs toward the metal bonfire, now totally engulfed in flames as the tail lights of the other truck slowly recede, smaller and smaller, until they are red pin pricks in the ink black night.

The heat is so intense, that he can get no closer than 50 feet. Suddenly he senses his grandson sprinting past him toward the inferno. He chases him down, and tackles him before he can get to the wreckage. He knows that nothing can be done to save her. His only thought now is saving his grandson from futilely rushing into the flames trying to save his mother, as he drags Michael away, furiously kicking and wildly swinging his arms as he resists his grandfather's hold on him, screaming "*Lemme go! Lemme go! Please! Lemme go! Mother! Mother...I'm coming Mother!*"

Finally, from exhaustion, he surrenders to his grandfather's iron grip on him. Resigned to the reality, he slowly closes his tear-swollen eyes burying his face in his grandfather's chest, away from the now, petroleum funeral pyre.

The only sound now is the roaring inferno, and the final screams of his mother's ebbing life, her last words of her tragically abbreviated earthly being, "*Mickey! Micke-e-e-ey!*" then silence.

His arms tightly wrapped around his grandson, trying to cover his ears and avert his eyes from the horrific scene, the grandfather knows that this was no accident, that his daughter was murdered. He vows retribution, *Whoever did this...you shall pay for this many, many times over. I put a curse on you...and your family. I will not rest until I find you.*

The loud rapid heartbeat, a cadence evocative of the drumbeat of the now, only ceremonial tom-tom war drums at the evening campfire, is the only sound Michael hears, seemingly coming from the center of his head. Firmly embraced in his grandfather's still powerful muscular arms, pressed against his hard massive chest, his head is rained upon by tears of anguish from above.

- Chapter 17 (60) -

The NM Highway Patrol investigation will later conclude from the skid marks which lead directly into the abutment, that the driver probably fell asleep or passed out from alcohol as evidenced from an open half-full whiskey bottle laying beside the wreckage, and the last second woke up, slamming on the brakes, but that it was too late to avoid the concrete abutment. Just another *Firewater Fatality*, in a string of many around the rez, almost a monthly occurrence. Usually young braves whose wellspring of hope and dreams have been poisoned by the *white-man's firewater*.

At the memorial service, attended by hundreds of people from the rez, and the local community, with many giving heartfelt, beautiful eulogies, there is an outpouring of love and emotional support for Leonard Eagle Feather and Sora's son, Michael. Among the mourners, is Raymond Running Bear, who comes late and leaves early, making sure not to make eye contact with Leonard Eagle Feather.

At the wake, there is much drinking and crying. It is traditional Indian memorial service which celebrates the life of the departed, but more profoundly embraces the journey into the next life.

After his mother's death, Michael is going through some of his mother's things. Inside of a packed suitcase, he finds a beautiful hand-carved wooden box. It is locked. The suitcase appears to be packed to leave at a moments notice. He forces the lock open, inside are a stack of letters wrapped with a pink ribbon carefully tied in a bow—nine letters that have been addressed with postage but obviously never mailed. Also in the suitcase is a very sexy negligee, with tears streaming down his cheeks, he buries his face in the silkiness of it, drinking up his mother's scent. There are also a lot of photographs of very tall man with his smiling mother, on the back a date of 1972, obviously happier times.

He immediately sees the resemblance with the man—very tall, and lean with broad shoulders, and the same wry smile. As a boy growing up, he was always curious about his biological father. When he had asked his mother about his father, she told him they had met in 1972 when she was performing in Los Angeles. She was lonely, had gotten drunk and slept with a musician.

It was a one night stand—she hadn't taken precautions, stupidly allowing herself to become pregnant. She then concocted a story to appease his natural curiosity, that she had heard later that he had died in Vietnam as a draftee not long after she had returned to the reservation to give birth.

He opens the first letter, written almost nine years ago—it is a love letter...of sorts. As he reads, he becomes aware of the circumstances of his birth. In the letter she makes reference to the terrible argument and subsequent parting. Also in the suitcase is a brown manila envelope with Michael's name on it. He opens it—it is his birth certificate with the father listed as Michelangelo Kozlov.

He realizes that his mother has lied to him all these years and he suspects this man in the photographs is his biological father:

December 21, 1973

Dearest Mickey,

We have a son!

It's been a year to the day since we parted...painfully. It seems a little awkward to be writing this, but I felt I had to find some release for my emotions, otherwise they would burst me wide open.

So, I'm not sure where to begin this letter. I'll probably never mail it.

I guess I'll just start by wishing you a Happy Birthday - with a BIG surprise gift for you!

Our son, Michael Ahiga Eagle Feather Kozlov made his entrance into the world on June 18th, 1973, full of fight, kicking and screaming. Grandfather Eagle Feather gave him the middle name, Ahiga...he fights in Navajo...so he is another MAK.

He's a long one...he'll be tall like his father. I've settled into life here on the reservation. The extended family of Navajo wives and mothers have been very supportive. Michael's first few months were difficult...he was only 5 pounds 11 ounces when he was born, one month premature. He had some serious respiratory problems which seems to have stabilized.

Mickey, obviously I decided not to have an abortion. When my friend Elaine took me down to Tijuana, I just couldn't go through with it, by then of course, I was sensing some movement from him. If he was trying to get my attention...it worked. So I came back home to the rez, to have him.

I now realize that he is a gift...he is part of you, of the man that I could never have in my life. He is doted over by his many aunts and uncles, his grandfather, and the other elders.

After our very difficult parting, where you said some very hurtful things, I now realize that it is probably best for everyone, most especially our son. Here on the rez, he'll have lots of extended family...my father's wisdom will teach him well...our customs and culture. Even at his young age, I some day sense that he may become a chief.

Even though I loved you, and always will...so deeply and completely, because we are from such different worlds, I don't believe I could have survived living in your world...for very long...probably ending up as my dear mother who died from complications of alcoholism in her 30s.

Living in L.A. was such a different world...the whole phony scene...me trying to be something I'm not. Nora Feather, then with all that makeup and showbiz BS...what a joke! I know now that our son and I belong with our people. I believe that the true calling for his gifts...and mine, my music, is try to affect positive change for our people...especially the young ones, including our Michael to try to instill some sense of hope and opportunity for a better life.

Mickey, I know that because of your difficult and painful childhood with an abusive alcoholic father, that you did not believe you were suited to care for and nurture a child...that you were so damaged and traumatized, and emotionally closed down because of it. But I think you would have made a great dad...still do. So I hope maybe someday you will be able meet our son.

Every time I look at him...hold him, I can't help but think of you.

Please take good care of yourself.

Love always,

Sora.

He now realizes that when he and his grandfather came upon the wreck that was engulfed in flames, her final screams of life, were not Mikie, but "Mickey! Mickey!" It was not his name but the name of *this* man, his father,

even after all those years, she was still in love with him, so much so as she was being overcome by the fire, his name was the last words to leave her lips.

He also suspects the man is still alive. He notes the address in Venice Beach California with the date of the most recent letter just a few days earlier —again, never mailed.

He opens each letter and hungrily devours them. They are in some kind of order. Each letter is dated December 21st; each successive letter, a year later. He finally gets to the 9th letter, written just two days before her death:

December 21, 1982

Dearest Mickey,

Our son, Michael turned 9 years old last June.

Already he is starting to show his father in him. He's very tall for his age...much taller than his cousins who are 13 or 14. He's quite slender but lean and strong...with a big frame. He moves with your effortless grace of a big cat. Spending a great deal of time with his grandfather, he is much wiser than his years. Father calls him 'un viejo su alma'...an old soul.

He has my jet black thick straight hair; with your intelligent green eyes and long black lashes. With his high Indian cheekbones and full lips, he is unmistakably a mixed breed. But he is blessed with quick wits, and a disarming sense of humor. So he is able to diffuse most of the resentful comments by his fellow braves about his mixed lineage with humor and grace. A sense of humor like his father...and a serious side like his mother. As a result, he is much liked and respected by his peers, already becoming a real leader.

And like you...he is very strong willed. Stubborn is more like it!

Father and I, and almost all of the tribal elders, have been actively trying to resist attempts of a large corporation, National Petroleum Inc., to cross our land on the rez for a huge oil pipeline. The proposed route would cross sacred land...burial grounds. As proposed it would run within the water shed for our drinking water for many miles...god forbid if there was ever an accident like a rupture or a spill, it could contaminate our main source of drinking water for decades.

On the 23rd of December, there will be a big anti-pipeline

rally at the Santa Fe community center. There will be many speakers, from the rez...and environmental activists opposing the pipeline. I'll sing some of my original songs. Father will be leading a tribal meeting of the elders...a discussion about the pros and mostly cons of the pipeline.

Because of his maturity and size, Father thinks it is time for Michael to do his vision quest. It's a Navajo tradition. It consists of a young brave, spending one to four days and nights, fasting, secluded in nature. A deep communion with the forces and spiritual energies of creation and self-identity. The intense spiritual communication a brave can receive provides a profound insight into themselves and the world. It usually takes the form of a dream...a vision, that relates directly to their purpose and destiny in life. Father will be just near enough, silently observing him, in case he has any difficulty.

Michael is doing very well in school. His bright and curious mind asks a lot of questions, which Father patiently answers. I think he is already thinking of college...he is fascinated with computers, and already seems to have an aptitude for them. Maybe something to do with ancient Indian iconography that is deeply embedded in his genes. A Navajo code talker?

He is also quite an artist...as a young child he drew constantly, which I'm guessing he got from your side.

That's all for now. Wish us luck in dealing with the pipeline. They will not give up easily. In doing some research, we have heard from others, apparently they have a history of becoming quite aggressive when there's lots of money at stake.

Love always,

Sora

PS

Happy Birthday! Next year...the big 4-oh-my-gawd.

- Chapter 18 (61) -

"Think this *eagle feather* connection is some kinda cosmic prank?" I say.

"A prank on *koznick*? Maybe. But I gotta tell ya man I just don't buy into coincidences, cosmic or otherwise. Experience dictates it's usually the least plausible explanation. There has to be *some* connection. Could be that who's ever doing this, knows so much about ya, that they're just yankin' your chain. Maybe a setup, like they're trying to lure us into their confidence by tuggin' on your heart strings. They *had* to figure we'd probably parse out the connection of the name. Very clever, man—diabolical even. I don't like it. We need more independent information before we get much deeper with this *eagle dude*," the ever skeptical Hawkster says.

"Could be that there is *no* connection. Ocammm's Razor, that the simple explanation is that it's just a coincidence of no consequence," I feebly offer.

"Or...maybe some kind of Indian medicine man's like a Wounded Knee curse...like K-P, Karmic payback...from your past life finally catchin' up with ya. Can never outrun karma, man...she always bats last," Hawk adds.

"Well thanks...I'm feelin' better already," I say.

"Nah...not that you're undeserving of some serious wounded-female Karmic payback...but there's something that we're missin' here. Let's string this *eagle* along...not let on that we've made the connection...yet, and see if we can do some independent investigation to find the connection, then set a trap. We'll see just how smart this *eagle dude* really is," Hawk says.

"Maybe a good place to start is to see if Leonard Eagle Feather is still alive, and try to contact him...or perhaps even Sora's son.

"Okay...you start there. I've got few ideas I want to chase down. Catch up later," Hawk says.

We both go back to our respective computers and start doing some serious Googling. When I continue with advanced keyword search, I come across the Eagle Feather Foundation, initially funded by a large endowment from the proceeds of a large insurance settlement of several million bucks from the estate by the sole surviving member of the family. The family was tragically killed by a highway accident with a target defendant common carrier bus company.

The accident ultimately wiped out the entire family when the survivor-father killed himself shortly after receiving the settlement check, by driving his brand new Ford pickup straight into a bridge abutment near where

his wife and five children had died. There was not one single skid or brush mark leading up to impact. Turns out that was the accident that my investigation and still photos were instrumental at getting one of the largest personal injury settlements, in New Mexico history, as if there could ever be enough money in the world to replace the tragically unfinished lives of those five young children, and the mother and later the father. Sora and her father were extremely grateful for my help. So maybe I've got some positive K-P in the bank...or not.

Anyway, Leonard Eagle Feather is still listed as the active Executive Director of The Eagle Feather Foundation. There's a contact phone number, so I decide to give him I call.

After some serious Googling of Leonard Eagle Feather; he was born in 1930, raised on a Navajo Indian Reservation in Santa Fe New Mexico. He attended the University of New Mexico, where he received a law degree. As an active member of the N-M bar—a notoriously fierce advocate for Native American rights and social justice.

In a rare magazine interview granted during one of the many demonstrations against the petro-pipeline, he discusses his motivation, what compels him, even though woefully legally over matched, to continue to fight the juggernaut corporation NPI in court. *It is for our people, my grandson's generation, and each generation that follows. The only path out of the despair and privation of reservation life, is education...and to mentor our children in the ways and wisdom of our ancestors, to preserve our culture and heritage...and land for future generations, to make a stand here and now, or face certain extinction.*

It is also noted that he raised his 10 year old grandson, Michael after his mother died in an accident in 1982. Ultimately, he sent Michael to the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque, his Alma mater where he is considered a prestigious alumnus.

The call is answered with, "*Eagle Feather Foundation.*"

"May I speak with Leonard Eagle Feather please."

"*May I tell Chief Eagle Feather who is calling?*" the young female voice with a slight Native American sing-song quality says.

"Michaelangelo Kozlov."

"*Please hold...*"

A minute later, "*Leonard Eagle Feather.*"

"Chief Eagle Feather...this Mick Kozlov. I don't know if you'll remember me. We met many years ago. I was friends with your daughter Sora," I say.

There is a protracted silence. The only sound is that of Leonard Eagle Feather's slow rhythmic breathing.

“Are you still there, Chief?” I ask.

“Yes...” followed by another period of long silence.

“Do you remember me?” I ask.

“Yes...” again more silence. Redefines laconic.

“Chief, I'm calling to tell you that after all these years, I just recently found out about Sora's death...about the accident. To tell you how profoundly sorry I am to hear of her passing,” I say.

“Two things. Don't call me Chief...Leonard is fine. And my daughter's death was no accident...she was murdered,” he says with icy calm.

“*My gawd!* But when I resurrected the newspaper articles on the Internet there was no mention of the fact that her death was not accidental...or even under investigation,” I say.

“Don't believe everything you read in the papers...in fact, now days you would be wise to believe nothing you read in the papers...especially as it relates to Native Americans,” he says.

“But murdered? Have the authorities opened an investigation?” I ask.

“No...”

“If I may ask...why not? Is there any proof that she was murdered?” I ask.

“Mick...give me your phone number. I will call you back later,” he says.

“Sure...I'll give you my home phone number. Available day...or night. I look forward to your call. Thank you,” I say after giving him my number.

Click.

At about eleven that evening the phone rings.

“Mick...this is Leonard Eagle Feather. Before going any further in the conversation, can you call me back on my mobile from your mobile phone?”

He gives me his number and I call him right back.

“Leonard? Mick Kozlov...calling from my mobile.”

“Okay. Good. Thanks. Mick, we've got some things to talk about that must remain in confidence. I have reason to believe that my phone conversations are being monitored,” he says.

“What makes you think so?” I ask.

“It's been going on since the beginning of our efforts, here on the reservation, to repel the construction of a large oil pipeline through our land...beginning in 1982. So far we've managed to hold them off for almost

twenty years...but since the death...no, the murder of Sora, which they expected to chill our resolve to resist them, they have intensified their efforts to condemn our land through Eminent Domain proceedings. Still in the courts...on its way to the Supremes, I would imagine," he says rather matter-of-factly.

"Are you saying that you think the pipeline people were behind the death of Sora?" I ask.

"Yes...unequivocally they are," he says.

"Who is the *they*?" I ask.

"N-P-I," he says.

"N-P-I...National Petroleum Incorporated?" I ask.

"Yes...one and the same. You have some knowledge of the corporation?" he asks.

"Oh yea. In a prior life working for a large media corporation, I encountered Lane Rector, CEO & Chairman...and his factotum VP Howard Roland. Economic sociopaths," I say.

"Interesting. Roland's been the face of the corporation in this massive pipeline project," he says.

"He's was a real piece a work then...Roland and his dirty trickster Ernest Porter. What makes you think NPI was involved in the death of Sora?" I say.

"That night of December 23, 1982, Sora had left early from the anti-pipeline rally around midnight. My grandson and I were about ten minutes behind her, on a dark, deserted desert highway, when we came upon the wreckage of Sora's truck, already engulfed in flames...just as another vehicle was pulling away. By then, the fire was so intense, that the flames clearly illuminated the truck and it's driver. He was carrying what appeared to be some kind of red gas can.

It was a newer truck...black...a Suburban," he says.

"Were you able to get a license plate number or any other possible identifying things about the vehicle?" I ask.

"Our first impulse of course was to attempt to save my daughter. Too far away to get the plate number, but I'm certain it did not have N-M plates though. It had black tinted windows...all the way around. And it had one of those roof uh...cargo boxes with big white letters. My grandson said it was a THULE roof box.

The driver was a white man...tall and slender, smiling...more of a smirk on his face. My grandson saw him as well. As you can imagine, he still has nightmares about it. He's still able to see the image of his face...as I am, clearly lighted from the flames of the fire. But obviously since our first concern was for Sora...he was able to get away. For now. But, we will catch up with him someday. Us Injuns know many ways to make the white eyes beg for death..." he says mimicking the white man's caricature of Tonto "...and when

we do, he will wish he had also died in that horrific fire that killed my beautiful Sora...and left my grandson without his loving mother at the age of nine," he says.

"Jesus...the poor kid. But do you have any proof that N-P-I was behind it?" I ask.

"Clearly this was not an accident. Why would someone drive away from the scene of such a horrific accident...unless he didn't want to have to answer any questions about his presence...or identity? Who else could possibly have had a motive to kill her. Her murder was obviously intended to send us a message...to back off with our resistance to the project...or else. So while I have no evidence that could conclusively prove that N-P-I was responsible in a criminal court of law, there is no other plausible explanation. No one else would have had a motive. Sora was loved by everyone...she had no enemies," he says.

"Have you told the authorities your story?" I ask.

"Of course. But they just dismissed it. Thought it was just some more of the same old tired Injun-oppressed-people-paranoia against the white man...said I had absolutely no proof for the allegation. They refused to even investigate it," he says.

"How is your grandson doing? Was he orphaned?" I ask

"Okay. No...he's not an orphan..."

Is his father in his life? Is he helping to raise him...to cope?" I ask.

"No...his father doesn't even know that he has a son. Yet."

"Do you know who the father is?" I ask.

"I do. Okay Mick...I've got to go now. We'll talk later."

"When?" I ask

Click.

That night laying in bed in a restless tossing and turning unsettled futile attempt at sleep, replaying my conversation with Leonard Eagle Feather in my head, my subconscious starts to kick in. Something he said about the vehicle leaving the scene of Sora's crash starts to resonate.

A black Suburban...with black tinted windows...with a THULE roof box.

Yes...of course. That's the same description that my neighbor Tom Malloy gave about the truck that was parked in my driveway the night of the explosion and fire that killed Marla! He said it was there about a half an hour and left about an hour before Marla and drove up in the U-haul truck. Just a coincidence? Like the Hawkster says, coincidence is usually the least likely plausible explanation.

"Jesus Christ!" I yell out loud.

So loud, Oso, Big Dawg is awakened from a deep slumber. He immediately jumps up on all fours from his customary place on the floor right beside my side of the bed and starts whining, with a muffled bark, he places his massive head even with the bed near my hand, nudging it with the wet nose of his big white muzzle.

“It's okay, boy...sorry, everything's okay,” I say, sinking my right hand into the thick fur of his large head.

His tail wagging furiously...he starts barking.

“That's right boy...definitely something to bark about,” I say grabbing his head with both of hands, shaking it playfully side to side, giving him a big kiss on his forehead. He then jumps up on the bed, does a few three-sixties, then collapses with a big sigh, with his immense head resting my leg, nudging my hand, seeking validation that I'm okay.

“So whattya think about that boy?” I ask Oso.

“Ruf...ruf...” Oso says.

“Yeap boy...rough, very rough out there, ain't it?” I say

“Hey Hawk...” I say at about 9 AM as he wanders into my office with a giant 16 oz. mug of super-caffeinated black coffee—jet fuel, Jet City style, home of Boeing Aircraft.

“Hey Koz...since you're into coincidences, try this out,” he says grinning over the steaming rim of his mug.

“Funny you should mention coincidences...’cause I've got good one for you too, pally,” I say.

“Okay...you go first. Gotta feeling that after I *share*...” with exaggerated air quotes “...mine with you...you might not be real talkative...for *quite* a while,” he says.

“Okay, man. Like, late last night I spoke with Leonard Eagle Feather...Sora's father. I expressed my deep sorrow about the death of Sora. As you know we lived together for a while back in the seventies...until she got pregnant. I behaved badly...*very* badly and she left to get an abortion. Said she never wanted to see or hear from me...again...ever, she just disappeared. Thought she might have gone back to New Mexico to her people...but I checked several times. Not there...and nobody knew *nuthin'*...or were at least willing to talk,” I say.

“Of course I remember. As I recall, you took it pretty hard, man,” Hawk says.

“Yea...she was the love of my life...”

“Uh...one of them, go on,” Hawk says with a grin.

“Yea, okay...but top two...anyway. I was too *goddamn*ed immature to deal with it. I hurt her deeply...and I felt such an overwhelming sense of loss, that for the first time in my life I realized what a total ass I had been toward all

those women...for all those years before Sora. And now I was the one who had a broken heart. And I didn't like the feeling...not one little bit," I say.

"Okay...now that we've shared your little cathartic moment together, tell me about your talk with the Chief," Hawk says.

Still agitated about my past lousy behavior toward Sora, I stand up and start pacing around the office as I tell Hawk about the suspicions that Leonard Eagle Feather has about the murder of his daughter by NPI and the circumstances surrounding her death.

"And get this...he said that the vehicle he saw pulling away from the crash scene just as he and Sora's son drove up...was a black Suburban," I say.

"Black Suburban. Uh...*Sora's* son...okay, got it. So?" he says smiling.

"Yea...just before we left Lake Tahoe for Seattle...for the last time, remember when we went over to talk to my neighbor, Tom Malloy about that night of the explosion...my *gawd* that would have been 1985?" I say.

"Yea...with ya. Go on."

"Remember his description of the car that was in my driveway about an hour before we arrived?"

"Let me think...been awhile man. What...over 15 years? Okay...as I recall it was black...a black Suburban?" Hawk says.

"Yeap...so here's the coincidence for ya to grapple with, uh...my dear Watson. The vehicle that fled the scene when Leonard and his grandson drove up to Sora's crash site...was a black Suburban," I say.

"Yea...but there's plenty of black Suburbans out there, man. Kinda thin I'd say."

"Except for the fact that both descriptions, including my neighbor Tom, indicated black tinted windows...all the way around...even the front passenger side. Not that common man," I say.

"Okay...I can dig it. But still pretty thin."

"And with a black THULE roof box?" I say.

"Yea, I remember that now, the roof box...getting less and less coincidental...by the second," he says.

"And there's one other possible common denominator. Captain Ahab, aka Jason Mahoney, who I suspect contracted the hit on me and Marla in Tahoe, and N-P-I used the same contract black ops company...SHOPs...aka Ernie Porter...aka *El Negrito*. Less and less plausible that we're dealing with a coincidence, okay?" I say.

"Hmm...yea. So you thinking' that it may be the same vehicle...or kind of vehicle that was used in both crimes? And probably the same M-O using fire as means of disguising the murder as an accidental death, destroying all evidence to the contrary...by the same perp?" Hawk says.

"Yea...makes more sense than some *Bolshoi* coincidence," I say

“So *nyet* mit da coincidence? Sink shis varrants zum further 'vestiga-shun' uh...comrade?” the now KGB Hawk says.

“*Da* comrade.”

“*Da* indeed,” Hawk says.

“So...you said you've got one for me?” I say.

“Yeap...but before I tell ya, I think you'd better take a seat, there big boy,” the Hawk says with that trademark impish smile framing his pointy mouse teeth.

“Okay. I'm sittin'...go for it,” I say plopping in my reclining office chair, rocking back to accommodate my right foot on the edge of the desk.

“I think I may know the identity of @eagle,” he says.

“Okay...but no way this could be even ballpark top mine,” I say.

“*Oh yea*, baby...I *garr-an-tee it!* Through the unprecedented democratic power of the Internet, with almost all the state and local government records now available on line, I decided to check out something...which was way too much of coincidence for my taste. I did some on-line searches in the state databases for the name of Eagle Feather...birth and deaths starting in New Mexico, since Sora and Leonard live there. Got lots of hits. But one stood out...a birth...in 1973, Santa Fe, New Mexico. So I did some further checking, man.”

“Okay...so?” I say.

“June 18th, 1973...the j-peg copy of the certified birth certificate says Michael Ahiga Eagle Feather uh...Kozlov. Another MAK-a-saurus roaming and foraging the planet, man,” Hawk says barely able to contain his laughter as he slides the print-out of the j-peg birth certificate on the desk in front of me.

“What the hell are ya sayin', man!?” I yell.

“Sora *never* had that abortion, Koz. Do I have to draw ya *picitya*, man? You're the father of Sora's son, Michael.”

For one of the few times in my life I'm absolutely speechless, dumbfounded by the possibility that I have a son by Sora Eagle Feather.

“Whatsa matta...pally? Gotta a clothes pin on your tongue?” Hawk says giggling like a schoolgirl.

“Hamma...hamma...I aya. You're just screwin' with me, right? Man if you are, I'll make you pay like you wouldn't...couldn't even imagine,” I say.

“Flawless Ralph Cramden...getting busted for doin' something *really* stupid by wifey Alice.

“You're serious, man? No joke...not some childish, at the risk of being redundant, Hawkish prank?” I say.

“As much of a joke as say uh...cerebral hemorrhage.”

“Yea, okay so the personal irony is not lost on me. But *Jesus Christ*...so ya really think I've gotta son?” I say

“Does a *cetacean* shit in da sea, Big uh...Daddy?” he says grinning.

“I can't believe it, man! So he'd be what...about twenty-eight now? So for almost thirty years I've had a son...that I didn't even know existed?” I say.”

“Oh...but wait...there's more Daddy-oh. *So much* more. We're just getting' to the good stuff,” Hawk says.

“*Jezus*...Hawk...give me few minutes to process this. Don't know how much more of the good stuff I can take for one day, man. And just cool it with the Daddy shit, okay?” I whine.

“Okay...'cause I luv ya, man...I'll cut to the chase. Michael A. Eagle Feather Kozlov uh...that would be junior, attended University of New Mexico for two years. And get this, a computer science major. His last known employer...but that can change *very* quickly...lotta headhuntin' goin' on, including from Uncle Sam, was...C-S-I, Cyber-Secure, Inc., that does contract snooping and consulting for the N-S-A...and C-I-A on, and wait for it...cyber security. The kid's some kinda highly respected hot-shot on hacking into networks and breaking encryption...like tops in his field, man. Googled him under Eagle Feather...with keywords *cyber* plus *security*...all kinds of hits about his white paper reports on cyber security etcetera. Very impressive dude. Surprised Bill-yion Gates didn't snap him up first. Sounds like they drafted him before he even finished college...the Feds and cyber contractors do that when they find a very special talent.”

“Hamma...hamma...hamma,” I stammer.

“Well said, uh...Ralphie. So like where do we go from here? Time for a new game plan?”

“Don't know about you...but the only time I'm interested in at the moment is Greenwich Mean time...which I figure is just after 5 PM London time...which means Happy Hour. And I intend to go get *abso-fuckin'-lutely* trashed...and you my Dear Watson, will be my designated driver to...and more importantly, from our favorite public house watering hole, The Shamrock and Thistle.

We head over to the pub about two-ish with Hawk driving. After several hours of unsuccessfully trying to drown the anxiety of the recent revelation, I realize it's a futile exercise. My mind is so filled with chaotic thoughts vibrating with an unprecedented *melange* of paternal pangs, while at the same time selfishly pondering how this revelation, as a practical matter will start to complicate my life. *Jezus*...I'm a father! Michael Kozlov...aka uh...junior, aka @eagle. My mind is flooded with questions. Is he tall and slender like me? Does he look more like me...or his mother? His temperament? And on and on. *Now what?*

At about 5 PM I lean over to Hawk on the next bar stool.

“Hey Hawk...my not-so-Happy Hour is now officially over. Let's blow, man. Head back to the house...I got some serious *what-ifs* to process,” I say.

“Sure Daddy-oh...” Hawk says good-naturedly punching my shoulder gloating that he's found a new button he can push at will to needle his pal.

“You've already worn that Daddy one out...why don't ya give it a rest, big boy?” I say punching him back on his massive deltoid a little harder, like punching a rock, actually hurting my wrist.

“If you say so...Pops. By the way, aren't we 'sposed have dinner tonight at Ivan's with wifey unit?” he asks.

“Yea...forgot about that, uh...Uncle Hawk. Let's stop and I'll pick up some wine for tonight,” I say.

- Chapter 19 (62) -

If justice perishes, human life has lost its meaning
- Emmanuel Kant.

My dinner with Ivan, under the circumstances of the recent revelations, was not something that I was looking forward to. I was preoccupied, unsettled, in a state of agitation and probably not very good company. But, out of respect for I-T, I was determined to show up and try to put a good face on. And I was indeed, to be *very* glad that I did. It would form the foundation for the transfiguration of my very soul. My Great Wake-up.

The evening would closely parallel the same intense, profound discussions with my dearest, and it must not go unsaid now departed friends from Berkeley in the early 60s. It was reminiscent of the great classic 1981 film, a powerfully insightful yet humorous dialectic, *My Dinner with Andre*, written and acted by the brilliant playwright and actor Wallace Shawn.

As we pulled up to Ivan's home, the sun was slowly creeping toward the cloud shrouded horizon, casting amber shards of sunlight like kleig lights on Cascadia Bay. It somehow seemed to settle me. The magnificence of it made my little problems have less importance. I was overwhelmed with a deep sense of awe, and yes, gratitude that I lived in a place in the world that was endowed with such natural and diverse beauty, near the sea and the majestic Cascade mountains, the Western Alps with the snow-covered sentinel Mount Baker, leaping out of the horizon to the East, a stationary sentry, seemingly standing guard protecting the beauty and majesty of nature.

I-T's home was situated in Fairhaven, one of the oldest parts of town founded in the late 19th century. It sits on a hill with a commanding view of the Bay. It's a modest but well-maintained classic Greene and Greene craftsman bungalow with a vintage covered porch the width of the house with a swing bench seat suspended from above with a chain on each end, just wide enough for two, facing due West overlooking the often breathtaking sunsets on Cascadia Bay of Puget Sound.

Hawk and I with faithful Oso in tow trudge up the many concrete steps to the classic heavy oak front door with segmented lights across the top. Immediately the sound of a barking dog inside gets Oso's attention, and he begins his low muffled barking, his tail wagging furiously.

As we step on to the porch, the front door opens to Ivan's smiling face. There is also a large black muzzle with coal black eyes peering out, connected to large black Labrador, that I swear is *smiling*...barking unmenacingly, tail wagging being restrained by the collar by Ivan.

“Zelda...cool it! Hey, Mick...Hawk. Who's this lovely piece of canine with ya?” he says nodding toward Oso.

Oso sidles up to Zelda, dwarfing her, and starts sniffing her muzzle, whereupon she lays down and rolls over on her back totally submissive.

“Hey I-T. Meet Oso...” I say.

“Well now...looks like Oso had Zelda with a 'wuf. She's usually not that uh...easy. Looks like she could use some work on her canine comportment,” I-T says.

“Yea...Oso's kind of used to that. He gets by on his looks, sorta like his ol' man most of the time,” Hawk says.

“Not to worry I-T. He's gelded...and like his Uncle Hawk, harmless around females.”

“Geez...you two ever stop pimpin' each other? Ever think about gettin' married? Com'mon in,” he says smiling, as he leads us into the comfortably appointed cozy front room, with a roaring fire in the large fireplace,

Two huge fixed pane windows frame the front door facing the Bay. It's an old, bascially original house probably built in the late 20s which appears to have been faithfully restored, complete with oak quarter-sawed hardwood floors, beautiful oak architectural details, including a massive hand-carved Newel post at the base of the stairs. The doors and window trim all restored to original. It's full of floor to ceiling oak bookcases loaded with hard-cover books, many with leather bound spines. Permeating the air, the same nostalgic scent of the stacks at the UCB library where I spent many a happy hour listening to classical music while surrounded by the world's great literary works.

“Here,” I say handing him the bottles of Grey Riesling and Merlot.

“Excellent...white and red...and mit a cork yet...impressive.” he says placing the wine on the candlelit dining room table already set beautifully for dinner with a large bouquet of yellow and lavender fresh cut tulips.

Zelda and Oso, now cavorting around the front room, are pretty hard to ignore or to talk over.

“I'm going to put the woofs out in the backyard...let 'em get acquainted...so we can talk,” he says walking out toward the kitchen with both dogs rambunctiously following him out the rear door.

I notice that there is a middle aged man and a woman seated on an overstuffed sofa, probably in their late sixties, who are now both standing as Ivan returns to the front room with a stunningly beautiful woman with flawless sable skin, taller than Ivan with long slender graceful arms, and fine, delicate features. Her eyes are wide-set, dark and luminous with a charming slight overbite and full lips, framing a smile of pearlescent perfect white teeth set off nicely by large hand-wrought silver hoop earrings. Her ebony hair is long, worn up on top of her head, exposing her long slender nape. She looks like a

one of those *Kiplingesque* East Indian Princesses you'd see on the cover of a National Geographic. She's wearing some kind of brightly colored shift—an ethnic print of warm earth tones, accented with a flowing diaphanous ochre sarong that seems alive with her aura. A feminine shimmering sunrise.

“This is my wife...Sanjana. Sanjana...Mick Kozlov and Hawk Shapiro,” he says.

“Pleasure...Sanjana,” I say

Hawk recognizing that Sanjana's East Indian, being a devout practitioner of Hatha Yoga, places his massive palms together just below his chin, and bows slightly at the waist, “*Namaste*”

“*Namaste*,” Sanjana says smiling beguilingly returning the salutation to both of us.

“And this is my mother and father...Ruth and Joseph Tarnowski, visiting from New York City. Mom and Dad are giving a talk and a book signing at Village Books in Fairhaven tomorrow night. They just did a book signing to overflow crowds at The Town Hall venue in Seattle yesterday, sponsored by Elliot Bay Books. After here they're on to Vancouver the next night to a Chapter's Bookstore in Kitsilano which will complete the Left Coast promotional tour of their book, which they collaborated on...*Worker Cooperatives: The Antidote to Exploitative Capitalism*.” Ivan says which no small degree of filial pride.

Guess the radical apples from the Big Apple don't fall too far from the tree.

“Joseph Tarnowski...from New York City. Growing up I'd heard your name and work mentioned by my father, S. G. Shapiro, many times,” Hawk says.

“Yes...of course. Simon Shapiro...a fellow traveler. I've met him, but know him mostly by his tireless work and writings representing the legal rights of the underclass...a fierce advocate for social justice,” Joseph says smiling effusively extending his firm hand to Hawk, then to me.

“Happy to meet you both,” I say nodding to Ruth Tarnowski while shaking Joseph's hand.

“So you're going to give a talk tomorrow night at VB?” Hawk says.

“Yes indeed. Apparently because of the large crowd expected, the venue has been moved to the auditorium of the local community college in North county to accommodate the large turnout. It is rumored that some folks from North county...conservatives and Libertarians plan to picket the event and to '*engage the socialist commies*,’” he says with air quotes “uh...that would be my wife and I...in the Q and A, following our presentation,” he says smiling.

“Pop...some of those folks up there in North county are pretty tightly wound...redefines reactionaries. It's like a 50s time machine up there...especially the evangelicals and the *gun*-ho neo-cons in petty coats and leisure suits...some of 'em still fightin' the Cold War with the Commies,” Ivan

says.

“Ah...but where else can you still find a good ol' boy Saturday Night Tractor Pull?” Hawk says.

“People up there do *not* eat granola...and do not uh...suffer graciously those who do,” Ivan says

“Not to worry son, your mother and I have dealt with it many times. Should spark some lively debate...always a healthy proposition,” says the smiling socialist gadfly.

“Maybe if you were to show up in some county-chic Oshkosh bib coveralls, you'll get invited for dinner...and if they really like you...show you their Vintage Tractor collection,” I say.

Joseph Tarnowski is a short compact man, thick in the middle with receding thinning gray hair, gold wire rim glasses framing lively intelligent light coffee eyes with a constant facetious glimmer.

Ruth Tarnowski is almost the same height, attractive, slender and elegantly dressed with modest makeup and understated jewelry. Her hair is professionally colored and coiffed with blond highlights. Manhattan elegance. Her eyes are deep set, inviting, warm and engaging but seem to belie a tough no-nonsense aura just below the surface typically accompanying piercing, unblinking azure eyes.

Both seem very comfortable in their skin which is probably where Ivan got his *sang-froid* in the face of great adversity that I had witnessed first hand at the student demonstrations at UCB in the sixties—his enormous and unrelenting moral and physical courage in confronting the power structure of 'the establishment'.

Two young girls, pre-teens emerge from the kitchen. They appear to have acquired the best from both sides of the family tree, tall and slender with a *cafe latte* complexion—Ivan's gray eyes with long thick black lashes and beautiful thick shiny wavy raven hair of their mother.

“These are my girls...Maya, the older...and Monique,” Ivan says proudly.

“Hiya Maya the older and Monique,” I say.

“Hello,” Hawk says.

They smile shyly, nod toward their mother, who nods back, then retreat back to the kitchen to continue helping their mother prepare dinner.

“Real beauties...by the time they're old enough to date...you're gonna have your hands full keepin' the boys in check, Ivan,” Hawk says.

“Got plenty time to perfect my deterrence strategies...since they won't be allowed to date until they're, oh...say thirty,” he says with a grin which draws a smile and eye roll from their mother who disappears back into the kitchen.

Sanjana Singh-Tarnowski comes into the front room, and announces, “Dinner is served...please take a seat anywhere.”

“Maya and Monique, please sit between Mick and Hawk...to keep the Odd Couple, Felix and Oscar separated,” says Ivan with his seemingly ever present smile.

We all adjourn to the dining room where we are silently joined by Maya and Monique who are now seated between Hawk and I, making a total of eight.

“So Sanjana, how did you happen to encounter this raving radical Ivan?” I ask.

“Be glad to Mick...but first I'd like to hear about Ivan's days at UCB...as a revolutionary,” a smiling Sanjana says getting their daughters' attention.

“Okay...fair enough. Ivan and...” I start to say when I'm interrupted by Ivan, “Mick Kozlov you have the right to remain silent...anything you say can and will be used against uh...*me*. And unless you wish to be sharin' a bowl of Kibbles and Bits with the woofs, for dinner...” Ivan says smiling, making a zipper motion across his mouth with his hand, nodding toward his two daughters who are rapt to hear about their father's radical past.

“In other words...*stifle yourself*, Edith,” says Hawk a la Archie Bunker.

“Sanjana, I believe you know my attorney Mr Shapiro here, and having been duly advised of my uh...rights...by counsel, besides of which, I'm *very* hungry, having caught the delightful aroma of the food, I choose to invoke the Fifth. Maybe sometime when it's just us adults...” I say in full diplomatic retreat.

“That uh...*interesting*, eh?” Sanjana says.

“You have *no* idea. I'll put this way...he has every bit earned and is fully vested in the nickname Ivan the Terrible,” I say.

“Okay. Maybe another time,” Sanjana says.

“Maybe not,” Ivan says now staring at me with a thin, pasty smile.

The bill of fare is nothing short of spectacular with multiple dishes of exotic ethnic East Indian concoctions, each one more savory than the last, some with curry...others, subtle unrecognizable seasoning on several kinds of meat and vegetable dishes served with authentic ethnic Indian music, sitar accompanied by tabla drums barely perceptible in the background with the faint scent of patchouli incense. Obviously Sanjana has taken a great deal of time and care in the preparation. Much to Hawk's pleasant surprise, without so much as even an errant Tofu. Sure beats the hell out of Kibbles and Bits.

Conversation is lively, punctuated by a toast first to Sanjana for the lovely meal, then to Ruth and Joseph Tarnowski. The wine is flowing and

everyone's enjoying themselves with lots of laughter, good food and good cheer reminiscent of the wonderful Italian dinners my own mother Maria used to throw for our family and friends.

“Sanjana...before we were cleverly uh...sidetracked, you were going to tell us how you met Ivan the Terrible One,” I say.

“Well...I guess I should probably start with how I ended up here. My mother and father...were refugees from the constant civil wars and strife in India during the conflict for liberation from Colonial English rule in the late 40s lead by Mahatma Gandhi. My father, a professor at the University, was highly educated in Europe...and London. He was able to secure a visa because he was offered a job with the American government state department in San Francisco, as a translator because of his fluent English, and mastery of many Hindi dialects.

After we relocated, my mother became pregnant with me. Father attempted to go back to try to bring some of his family to America, his mother and father and siblings. In the process, sadly he was killed, in one of the riots in New Delhi by the separatists seeking independence from predominantly Hindu India...in what would later become the Muslim state of Pakistan. He was Hindu, and like Gandhi, did not support the partitioning of the Muslim and Hindu states based on religion. I was born here in the U.S. in 1948 in Fremont California just South of the Bay area where there was already a growing East Indian population. I was just a baby and never really knew him,” says Sanjana.

“Even though Sanjana was raised Hindu, after 9-11 many of the shall we say less enlightened uh...*inbred jingoistic patriots...*” Ivan says barely able to contain his anger, “just assumed that because she was obviously from South Asia, that she was Muslim which sadly trickled down to our daughters in school, with verbal attacks and insults...so much so that we decided to place them in a private school...Arcadia, where we felt they would be more safe and less distracted,” Ivan says.

“If I may...Maya and Monique...can I ask you how you dealt with the insults?” I say.

“Mr Kozlov...Monique and I were raised by our parents to never retaliate. When Meghan Allison asked me if my mom and dad were terrorist, I admit that I was like *really* tempted...to lash out at her...for being so...*stu-u-u-PID*. I just took a few deep breaths...and controlled my anger...barely...smiled and said, 'Meghan, when you're ready to listen...I would be happy to *try* to clue you in.' And I was *really* glad that I hadn't lashed out at her...because a week later Meghan...her sister McKenzie and her mom Jessica were all killed in the pipeline explosion,” Maya says with Monique nodding in agreement.

“Well said, Maya,” says the uncharacteristically avuncular Hawk patting Maya's hand, now apparently rehearsing for his new role as Uncle Hawk.

“Indeed, Maya. Sorry Sanjana...please go on about how you met Ivan...” I say.

“Thank you Maya...I'm *very* proud of you both, *apane priyajanom ko*...sorry, Hindi for *my dear ones*. So...I was attending graduate school here at Moody University in 1977, majoring in ethnic studies, when President Carter pardoned the draftees that had relocated to Canada. Ivan was on his way back home to America after years of living in asylum from the U.S. Draft, in Vancouver British Columbia. He got off the Greyhound bus to stretch his legs, and somehow found his way to the campus.

I met Ivan one day when he was wandering around the campus of Moody U. He seemed lost. So I asked him if he needed some help in finding his way some place. He said, “*Yea now that you mention it, I've actually been lost for oh...about the past ten years. And if you're not too busy at the moment I was wondering if you could like help me find my way back to some semblance of a normal life in America.*” As you know, Ivan can be *very* persuasive,” Sanjana says turning to Ivan, smiling mischievously.

“And as they say, the rest is *his-tor-ee*. Since that day, we've never been apart,” Ivan adds reaching over gently placing his hand on top of Sanjana's his eyes tearing up.

“Sounds like Kipling Kismet to me. So how'd you end up in environmental studies Ivan?” I say.

“Yea...well, to be honest, not a terribly high-minded decision on my part. I had just enough undergrad credits from UCB to enter grad school here, so I enrolled in the newly formed College of Ecology, frankly because it was new, had a lot of openings, and it was the only one I could get into that late date,” he says grinning.

“And now?” I say.

“Sanjana is the Dean of the Asian Studies curriculum here, a tenured professor with a PhD in East Indian Culture and as you know, I'm Dean of Environmental Studies. Sadly, unless in the unlikely event something *very* cogent dramatically intervenes, my present task is bearing witness and carefully documenting the demise of human civilization...the coming of the 6th Mass Extinction.”

“*Jezus* Ivan...” Hawk says picking up butter knife “ got anything sharper than a dull butter knife, to like open a vein? Oops...Sorry, man...forgot about the girls here at the table,” Hawk says.

“Not a problem Hawk...they've heard it all before...and worse...many times,” Ivan says smiling.

I look at the girls who just roll their eyes in unison and smile demurely as Daddy is obviously just starting to tune up...again.

“Despite imperative warnings of 97% of the credible scientific climate community...the merchants of doubt are still winning the debate.

Here's the reality of betting against the science of climate change. The odds of winning that bet, are just about the same as winning at Roulette. Betting the house, the car, and the wife and kids...everything you own...and

civilization as we know it, on *one* number and spinning the Roulette wheel. That's right 37 to 1 odds against, that you'll win. Redefines a sucker's bet.

The *idiot light* on the dashboard is now frantically flashing red, admonishing us to shut down the engine of greenhouse gases...before anymore irreparable damage is done. It is the tragic replay of the Greek mythos of Nemesis, Greek...to pay what is due. Divine retribution for man's hubris as he blithely allows the slow systematic Matricide of *Gaia*...tortured and slowly suffocated by a blanket of CO2 at the hands of Her own ungrateful children—a deadly irony—with the same slow irrepressible efficiency of the technology that caused it,” Ivan says.

“Isn't there anything that can be done to stop it? I mean, there *has* to be *some* scientific solution to this,” I say.

“Mick, the problem we are facing has less to do with the science and more to do with the politics...not a climate crisis...but rather a climate of crisis management, rife with non-feasance and malfeasance...shortsighted reactionary ideology...a tragic and I must say potentially terminal crisis for the planet from a lack of political will and leadership,” Joseph Tarnowski says.

“And as a sociologist slash anthropologist,” adds Ruth Tarnowski “we see that, the geometric evolution of the compression of time has resulted in short term tactical thinking of maybe a seven year horizon, instead of long term strategic thinking, like the early indigenous peoples of *seven generations*. This shrinking of the human construct of perception of time through technology...has created a pervasive sense of immediacy...a priority of short term gain, of quick profits which through the years has resulted in the systematic attack and successful de-certification of collective bargaining units by the Corpocracy along with the tacit ever-present threat of replacement by automation and cheap unregulated labor of Globalism. Workers have been coerced into a perpetual state of fear and anxiety, petrified of taking the risk to confront it for fear of tangible short-term loss for some theoretical long-term gain...to them just an abstraction...for now.”

“So what's the solution...where do we go from here?” Hawk says.

“The first step toward grappling with such a huge complex problem, is a recognition, as painful as it may be...of the political, and by extension, existential reality. Defining and quantifying the problem and breaking it down into discreet manageable parts. The most problematic and difficult, yet imperative component of all, the politics of a massive shift in the collective *consciousness of humanity*. In short...*from the ME to the WE*...and a return to a sense of shared sacrifice and community. And while we're at it, a repatriation...a resurrection of pre-patriarchal governance...*sans* testosterone, the only sure way to end all wars,” says Ruth Tarnowski with a wry smile.

“And just how would you propose to make that happen?” I say.

“Obviously, it's a political improbability to even try to legislate something even resembling compassion...and an even greater practical impossibility to attempt to enforce *make nice*,” she says.

“So again, how would you suggest we go about that, short of becoming a police state...and forcing everybody to *make nice...or else...*” I say sarcastically.

“*Becoming* a police state? Ha! It's already a *fait accompli* my dear boy. Just wait until the catastrophic consequences of climate change come home to roost. Chaos and anarchy on the streets of the good ol' U-S of A...the police and the military are already preparing and planning for it...quietly putting infrastructure in place, including the wholesale militarization of local police force assets...subsidized by the Feds. Recycling all those hundreds of billions of tax payer dollars of war surplus equipment and ordnance...ultimately to be used against the very people who paid for them. The magnitude of the irony is...well...” Ruth says.

“Hard to get your head around? So what are you saying, Ruth? Time for a massive revolution?” I say.

“I'm afraid the inescapable answer to that is...a categorical *Maybe!* Not quite yet. It would first have to start with a revolution of *consciousness*...a revival of the innate sense of humanity and compassion that has been implacably eroding through the monopolization of consciousness by technology...commodification of everything...even our human interaction and relationships through social networks, that enables the sociopathy of Capitalism...so gradually as to be almost imperceptible,” Ruth says.

“Sounds more like a *definite Maybe*. So do you *actually* think it's possible to put the genie of technology back in the bottle?” I say.

“No, Mick...I'm not that naïve...nor am I a Luddite. So I'm not saying that there are not some profoundly positive innovations and uses of the Internet. But the technology has evolved at a much, *much* higher rate than our capacity to deal with it intelligently. Our relatively primitive *un-evolved* lizard brains still function for the most part at a primal level...avoidance of pain, seeking pleasure along with a yearning for simple binary answers to increasingly complex and persistent moral and legal questions. Like the Sorcerers Apprentice...possessive of the enormous power of technology, but lacking the wisdom to deal with it.

Psychologists tell us that entering this world at birth, there are three essential biological needs, security and survival, power and control and last but certainly not least, affection and esteem, which some might call love. The propagandists have over history, learned to how expertly, more importantly indiscernibly, manipulate and exploit those needs to their cynical self-serving end, which the technology of mass communication has only enhanced the depth and breadth of their effectiveness by an order of magnitude...reducing once civil discourse and honest debate to a partisan blood sport...a cacophony of rancorous polarization.

We now live in a collective intellectually incurious trance...tranquilized by the trivial, a reality essentially based on myth and fantasy, which has, through the increased empowering of technology created

many more choices in life...*to have it your way*...and with that expansion of options, freedom to choose, tremendous, often overwhelming, permutations of complexity are created. With complexity comes less certainty...causing many to retreat to nostalgia, to fantasize about the the good days, especially *for the man of house*, when a woman knew her place, and the man was the king of his castle,” Ruth says dripping with sarcasm.

“And, one of the manifestations of living in a counter-factual world of fantasy with regard to dealing with climate change is Denialism...welcome to Fanlandia...where anodyne fiction is preferred over grappling with painful inconvenient facts,” Ivan says.

“Indeed son. The reliance on the perceived improvement of efficiencies, including the priority of lower prices on goods through automation, and overall quality of life through technology appeals to that part of the brain that seeks, and becomes addicted to pleasure...a dopamine high, much like a drug, or alcohol. But, *there is a high cost to low prices* in the dehumanizing preoccupation with a world based primarily on economics...a tragic perversion of the democracy which has now become the unwitting servant to capitalism. And if we've learned *anything* from the so-called spectacularly failed war on drugs...and don't *even* get me started on the Corporate Prison-Industrial complex...is that the only answer in combating abuse and addiction, is not through mass incarceration-for-profit, but through education and early intervention. So okay...like most addictions, humans over time become inured...or normalized with it...constantly escalating usage to feed a growing addiction,” Ruth says.

“Ya know Ruth...” Hawk says “this whole discussion about the profound influence of technology on the traditional American concept of democracy and capitalism, causes me to imagine what a post-capitalism society might look like. While the neo-liberals...the oligarchs, continue to embrace an increasingly automated production model...to keep costs and therefore prices lower and lower by forcing the workforce to compete with the tireless efficiency of computers and robotics, it seems to me, the great irony is, that they have failed to grasp that it will be technology that will usurp and up-end the traditional free-market capitalist paradigm.

Because of the colossal failure of capitalism to deliver a sustainable decent quality of life to the working class majority...the constant grinding of the *laissez-faire* machine, slashing the workforce, forcing workers to do increasingly menial work that takes no pride in production. Serving only the Deity of Efficiency...undignified work that is essentially without any meaning beyond rate of return for their masters. Essentially slave labor paid just enough to survive so they can come to work another day. And for this profound increase in productivity they are rewarded with stagnant wages...treated like indentured servants with disrespect and contempt by their employers.

The Neo-Dark Ages...nothing more than a Lord and vassals...now punching time clocks. But as the history of civilized societies has

demonstrated, with the arrival of the Renaissance, the universal humanity of man naturally seeks and flourishes in the light of human creativity...humanity and the arts. Infusing into man's quotidian existence, human dignity, mutual respect...and egalitarianism. A reason to keep on keepin' on. Maybe...just maybe a *true* democracy will emerge.”

“Why Hawk...well said. Spoken like a true revolutionary!” a smiling Ruth says to a blushing Hawk.

“Proving Hawk's not just another pretty face, Ruth...” I say with a smirk toward Hawk who better than anyone else knows full well that his face could be considered anything but *pretty*. Masculine yeap...very.

Undaunted by my amiable needling, Hawk continues, “And in this so-called Information Age, of which I have been involved in since its genesis, there is no more of a pure model of democracy than the open source model of information sharing, free and therefore without scarcity, natural or artificially induced. I think it will be the vehicle for the restructuring and reshaping of a new world order.

So this whole discussion about the New World Order AKA The Digital Age can be distilled down to one word. Algorithm. Who creates it, who controls its implementation, and who benefits from it. In other words, and most importantly, *who decides who gets to decide*. Algorithms are essentially the DNA of the Digital Age. Without algorithms computers do not even exist, much like the human species could not exist without DNA, which essentially serves the same purpose...a set of coded instructions which empowers and makes possible their very existence. Because algorithms which are the building blocks of *Artificial Intelligence, or A-I*, also known as *machine learned behavior*, are a human construct, and as such, can be used for benevolent, or malevolent purposes...it's up to we humans to be constantly vigilant.

The insidious, therefore most difficult to control component of A-I, is the bilateral dynamic DNA of the code. Basic computer code is uni-directional where the code instructs the CPU to produce an intended or anticipated result. *A-I* coding is bi-directional and dynamic, where the code constantly harvests the results, then learns from those results, which may or may not be anticipated or intended, then altering the original code, or creating ancillary code to the original code, which can create the potential to essentially usurp the boundaries of human intelligence to comprehend the complexity of the process. Sometimes exhibiting anthropomorphic behavior, like “having a mind of its own”, producing socially deleterious or nefarious results. To ensure that the huge corporations that instruct the programmers who create algorithms, or computer code, especially A-I to achieve a specific task, like data mining and invasion and usurping of user privacy, are subject to regulatory oversight.

Because the internet has evolved to such high levels of penetration and dependency, it must now be considered in the same light as other natural monopolies...like electricity, and water...it is now behaving more like a utility than a commodity, and must be regulated as such. Right now, ubiquitous social

networks are utilizing very opaque algorithms, whose code is protected by intellectual property law, that have free unfettered, and unregulated rein over its now billions of users. In the wrong hands, these very powerful algorithms, can nefariously, and most alarmingly...indiscernibly, shape and shift public opinion at literally the speed of light.

Just think of it...that the future of democracy, indeed civilization is in the hands of an unelected, unregulated and politically unaccountable prerogative of a bunch of maybe 50 mostly white male presidents and CEOs. no older than thirty-something, in Silicon Valley. It creates an inherently hugely seductive moral hazard of a mindset of omnipotence with a grave propensity toward megalomania. That much power needs to be regulated...much the same as genetic engineering of our DNA...altering the genetic code, the instruction set at the chromosome level, must have clearly defined boundaries to prevent abuses like eugenics...Hitler's relatively crude attempts at genetically creating an *ubermensch*...or super race through selective breeding," Hawk says.

"So who's going to be entrusted with such a highly technical responsibility...a bunch of computer nerds with pocket protectors?" I say.

"Ya mean like this?" a smiling Ivan says pointing to his impressive array of pens and mechanical pencils in his breast shirt pocket protector.

"Yeap...Ivan, great minds work alike..." Hawk says patting his own breast pocket.

"A walking Office Depot," I say.

"Mick, don't knock us nerds. Just consider the launch of Wikipedia, online digital encyclopedia in early 2001 by a bunch of computer geeks with a grander, more magnanimous vision for access to information. All the information...more importantly knowledge, not the same thing, domiciled there will be easily accessible online, freely distributable with relatively few intellectual property restrictions. It will be publicly subsidized through donations, maintained and curated by volunteers...without compensation. Because it is open source, as such, it is essentially self regulating through constant peer review.

And Congress will have to create new laws and regulations which specifically addresses abusive and deleterious uses of algorithms...forcing those corporations that profit from providing the platform, to be held legally liable and accountable for damages to injured third parties for libel, slander and deliberate disinformation. And upon judicial review, headed up by a special branch created at the DOJ, be required to allow the algorithms to be scrutinized and assessed as to their legality under the newly created legislation.

The first legislative step, repeal, or amend Section 230 of title 47 of the U.S. Code enacted as part of the United States Communications Decency Act of 1996, that generally provides immunity for website platforms with respect to third-party content.

If indeed *knowledge is power*...as prophetically declared in the 16th century by philosopher Francis Bacon, it will revolutionize, literally, and reconstitute the power structure. The Information Age, eventually will bite the gluttonous hand of the capitalists that have fed it. Because pricing of goods and services is dependent on scarcity, the explosion of an open and free information economy will evolve it away from a classic hierarchical capitalistic model. From *the few-to-many...to the many-to-many* economy.” Hawk says.

“And the natives are getting restless,” Ivan says. “The end of capitalism is coming and the Captains of Capitalism are now beginning whiff the growing putrid scent of discontent. I think the larger question now becomes how will the Ace of Spades...the ultimate dark trump card of the coming catastrophic consequences of unmitigated climate change, redefine the social order...once the collective primal instinct of survival, caused by scarcity is unleashed...with a vengeance. A game changer.”

“Indeed son. In the meantime, in the face of knowing what's coming, *we need to plant a tree*...to incorporate into the curriculum for our children, at a very early age, how to recognize the limitations of technology...to place the use and our reliance upon it in a proper perspective...to re-instill a hierarchy...a priority of moral values. Basically, technology and media literacy. At some level, long term, the addiction to dehumanizing technology...our blind reliance on it, as more of an end...than a means, poses a far greater risk to the survival of civilization than say...any existential biological pandemic or even climate change,” Ruth says.

“Okay Ruth...so what's your vision on how to accomplish that?” I say.

“Ah...didn't say I know the *how* silly boy!” Ruth says playfully slapping my hand, “that's a much harder question...that's your job *bubbala!*” a smiling Ruth says, “the solution of which will have to come from yours and future generations. But we have little time to waste. The society is already unwittingly voluntarily, and probably irreversibly on a massive scale, relinquishing and abrogating its privacy rights. It's imperative that we infuse future generations, now...with the moral and legal implications, with a recognition that the rights of the individual, embodied in the Bill of Rights, *must* remain sovereign. Inevitably the Corpocracy...and by extension the state...will insidiously and systematically, through gradual accretion attempt to usurp our right to privacy on the basis of some straw-man overblown argument of security.”

“So Big Brother is *already* watching?” I say

“Yes, but only to a degree, for now, Mick. But it most probably will *not* unfold like Orwell's 1949 masterwork, *1984*, *initially*...but rather by slick seduction through propaganda by the Corpocracy, known euphemistically by the innocent and harmless sounding, *marketing*. The *seek-pleasure-avoid-pain* mantra of mainstream media and technology...as depicted in Aldous Huxley's

incredibly prophetic “Brave New World...written in 1932!” Ruth says.

“So it won't start out with Big Brother...or the state controlling the message?” I say.

“No...first by the Corpocracy...or *Little Brother*, lead by the Great Prophet of the Capitalism...*Monsieur Baron du Bottom-Line*...through selective seductive dissembling that will gradually compromise our resistance to give up our personal sovereignty...our privacy aka...liberty. Big Brother will come later after all the heavy lifting has been done, to irrevocably bend the nails over. So first be afraid...be *very* afraid of *Little Brother*...because the Corpocracy is not bound by as many of those uh...*inconvenient* Constitutional strictures or prohibitions...as the state is...yet,” Ruth says.

“So from years of working in I-T,” Hawk says, “it's obvious to me that while we're being paranoid about *Big Brother is watching*, Little Brother has been quietly encroaching...infringing on our right to privacy...like Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, Amazon and social networks like on-line dating, building up massive amounts of linked aggregate *metadata* at an astonishingly granular level. Which by the way, they can sell to third parties without our knowledge or consent...based on our buying habits, our keyword searches and links we click, etcetera...even our political proclivities. *Everything* about each one of us that uses the internet...which at that level of linked, granular data collection is tantamount, in some cases even superior to the actual content. So they *don't even need to have privy* to our correspondence.”

“So if I hear you right, Ruth...you're saying what's needed is not just a modern day equivalent of a Great Awakening of consciousness...but also a more urgent, imperative kind of complete reboot of the operating system...A Great Bucket-of-Cold-Water Wake-up, to the potential pathologies of technology and those who would abuse it for their nefarious self-interest?” I say.

“Precisely! A a rebirth of sorts or a Neo-Renaissance of the Age of Reason, if you will...before it's too late, which may already be the case. Through the millennia, the innate human compulsion to connect with his fellow man beyond the quotidian task of survival through various art forms has somehow survived, despite desperate attempts by despots to silence it. Mick, Ivan tells us that you are filmmaker. I'm sure you must realize that symbolic imagery such as film and video communicates in powerful ways mere words cannot,” Ruth says.

“Yeap, as we look at the good, classic social activist films like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Grapes of Wrath*, the bad, the inane *Beach Blanket Bingo* and *The Blob* and yes, the ugly history of cinema, sadly *The Birth of a Nation*, originally called *The Clansman*...the title changed to suffuse the message with a more seductive American nationalistic tone. The 1915 American silent drama film directed by D. W. Griffith demonstrated the awesome power of moving pictures in the nascent filmmaking industry to create negative stereotypes, specifically of Black people...and Jews and

Catholics. The most reprehensibly racist film in Hollywood history. And let's not forget that it was a silent film...no words were spoken, only text as screen captions. Musical background or scores, in those days were furnished live, usually accompanied by an organ in the theater. The film has been acknowledged as an inspiration for the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan, which took place only a few months after its release," I say.

"And later an inspiration for director Leni Riefenstahl, for her 1930 Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* resulting in worldwide attention and acclaim. Influenced by classical Hollywood cinema's style, she employed music to enhance the narrative, establish a sense of grandeur, and to heighten the emotions in a scene, using nostalgic traditional German folk music to intensify patriotic nationalism. The film is widely considered one of the most effective and technically innovative propaganda films ever made and contributed to the rising tide of nativistic white supremacy and collective anti-semitism in pre-war Nazi Germany," Ruth says.

"And we all know how that movie ends...for over six million Jews," Hawk says.

"And now with the incredible power of very sophisticated technology of multimedia and the ability through CGI, computer generated digital imagery, to create a very realistic alternative reality indiscernible from actual reality, poses an even greater threat of nefarious reality warping. The impact of these relatively new powerful mediums of expression, which thanks to the democracy of the Digital Age are now available to the masses, will play a profound role in the creation of cultural memes and shaping and influencing opinion of the *vox populi*. It powerfully demonstrates and reinforces that with great creative, artistic power comes even greater responsibility, sort of a cyber Hippocratic oath, to *first do no harm*," I say.

"Indeed Mick. But, *pure* honest art, from the heart, including the literary arts like poetry and prose...and painting and sculpture, connect *comme un cœur transpercé* like a spear in the heart, a visceral meta-level of consciousness. If done with conscience and moral responsibility, a positive affirmation of the human condition and all its wonder, and it must not be left unsaid, its foibles and flaws. To create is as intrinsic in the human spirit as the biological urge to procreate" she says.

"Again, sorry Ruth, but do you really think that the civilization is salvageable...or even worth saving?" I ask.

"Yes, Mick...*I have to*...because without hope...life is not worth living. Hope unifies...fear divides. For our children's children and generations to follow, the death of hope would mean the ultimate demise of democratic civilization as we know it. Civilization may look quite different, probably unrecognizable from its current state...thank you very much, but as long as the end result is fair, just and egalitarian, the rest are mere details...as Albert Einstein famously said, *I want to know God's thoughts...the rest are mere details*," Ruth says

“And to paraphrase Kant, *without justice, life has no meaning*,” Hawk says.

“Indeed Hawk, *Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary*. the theologian and thinker Reinhold Niebuhr so poignantly said,” Joe says.

“It is the eternal...perpetual tension through the millennia, exacerbated even more now with the ubiquitous reach of technology of today’s culture—the constant never ceasing battle of truth...and hope over fear, cynicism and demagoguery. Hope is about growth...fear is about limits. Hope points ahead, working for a common good. Cynical fear lives in the past pointing at others, assigning blame. Fear pushes away; hope pulls others closer.¹²” Ruth says.

“Also known as democracy versus plutocratic capitalism, or autocracy,” Joe adds.

“And...science versus fiction...” Ivan says.

“And that is why you artists, Mick must now step up, as never before...to create and *live outloud*. I believe the highest and indispensable calling of the artist is to be a prophet, essentially a healing secular shaman, historian and conscience of civilization. To be the steadfast guardians of precious hope. As an anthropologist, we study ancient civilizations and sacred tradition of allegory, of striving to deliver their moral payload, that is documented as far back as the Paleolithic cave paintings of Lascaux 20,000 years ago. By connecting to the primordial instinct to share the experience of the human condition through captivating storytelling, in all its art forms, thus passing on cumulative wisdom and tradition through parable for generations to follow,” Ruth says.

“Well, if what you say is true about the militarization of law enforcement...how could a revolution by...and for the people be successful waged against such overwhelming military might?” I say.

Hawk, his eyes smoldering with anger, apparently his anger management strategy on temporary sabbatical says, “Well, to me there seems to be no other viable alternative but to take it to the streets. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre said it best, *mon ami...!I was not the one to invent the lies: they were created in a society divided by class and each of us inherited lies when we were born. It is not by refusing to lie that we will abolish lies:it is by eradicating class by any means necessary*’ and I underscore, *any*.”

“So you advocate the use of violence to that end, Hawk? So you’re a closet Marxist...a Leninist advocating the violent overthrow of the government as a prelude to a new grand world order?” Ruth says.

“More like a Groucho...” I say, trying to lighten Hawk up, who now in his heat-seeking missile mode, brushes off.

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“Hey Mick...*mon ami*, make like Harpo will ya?” he says with zipper mouth motion.

“Geez...what a...what for it...?” I say.

“Dear Ruth...yes, I would...and not necessarily as a last resort which may be too late. I still can recall the words of Malcolm X, in 1965...just before he was assassinated, indelibly burned into my consciousness. When the defenseless Blacks were mercilessly being beaten and slaughtered, *We declare our right on this earth to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence...by any means necessary.* It was not until the Blacks began to arm themselves...to fight back in the North...in the Bay area with the Black Power Movement. The Black Panthers...that's when the White establishment began to sense their vulnerability. That Whitey could no longer gratuitously inflict violence on Black people with impunity...without Black blow back,” Hawk says.

“And so you think that violence would have expedited the cause of civil rights of the Black people?” Ruth asks.

“I don't know...but it sure as hell would have caused some folks in the Jim Crow South to take pause...to realize that they could themselves be exposed to physical violence...that some of *their* lily white asses, literally was in the game,” Hawk says.

“And when the oppressed are so far down...Bob Dylan's, “*When you've got nothing, you've got nothing to lose,*” I say.

“You're *so far down*...that down looks like *up*. Ruth, as another Jew, I would think that you, of all people, would realize that the Jews in Germany during Hitler's reign of terror...millions of our people, men, women and *children* were exterminated...like vermin. Meekly following like lambs being lead to slaughter during the Holocaust. But had they resisted *en masse...by any means necessary*, including armed resistance, like the French Resistance...the outcome may have been much different from six million Jews being eradicated...erased like they never existed,” Hawk says.

“I understand...and indeed share your anger, but in your rage, you're blaming the victim, Hawk. And by the way...remember that historically our people are from the *merchant class...not warriors...we finance and supply wars...not fight them, present company excluded,*” Ruth says smiling facetiously.

“Yea...like the Rothschilds', just shopkeepers doing a *bisl gesheft*...a little business, eh? Finance and supply *both* sides...so they're always on a winning side...and if you believe in uh...*Kosher Karma*, well I won't *even* go there with the Holocaust. *Dammit* Ruth...seems to me that the not-so-latent Jewish self-loathing mentality was, and still is large part of the problem. Yea...I know it's part of the process...a result of centuries of oppression. But when some of the Blacks had finally had enough, their response to violence was, *Yessuh, Massa Whitey, I'll turn the other cheek...so you can kiss the other*

cheek...of my black ass. And guess what, some of the Whites suddenly started to get more than a little circumspect about how they treated Blacks... 'cause they were scared *shitless*. Why? Because now, they sensed that what was once considered a birthright, a VIP pass of white entitlement, could be taken away from them by violence. Now *they* had something they could lose," Hawk says still seething.

Ruth says, "In many ways the Blacks, have much the same narrative as the oppressed Jews throughout history...treated like sub-humans...even in literature. The seemingly benign but no less pathological stereotypes...going as far back as Shakespeare's Shylock, and even before...just because of their ethnic origin. Okay, so granted, short term, they got the attention of the oppressors. But, how exactly, as a practical matter, would you propose that this armed insurrection be implemented...and financed, remember, I *am* a Jew..." grinning, "...and perpetuated long term? And more importantly what does the end game look like? The streets flowing red with the blood of Americans killing other Americans? Another American civil war? In the end, what exactly did *that* solve? Seven hundred thousand dead Americans later, which today would be equal to over seven *million*, just how'd that work out for everybody?" Ruth says.

"Well, I haven't figured that part out...yet. *That's a much harder question...*" says a sheepishly grinning Hawk with air quotes repeating Ruth's earlier answer. But I *can* tell you this...for me personally? As Emiliano Zapata said during the Mexican Revolution, *I'd rather die on my feet, then live on my knees,*" Hawk says still in anger relapse mode.

"*Touche*, Hawk." says a smiling Ruth, "Noble and laudable words, Hawk. I have no doubt as to their sincerity."

"Don't know the *when*...or the *how*...but inevitably, the world's headed for a fiery broadside collision on the corner of Main Street...and Wall Street...between regressive capitalism and progressive democracy. And...*there will be blood...flowing in the streets,*" Hawk says.

"Maybe so. But consider this, my dear enraged gladiator friend. An armed insurrection would be exactly how the government...and the oligarchs would *like* it to unfold...thereby justifying a full and overwhelming military response. Long term...not a winnable war for the revolutionaries. No...if history tells us *anything*, including the liberation and decolonization of India from the British, lead by Gandhi...and in this country the successful prosecution of civil rights by the Blacks in the 60s, lead by Martin Luther King Jr...it must be through the same massive *passive aggressive* response. Non-violent demonstration and civil disobedience including rolling strikes and boycotts by the workers. But first it will require the almost complete solidarity and mobilization of many of the workers. Committed worker solidarity is the key...the necessary condition precedent," Ruth says.

"But how do you get all the workers to unite? I mean, isn't that rather unrealistic idealism, if not Panglossian to expect that kind of worker unity?" I

say.

“What I find as the height of hypocrisy is the worker who whines about how corrupt and useless labor unions are...that union dues are unfairly required even if you're not a member, etcetera, basically more neo-liberal red-herring.

To them I say, are you only required to work a 40 hour work week, with time and half after that?

Is there a minimum wage law that protects workers, especially non-english speaking immigrants from employer exploitation...which keeps wages lower for everyone who has to compete in an unfair job market?

Do you get paid holidays and vacations? Safe and humane working conditions? If you're injured on the job, are your medical expenses paid for you, wages paid, and if disabled as a result and can no longer work at that job, are you awarded a disability payment?

Do child labor laws prevent young, defenseless children from being exploited in the workplace, forced to work around dangerous machinery, which often resulted in serious injury or even death to the child?

Well, *Yer Velcome*, you bunch of *kevetching schnorrers* uh...whining freeloaders and spongers. For without the counter-balance of collective bargaining labor unions, decades of sweat and yes, blood of the liberal organized labor movement, probably many if not most of those protections against unfair, inhumane and unsafe labor practices would not even exist today,” Hawk says.

“Amen...and Halleluiah Hawk!” Ruth says.

“Indeed Hawk. My widowed mother,” Sanjana starts out, “often spoke of the demonstrations by her people in New Delhi...the heroism of the waves of Mahatma Gandhi's followers, as they stood, totally defenseless, in complete commitment and unity, to *Satyagraha*....non-violent defiance against the government dragoons. As the soldiers mercilessly beat them...as each wave of the injured were carried off, then replaced by the one behind, each wave heroically stepping up into the breach...knowing that they were going to be brutally beaten. Until finally some of the soldiers became so physically exhausted, their blows no longer had any power...either physical or as psychological intimidation over the protestors. Many of the soldiers were so moved by the heroism and self-sacrifice that tears were streaming down their faces. Many of them, knowing that they would face harsh disciplinary action themselves, refused to continue beating their fellow citizens.”

“Inspiring Sanjana. I have often wondered if I would be capable of such physical...and moral courage, to take a beating without fighting back,” I say.

“Yes, Mick...that's what makes it even more remarkable. The protestors had won...without resorting to physical retaliation. Creating a tide of massive moral outrage that swept over the country, which inspired even more

protestors to join in...until through geometric progression, a tipping point of critical mass was reached. Eventually the sheer magnitude of humanity, willing to sacrifice their bodies, and the international moral outrage, finally overwhelmed the resource...and resolve of the British. It was a noble moment in the history of civilization...and the history of India in particular...liberation from English Colonial rule. And it was accomplished without ostensibly firing a single shot by the dissidents,” Sanjana says.

“Thank you my dear daughter...for that. The eventual triumph through such extraordinary moral and physical courage by just common, but far from ordinary folks, later would serve as a successful model for the non-violent civil rights protests in the Jim Crow South, lead by Gandhi's disciple, Reverend King,” Ruth says placing her hand gently on Sanjana's, her eyes tearing up.

“Heroic indeed, Sanjana. Like the lunch counter sit-ins where the Blacks suffered merciless beatings...for what? Merely asking to be served? But do you *really* think that today's generation of selfish, relatively affluent people of the West are capable, more to the point, willing to make such selfless shared sacrifice? I think it was Gandhi, who when asked the question, *What do think of Western civilization?* replied, *I think it would be good idea,*” I say.

“Yes...I do, Mick. I believe Civil Rights legislation in the mid 60s was a direct result of the *peaceful non-violent* demonstrations by the Blacks in the South lead by Reverend King. And my students are just as committed to righting social wrongs...like gender equality...and for the LGBT community, as our generation during the 60s against discrimination based on race,” Sanjana says.

“Now that you mention it, of course. I lost a young man who was like a son to me. Trey Mahoney sacrificed his unfinished life...attempting to *make* them listen. To do the right thing. His only crime was that he was gay...and for following his broken heart as to whom he chose to love, and in doing so, he was assassinated by the homophobic establishment.

“And Selma in '65...and C-Wash,” says Hawk

“Indeed. *But for* the horrific images coming into the living rooms of Main Street America...via the six o'clock news, of the gratuitous violence and attack of the defenseless, peaceful non-violent demonstrators who were marching from Selma to Montgomery, the capitol of Alabama...*no* Voter Rights Act of 1965. Hawk and I and of course Ivan, lost one of our dearest, most committed and courageous brothers there, Charles Washington...the ultimate sacrifice, martyred. Thank you for reminding us, Sanjana,” my throat tightening up.

“Rest in peace...C-Wash,” Hawk says bowing his massive hairless candle-lit glistening head deferentially.

“Yes, and RIP brother Mario Savio, taken from us in 1996...at fifty-three. They said it was a heart attack. But I believe it was *a broken heart* that finally took Mario. *Weltschmerz*...world pain...or world weariness from the

recognition of man's seemingly infinite capacity for inhumanity and lack of compassion for one another,” Ivan says one of Mario Savio's closest friends and collaborator in the FSM at UCB.

“Rest in peace...Mario Savio, Charles Washington 1940-1965...at 25, Selma, Alabama and Byron Brawley 1942-1967...at 24, Kontum Province, Vietnam,” I say

“Indeed, Mick. But...again if we look at the history of tectonic social change...general rolling strikes, Syndicalism has been a common union organizing principle in a number of European countries, including France, Spain, and Italy. To be successful, it requires no more than half of the workforce, in America maybe 75 million of the total 150 million total workforce of rolling strikes, across the complete spectrum of the production of goods and services to bring the oligarchs to their knees in less than two years,” Ruth says.

“So if the workers are the real producers of wealth for the oligarchs...no producers...no excessive cash flow...no obscene wealth?” I say.

“And in recent surveys of all the industrialized countries where the citizens rated their degree of overall contentment or happiness, health, and security, and perceived upward mobility, the Nordic countries by a wide margin had the highest rating, year after year. And, not by coincidence, continue to have the highest union density in the world with all blue and white-collar workers, with membership of trade unions amounting to 52% in Norway, 65% in Finland, 84% in Iceland, 66% in Sweden, and 67% in Denmark,” Ruth says.

“And no oligarchs,” Hawk adds.

“Ergo *bubala*. A bloodless reversal of the current slow-motion Corporate *coupe de etat*, concentrated class warfare against the working middle class for over four decades by the neo-liberals, the turning point in 1981 with Reagan firing almost the entire PATCO air traffic controllers of over 12,000, just for daring to go on strike. Its cynical objective worked, beyond the neo-liberals wildest expectations, creating a still prevalent sense of massive insecurity and vulnerability of the working class.

From that point on, the tacit ever-present threat of general strikes would slowly erode until today labors unions are only about 7 percent from the over 30 percent of the workforce before the 1980s. So the imperative is now in clear focus. The first step toward a fair and upwardly mobile economy is...unionize! Ultimately when a committed workforce has the power of collective bargaining of over 50% of the labor force, it could force the few remaining oligarchs to deal with the reality that ultimately it is the worker...the producers of goods and services that hold the power,” says Ruth.

“Hmm...sorry Ruth. But I have to say that this uh...strikes me somewhat as Marxist utopianism...rooted in collectivistic idealism. Can you cite like some big and meaningful example, and I don't mean some obscure little victory of labor in some *banana republic* podunk country, where this

actually affected a profound and lasting reorganization of a social order?" I say.

"Sure. Thought you'd *never* ask...*big boy*." the always affable grinning Ruth Tarnowski says, with her dancing penetrating blue eyes, "the most striking recent example, no pun intended, of successful non-violent revolution through general strikes was that of 1989...in Poland were part of a revolutionary wave that eventually resulted in the Fall of Communism in the Communist controlled states of Central and Eastern Europe by the end of 1991. Just think of the power of that. All those Trillions with a *T*, of dollars spent by the USSR and the U.S....on armament over four decades...and in the end it was a civil implosion. Ordinary working class people...that was more powerful than the technology of any man-made implosion-type thermonuclear weapon, that ultimately defeated the so-called Red Menace. And the fall of the Iron Curtain. So...sometimes for decades and decades...nothing seems to happen. Then in few weeks...decades happen. That one big enough for ya *miene bubala*, Mickey? Hmm?" says a warmly smiling Ruth Tarnowski.

"Okay, Ruth...ya got me. I can buy that. But look what happened with the power vacuum created by the collapse of Communism. The same oligarchs, the *apparatchiks* become born-again Capitalist...and ended up with all the marbles...again," I say.

"*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it...* George Santayana," Joe says, "using the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR as a negative paradigm, this revolution will be forced to heed the harsh lessons of the collapse of Communism...or it too shall fail...just as spectacularly. Which translates into the necessity for bold, visionary...and very vigilant leadership. That's where the people of your generation come in, Mick. Old enough...possessing of institutional memory to remember the past failures and follies of history like the American imperialist interventions...the war in Vietnam, the attempts at the overthrow of the democratically elected socialist governments in Iran 1953, Chile in 1973, Afghanistan in 1979 and Nicaragua starting in 1981 ending with Iran-Contra in 1985, to just name a few of America's greatest hits...your tax dollars at work.

Meanwhile, back on the home front, a wholesale assault...the deregulation of Capitalism, including the privatization of the vital functions of government, like the sacrosanct medicare and social security. Your generation is still young enough, and energetic with wisdom of life experience to *shepherd* the process, to mentor the children of our lovely grandchildren's generation...to keep it from straying off course," Joseph Tarnowski says.

"So are you sayin' it's time to start mobilizing like *yesterday* for a uh...revolution?" I say.

"Yeap...you got it. With a little more *re-socialization*," Ruth says with air quotes, "I just may turn you two *schatzi's* into little lefty revolutionaries yet!" Ruth says facetiously with a wicked smile.

"Welcome to my world, boys," says a grinning Ivan.

"So Ruth...what and when's the next step?" I say.

“To survive this unprecedented global threat of climate change to our very existence will require a radical reordering of civilization's deeply devolved and perverted priorities. The great tragedy is that the American working class for the most part is ignorant of the fact that they are essentially slaves, *wage slaves* as Marx put it, to a rigged system where *our* democracy, or what's left of it, like a defective gene through incest has run amok...an inbred mutation, into this obsequious, antithetical servant of Capitalism. I like to quote Harriet Tubman, African-American abolitionist and humanitarian when she said, *I freed thousands of slaves, but I could have freed thousands more...if only they had known they were slaves.* For millions of people with today's obscene disparity of wealth, poverty is the new slavery,” says Ruth Tarnowski.

“So the answer is through the media...to sound the alarms, a massive media campaign...a clarion call to action?” I say.

“I'll let Joe answer that since he's the economist...besides I'm tired of hearing myself talk,” she says with genuine humility.

“Okay, Ruthy...you can take the rest of night off. Save a little of that fire for tomorrow night at the book signing...honey, you've *more* than earned your dinner tonight,” he says with an authentic love and respect, affectionately patting her hand.

“Mick, as Ruth stated, it was during the 80s with the Reagan administration, that the overt, concentrated war against labor unions began. Huge income tax reductions for corporations, the wealthy including inheritance tax, massive deregulation and lax anti-trust regulation and enforcement started in earnest, with mainstream media becoming increasingly concentrated and consolidated in the hands of just a few major corporations. With no efficient competitive alternative, and the redefinition of corporate societal responsibility to become solely and completely...shareholder value. Full stop.” Joe says.

“Like the one with the biggest uh...*megaphones* usually wins the argument,” I say.

“Yea...like here's ya megaphones...right here,” says the Hawkster turning away from the girls seated next to him in a rare display of decorum, grabbing his genitals, doing a spot-on *wiseguy*, which draws a snigger from the girls.

“*A-hem* uh...correct. The notion that the solution to climate change is through more concentrated CASMO, or Corporate Advertising Subsidized Media Octopi, again essentially shareholder supremacy Capitalism, is a naive myth promulgated through the slick dissembling known again, by the euphemism *marketing*. Essentially propaganda. A society distracted from the crucially important social issues by a constant bombardment of our senses with inane, vulgar minutiae. Through technology...social media, electronic gossip mills, the contemporary *bread and circus* of the Roman Empire...promoted by corporate mainstream media, the sycophantic handmaidens of the Corpocracy. As Neil Postman prophetically wrote in 1985, in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*...echoing Huxley's *Brave New World*, the public is more oppressed by

their addiction to amusement...pleasure, than in Orwell's work, *1984*, where they were oppressed by state control," Joe says.

"Yes...I've read Postman, Chomsky and Zinn and others, extensively. And I too recognize and have often acknowledged the profound prescience of Huxley's fictional masterwork. So the system is so broken...so corrupt, that it's not fixable?" I say

"Yeap...ironically from the third rate actor...like most things Hollywood, pretend president Ronald Reagan's so-called *shining city on a hill...a Potemkin Village*," he says with air quotes "...and that old shining majestic mansion...up on the hill that from a distance looks like all it needs is a fresh coat of paint to restore it to its original splendor? Belies the reality that it's been so infested with termites and rats, of the bipedal kind...for so long, that it's rotting from the inside out. And no amount of propping it up...mere cosmetic change, like every empire before it, is going to save it from eventually collapsing under its own weight. And as Ruth says...poverty is the new slavery. And all the tweaking...all the so-called reforms around the edges only serves to *lengthen the chains...it does not break them*," says Joe.

"So...time for what? *Bulldoze* the bureaucracy?" Hawk says.

"An apt metaphor, Hawk. Yes...and like any other structure that's in danger of collapse, first it needs to be condemned...then the demolition needs to be planned and controlled to prevent a precipitous, chaotic collapse," Joe says.

"So...doz it all the way down to the foundation...and start over?" I say.

"I'm afraid so. Sadly, nothing less will suffice. But if the democratic foundation is solid, and I believe that it is, in time, the process of rebuilding on that foundation can begin," Joe says.

"Assuming there is the equivalent of a Great Awakening...since there is so much economic inter-connectedness through Globalism, what's the rest of the world going to be doing...while America is tuning up for American Revolution 2.0?" I say.

"Through Globalism the highly formidable virulent strain of Capitalism, particularly prevalent in America over the past century has now metastasized all over the world, indeed *tout le monde*. The so-called American Dream has morphed and spread into the World Nightmare," Joe says.

"Greed...without borders. America's main export," interjects Hawk.

"Agreed. The dark underbelly of American Exceptionalism." says a smiling Joseph Tarnowski, "so...the old bromide especially in the era of Globalism, *when the American economy sneezes...the rest of the world catches a cold*, was never more relevant, that is as long as the American dollar is the international primary reserve currency. By the way if that should ever change...the collapse of the dollar would throw the world into a global depression...economic chaos and anarchy.

In Europe, for example because it's so fractured politically, with so many competing issues of inter-state sovereignty...with no true central government or bank, perhaps the potential for a contemporary equivalent of the French Revolution in terms of bloody violence and anarchy is even greater. A Reign of Terror 2.0. And you can be sure that abroad...as well as here, of asymmetrical warfare...by non-state actors, leftovers and dead-enders of the former oligarchy who failed to get the memo, desperately attempting to retain power by exploiting the chaos for financial...and hegemonic gain," Joe says.

"Yea...but..." I start to say when I am eerily confronted by a memory seeping in from my past life as an *M-F*, Yes...exploitation, as Jason Mahoney presciently declared, years ago in the early 80s while convening and Chairing the Entrepreneurial Corporate Caucus, the ECC with the other plutocratic Masters of the Universe about the coming chaos caused by climate change. *Never, ever...let a serious crisis to go to waste. This crisis will provide the opportunity for us, the ruling class to do things that we could not have ever been done before...'*

"Hell-o-o? Earth to Koz-mick...yes, but *what*, Koz?" Hawks says mercifully interrupting the dark reverie of my past with Captain Ahab which sends a chill down to my toes. Hmm...*what the hell is that about? Some unfinished business...from long ago?*

"Uh...sorry. A Proustian moment...Remembrance of Things Past," I say, "So...you were saying, professor?"

"Sure...Mick," Joe continues, "so...Capitalism has now devolved into an *international* sociopathology, with the disparity of wealth world-wide, rivaling even the excesses of the mythical Gilded Age, when John D. Rockefeller...of Standard Oil, his net worth today adjusted for inflation would be a staggering 340 billion with a *B*...and in Europe, the notorious war profiteer Nathan Mayer Rothschild, worth about 350 *billion*."

"Man...didn't know there was that many zeros. The Second Gilded Age...redefines disparity of wealth to a whole 'nuther level," I say.

"Louis Brandeis, Associate Justice on the Supreme Court summed it up best, *We must make our choice. We can have democracy in this country or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of the few. But we can't have both*," Joe says.

"*Jesus...this level of obscene wealth. Like, today's Capitalism is to a democracy...is uh what...pornography is to love?*" Hawk says.

"And to extend your metaphor professor, in the process of rebuilding, engineer it to withstand the inevitable challenges...of internal political and seismic external hazards, like the social dislocation caused by the calamitous destruction and chaos from climate change," I say.

"Sadly, climate change for the most part, is a done deal, Mick. We could have largely prevented the catastrophic consequences of it had we only listened to the respected climate scientists like James Hansen of N-O-A-A, as

far back as the 80s,” Ivan interjects.

“So...not exactly a very rosy forecast for the planet...or its inhabitants?” I say.

“Nope...not much consolation, but it's totally self-inflicted. As the indigenous peoples have known for millennia...*Gaia* has only rules. She is impartial. She knows no mercy. We knew Her rules...yet we continued to disrespect Her. Break Her rules...and you pay. You can pay Her now...or you can pay Her later, but in the end, She *always gets paid*. Like the credit card that's been maxed out with minimum payments, the principal and interest are now due but with obscene deferred compound interest,” Ivan says.

“I guess in the end, the people get the kind of government...and planet they deserve,” I say.

Ivan says, “Again, not much consolation, but yea. Tragically, it is our innocent children, who will inherit a once democratic country, built on middle class prosperity, at one time the envy of the world, now on the verge of becoming a failed state. And a world civilization...on the brink of collapse. Like one continuous 50 year New Year's Eve drunken profligate orgy of willful, indeed arrogant ignorance by their hung-over parents, the *Biffs* and *O-blivias*.”

“While we're discussing Marxisms, I think this quip from uh...Groucho, captures the mindset of our generation...*Why should I care about future generations...what have they ever done for me?*” I say.

“Ha! That about sums it up, Mick. Sadly, if it wasn't so tragic...”

It's the day after and the kids are stuck with picking up the tab for cleaning the colossal mess up...to hose the place down to make it even liveable. The civilization in some perverse degraded form will survive...it always does. But history, will not be kind to our generation for allowing this totally unnecessary catastrophe to happen.” Ivan says.

“A complete and total fiasco...if you ask me. So no magic bullet solutions...no last second Hail Mary game-winning pass?” I say

“Sorry...but again, nope. Except to maybe literally start praying Hail Marys', like overtime,” Ivan says.

“Hey Hawk...pass me that butter knife, will ya pal,” I say.

Ivan continues, “Now, with the inexorable inertia of it, the positive feedback loop of the melting polar caps, glaciers and perma-frost, and the release of methane gas, along with dramatic sea warming, increasing levels, causing more calamitous extreme weather events...well, the only realistic hope is to mitigate it. No one, not the government...not the scientists are willing to publicly admit it for fear of starting a panic stampede for the exits...a mass exodus.

While there is some promising nascent scientific research into technologies of massive carbon mitigation, so-called Geo-engineering, like underground carbon sequestration or atmospheric seeding of a reflective layer

to repel the sun's rays...it's probably too little...too late. And even if these technologies had some practical level of success, the political implications between sovereign nations of actually implementing them is tremendous...possibly causing changing weather patterns, like rainfall, to the advantage of the nation using it...to the detriment of other nations, eventually perhaps even causing wars.

No...we are now entering the adaptive phase of dealing with the inevitable consequences of anthropocentric climate change, including in the not too distant future, by 2050, dramatic increase of sea level and average global temperatures, uncontrollable wildfires and intensified hurricane and tornado activity, displacing hundreds of millions, with mass migration of the populace of the planet to the Northern latitudes...like the Pacific Northwest. Perhaps even in the lifetime of our children, a dystopic diaspora of marauding starving masses of desperate peoples, roaming and foraging to merely subsist. An existence of chaos and anarchy, relatively devoid of any social order or security," says Ivan.

"Jesus! Sounds like it's time for a Hemlock Happy Hour," Hawk says.

"Yea...nice uplifting message, Ivan...so now what?" I say.

"Well guys, most of us with children...and grandchildren will choose not to indulge in Hawk's uh...*Hemlock* Maneuver, as we are *now* charged with a solemn duty. To prepare ourselves...our families and loved ones to start to form self-sufficient, defensible communities with others who share the same vision and are able...and more importantly, willing and committed to begin preparation for the inevitable.

Survival, with some modicum of quality of life, including the preservation of the arts, and culture, will depend on the ability of these enclaves to produce their own food, water and sustainable energy...to be completely self-sustaining...indefinitely. Everything will have to be produced locally...including security, as the government or what's left of it, may not necessarily have the resources, or the will to protect the populace against the onslaught. Sadly...it will become almost a tribal kind of existence, probably for several decades, at least until the world population through attrition, including starvation, pandemic disease, civil strife...and war, becomes viable...The Dark Ages 2.0...hopefully it won't last four centuries," Ivan says.

"So what's your estimate for viable world population?" I ask

"Oh...optimally about three to four billion tops, with zero growth. Eventually self-evolving to a homeostasis, or equilibrium of population and resource for the planet to support it," Ivan says with a cavalier, unsettling clinical insouciance.

"Jesus, Ivan...you're talking almost a fifty percent reduction of the current levels of world population?" I say.

“Unfortunately...your math is correct, Mick. But history informs us that the Bubonic Plague between 1347 and 1353 decimated the population between *thirty to sixty percent* of Europe and Britain alone. For centuries the epidemic continued to strike every 10 years or so, its last major outbreak being the Great Plague of London from 1665 to 1666. Sadly, during a so-called Dark Ages 2.0, because the collapse of international sovereign governments and health care infrastructure is almost a certainty, another pandemic could be just as lethal.

Vast portions of the planet probably twenty, even as much as thirty degrees North and South of equator will become essentially uninhabitable. Due to consistently extreme air temperatures...and sea rise, the global coastal topography, where about forty percent of the world's total population is concentrated within seventy miles of the coast would be regularly inundated by brackish sea water making the land no longer arable, and in many places not even liveable within ten miles of the water's edge. And protracted droughts in food producing latitudes will further stress and exacerbate the production of the food chain for the masses, not to mention the availability of basics taken for granted like turning on the tap for potable water and flushing the toilette,” Ivan says.

“So...basically, clean drinkable water will replace the *black gold* of petroleum, as the new coveted natural resource...nations willing to go to war to keep it flowing?” I say.

“That's right Mick. The collapse of the water table from frequent severe droughts and poor stewardship of the most precious life-giving resource on the planet will cause violent, literally shooting, water wars, between and even within sovereign states. The once raging untamed, Colorado River will be reduced to a trickle, drastically impeding the production of agriculture and hydro-electric power. Without very costly capitalization and maintenance of desalinization plants, parts of California, Nevada and Arizona will become essentially unlivable. Las Vegas, with little or no drinking water will be the most expensive ghost town in the history of civilization...*Lost Vegas*. Those abandoned glitzy mega-hotels, like the totems of Easter Island, will be reduced to tragic anthropological monuments to man's colossal willful and arrogant ignorance.

That's why the revolution must occur first...to form the political infrastructure, an armature, to try to ameliorate the worldwide chaos and dislocation caused by climate change. To allow in a relatively orderly way, for the regeneration and re-emergence of a new world order. A more egalitarian society, not solely based on acquisitiveness as the main priority, but more on social justice and the universal rights of man,” Ivan says.

“Ivan, I have to say, nice speech, man...but it sounds more than a trifle quixotic, almost naively utopian to me,” I say.

“Indeed. But that's no reason not to strive for it, Mick. At the risk of sounding cliché...to let the perfect be the enemy of the good,” Ivan says.

“Mick, as Ivan says, the planet is already pretty much fully cooked...stick a fork in it,” Joe says

“So what you're saying Joe is...no matter what we do...basically we're *forked*, eh?” Hawk says smiling.

“Ha!” says Joe laughing, “yea...pretty much, well put Hawk. Even the well-meaning mainstream environmentalists have failed to grasp that the current mutation of Capitalism is as capable of self-reform...as a career chronic alcoholic living in daily denial, lacking the political will and courage to deal with climate change. No...Capitalism as it exists today, is not the solution...it *is* the problem,” Joseph Tarnowski says who appears content to have his wife and long time collaborator and equal partner, a highly respected professor of Sociology and Anthropology, unthreatened by the intellectual brilliance and virtuosity in her own right, carry the mantle for social reform in particular as it relates to her area of expertise of the social sciences.

Quite a potent tag-team duo.

“Hmm...well I didn't expect to be breaking bread tonight in the presence of revolutionary uh...*royalty*” Hawk says with exaggerated air quotes to emphasis the irony “with contemporary iterations of Rosa Luxemburg and later Emma Goldman...and Karl Marx. Raise your glasses to Ruth and Joe...and to all the fellow travelers for the cause of social justice...of the past, the present and the future...everywhere,” says Hawk smiling holding up his glass of wine.

“Here! Here!...well said Hawkster,” I say raising my glass.

“Indeed.” says Ivan raising his glass with Sanjana.

“Why thank you Hawk! We take that as an esteemed compliment,” Ruth says smiling broadly raising her glass.

“Very kind of you...thank you. And here's to S. G. Shapiro...truly a *Sui Generis*,” says Joe Tarnowski raising his glass.

“It certainly was intended as such, Ruth...I only wish Papa uh...S. G. could have been here to join in this discussion with these esteemed fellow travelers,” Hawk says wistfully.

“Uh...don't wish to sound too ignorant...but uh...” I say

“Dat train dun already left da station,” Hawk interjects always enjoying needling his pal.

“Rosa Luxemburg?” I say throwing Hawk a contrived exaggerated sarcastic smirk.

“A Marxist theorist, economist and revolutionary socialist of Polish-Jewish descent...one of the leaders of the German Revolution of 1918...which essentially ended the First World War after of abdication of the Kaiser...aka Mom.” Ivan Tarnowski says with a proud smile.

“A beautiful as well as brilliant *bubba*,” Hawk says winking at a blushing Ruth Tarnowski.

“Uh...by the way...she was martyred at the age of 47...hopefully not prophetic of tomorrow night...,” an only half-joking smiling Ruth says.

“Well, folks, on that happy note...this is probably a good place to call it a night. If you want to hear more about the book...the uh...WMD contra the oligarchy by WSDE, Workers Self Directed Enterprises or Worker's Cooperatives, the rest of this dog and pony show will be appearing at the auditorium of the community college tomorrow night at 7 PM. Might want to get there a little early to get a good ringside seat,” Ivan says again, only half-jokingly.

So we bid a good evening, thanking Ivan and Sanjana for a lovely dinner and the stimulating thought provoking conversation with Joseph and Ruth Tarnowski.

Again, it is reminiscent of many an evening of long hours of discussion and yes, debate, sometimes into sunrise, with Mario Savio, Charles Washington and Byron Brawley at UCB, including many of the things discussed tonight. It profoundly enlightened and informed me, at the time *jejune* world view. Sadly those principles that those young men, the best and the brightest, sacrificed their lives for, I am now deeply ashamed to confess, that somehow I allowed to erode—to eventually become dormant.

And *moi*...seduced by the siren call of the Gods of Capitalism, the Corpocracy, in the unfettered, unabashed pursuit of material wealth, luxury and power.

That is, until 9-1-1 and the Big Kaboom aftermath, reinforced by this incredible gift of the breaking of bread, of intellectual communion, with such principled, esteemed brilliant fellow travelers.

So...we collect Oso, who has apparently fallen in deep lust with Zelda, and is reluctant to leave as exhibited by his intense whining all the way home to Chez MAK.

I'll try to unpack and process all we heard tonight from some very committed, and yes inspiring folks *manana*, hopefully after a good night's sleep. *Ha!*

Tomorrow night, maybe we'll take in the second act of the Ruth and Joe Road Show if for no other reason than to provide some security backup in case the North county crowd gets a little rowdy.

Still reverberating in my consciousness...

Your generation is still young enough, and energetic with the wisdom of life experience to shepherd the process, to mentor the children...to keep it from straying off course...

Including my own son. Michael...*my son!? Jezus.*

I finally fall asleep about 3 AM after staring at the ceiling for several hours of counting the knots in the knotty pine ceiling, pondering my past with

the diabolical Captain Ahab. Indeed, definitely some *unfinished business* from long ago. The brutal murders of Sora Eagle Feather and Marla Dyson. And for *El Negrito* and J. Murdock Mahoney et al...again, some Koz-assisted-Karma. *De-fin-itely*.

And by the way, make that second term U.S. *Senator* J. Murdock Mahoney, from the *Great Centennial State of Colorado*, with the motto *Nil Sine Numine*. Nothing Without Providence. *Here's ya Providence...right heya, Jason...*

- Chapter 20 (63) -

With all the chaos connected with the pipeline explosion, the death and destruction, I am once again moved to go back into the studio, my sanctuary, to release and liberate my consciousness from the intense anxiety, as I had done in the past with the deaths of Sora and Marla—of dealing with the oftentimes crushing reality of the uncertainties of temporal human life. Some folks deal with grief by writing prose or poetry. I make art. For me painting is like writing poetry on canvas—the same process of metaphoric distillation, then unleashing the sometimes angry catharsis of emotion through 'throwing paint'.

The death of the innocent victims of the pipeline blast, the murders of Jennifer Rogers, and the Tehrani's, compounded by the recent epiphany that I have an adult son whom I have never met, compel me to paint a group of five very large paintings. The Fragile Status Quo Series just pour out of me over several days. As Emile Zola said, *If you ask me what I came into this life to do as an artist, I will tell you: I came to live out loud.*

It helps to lift the veil of dark clouds of depression caused by senseless tragedy, the recognition of the fragility of human existence. It becomes an elegy—an expression of my personal grief for the innocent, unfinished lives lost, and the mayhem inflicted on a beautiful, very special place.

The only positive legacy I can remotely muster is that maybe this tragedy can serve as an unwavering parable of man's infinite capacity for self-destruction, and the need for constant vigilance to prevent this kind of irresponsible stewardship of industry and technology, from ever happening again, here or anywhere else.

At about 10 AM, I answer the phone, "Kozmick Productions"

"This is the National Transportation Safety Board calling for Mister Michaelangelo Kozlov. May I speak with Mr Kozlov please," the voice on the phone says.

"Speaking," I say...quite cleverly.

"Please hold for Ms Takahashi," the voice says.

"Mr Kozlov, my name is Tara Takahashi. I'm the lead NTSB investigator on the pipeline blast in Cascadia County on October 10th. I would like to meet with you, and Mr Shapiro in person at your earliest convenience. We are the lead agency investigating this incident and we would very much like to hear your version of the facts, as it is our understanding that you were a percipient eye-witnesses to the direct aftermath of the initial explosion," she says.

“I don't know what I can add to the other statements that I have already given to other agencies, including the FBI...and the media,” I say.

“Mr Kozlov, I'm sure you must realize that is a very serious incident with the casualties, some very severe, loss of life and major property damage. We'd very much appreciate your cooperation in determining the cause. It is our Federal mandate to thoroughly investigate every incident involving a common carrier, to determine cause and assess responsibility as in the subject case involving a pipeline carrying toxic or flammable substances...to try to preclude and prevent future such disasters,” she says.

“Interesting choice of words...incident, Ms Takahashi. It would seem that the working assumption...of everyone most especially the FBI, is that the cause of the explosion was an act of terrorism. Done deal. Are you investigating the possibility of causes other than a criminal act perpetrated by terrorists?” I ask.

“Mr Kozlov the NTSB does not deal in assumptions. In every incident...most especially one as catastrophic, every possible plausible explanation is on the table. We literally start at ground zero, and very carefully, sometimes agonizingly slowly for the public and other agencies...and the media in particular...begin to exhaustively investigate every scintilla of evidence available, and allow the evidence, including testimony of parties involved, such as participants, and witnesses...like yourself and Mr Shapiro to let the investigation go in any direction it may lead. Can we count on the cooperation of you and Mr Shapiro?” she says.

“What is it you want from me and Mr Shapiro, exactly?” I say

“We would like to take recorded statements...under oath, of your testimony as eye-witnesses...from both of you,” she says.

“What did you mean by *every incident, every possible plausible explanation is on the table?*” I say.

“As a matter of policy...I can not comment...or divulge any direction, issues or facts of an ongoing investigation. But again, we follow the evidence where it takes us,” she says with cold professional detachment.

“And if we decline your uh...cordial invitation to participate?” I say to test her bureaucratic attitude.

“Mr Kozlov...I'm sure you must realize the seriousness of this incident...with your own serious injury, the tragic loss of life...so please help me out here. Why would you not want to cooperate with the investigation?” she pleads.

“Well...we may have some reservations about cooperating with the government on this investigation because frankly up to now, we believe there has been a rush to judgment,” I say.

“I am honestly hoping that we...you and I and the NTSB, do not have to further explore the possibility of compelling your cooperation. Let's just say that we have considerable legal means at our disposal. Please understand,

that I'm not demanding that you cooperate...yet. But I would think that you would be willing to cooperate at the very least from a sense of civic duty...unless there is some compelling reason that you might have, which I would indeed be very interested in hearing," she says.

"Good answer. I, and Mr Shapiro appreciate that you are not attempting to assert your legal authority...yet. As we've had a particularly distasteful experience with the FBI trying intimidate us. We believe that the conclusion released by the FBI for widespread media distribution is premature...and frankly is in conflict with our own independent investigation, and..."

She interrupts, *"I am aware of your previous interaction with FBI Agent Charles Cunningham...and Officer Gillespie...it's in the file. Off the record, you'll find me much easier to deal with. Much less uh...testosterone...and I promise not to arouse or otherwise antagonize Mr Shapiro's considerable canine protective instincts. And again I would be very interested indeed in hearing about your uh...investigation...and any alternative narrative, including any...conspiracy theories, as to causation,"* she says with no small patronizing tone in her voice.

"Glad to hear it. Ya know sometimes, after the first sighting of Mr Shapiro...coupled with the disclosure that he was the victim of an alien abduction...a spaceship from planet Mongo...in an inter-galactic conspiracy to rule the universe, well for some reason, folks just tend not to take him very seriously," I say.

Nothing...just a long silence.

"Hello? Still with me...Mizz Takahashi?" I say.

"Uh...I uh...yes...sounds positively uh...cosmic," she says with a hint of irony.

"As you may...or may not...soon discover for yourself, five minutes in closed space ship with the Hawkster...and the aliens turned right around and zoomed him back...*tres rapide*. Still game?" I say.

"Ma oui...and an interview with an alien abduction victim just might kinda perk up my otherwise pedestrian bureaucratic resume," she says. Ah excellent...self-effacing humor, but a gamer and *elle parle Francais*, albeit a Nucky brand. Maybe she really is open to an alternative narrative. I decide to give her the benefit of a doubt and because, frankly I'd like to get a *vis-à-vis* with her. Like I said...always a sucker for an alpha Ms...with a finely honed sense of the ironic.

"Good. Hold on a minute while I run this by Rottweiler Man," I say placing her on hold.

I say to Hawk who has just wandered into the room with the ever present bucket of steaming Seattle jet fuel under his nose, "Hey Hawk...the NTSB wants to interview us...under oath, about the pipeline explosion. I've got the lead investigator on the phone. She sounds pretty reasonable...but more

importantly seems open to some alternative scenarios for the *how, who and why?* Maybe this is a chance to present some of the results of our own investigation. Sounds like she's willing to take this investigation where ever it may lead. Probably our best shot at getting to the bottom...and maybe even to the top of this. Your thoughts?"

"Okay. On one condition. As long as they're open to hearing all the facts...act on them even if it's politically uh...inconvenient. And willing to share the results of their investigation with us," Hawk says.

I release the hold button, "Ms Takahashi...Mr Shapiro says...*woof-woof, uh...Oh-kay,*" causing Oso who's sprawled beside my desk to second the motion with his signature deep *woof-woof*, gaveling two loud tail thumps, "the motion is seconded and carried unanimously. When and where would you like to meet?" I say.

"*Okay...good.*" she says "*for me...looking at my calendar...tomorrow afternoon say around 4 PM at your home or place of business where it's presumably more quiet and we can be undisturbed by interruptions. We've set up our investigation control center at Lakeway Best Western...a few miles from the blast site.*"

"And just a few miles from us. Well alright then...at the house...and place of business, one and the same tomorrow at 4 PM. I assume you already have my address," I say

"*I do indeed...looking forward to meeting you and uh...your friend, Mr Shapiro,*" she says.

"More than a friend, Ms Takahashi...man's *best* friend. Oh...and Ms Takahashi...on the first meeting with Hawk Shapiro, it's always wise to follow best canine protocol to allow him to sniff the back of your hand first...until his tail wags," I say.

"*Thanks for the heads-up...I'll bring some doggie treats...au revoir,*" she says with a sardonic laugh.

Click.

After lunch, I log on to my email account with the Apple notebook, and check my email. After almost a week, there's finally something from @eagle.

From: atsa_ee@hushmail.com Date: Thursday October 24, 2001 5:23 AM

To: mak@kozmic.com

Subject: RE: Your LAN-IP 24.12.33.14 has been hacked

*by now it should be obvious that the people>>>*aka NPI*>>> you are chasin'>>>are very good at what they do>>> desperate and *very* dangerous>>>they have been tracking you since the explosion*

*always at least one step ahead of your *pitiful effort* at investigation. you have lead them right to the only witnesses>>>served them up on a silver platter. they have committed murder>>>they will stop at *nothing* including you 2>>>to keep the truth from coming out. do you and your partner have the *cojones* to take them down??! are you both willing to *get dirty*>>>to get even for the murders>>>including marla dyson?*

If so>>>it's showtime>>>lemme know

@eagle aka injun avenger

I yell, "Hey Hawk...get in here, man! You'll want to see this."

Hawk saunters in, "What's goin' on, man? What could possibly be so friggin' important as to interrupt my watchin' the Honeymooners reruns streamin' on the net. *Bang..zoom...to da moon Alice...*"

"Sorry uh...Ralpie. But just read these back and forth emails re @eagle," I say, my heart rate kicking up.

"Hmm...as da Kingfish would say, *da plot be thickenin'*," Hawk says.

"So how *in-the-hell* has he somehow connected the murder of Marla Dyson with the people who were behind this...whatever *this* is, with the pipeline explosion?" I say.

"And the murder of his mother Sora?" Hawk says.

"In the phone calls I had with his grandfather Leonard Eagle Feather I never mentioned Marla's death...and possible connection of the same or similar vehicles involved. That revelation came *after* the phone call with Leonard Eagle Feather and was never discussed with him," I say.

"Only other plausible explanation...he's somehow gained access to the files, probably hacked the security, emails etcetera...maybe phone conversations of the bad guys and possibly us. Like I said...he's good...*very* good," Hawk says.

"Okay...let's step up the pace. See just how much game he's got. Time to go on offense...tell him I know who he is...should get his attention," I say.

"Ya think?" Hawk say.

I reply.

From: mak@kozmic.com

Date: Thursday October 24, 2001 2:21 PM

To: atsa_ee@hushmail.com

Subject: RE: Your LAN-IP 24.12.33.14 has been hacked

The answer is yes....by any means necessary.

So here's the jackpot question for you.

Michael...do you have the balls to come out from hiding behind that screen into the real world...to physically meet with us to help avenge the murders...including the brutal murder of Sora Eagle Feather aka your mother?

~mak aka paleface avenger....and oh BTW...aka your father

Within five minutes I receive a reply from @eagle.

From: atsa_ee@hushmail.com
Date: Thursday October 24, 2001 2:25 PM
To: mak@kozmic.com
Subject: RE: Your LAN-IP 24.12.33.14 has been hacked

wtf>>>guess ur not as incompetent as i thought eh?>>> LOL.

okay>>>busted>>>so *now what* uh pops?

@eagle

Hawk reads the email, then smiling says, “Gets right to the point, don't he. Direct...and some serious *sang-froid*. Cool under pressure. Good to know. So...good question, uh...Pops. Now what?”

“I haven't a fuckin' clue, man...*en I tole yuz once...I tole yuz twice...dun call me pops*,” I say.

“Another hamma...hamma...moment eh, Ralphie? At least you're consistent,” Hawk says.

“And gettin' pathetically *petite bourgeoisie* predictable. Like this is startin' to sound like some kinda beyond banal online-dating word-dance...coily feigning indifference, not wanting to seem too eager...jockeying to set up the first face to face...for *el momento de verdad*,” I say.

“Well you could always cut to the chase, and try the online, more direct uh...gay-way. Basically your place or mine.”

“Is that so uh...*Ball-hawk*? Using my picture, howd'ya square that when you finally meet?” I say.

“Works for me. Hey, usually at least two...sometimes three or more consenting and very willin' adults. Gotta go for it, man, life's too short,” Hawk says

“T-M-I, man. *And dat ain't all dats showt...ma heb honkie fren*. Come on...so help me out here,” I say

“An unkind reference to my uh...shortcomings, resorting to negative cliché cultural stereotypes...unworthy of you sir. To wit, *If you uh...prick us do*

:: AMERICAN ALGORITHM — m.a.kominsky ::

we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us...?"

"Stifle it Shylock...mit da Jewish victim schtick for Chrissakes. I'm dyin' here and you're givin' me Merchant of Menace?"

"Okay...okay, stop mit da whinin'. Well...employing accepted online mingling orthodoxy, I'd say the first step might be to offer an ice-breaker phone conversation. Exchange some mutual data...then ease into a face-time meet...TBD," Hawk says.

*From: mak@kozmic.com Date: Thursday October 24, 2001 3:10 PM
To: atsa_ee@hushmail.com
Subject: RE: Your LAN-IP 24.12.33.14 has been hacked*

Okay Michael...time to real-ly connect. No more games.

This email venue is too limiting for me...so lets to cut to the chase. As a place to start...how about a phone conversation...real time...like real people? I'm thinkin' we both might have a few questions:)

*See where it goes from there.
So if you don't have it already...here's my mobile number.*

360.935.5555

You in...or out?

~mak

And the reply about 5 minutes later.

*From: atsa_ee@hushmail.com
Date: Thursday October 24, 2001 3:15 PM
To: mak@kozmic.com
Subject: RE: Your LAN-IP 24.12.33.14 has been hacked*

*what's the rush pops>>>LOL>>>only been what about 30 yrs?
i'll think about it>>>maybe, just maybe i'll give ya a call>>>maybe
not.*

@eagle>>>aka mak_too>>>LOL

ps

oh yea>>>i got your number, man>>>LOL

So I say to Hawk who's reading the screen over my shoulder, “So whattya think, man?”

“Hmm...lotsa LOLs. But he ain't laughin' out loud. Nope...lotta edge. Probably some major patriarchal figure anger...just below the surface, not that you'd know anything about that. Also looks like he's got some genes from your side of the pool...poor kid, including a marked propensity toward sarcasm and cynicism,” Hawk says.

“Kid coulda done worse,” I say.

“Yea...Ted Kaczynski a-k-a Unabomber.”

“Was thinkin' more like Al Camus and the rest of the nihilist Sunshine Boys,” I say

“So...he's going to make you sweat a little...maybe a little payback for what he perceives was your bad Karma with mama. Passive aggressive childish hacker power-play shit. But...he'll call. He's going to make you *earn* his trust. Again...some serious man-splainin to do. Probably make you eat some major uh...*unmentionable indigestibles* in the process.”

“So now what?” I say.

“Sit back...relax, and wait. Remember? Like you always say, let the game come to you. Hey man, you're about to connect with your one and only son...for the first time. So how do ya *feel* 'bout that, Koz?” Hawk says thrusting an imaginary microphone in my face, like some inane post-game Bimbo interviewer.

“Apprehensive...ambivalent uh...Bambi,” I say with the proper measure of masculine understatement. Mr Cool-breeze.

“How about terrified?” a grinning Hawk says again with the phoney microphone bit.

“There's that. More like uh...*bleep-bleep* terrified,” I say so as not to offend Bambi Bimbo and remain PG rated for TV.

But somehow...at some inchoate level, don't ask me how or why, but it actually feels good to say, *your father*...hmm. Dad, daddy-oh, pops and in Ruskie, *batya*, and in Italian...*babbino*. *Yikes!*

- Chapter 21 (64) -

By noon the next day still no reply from *mak_too*. Like the kid said...what's the rush, huh *Pops*?

Hawk meanders into my space, "Any reply from J-R?"

"Nope. Nada. Zip. Hawk, we probably should talk about our meeting this afternoon with the NTSB...define some parameters and lay out some rules of engagement with *Miz* Takahashi before giving her our statements. I think we should hold back any of the results of our investigation, the video...the audio, the translation by Dr Tehrani, etcetera until we see just how open she is to an alternative causation," I say.

"Yea...let's feel her out. Uh...*your* specialty. Probably shouldn't connect the deaths of Jenifer Rogers or the Tehrani's to the explosion until we're fairly certain that she's willing to dig deep into this thing...that she's not some career bureaucrat just going through the motions," Hawk says.

"Agreed. Otherwise, she might think *both of us* are wacko nut-job conspiracy theorists. And we don't give her what we've got until she levels with us about what she's got on her end. I had the impression talking with her on the phone that somethin's buggin' her, man...maybe the scent of a cover-up...dunno. We'll know more after we eyeball her and hear what she's got."

Hawk says, "A uh...*squid pro quo*, man."

"Sorry?" I say

"Where ya *squeeze* the uh...quid it outta 'em."

"A tat for tit...if you will?" I say.

"*Zackly...mon petit sexist porcin*. By now, she must have interviewed all the employees and management of the pipeline company uh...Cascadia Pipeline which as you may recall is a subsid of NPI?" Hawk says.

Yeap. *Gee*...just another coincidence?" I say.

"Might be helpful to have access to the *who* and their version of the *what* happened...just in case somewhere along the way the inconvenient politics of it, gets it buried in the bowels of the B-S bureaucracy," Hawk says.

"If there is in fact a cover-up conspiracy...seems to me that with the potential of a lotta of the staff and management knowing about it...like the more difficult, order of magnitude, it is to keep the lid on it. Like Watergate...not the crime but the cover-up," I say.

Hawk says, "Dig it...the more, the less *merrier* it gets...just gotta flip one."

"Uh...that would be *your* specialty," I say

“Then work your way up the food chain,” Hawk says with his impish grin relishing the prospect of the process. His mere menacing physical presence a persuader *par excellence*.

At exactly 4 PM, the doorbell chimes. I open the door for my first but by no means last lascivious look at Ms Tara Takahashi. I am not disappointed. She's mid-forties, but has the agelessness of Japanese women, the perfect porcelain skin. She obviously is a *melange* of some other non-Asian gene pool. Uncharacteristically tall, in her black 2 inch heels almost 5'8”, but slender revealing small but full breasts gently protruding through a pricey white silk blouse, accented with a simple strand of white pearls, with the petite bone structure of an Asian woman. But it is her eyes that stir me, actually give me a chill. Just a hint of almond shaped eyes, but a brilliant sapphire, with thick long black lashes. Awakening *Monsieur* Wilson who has been in hibernation, *Vol-Cel*...voluntary celibacy for several years now.

Her nose is petite slightly upturned with a suggestion of maybe Western European length and straightness high above her generous wide mouth and sensual lips. Her makeup is understated and expertly applied. The long straight jet black hair gathers to form a thick shining shawl across her slender shoulders. She's in an elegant 'real' black suit, maybe DKNY, with slacks perfectly tailored, nicely, but tastefully accentuating her narrow hips. Very professional...and very distracting. *Pure class*.

I have a flashback of the male stirrings of my first meeting of Marla Dyson. *Jezus*, what is it with me and these Alpha *Shiksa* Chicks?

“Mr Kozlov, uh...*Mr Kozlov*?” she says waving her hand side to side to get my attention, interrupting my gaping-mouthed reverie.

“Uh...yes?” I cleverly quip.

“I'm Chief Investigator Tara Takahashi...from the NTSB. We had a 4 PM appointment?” she says perfunctorily holding up her photo ID credentials.

“Yes?” I say, by now she must be duly impressed with my clever riposte.

“This is my associate...Investigator Terrence Howard,” she says obviously feigning indifference at my *bons mots*.

Terrence Howard is a thirty-ish well-built Black man about 6'4”, with the body of an ex-jock, thick broad shoulders with a waist line maybe 20 pounds past his playing prime. His head is cleanly shaven, with a closely cropped meticulously-maintained goatee. He's wearing aviator glasses with a slight yellow tint, like shooting glasses. And a holstered semi-automatic side arm, looks like a standard government issue. *Say what?*

He's dressed more casually, wearing a zipped up windbreaker with N-T-S-B in large white block letters emblazoned across the front and blue denim jeans with ankle high combat-style boots, shined to military perfection. Hanging from his shoulder is a very large black carrying case, presumably for

a laptop and recording equipment for the interview.

He's got a disarming smile, a perfect row of pearls and affable ironic eyes, that same easy-going, but uncontrived self-confidence that many good college ex-jocks possess. Reminds me of my first encounter with Charles Washington at Berkeley. I get a momentary chill, but I fight it off. RIP Brother C-Wash.

"Uh...Mr Kozlov...may we come in?" Tara Takahashi says smiling for the first time. It's a beauty, fully engaging not just the mouth with perfect teeth, but also her lovely Quasi-Asian eyes. Authentic.

My momentary trance broken, I say, "I'm so sorry...sure, please come in," offering my right hand to her, which she demurely reciprocates, then to Terrence, who offers a firm, but not gratuitously so, very large powerful hand.

I open the door wide, "Let's go into my office...we can conduct our business downstairs where my associate Hawk Shapiro is waiting," I say leading them down the stairs to our production and post-production facility office on a totally dedicated floor below the main floor.

As we're going down the stairs, "Is Kibbles and Bits okay?" Tara Takahashi says with a barely perceptible playful giggle.

"Sorry?" I say

"For Mr Shapiro," she says.

"Ah...yea sure...of course. Rewarding good behavior with positive reinforcement...doggie treats, excellent strategy for enlisting his cooperation. He's an omnivore, but with strong carnivore tendencies," I say.

"Meaning he'd probably eat anything...and anyone. Hopin' he's not partial to dark meat. It's a Black thing...with dogs, Mr Kozlov." Terrence says with a wry grin.

"Yea...I get it, like Selma in '65. And by the way you can drop the formality...please call me Mick. Ad Hoc Shapiro goes by Hawk, okay?" I say.

"Where appropriate, uh...Mr Kozlov," she says seamlessly back in professional mode.

When we reach my office, Hawk is standing.

I make the introductions with Hawk offering his huge meaty hand. Tara Takahashi is obviously taken aback by his appearance leaving his empty hand dangling in mid-air, which Terrence Howard quickly grasps, shaking it effusively with a great toothy smile, slowly eying Hawk admiringly up and down, and up again.

"Ms Takahashi...I thought Mick here had sufficiently prepared you for the first sighting of *moi*." Hawk says grinning. By now, he's grown accustomed to the jaw-dropping first response on meeting him.

"Mere words fail," I say.

"I uh...I'm so very sorry Mr Shapiro. Well I must admit...Mr Shapiro is everything as advertised...and more." she says with that same lovely

authentic laugh, enthusiastically thrusting our her hand out which Hawk takes into his huge paw, raising it to his nose and slowly sniffing the back of her hand, then releasing it with a “woof-woof...” nodding his approval at me. Then he leans over to my left ear, my best ear after the explosion, so only I can hear, “Man...what a beauty. *Almost* makes me want to switch sides...by the way she ain't wearing no wedding band, *mon ami*.”

“Hey man, don't be such a *yenta*, I'm tryin'...desperately to stay on mission here, *mon ami*,” I say *sotto voce*.

“Just sayin'. By the way, the correct kosher term of art for matchmaker, is *shadchan*.” he finishes in a whisper with fraternal pat on my shoulder.

“Uh...allow me to translate. You're apparently *Oh-kay*, Ms Takahashi...in every respect. But I'd keep those Kibbles in close proximity...just in case you might ask some overly uh...probing penetrating questions,” I say.

The smile slowly dissolves until she realizes that I just being *Kozmickly* ironic, an acquired taste, like *Lutefisk*.

We all take a seat at the large conference table.

“Anyone care for something to drink...coffee...tea?” I graciously offer.

Everybody's fine for now.

“Okay if I call ya Terrence, Terrence? Just a guess, you play college football somewhere?” I say.

“Sure, Terrence is fine. Yea...UCLA, 'bout 13 years ago,” he says smiling.

“Lucky guess...offensive lineman?” I say.

“*Very*. And you? Looks like you coulda played,” he says smiling. Ah...the ex-jocks bonding ritual, like two ex-marines of any age, *Semper Fi*.

“Yea...UCB '64, B-ball...until my career was abruptly abbreviated by uh...*differences in political ideology*. And how about you, *Ms Takahashi*?” I say being deliberately unfamiliar showing proper professional deference.

“Nope...never played football. Couldn't get the uh...scrotum scratchin' and spittin' down,” she says with a wickedly wry smile, “so I played volleyball...a setter at UBC, University of British Columbia Vancouver.”

“And you studied?” Hawk says.

“Majored in Engineering...with a minor in Environmental Studies. Picked up a J-D along the way at U-Dub Law,” she says with casual modesty.

“So you're a Cannuck?” I say as it turns out prudently deciding to pass on the *eh* punctuation.

“Half...with dual citizenship, my mother's a Yank. Yeap born and raised in BC. My father's a professor at UBC...David Takahashi. And thanks for not appending the tired Yank cliché *eh*,” she says sighing with a bit of an edge.

“Dr David Takahashi...the renown environmental activist?” Hawk says.

“One and the same. Because I have knowledge and experience with Canadian law, I was assigned this case...as it involves some *possible* causation issues with a Canadian citizen and potential bi-lateral country sovereignty and jurisdictional issues of governing laws. Just to remind you...the *alleged* terrorist, Hassan Tehrani was a citizen of Canada, and a resident of Vancouver. We are coordinating our investigation with the FBI. A joint task force investigation with the RCMP...the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.” she says.

“Okay...so tell us what you want from us,” I say.

“As discussed on the phone...we want both of your very detailed statements about what you both observed...or discovered prior to, during and subsequent to, the explosion of the pipeline...recorded, and under oath. We would also like you to turn over *any* evidence, in any form, no matter how insignificant it may appear, including statements, written or recorded, including any notes of discussions from any parties even tangentially involved in your uh...*investigation*,” she says taking out a very thick folder from a zippered side panel of the large black computer case.

Terrence is now placing a very high-end Tascam DR-680MKII professional 8 input digital field recorder, starting to set up the two lavalier microphones to plug into the XLR balanced inputs. Some serious audio gear.

Damn...she's good. She'd probably give AK-47, Jason Mahoney's brilliant and beautiful Asian Arm-piece Alexandra Kwan, a run for the smartest 'guy' in the room.

“What no urine or blood sample? So before moving forward, how about *telling our lucky contestant* here what he gets in return? I say.

“The undying appreciation from the American people for your patriotic cooperation, and civic...” she says interrupted by Hawk.

“Terrence,” Hawk says making eye contact with me, “you just might want to hold off setting up that D-R.”

“Tara...” I start out, “ please, you can call me *Ms Takahashi*,” she says smiling coolly. All business, obviously piqued at our apparent reluctance to proceed with the statements.

“As you wish. What I am about to tell you and Mr Howard here, has to be completely off the record, agreed *Ms Takahashi*? Or this interview is hereby terminated.”

With her face expressing ambivalence, after several seconds she reluctantly says “Okay...Agreed...for now.”

I look at Terrence Howard, “Agreed,” he says.

“Okay. Suppose I were to tell you, and I most emphatically am not admitting that it is the case...that we *may* be able to provide some *quasi-evidentiary* media that *eventually* if properly and diligently pursued might prove exculpatory as to the guilt of the primary suspect in this case, the late Hassan Tehrani? Which would expose this whole Islamic terrorist causation narrative currently...and vigorously being promulgated by the FBI et al...as a uh...steaming pile of equine excrement.” I say.

“Why do *you* think...the government would be *sooo* eager to advance this...terrorist narrative...even in the face of contravening evidence,” she says.

“Excellent question...here's what we think. Since 9-11, the so-called terrorist narrative suits the government's purposes to maintain an irrationally fearful climate of Islamic terrorist paranoia. By doing so...it can justify to the American people, why they should be willing, voluntarily to surrender their, up to now, constitutionally protected privacy rights, based on some overblown BS straw-man argument in the name of the so-called *war* on terror, a tactic...essentially a symptom. Sorta like declaring a war on alcohol addiction by Prohibition. Confusing the symptom with the underlying cause. Forcing the problem underground...the Mafia's speakeasy's, moonshine and folks blinded from bathtub gin. So just how'd that workout?” I say.

“Are you saying there's a massive conspiracy of silence? That the government may not want the truth to come to light on this and other alleged incidents of Islamic terrorism, just to perpetuate the national paranoia to serve their clandestine surveillance agenda? *Oh pleeeeee!*” says Tara Takahashi patronizingly.

“Okay,” Hawk says, “then explain this. Having worked in upper management for Microsoft for many years, I can tell ya that the I-T community is surprisingly small, confiding...and *intimate*,” he says with a Hawkish smirk. “I have *personal* knowledge, that NSA approached the VPs of MS to provide a backdoor exclusively for NSA, for direct access to the MS Server hardware...to monitor all the activity, including email servers...on the MS operating system servers that are running on 90 percent of the internet. I never heard that MS definitively declined,” Hawk says.

“Doesn't prove they complied with the request,” Tara Takahashi says.

“And it doesn't mean they didn't. But it does demonstrate intent,” I say.

Hawk continues, “We have it from a reliable insider source that William Binney, a former highly-placed intelligence official with the National Security Agency, recently resigned this October, after 30 years of faithful service...turned whistle-blower in protest of *the deliberate violation of the U.S. Constitution*.

Immediately after 9-11, with the passage by Congress of the so-called Patriot Act, NSA under a program, code name Stellar Wind, began

pervasive interception of significant amounts of communications, email, internet traffic etcetera, including metadata and actual content of phone conversations by *any and all means necessary*...including domestic communications of American citizens without probable cause or valid court order.

Binney's reasons for his resignation in opposition to the Bush Administration's draconian surveillance measures, are well-documented. Clearly, in retrospect...9-11 possibly could have been prevented had the CIA and NSA not had their *collective helmets on backwards*. Bureaucratic territorialism...or worse. They not only fumbled the ball...they kicked it into their own end zone. An easy *gimmie* TD for the bad guys. Beat by a bunch of rag-tag uh...*rughead* third string walk-ons," He says not without Hawkish edge.

"So now...to compensate, they've overreacted and illegally overreached so they won't get caught with egg, more like a Denver omelet, on their mug...again. Bureaucratic C-Y-A...in part to justify and otherwise protect their exorbitant budgetary funding," I say.

"And that doesn't include the billions of bucks of off-budget dark money...for Black ops etcetera," Hawk adds.

"Don't *even* get me started on the new Surveillance State, of the now, Military Intelligence Corporate Complex...formerly known as the Military Industrial Complex by president Eisenhower. If you're truly interested...it's a matter of public record *if* you're willing to dig deep enough," I say.

"So help me out here. *If*...and it's a very big *if* at this point...that what you say is true about your evidence, why would you even be willing to deliver such dispository evidence to us...a government agency?" she says.

"I got this one Mick," Hawk says. "An ongoing *very* independent investigation being conducted by us, has quite unexpectedly turned up facts that potentially connects the murders, ergo the perpetrators...of several people...including some people very dear to Mr Kozlov here many years ago, to the same players behind this pipeline explosion coverup. Mick and I, by fraternal extension, still got some *very personal unfinished bidness with those peeps*. *Our* business...*not* yours....*not* law enforcement and certainly *not* the government."

"*Tell it* Hawk!" I say, fist-bumping him deliberately missing his fist. Just a little levity to cut the growing tension, guess you had to be there.

"So it would be a trade-off. Data symbiosis...where we both win. But we would hope that the NTSB would indeed reveal the truth to the American people...whatever that may turnout to be," Hawk says.

"There are *extremely* powerful forces at play here...that could quite possibly attempt to thwart exposing the truth...by *any* means necessary," I say.

"Like?" Tara says with no small whiff of condescension.

“Not just limited to political intrigue. Sinister motives and resources, the magnitude of which you can't begin to quantify...or even imagine. The wrath of which I've *seen* and...*felt* first hand,” I say.

“We believe if we can fill-in a few crucial pieces of missing information that your investigation may have uncovered...like the identity of employees and manager's of Cascadia Pipeline...gain access to your statements so that we can follow-up on them. *Un*-constrained by uh...conventional boundaries and the legal orthodoxies of a government investigation,” says the Hawkster smiling at *moi*.

“By that you mean...*extra*-legal methods, like torture?” she says with alarm.

“*Not* your problem...*Mizzy*,” Hawk says smiling amiably “Just uh...*vigorously* shakin' the conspiracy tree...to see what...and *who* falls out. In the process maybe we flip one or more of 'em, then *aggressively* follow it up the food chain. Eventually it just may lead to identifying those involved in the massive cover-up conspiracy of the explosion...as the same perps who committed the murders...years ago. And in no *small by the way*...the murderer of the only known eye-witness to the explosion, Jenifer Rogers a beautiful young woman in the prime of her life...and her unborn child. She was the driver of the vehicle that fled the scene that horrific day,” Hawk says still feeling the sting of some measure of responsibility for the death of Jenifer.

“And the brutal assassination of Dr and Mrs Amir Tehrani, the parents of Hassan Tehrani,” I add.

“Are you alleging that the death of this Jenifer Rogers...and the Tehrani's is linked to a cover-up of the pipeline explosion. Murder perpetrated to silence them...and in the Tehrani's case...not a racially motivated hate crime!?” she says in a tone filled with incredulity.

“I can see you're *very* adept at reading between the lines...*Ms* Takahashi,” I say softening my sarcasm with a smile.

“*My God!* My father was a very close personal friend with the Doctor also a prof at UBC...and his lovely wife. He was devastated by their senseless murder. Honestly? Yea, that might make a *helluva* lot more sense than a hate crime...not a *Nucky* kinda thing, especially in very-left-leaning ethnically tolerant Vancouver anyway,” Tara says.

“And one shouldn't have to be reminded that the attack was on the *American* Homeland...so why such apparently US nationalistic outrage?” I say

“Yea...and way too professional. An execution...and *sooo* on the nose obvious with the convenient hate graffiti. Frankly, it has been bothering *me*,” she says with Terrence Howard just whistling out loud.

“Great minds work...” I start to say.

“*Exactly* what is it that you want in exchange for your so-called evidence?” she says impatiently.

“Still off the record here...we want full, complete and continued on-line access to the *all* the results of your investigation...thus far and in the future, to all the files including the FBI and the RCMP that you possess,” I say.

“*Preposterous! Never* happen...forget it! And even if we, Terrence and I wanted to open our files to you...if the boss ever found out...*fired* in a New York second.”

“What you mean, we...*paleface*?” Terrence says smiling.

“Terry...you *can't* possibly be serious?” she says.

“Hey...with due deference to ya Tara. Doncha think it's 'bout time we leveled with Mick and Hawk here about our own reservations with this terrorist B-S? We're all after the same thing here...the truth, right?”

“The whole truth and nothing but. But...only *if* we can get there legally...to make a conviction stick,” Tara says.

“You're the lawyer, but if just half of what they say is true...these uh...sorry to have resort to ethnic stereotypes but *these paleface mutha-fuckin' suits need to go down. Period!*” he says with a startling vehemence, dripping with displaced anger from presumably past racial injustices by *da man*. “Man...all the death and destruction...innocent folks, we *cannot* allow it to stand! You're the lead investigator...so it's your call. But Tara, if I may...I'd say to Mick and Hawk here...off the record. Show us what you got...literally and figuratively. And if it's what they say it is, then we talk. If not...we walk. Sound righteous, gentlemen?” Terrence says turning to us.

“Works for me. Hawk? I say.

“Deal.” Hawk says.

“Tara?” Terrence says.

“Okay...I guess. Show us the *evidence*...” she says with air quotes, “*first*...then we'll see. That's the most I can promise you. But it's got to be able to withstand the highest appellate legal scrutiny...or they'll end up walkin'. I promise you they'll get the best legal team...and so-called justice, that money can buy,” she says, realizing that any conviction, with the defendants big money and unlimited legal resource, would be challenged probably all the way to the Supremes. One tough lady...seeing the whole chessboard, reserving all of her options.

“Okay...sounds like we can move forward,” I say.

“Gentlemen...meet Righteous *Sista* Tara Naomi Takahashi. You will soon discova why she be nicknamed...T-N-T,” Terrence says slipping seamlessly in and out of street Black Ebonics, as he fist-bumps her with a killer smile.

“Yea...yea...got a feeling I'm *really* going to regret this...a real potential for a C-E-E.” she says smiling sheepishly.

“Sorry?” I say”

“Bureaucracy-speak for *Career Ending Event*,” she says.

“Long term for you...that the bad news...or perhaps the good? And the *most* I can promise *you*...both, is that we'll do our best to give you plausible deniability and that we'll *never* reveal our source,” I say.

“Who was it that said...*an oral contract ain't worth the paper it's written on?*” she asks rhetorically.

“Hey...it's about five. Looks like were going to pull an all-nighter here for us to show you what we've got...and vice versa. I suggest we take a little break...call out for some Chinese?” I say.

Terry nods his approval. Tara just shrugs. Still...Ms Maybe.

“Hawk, why don't you take care of ordering the dinner while we adjourn to the Kozmick Cabaret and Lounge, uh...the living room upstairs. *It is Happy Hour,*” I say.

“Tis indeed,” Terrence says grinning wide.

“Happy Hour specialty of the house...two-for-one Burnt Bombay Martinis. Shall we?” I say.

“Lead the way *kemo sabe,*” Terry says.

“Ms Takahashi...vodka or gin?” I say.

Sighing, with grim resignation, “Okay. *Jezus,* uh...gin. Got any olives?”

“*Bien sur...madame.* A Martini without an olive is like a banana split...without the banana,” I say.

“*Merci*...I think,” she says.

“Terrence, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful uh...*friendship,*” says Hawk, smiling big-time.

“Tis indeed...Hawk, *ma man,*” Terrence says with a fist-bump, matching Hawk's big grin.

As Tara, Terry and I adjourn to the living room upstairs for cocktails, Hawk reaches under the table, and hits the *stop* button on the digital recorder, then gets on the phone and orders the whole left half of the Chinese Take-out menu. Looks like *T-How,* Hawk's newest candidate for Goy Boy Toy...could eat.

- Chapter 22 (65) -

Half way into the second round of MAK's Magic Martini's, Ms Takahashi's starting to loosen up, says, "So...since we're still off the record here uh...Mick, I guess you can call me Tara," she says facetiously batting her eyes giving me a very nice warm smile reminiscent of another heart-breaker beauty, Annie Trudeau.

Hmm. An encouraging, if momentary thawing of the icy veneer of professionalism.

After the delivery of a full mini-van of Chinese food, we adjourn to the conference table downstairs...each of carrying several bags of white fold-top cardboard containers...with plates, flatware, chopsticks...and Martinis. A working dinner. *Ever wonder how the Pre-Fold-top Ming Dynasty Chinese...did take-out?*

When we arrive downstairs, Hawk's already got a monitor and VCR cued up with the tape of the scene of the explosion from Moody Park Falls. He has also pressed the *record* button on the digital recorder set-up under the conference table, with three hidden mic's in different locations of the room for good coverage.

We take our seats around the table with food and drink.

"Should probably have our dinner before viewing the video clip...otherwise, I gotta strong suspicion, it just might uh...*suppress* your appetite," I say.

As we're eating, I give them background and our theory as to why we believe it was not an act of terrorism but rather an act of heroism by the young Hassan Tehrani in an attempt to save the two young boys, who died from horrific burns at ground zero.

I also update them on our contacts with Jenifer Rogers the only eyewitness, and the Tehrani's, both now deceased.

"At this point in time, we're not certain what the proximate cause of the explosion was, but we believe the most plausible explanation, for now at least, is from some internal failure of the pipeline system and gross negligence of the operators of the pipeline in responding to it. With *no* extreme, uh...efficient intervening external causes," I say.

"Except for *extreme stupidity* and incompetence," Hawk says.

"We have the original recording of Hassan's Tehrani's last words spoken to me, available for independent translation with the chain of custody preserved. And the written transcript of Dr Tehrani's translation from Persian of his son's dying declaration," Hawk says.

“Hawk and I are convinced that Hassan Tehrani had no causal part in this tragedy...in which he himself, and ultimately, his lover, pregnant with his child, and later, his parents also were victims,” I say.

Hawk and I give them an oral summary accompanied by a detailed written narrative with a time-line of our investigation, including a PowerPoint presentation, everything to be on a DVD disk, if we get a commitment for reciprocity of info. After dinner and drinks are done, we clear the table and get down to some serious business.

“Warning...viewer discretion is advised. What you're about to see is frankly, horrific. It's only a few minutes long...but an eternity to watch. You will see the immediate aftermath of the explosion...just after we arrived on the scene with Hawk on camera. You will hear Hassan Tehrani last words...before he died a terrible death from multiple third degree burns. This footage has never been viewed before by anyone other than Hawk and I...no one, now after the murder of the Tehrani's, is even aware of its existence. Hit the play Hawk,” I say as I turn down the house lights.

As the video is playing Hawk and I are studying the reaction of both Tara and Terrence with the monitor screen casting an eerie flickering surrealistic glow on their faces.

On the video, Hawk zooms in for a close-up of Hassan, his desperate cries of pain and anguish pleading for help, his response in Persian to my question of what happened, then the secondary explosion with my double back lay-out dive onto the mid-stream boulder. Tara's face, filled with horror, places her hand to her mouth, and shrieks, “*my God!*” Tears are streaming down her face. Terrence, sitting impassively, is just shaking his head from side to side. I suspect that violence is no stranger in *T-How's* life, maybe from the military, maybe from inner-city mean streets, killing fields, of young Black men, which might account for his muted reaction.

It's over in less than two minutes. I turn up the lights.

Tara says, “Is there a bathroom nearby?” she says obviously shaken from the experience. I point down the hall, “Second door on the left...take as much time as you need,” I say.

She bolts for the bathroom. After Tara has left the room, Terrence says, “*Bad Mo Jo*, man...I thought I seen some pretty *bad shit* in '91...the Gulf War, but...” he says stopping to compose himself. We sit in silence for well over a minute.

“*Fuckin'* homicide. The very least involuntary...of the kids and all the other vics, including Hassan Tehrani. On Rogers and the Tehrani's...murder *one*, man...plain and simple,” he says. Turns out that the Big Fella has also studied some night-school law...which he modestly downplays.

“Yea. Sorry you and Tara had to see this,” I say.

Finally, he says, “Hey, man I could sure use a shot of something...”

“Yea, I think we all could,” I say getting up and inviting my old pal, Johnny Walker Black to join us, placing four glass tumblers on the table.

“Up or over, Terrence?” I say with bottle poised in my hand.

“Up...thanks, man,” he says slamming it down in one gulp pointing to his empty glass again. I pour another shot, he commences sipping it.

Hawk and I likewise take the Johnny neat, both of us taking a generous pull.

“Think Tara's okay...or should we check on her?” I say to Terrence.

“Hey, man not to worry...she *is one tough little broad*. Why ya think I call her T-N-T...a *very* powerful explosive in a *tiny* package. Been working together for over three years now. One of the brightest...most principled and tenacious peeps I ever met. *Period*. If this deal is dirty...and it's startin' to look that way, trust me. If you the bad guys, you *do not* want her linin' up on the other side of da ball. She ain't got *no* quit in her, man.

The good news and the bad. Because of that she ain't got no life...*nada*. She married to the company store. Guess what I'm sayin' man is I can see the way she lookin' at ya when you ain't lookin', Mick. First time I've seen it since we been partners...so I guess what I'm sayin' man is, the door is wide open,” Terrence says lapsing into his after-hours normal street dialect, which means he feels comfortable with us, with a beautiful benevolence in his smile when talking about his partner. With his smarts...he could be C-Wash's kid...if...

After about five minutes, Tara returns to the table seemingly having regained her composure. She's fixed her eye make-up, the black tracks down her cheeks from tear laden mascara are gone. *Look-ing Good. Damn Good.*

“Care for a drink?” I say.

“Thought you'd *never* ask, Big Boy. *Gimme a whiskey...and don't be stingy, baby...straight up.*” doing a dead on Garbo from the 1930 classic Anna Christie. I graciously comply pouring her a double shot plus a little extra of social lubricant. She takes a generous pull.

“So okay. Your reactions, comments on the “evidence,” I say with air quotes looking directly at Tara “and whether...or not you are willing to entertain our theory that this terrible tragedy was *not* the result of a terrorist attack? And...if not...then *why* not,” I say with a bit of an edge getting more than a little exasperated with all this cat and mouse exercise...including with my *son*.

“You present a very uh...*compelling* argument against the terrorist narrative, Mick. I would need some more time to study your detailed written narrative, etcetera, but on its face I would say we *may* have sufficient probable cause to further investigate the elimination of terrorism as the proximate cause,” she says. *Sigh*. Lawyers. Why use 5 words...when you can use 10? It's like they get paid by the friggin' word. If she wasn't so damn bright and beautiful...

“Terrence. Your thoughts?” Hawk says.

“*You* definitely got my attention...time to talk,” he says smiling.

“Okay. So now it's time for you to reciprocate...show and tell, the quid pro quo,” I say

“Before we proceed, I want to most emphatically confirm that we are still off the record?” Tara says. I glance at Hawk making eye contact, then back to Tara and wordlessly nod affirmatively, which of course will not be recorded.

“We have taken recorded statements from about a dozen employees and managers, from lowly staff and admin, to State and Regional Managers of Cascadia Pipeline, which is a subsidiary of National Petroleum Inc., the parent corporation out of Houston Texas,” she says.

“Have you interviewed Howard Roland VP of Operations, at NPI corporate?” I say.

“Not yet. He's in Houston, so the logistics make it challenging. We feel that Mr Roland is attempting to uh...*delay* giving his statement. According to him...*he's a very busy man*. He is represented by counsel...very expensive counsel specializing in corporate criminal defense, and refuses to give a statement without having counsel present.

“Not surprised...*corporate criminal*, a tautology. Gee...wonder why he thinks he needs a *criminal* lawyer? So...when do you anticipate interviewing Roland?” I say.

“We are currently in uh...*negotiations* with NPI,” she says sheepishly.

“Would *not* be surprised if you have to file a lawsuit...in order to depose the weasel. When you do interview him, ask him about Ernest Porter, and SHOP's, a uh...private corporate 'security'” I say with air quotes ” company that is on constant retainer with NPI. In any case I'd record the whole *damn* interview, using a Certified Legal Video Specialist...he's a slippery M-F. Like to see the expression on his face at the mere mention of ol' Ernie, which a court reporter transcript, could not provide,” I say.

“Although legally it cannot be used to infer intent to evade investigation, from experience as an investigator at a visceral level at least, it naturally raises suspicion over the possibility of an intent to withhold or deceive. Each of the following subjects I will list later, are also invoking the right to the presence of counsel, retained by and of course paid for by NPI,” she says.

“I've done hundreds of these kinds of interviews. From body language, failure to make contact and other tell-tale evasive signs, my gut says that they're all scared *shitless*...probably with good reason,” says Terrence.

“After our extensive recorded interviews, due to some material inconsistencies between the interviewees versions, and again some visceral indications of intention to deceive, perhaps for reasons as simple as a fear of

culpability, our interest, at this point in time is primarily focused on the following employees and managers of Cascadia Pipeline. They were all integrally and personally involved in the events leading up, during and after the event,” she says

“Are you willing to provide us access to those recorded interviews and or the transcripts?” I ask.

“Mick, let's not get ahead of ourselves here. I'll have to hold that decision in abeyance until I have had a chance to very carefully scrutinize and substantiate the evidentiary material you have presented,” she says.

“Come on, Tara...this is...” Hawk starts to say but I wave him off. I do not want to jeopardize her cooperation thus far by flying off the handle. Plenty of time for that. We'll want to extract as much info as we can in this meeting in case she declines to provide access. We'll deal with the issue of access to files later...maybe through an alternative source like Hawk's considerable hacking skills.

“Please proceed Tara,” I say. Mr Reasonable.

“Thank you Mick. Okay, first, Tom Hyatt, a recent employee for only about a month, who had just completed his 30 days of O-J-T. He was on duty at the Fernwood monitoring station at the time of the disaster. Second, a Frank Gutowski who worked the shift just prior to the incident. And third, a George Gunderson, Supervisor and System Administrator for the Cascadia Pipeline, Washington State.

Tara Takahashi outlines her concerns with each specific interviewee in detail, along with the results of some intriguing forensic evidence. The metallurgy, the scrupulous examination of the metal fragments of the location of the rupture indicate the failure of the wall of the pipe was initially *internally* induced, which would challenge the proposition that the pipeline initially ruptured from an external charge of explosive material. There is also the matter of the computer network conveniently being down, and the printer out of paper, so *none* of the telemetry and anomalous events leading up to, and during the disaster were logged for later examination. Intentional or just incompetence? Hmm...*go figure*. But without that data...it's very difficult to definitively prove an internal system failure. Difficult, but not impossible. Our recording of the meeting will memorialize all of this so we don't have to take detailed notes.

“It's getting very late. I think we've gone about as far as we can for tonight,” she says.

“Or, as far as *you're* willing to go. *When* can we get online access to those files, etcetera?” Hawk says. Mr Nuance.

“Terrence and I will discuss the matter over the next few days. We'll have your answer when we return to take your recorded statements...in no later than a week,” she says presuming it's a done deal.

“That's fine. Give us a call before, let us know your decision about the access...might save you a trip, for professional reasons anyway,” I say.

“Are you saying that you will *refuse* to give us a recorded statement unless we provide you with access to our files?” she says with a harsh edge.

“Like I said...very adept at reading subtext. But to answer your question with *your* level of directness...the answer is...*let's not get ahead ourselves*,” I say which draws a barely suppressed smile from Terrence Howard.

Tara's says, her tone now querulous, “We had a deal...now you're *re-nigin'*...” which causes a raised eyebrow from Terrence Howard. “Versus, uh...what...*nigin'?*” he says with a sardonic smile giving her a fist-bump.

“Uh sorry Terrence...poor choice of words...you're stonewalling us?” she says smiling wanly at Terrence, then glaring at me.

“You're right about one thing...it is quite late...in many respects *too late*. *Too late* for at least three innocent people who have been murdered, so far...not including an unborn fetus. During the course of this investigation, there's been a murderer...or murderers on the loose out there. They are *very good* at what they do...real pros. We also think that we may be the target for further attempts to keep a lid on this thing. Sorry, but we do not share your sense of urgency...rather the lack thereof. Frankly, we do not have the luxury, Tara, of waiting around for you to plumb the depths of your innermost professional *ethical legal* conscience. People's lives...*real people...real lives*, not some bureaucratic abstraction, are at stake,” I say

“I'm well aware of what the stakes here...but...” she starts to say.

“Okay...let me be very direct...*and very clear*. I suggest you sleep on this, and give us your answer in twenty-four hours, or the deal is off the table and we move forward without providing you our statements...or any of our evidence. In any case, I want to thank you for coming today...and hearing us out. On a professional note, I think both of you are a credit to your profession and the NTSB. They're lucky to have both of you...as I know you could be making better money in the private sector...*much* better,” I say

“*Gee* thanks...” she says condescendingly.

“Okay Tara...I know you're disappointed...I get it. But on a personal note, we would hope that there will be no personal animus between us, however this thing shakes out.

Standing up, throwing the strap of the computer case over his shoulder, Terrence Howard says, “Thanks Mick, and you too Hawk. Tara and I will talk it over and get back to you. You've been square with us. In the meantime watch your back, man...if half of what you say is true, these are *very bad dudes* we're dealing with here. I'm certified with this side arm...off the record and off the time-clock, let me know if you need some backup. Here's my card with my personal cell phone number on the back. We should be in town for the next week or so,” he says handing the card to Hawk then

exchanging a warm handshake with both of us...lingering in Hawk's hand for just instant.

"Thanks for that, man...we'll definitely be in uh...touch. Right Hawk?" I say.

"Indeed," the Hawkster says with a grin.

"Okay...I think we're done here," Tara says, standing up, warmly offering her hand which Hawk accepts uh...graciously, for him.

"*Bonne nuit, a plus tard, Tara?*" I say giving her hand a little squeeze, which brings a beautiful full-bodied smile to her lovey *visage*.

"*Oui, a plus tard. Bonne nuit, Mick...*" she whispers giving my hand a firm squeeze before releasing it. *Yes, see you later. Good night indeed T-N-T, and sweet dream a vous.*

It's about 11:30 PM by the time they leave.

"Your thoughts?" I say to Hawk.

"Frankly, I don't see her going for the deal. Not so much out of fear, but more so out of professional ethic...which you gotta respect. Says a lot about her character. As an attorney, she *is* an officer of the court. But, I don't believe that Terrence feels the same...T-B-D. In any case, I think we should start investigating...connecting with the three people...the names Tara gave us, like yesterday. See if we can get ahead of the curve. Up to now we've been just reacting...playin' defense. Let's go on offense and turn up some serious heat, then let the game come to us...on our terms," Hawk says.

"Like dig it. Goin' with the Greco-Roman military strategy thing, *mahn*...like let 'em chase us...til we like catch 'em kinda deal. Like that whole Trojan Horse bait and switch thingy," I say channeling the Big Lebowski.

"Kinda, uh...*Dude. Now, we can locate them with...or without NTSB's help,*" he says.

"Agreed. Time to start shakin' that tree, eh *mon ami*? I think I'll wait for tomorrow morning to check my email. I've had enough drama for one day," I say.

I let Oso in from the back deck where he's got a little, make that *grandisimo*, authentic to scale sheep herder cabin with windows like something from Spanish Basque country, his origin, that I custom built for him. He jumps up on his hind legs putting his massive paws on my shoulders, his head almost even with mine, his tail wagging furiously, licking my mug with his great pink sandpaper tongue.

"Me too boy...missed ya all day. Let's head upstairs...and I'll tell ya all about my day," I say sinking my hands into the thick fur coat around his neck and massive white head, shaking it side to side.

"Woof-woof" he says which some may misinterpret as just a random bark. Ha! But we know better don't we *boy*. Of course it means '*Oh-kay*', just ask the Hawkster.

“And so how was your day, Big Dawg?” I say.

“Woof-Woof” he *says*...see what'd I tell ya.

Right around midnight, the Black Suburban slowly pulls away after the NTSB investigators have left. It's been a long day for *El Negrito*, just sitting there waiting and watching Kozlov's house, from an undetectable distance, but since he's billing by the hour...

Well now...they've spent almost 8 hours in there. Kozlov and Mr Clean, that Jap...and the Nigger. Must be on to something. Not good. Don't know how much longer I can depend on “Guts” Gutowski to keep his *fuckin'* mouth shut...he's the only direct link to me and NPI. They sweated him pretty good when the NTSB took his statement, scared the *shit* out of him. He thinks they may smell something, maybe something bad...for him.

They get to him, maybe offer him a deal, immunity from prosecution in exchange for rattin' out...testifyin' against me...and NPI. Then all the wheels come off. Big Time.

Just to be safe, time to terminate that threat vector. But it'll have to wait 'til tomorrow night, to set it up so it looks like an accident, the specialty of the house. Like I always tell those whores...I do my best work in the dark.

Tomorrow after my daily ration of ham 'n eggs, coffee and sour dough toast, I'll plug all the variables into the decision matrix...come up with a plan, then *execute*...figuratively and literally. Like *Daddy* always said, '*fore goin' huntin' for coons, the two legged kind at dawn, ain't healthy to kill, or even plan to kill, on an empty stomach.*

- Chapter 23 (66) -

Hawk and I are sitting in my office over a mug of steaming Jet Fuel and fresh, hot *obscenely* tasty Apple Fritters from *Lafeen's Donuts, Ice Cream, Espresso* on Electric Ave not far from Moody Falls Park, Ground Zero.

We're rehashing yesterday's long and relative productive day, with me slowly working up the courage to check my email, to see if there's anything from @eagle...aka Junior.

Hawk takes Terrence's card out of his shirt pocket, with his mobile phone in hand, he says, "Puttin' Terrence's phone numbers etcetera in my phone contacts, in case I lose his card." manically fully engaging both of thumbs on his Blackberry.

"Don't want lose contact with your uh...*Goy Toy*, eh *mon ami*?" I say

"Hey man, I think he's a pretty cool guy...like to get know to him. He's got a Seattle area code which makes things a little less GPS, uh...Geographical-Problematic-Situation," he says.

He flips it if over and says, "Koz...have a look at this!" he says handing it to me. On the back are four lines of block-letter handwriting:

206.659.5555 MP
T_How1966
@6691_woH_T
7

"What do you make of that?" I say.

"His phone number...*M* obviously for mobile, *P* for personal. And probably, there's a user ID...and a password," he says.

"To what?" I say.

"Move over and let me get on that computer," he says.

I quickly slide out of the way.

Hawk hungrily starts pounding on the keyboard...his fingers a blur.

He enters the URL from Terrence's email address,

Terrence.Howard@http://www.nts.gov/

from the front of the card.

He's now at the NTSB website. After few minutes of mousing around he finds buried deep in the one of the obscure pages under "About" a login link. But it's a hidden link, he finds it by viewing the source code in the browser and doing a keyword search for "log", "sign" and gets a hit, finding the *HTML* line item that has a *h_ref* link to a hidden login page <http://www.nts.gov/about/db/login.aspx>, hyperlinked to a small innocuous logo image in the header, which you could only access by knowing the specific

image...unless you're the Hawkster. He copies and pastes it into the address line of the browser and hits enter.

“Here it is...the login page. Showtime, baby. Just to be safe, I'm going to open a TOR browser so our IP can't be traced,” he says entering Terrence's user ID and password.

“*Voila*, we're in. The NTSB database server. All of Terrence's files assigned to him are displayed,” Hawk says barely able to contain his excitement. Doesn't take much to put these nerds in an *orgasmic state of pure ecstasy*...bonkers.

“All the files for his cases are listed and sortable by date, file number, name, and activity etcetera. Cascade Pipeline is right near the top. It's a hyperlink,” he says.

“So click it already...cyber-snoop,” I say, which he does.

“Man...it's all here. Everything...including mp3 files of the actual interviews, contact info, the transcripts, the forensics and investigator notes, including Tara's. Apparently their comments and notes etcetera are linked to be shared on common cases,” he says regaining his cool.

Looking at the back of the card, I say, “So whattya think the number 7 means?” I say.

“I'm thinkin' T-How's tellin' us we got no less...and maybe more than 7 days to download everything we can before he changes his password. Probably a mandatory routine automatic PW change every 14 days for security reasons...maybe 7 days or more days left before he has to change it. He's probably not sure so he gave us 7,” he says.

“Now what” I ask.

“Okay. T-How's stickin' his neck out a mile for us here, man. So we gotta be cool about how we download these files. We'll use TOR for just casual browsing so that our IP will be randomly relayed and spoofed so they can't trace our actual IP. Because TOR is so slow, we'll download the files from an unsecured Wi-Fi connection, with no authentication...at a coffee shop like a Starbucks. A different one each time, so it can't be traced *directly* back to us. But we'll want to go to another city like Seattle...maybe Redmond, home of Microsoft, just to have some fun with 'em.

The Sys Admin will be alerted if the system detects massive single session downloads...like you'd see with a hacker. So we gotta go slow...do our download sessions over several days...at different times from different IP's so as not to attract any attention of the Sys Admin...so it looks random and natural. Otherwise, the Sys Admin will shut us down in a New York minute. And lock out T-How until he figures out what the hell's going on. Maybe even alerting the Director of a possible breach...which would *not* be good for Terrence,” Hawk says.

“Ya think?” I say.

“First order of business...look at the investigator's notes,” he says.

After about five minutes of reading, he says, “Okay...you'll love this one. Tara's notes on her phone conversation with the Koz the other day arranging last night's meeting and I quote.

Made phone contact today with witness Michaelangelo Kozlov re setting up a date for a statement from he and Ad Hoc Shapiro. Mr Kozlov impressed me as being rather arrogant and potentially difficult to deal with. Thinks he's a lot funnier than he really is. After much bantering back and forth agreed to meet with both he and Mr Shapiro tomorrow at 4 PM at his residence. Note to self. Bring Kibbles and Bits doggie treats :)

“In just a few short minutes of conversation apparently she was able to grasp the uh...*true* essence of your personality, eh? *Arrogant-Boy?* Man, she's good...*very* good,” Hawk says.

“Arrogant? *Moi?* Difficult? It's a gift. But the part that really cuts to the quick is the crack about my sense of humor. *Phew. Tough crowd* these bureaucrats,” I say.

“Okay, reading Terrence's notes re the interviews, looks like of the three subjects that Tara listed, one in particular raised uh...*grave suspicion* in both Terrence and Tara. A Frank Gutowski. Looks like they perceived *excessive and inappropriate nervousness, body language, including inordinate perspiration and failure to make eye contact consistent with evasive and deceptive behavior* during the interview. Might not be a bad place to start,” he says

“Any contact info?” I say.

“Yea, lives in Moody Seaport...an address off of Alabama Hill, Silver Beach area, near Cascadia Lake. There's a phone,” he says.

“Any personal info that might be useful?” I say.

“Okay, his bio summary. Uh...he's 36, married with one kid, a daughter 10 years old. Served in the military. Marines...interesting, Special Forces...1987 to 1995, Gulf War theater...a coupla Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star for Bravery...honorable discharge,” he says.

“After I check my email, let's go pay Frankie a little visit...a cold call,” I say.

“Okay. I'm going to load up some gear in the truck...video camcorder,” Hawk says

“And the digital audio recorder...just in case we get lucky and get something outta him,” I say.

I log on to my email account, and check my email. There's the usual inane spam for:

SURE CURE FOR ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION!!

:: AMERICAN ALGORITHM — m.a.kominsky ::

*All Natural...Just 9 pills a day...and you're on your way to being a REAL STUD!!
Special Two-for-One offer for Today Only!! No Need to Suffer the HUMILIATION of Being UNABLE TO PERFORM Any Longer!!
ACT NOW!! Put a SMILE on your WIFE'S ...OR...FACE AGAIN!!*

With my affinity for Alpha *Shiksa* Chicks...nice to know there's a backup out there for *performance anxiety*...

So even though I'm tempted to put the *FUN*, back in uh...*DYSFUNCTION*, since I'm *sans* wife or even an S-O...placed on waivers, free-agency status, I decide to pass...for now. *Delete*.

After deleting another 20 useless banal messages, there's one from @eagle received by my email server early this morning.

*From: atsa_ee@hushmail.com
Date: Thursday October 26, 2001 6:43 AM
To: mak@koz Mick.com
Subject: contact*

after talking this over with grandfather he thinks we should talk>>>he says you're not a bad guy>>>for a paleface>>>LOL.

call ya tonight at about 11p ur time>>>maybe>>>LOL

@eagle aka mak_too

I reply.

*From: mak@koz Mick.com
Date: Thursday October 26, 2001 10:12 AM
To: atsa_ee@hushmail.com
Subject: RE: contact*

Okay Michael. Looking forward to it...maybe:)

~mak aka paleface paw

Well now. I'm frankly filled with ambivalence about the phone call tonight with my uh...*son*. I try to slow my accelerating heart rate and rapid shallow breathing by taking long, slow and rhythmic deep breaths. Yogic breathing...*Pranayama*, Sanskrit which means...*extension of the life force*. Within a few minutes, it works. I'll have to remember this for tonight, just

before the kid calls.

Hawks noiselessly sashays into my office. For such a big man, from years of martial arts and ballet training he's surprisingly lithe and light on his feet.

“Ready to roll?” he says.

“Let's do it. Just in case, slip one of the 9 millimeters in the truck,” I say.

“Already thought of that...*Allons-y mon ami*,” he says, *Let's go, my friend*.

“*Bien sûr, vous avez. D'accord...Allons-y...*” I say, *Of course you have. Okay...Let's go*.

Within 15 minutes we arrive in front of Frank Gutowski house about two in the afternoon. It's unseasonably warm and muggy. We park across the street and survey the situation—an ordinary middle class neighborhood. Probably developed by the same builder back in the postwar go-go 50s. Of the 20 or so single story probably 3 bedroom houses in the subdivision, there's maybe 2 variations in design, all the same size, flipped to a mirror image to the house next to it with a futile attempt to disguise the repetitiousness of the design with minor token differences in trim and color scheme.

The exterior of the house is free of clutter, the paint looks recent, with the trim in good condition. The yard is well-maintained, the lawn recently mowed. In the driveway is a very large cabin cruiser boat with twin outboard motors on a trailer, with a late model Ford three-quarter ton pick-up truck hitched up to it.

“Hey Hawk...how about you pullout the camcorder and keep it at the ready out of sight on the front seat. I'm going to take the digital recorder, clip it to my belt under my shirt...turn it on then go knock on the door,” I say.

“Okay...what's the pretense...ya know, why are you knocking on his door if he asks ya?” Hawk says.

“I know the thought never occurred to you, man, but I suppose I could uh...tell him the truth,” I say.

“Hmm...clever And *very* original...diabolical even. I like it...let's go with it,” the Hawkster says.

“Machiavellian...my peeps. So obvious...as to be *not* obvious,” I say.

“Then what?”

“Haven't got that far...yet,” I say.

“Easy plan to remember.”

“*Zackly*...and execute. The elegant simplicity of it...until I can unleash my not-so-legendary improv skills,” I say.

I walk up to the front door, which has a substantial aluminum door with screening on the upper half. My knock rattles the screen door frame. Immediately a dog starts barking on the other side, not very big by the sound of it.

The inside solid green door slowly opens revealing almost a totally darkened room except for the stroboscopic glow of a TV. Squinting, the cave dweller shields its eyes with its hand apparently, unaccustomed to sunlight...of any kind. It's a woman, I think, probably mid-thirties, maybe 5'3". But looks shorter as she's more than slightly obese. Her sandy hair is cut short...looks like a home-job bowl cut. No make-up in a man's t-shirt. Her arms are thick and fleshy with dark rings of underarm sweat. In the background is the unmistakable loud sound of a canned-laugh-track of some sitcom rerun on TV.

"Yea?" she yells says over of the barking dog.

"Is Frank Gutowski in?" I say mustering my most charming aluminum siding salesman smile.

"*Fraaaaank!* Somebody here to see ya," she yells...like gravel thrown on a tin roof, then recedes back into the black monotonous torpor of quotidian subsistence.

Within a few seconds, a man emerges out of the darkness to the mouth of the cave. He's close to 6 feet, well-built, erect and trim...not overweight. His face recently clean-shaven with the strong chin, high cheek bones and the clear deep-set blue eyes of a recruiting poster for the U.S. Military. America's finest—a warrior, a modern-day Centurion. He's wearing blue jeans, a Navy blue sweatshirt with the sleeves torn off at the shoulder with a blue baseball cap with a large *S...*a Seattle Mariners fan. *Poor guy.* His ample arm muscles are impressive and well-defined. He's tan and looks fit like he works out regularly.

Definitely still possessing a military bearing and the ethic of pride in his physical comportment.

"Yes?" he says.

"Are you Frank Gutowski?" I ask.

"Who wants to know?" he says.

"I'll take that *not* as a no. Mr Gutowski, my name is Mick Kozlov. I wonder if I could have a word with you?" I say like a benevolent door-to-door Evangelical Christian earnestly trying to initiate a dialogue as an entrée for salvation from certain Eternal Hell. In his case the man-made-hell of prison life...for a *very* long time.

"'Bout what?" he says now eying me up and down with suspicion.

"I wonder if I could come in...so we could chat..." I start to say.

"I can hear you just fine...right where you are. State your business...or hit the road pal," he says with a little more edge.

“Okay. Here's my card,” I say gesturing for him to open the screen door, so I can hand him my business card from Kozmick Productions.

Leaving the screen door closed, he says, “Okay. One last time...state you business...or get off my property,” he says, with hard edge now in his tone.

“Okay, uh...Frank, here's the deal,” I say as I'm tucking my card in the cross member of the screen door, the front facing him. I decide to go for it...to bluff him that I know a whole lot about his involvement in the blast.

“I know the NTSB has recently interviewed you. It did it not go well for ya, did it Frank? They're on to you, man...they know you're lying'...trying to conceal something. They know it's got something to do with NPI and their *dirty-trickster* uh...Porter, who is known to do their dirty work,” I say.

“Who the *hell are you*, man?” he yells.

“Frank...I'm here to *try* to help you, man. It's just a matter of time before the Feds put this whole thing together...that the blast was *not* an act of terrorism...was it Frank? The forensics are *screaming* cover-up, man,” I say.

“I don't know what the *hell* you're talking about and I don't know no Ernie Porter,” immediately he realizes he screwed up. I never mentioned Porter's first name. A stupid *rookie mistake*. Poor guy, now that this thing is unraveling at warp speed, he's so scared he can't even think straight. Just a matter of time before he cracks. *Gotta keep the heat turned up*.

“Frank...*Frank!*...com'mon, man. This is *fuck-ing* fut-ile. You could end up being hung out to dry...taking the fall for this deal. I know you gotta wife and kid, a young daughter. What about *them*? Unless you cooperate...they'll bust ya like a cheap pinata,” I say.

“You leave my family outta this...or I'll...”

“Or what Frank...you'll *kill* me? Like Jenifer Rogers, and her unborn child...and Dr Tehrani and his wife in Vancouver BC? Did you do that Frank?” Hasn't there already been *enough killing*,” I say trying to unnerve him.

“*Shit*, man...what the *hell* do you want?” he says now obviously rattled.

“I want ya to level with me, man. Who's behind this cover-up? Save yourself...and your family. We can talk to the DA...and the FBI...we'll get you into witness protection. All ya gotta do is start tellin' the truth, man. The FBI can protect you and your family,” I say feeling confident Tara and Terrence would advocate my offer to him, to the Feds if it means putting some major corporate suits in jail for a long time, which wouldn't look too shabby on any Federal Prosecutor's resume.

“*Pregnant?* Jesus. Hey...I didn't have *nothin'* to do with the murder of that poor girl, man...or those people in BC. It was...” his voice trails off, then “*Shit!*” as his attention is diverted by something he sees in the street. I turn around to see a Black Suburban slowly cruise by. All the windows are tinted so I can't see the driver. I turn around to face Frank Gutowski just in time to see him slam the inner door shut. I face the street again to see Hawk still sitting in

the driver seat leaning out the window. He's shouldered the camcorder, panning with the Black Suburban as it turns right at the next corner.

Gawd...I huuv working with professionals.

In one last futile attempt, I turn to face the front door. Over the barking dog, I hear loud cursing coming from inside. I realize that for now, mission accomplished. He's scared...*big time*, and that my business card is gone.

The Black Sub. *Jesus!* Like da *Kingfish* like ta say...*the plot be thickenin'*.

Realizing, that for the first time, I've almost been within touching distance of the murderer of Marla Dyson...and most probably Sora Eagle Feather, I walk back to the truck on rubbery legs. Hawk is pulling the DV tape out of the camcorder, and labeling it with a felt pen and setting the cassette so it can't be recorded over inadvertently. My hand is shaking as I open the passenger side door. I climb in, reach down, remove the digital recorder from my belt and hit the *stop* button.

"Mickey, you okay, man?...you look pretty shook up," Hawk says studying his pal who is ashen, his hands trembling.

"Not really...I'll tell ya later, man. Uh...were you able to get a clear shot of the driver of the Black Sub when it drove by?" I say.

"Nope...by the time I had the tape rollin' he was almost past me...all the windows were tinted. Think it was our, uh...*friend?*" he says.

"With a THULE roof box?" I say.

"*Oye vey...*as my peeps say," he grunts.

"*No shit!* Uh...*Shylock*," I say with an edge still scared and angry from being that close to the murderer.

"You must be really stressed, man. Ya mean Sherlock?" he says.

"Nope. Shylock, as in a Yiddish Sherlock," I say.

"A riot Alice, a regular riot. So...what'd Gutowski have to say?" Hawk says with a wisp of smile.

"*Man*, Terrence is right...he *is* scared *shitless*. He all but admitted that Jenifer Rogers and the Tehrani's were murdered...that he was part of a cover-up. He clammed up as soon as he saw the Black Sub. But I got it all on the D-R. He's ready to fold like a cheap leisure suit...*if* we can keep the heat turned up. With your connections...can you run the plate on the Sub?" I say.

"Yea...but it's out of state, California. Five 'ill get ya ten *yen*...it's bogus. But I'll check it out anyway," Hawk says.

"Hey man...I could sure use a drink...a cold beer would *not* be a bad idea. Let's head over to the ol' Horseshoe Cafe downtown, where it's *always* Happy Hour. I'm buyin'. I want to give Terrence and Tara a call...give 'em a

heads-up on this latest development,” I say.

“You're buyin? Happy Hour at the *Horseshoe*? Lucky me,” Hawk says.

El Negrito pulls into the parking lot of the hotel, the Lakeway Inn, where he's staying under one of his many assumed ID's, so he can keep close tabs on Kozlov and the NTSB people. He replays the latest developments in his head.

Not good...but I've been in tighter spots...compared to an ambush-gone-bad firefight with the *Sandinista* rebels in the jungles of Nicaragua...this ain't shit. Most important thing to remember when takin' heavy enemy fire...be cool...keep your head...or you're dead meat.

Time to step it up...big time, if I'm goin' to keep a lid on this thing. Just like I figured. That bastard Kozlov's on to something. New rules. First order of business. Terminate with Extreme Prejudice...and alacrity the immediate threat vector of Frankie boy. Second, I've had enough of those two major pains in the ass...Kozlov and that Jew bastard Shapiro...*ka-boom*...you're dead. Won't be any pieces left, big enough to identify...after an RPG.

Frank's reaction to the drive-by had to cause suspicion...they know my wheels now. Don't think Kozlov had enough time to get enough outta Gutowski to cause a major problem before he slammed the door shut in Kozlov's face...yet, before my well-timed drive-by. Dammit! No other options...risky...but was forced to expose myself...only way to try to cut it short. Long term, won't make a bit of fuckin' difference. Frankie boy can't testify from the bottom of the Bay. He's a dead man walking...or sinkin'.

Laughing out loud, Hot damn...I'm one fuckin' funny dude...when I wanna be. *See there Daddy? I can still bring funny...even after all your shit...you mutha fucka!*

Kozlov and his pet gorilla are smarter...and movin' faster than I thought. I won't underestimate them again. Since Mr Clean got some video of me drivin' by...gotta change license plates...like now. No way they coulda got a shot of my mug...so I still got that element of surprise on my side. Probably wise to change vehicles now...instead of renting a car, I'll buy one, so it can't be traced...pay cash from a private party. Just put it on your tab, Howie....chump change if I don't keep a lid on this thing.

His reverie is interrupted by his *vibrating* mobile phone. The phone number flashing on caller ID is an all too familiar one. Charleston South Carolina. He breaks into an instantaneous copious sweat.

“Hel-lo?”

“*Ernest...this is your fatha.*” says the deep voice, the thick South Carolina drawl still reeking with an imperious military bearing even at the age of 68.

“Yes-sir, Major sir...” *El Negrito* says.

“You have not called ya motha for ova two weeks. Do ya'll have a valid EX-cuse?” the retired Marine Major barks.

“Daddy...really sorry. Been kinda busy here...on business, ya know...” Little Ernie says obsequiously, reverting back to his childhood role of a late-in-life only child of a domineering autocratic career military...a lifer.

“Not acceptable! Call your motha...today! That's a direct orda. Do not make me call ya again...or you know the consequences, don't ya Ernest. Are we clear on that?” he says with the all too familiar menacing malevolent tone of his childhood.

Know the consequences, don't ya Ernest. The constant emotional and physical abuse heaped upon him, and because of it, the humiliation of the bed wetting on sleep-overs at his pals...and even now after over 40 years at the mere sound of the Major's domineering bark, the Pavlovian response of the barely controllable urge to urinate. As a kid, to piss his pants. Like some poor abused dog pissing all over himself at the mere sight of the raised hand of his abuser.

“Yes-sir! I promise...I'll call...” he starts to say.

Click.

One of these days Daddy...one of these FUCKIN' days...

Time to replace the wheels. He parks the Black Sub way in the back in an obscure part of the Lakeway Inn Hotel parking lot where he changes the plates to Illinois, and removes the THULE roof rack placing it inside the Sururban. *El Negrito* measures the custom made THULE roof box, made to order to for the tools of his trade, a Bushmaster Sniper Rifle with a Scope, and an RPG-7, a portable, unguided, shoulder-launched, anti-tank rocket-propelled grenade launcher. *A skilled craftsman is only as good as his tools.* He'll want to make sure the case will fit into the back of the replacement SUV, for quick access.

On Craigslist, a classified advertisement website started in 1995, from a private party, he finds and pays cash for a 1997 White Ford Explorer. Large enough in the rear cargo area to accommodate the roof box. Perfect, to throw 'em off the scent—they'll still be looking for a Black Sub with roof box. He puts on a bogus set of Colorado plates.

Good to go. Tonight he'll set up the unfortunate mishap for Frankie Boy. He noticed that Frank's C-Dory cabin cruiser, was already hitched up to his pick-up truck. Knowing Frank's passion for fishing and solitude, especially when he's under stress, uh...*ya think?* He'll probably launch the *Alicia May*, named after his sickly, defective daughter, early tomorrow morning. *Yeap...pretty hard to testify...underwater.*

- Chapter 24 (67) -

We take a booth way in the back of the bar at the Horseshoe Cafe, the oldest continuously operating cafe and cocktail lounge in Washington, a part of the community since 1886. By the looks of it, the original carpet and paint...and help. I call over to the bartender for two bottles of Alaskan Stout...a chewy dark beer. He nods. Hawk gets on his Blackberry and calls Terrence Howard on his personal mobile number.

“T-How here...speak...” he says.

“Woof-woof.” Hawk says.

“Ha...Oh-kay. And woof-woof backatcha Hawk, ma man. S'up?” he says.

“T-How, Mick and I paid a little visit to Frank Gutowski this afternoon. I'm going to put Mick on...let him bring you up to speed,” he says handing his phone to me.

“Terrence, some major developments since yesterday. Looks like Gutowski's ready to flip...like a flapjack on a hot griddle. We're at the ol' Horseshoe Cafe on East Holly at Railroad Ave. Probably be better if you came down here...than do this over the phone. Bring Tara if she's available, she'll want to hear this,” I say.

“Hold on a sec...” he says, then a few seconds later comes back on, “We're on our way, man.” he says.

“We're in a booth in the back...in the bar,” I say.

“What a surprise,” he says.

Click.

In the meantime the bartender sets the beers with glasses on the table.

“Start a tab?” he says.

“Sure...keep 'em comin'...fast and cold,” I say.

“You need anything else...*call your server*,” he says with a bit of attitude. Even though the bar's totally empty, guess I pulled him away from some serious slicin' and dicin' of lime and lemon rinds. Probably just doing this, until his big book deal or Spielberg picks up the option.

“We both push the glasses to one side and take a long pull out of the bottle. It's icy cold. After a long day of all this *vestigatin'* nothing could be *finah*. I immediately call uh...our server to be P-C, with a name tag Roxy, *I kid you not*. A classic old-school, tough don't-give-me-no-lip, middle-age black gal...with hi-mileage and a bottle blond wig. A career uh...*waitress*, which suits the decor *mo betta*. She looks like she came with the place. I order another round.

“While were waiting, I'm going online with the Blackberry...the Dark Web...see if we can get more info about our friend Porter,” Hawk says.

About five minutes later, Hawk hands me the Blackberry, “Have a look at this...man Junior wasn't exaggeratin'. This Porter's a *very* heavy hitter, *shit*...man, this guy gets around...Mexico, South and more recently Central America...big time. Scary dude, man...way over our punchin' weight.”

“Yea...now that he knows that we know that he's behind this coverup...he'll probably be makin' a move on us. Just in case...best start packin' those nines...full-time,” I say

About two rounds of Alaskan Stout later, Terrence and Tara come walking back toward our booth. Terrence slides in next to Hawk. With a nice warm smile, Tara slides in on the other side, next to me, nesting her cute little tushy, now touching mine. Hmm...*excellent seating arrangement*.

“Whattcha drinkin'?” I say.

“Beer looks good,” T-How says.

“Make it two...with a glass for me, please,” Tara says always the lady.

“Hey, Roxy,” I yell. Roxy ambles over with a nice side to side *mo-tation*.

“Hay's for horses...or horse's asses. Watchya want sweetcakes?” she says with a sparkling smile and wink. Yeap...she still got game.

After a weak ersatz horse nicker, and stomping my foot on the floor a few times, “Alaskan Stout...with a glass for the lady and....” but before I can finish...

“Sure...how 'bout the Black Stallion there,” she nods smiling at Terrence with another wink, already throwin' me over in a heart beat...for a *brutha*? Man, ain't that uh...*sexual discrimination*? I *tellya*...can't get *no respect*.

“He'll have what I'm havin',” Hawk says, returning a wink at the bemused Roxy. Which draws a big grin from Terrence and a loud laugh from Tara.

We make small talk, until the drinks show up, then when Roxie's out of earshot, we get down to business.

I summarize the encounter with Frank Gutowski, leaving out the part about how we got his address and other info etcetera. I tell them that the whole conversation was recorded surreptitiously on a digital recorder.

“*Excellent* work, Mick!” Tara says.

“Tsk...tsk, S-O-P for us trained investigators,” I say air drumming my fingers. “So, I'm talking through the screen door to Frank...he's starting to uh...grasp the gravity of his situation...” I say.

“What was his demeanor?” Terrence says.

“You were dead on...he's scared to death. Poor guy...hard to watch, man. Apparently he was highly decorated during his service...so he saw some serious in-country *shit*. From his anxious and agitated state, I wouldn't be surprised to find out he's got some serious psychological residuals, like PTSD.”

“Yea, my impression too. But I felt that he wasn't a bad guy...just caught in a bad situation. Being a fellow vet I couldn't help but have some empathy for his situation,” Terrence says his street Ebonics now in suppress mode.

“Agreed. I think although he may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, he's basically a decent man, with a wife and a kid...who he's very protective of,” I say.

“So what were you able to get out of him that would *change the course of the investigation*?” Tara says impatiently cutting to the chase with her laser-logical mind.

“Not dancin' fast enough for ya, babe?” I say with smile causing her to blush which I find very sweet, for the first time sensing a vulnerability.

“*Sorry...hard-wired in my Nipponese DNA...please go on, Mick,*” she says.

“*Pas de probleme...belle dame.*” I say patting her knee under the table. “He denies having killed Jenifer Rogers and the Tehrani's, which I believe, but through a personal denial...and a tacit non-denial he unwittingly confirms that they were in fact murdered, just that he had no part in it. Same deal with the cause of the explosion...not being a terrorist act. He seems to have genuine grave remorse about the death of the pregnant Jenifer.”

“Did he say he knows who *did* commit the murders?” Tara ask.

“Never got to it...just as he was about to spill, a Black Suburban cruised by. The poor guy almost pissed his pants, clammed up and literally and figuratively slammed the door shut,” I say

“Your take on the significance of the Black Suburban?” Tara says.

“I won't go into too much detail now, but through our investigation into the murders of two victims...years ago.” I say starting to tear up...*victims*, for *Chrissakes* two of the most important women in my life, “uh...sorry...yea, the *victims*, both eye witnesses agree that they observed the presence of the same kind of vehicle at the crime scene...a Black Suburban, with a THULE roof box...too much of a coincidence,” I say.

“I got the vehicle on video tape...no clear image of the driver. The license plate will probably turn out to be a phoney. It had a THULE roof box,” Hawk says.

“How do you make the connection between the two?” Tara says.

“Three murders actually, but who's countin'. We think that the common denominator that links the crimes is the involvement of a corporate *security* “ I say with air quotes “company that does dirty tricks, covert kinda stuff. They are on permanent retainer with NPI. One of the murders, years ago, involves a proposed pipeline in New Mexico...by...wait for it...” I say.

“NPI,” Tara says.

“Bingo, babe. So in all the crimes, including this one...the same M-O...the same type of vehicle...just like to today. They stay below the radar but the president and CEO, whom I've personally met many years ago, is a piece of work...a real reptile,” I say using Marla's perfect metaphor for him.

“Gotta name?” Terrence says.

“Ernest Porter...fifty-ish, goes by the nickname *El Negrito, en espanol*...The Black One. An ex-Marine...with as I recall a Force Recon tattoo.”

“He a brutha?” T-How says.

“Nah...lily white...with a distinct cracker Southern drawl...drippin' with James Crow attitude to match. KKK recruiting poster material,” I say.

“Any idea of dates of military service?” Terrence says.

“Not sure...but from his Vietnam campaign tattoo...he saw action in Nam,” I say continuing on, “his company is SHOPs...Silent Hand OPs...or operations LLC. The home office of operations is in Southern California...Chula Vista, just South of San Diego near the Mexican Border...and Central and South America.”

Hawk continues, “Went on to the Deep Web...to some of my Darknet sources...sort of like a Dark Wikipedia...an info-central of a who's-who, of the dark underbelly of hackers and nefarious characters. Craigslist of classifieds for bad guys. Checking around, word on the web...many of their clients are Drug Cartels...large sophisticated criminal enterprises that operate in Mexico, and Central and South America with the same managerial hierarchy and financial efficiency as a large multinational corporation, only with more asset...and more scruples.”

“They both prey on the most vulnerable, the underclass...at least the Cartels make no pretense about their predatory obscene profit motives. With Gross Sales rivaling many Fortune 500s...with *Net* Profits that make GM look like a start-up.” I say as Terrence is taking notes in his little spiral note pad.

“So where do *you* think we should go from here, uh Dick Tracy?” Tara says with a whiff of sarcasm.

“That be me, Dick Tracy. Private Dick for Hire...at your service ma'am.” I say with a casual tip of my imaginary Fedora, which causes her face to redden big time. Like I said...a charming vulnerability.

“Time to turn up the griddle...and *flip the flapjack*.”

“And just what do *you* think, uh...Sam *Spade*...fearless NTSB investigator? Tara says to Terrence with an insider wry grin.

“Well...me bein' a seasoned, trained *inves-tigata*, if it be up to me...I say flip da Frank...soona din layta,” the good-natured Terrence says, back in Ebonics Rapper mode.

“Hawk?” Tara says.

“I vote with my esteemed colleagues...time to *Shake 'n Bake* Frank Gutowski,” Hawk says.

“So...Tara, do you think you could work out a deal for Gutowski to get immunity or at the very least a highly reduced sentence in exchange for his testimony implicating the perps and corporate pimps? Oh, I uh...probably should mention I *kinda* already promised him *that*...if he'd cooperate.” I say grinning.

“I could try. Having the recording with Gutowski...won't hurt. The first step would be to deal with the local jurisdiction, that would be Cascadia County. I'd have to run this by the local DA...a John Allison. If they're willing to sign off...then we work our way up, in this case down the food chain to the FBI...probably your fav, Charles Cunningham,” she says with a smirk.

“Probably better if the Hawkster goes uh...*fishin'* on that day,” I say when the Hawk cuts in.

“Ah...tis true indeed. A fisher of men...*ahem*...non-Biblically speaking,” the Hawkster says winking at Terrence.

I continue, “*Very*. So best that the Hawkster sits out the negotiations with the Chuckster. And oh...by the way, I *kinda sorta* promised Frankie uh...witness protection...and a relocation *kinda deal*,” I say sheepishly.

“Any other...*oh by the ways*, we need to know about, Mick?” Tara says smiling with an arched eyebrow.

“Nope...other than the FBI would protect he and his family in the interim. We should have some degree of confirmation of the framework for a deal, before we approach Gutowski and uh...his attorney, which I uh...also *kinda* promised the Feds would pay for. Frankly, pun intended I think he's concerned about an attempt being made on his life...or perhaps trying to silence him with threat of harm...or worse to his family. We don't have much time here...gotta move now or he might rabbit before we can flip him,” I say.

“What? No all-expense paid Caribbean Cruise to Club Med?” Tara says.

“With this psycho killing machine Porter still out there, was thinkin' more like maybe Alaska, someplace with a bustling population of 500...North of the Arctic Circle. Tara, I'd like to sit in on that meeting. I have a personal connection with John Allison...he visited me in the hospital after the explosion. He lost his wife and kids in the blast. Understandably, it totally devastated him. I suspect he's out for blood...as much...and any place, he can reasonably or unreasonably, find it. As a fellow victim, I think I might be able to help

convince him of the wisdom of this deal,” I say.

“Yea, I heard about that. Tough one. I'll set it up and get back with ya. If there's nothing else?” Tara says. Hearing nothing from anybody, “Okay...I best get started, like yesterday. I'll make contact with DA Allison ASAP.”

“When and where...I'll be there,” I say

“Talk later, Mick.” Tara says sliding out of the booth, giving my right knee a nice squeeze under the table.

“Keep in touch. And watch your back. Gonna see if I can find out more about this Porter cat in the Fed database,” T-How says as he slides out the booth. Hawk and I both nod. End of meeting. Time to head back to Chez MAK. *Got an important appointment tonight...with my past.*

- Chapter 25 (68) -

At almost midnight, the phone rings. The caller ID says it's blocked.

“Mick Kozlov here...”

Nothing...just silence on the other end.

“Michael? If it's you...let's talk.”

Still nothing.

“Come on, Michael...talk to me, man.”

Just the sound of labored breathing on the other end.

“Okay...either somebody's got a wrong number...or the more tantalizing prospect of an obscene phone call.” I say with a tone of exasperation. The kid's probably feeling a little awkward... *ya think?* Or maybe he's just messing with me...a little payback? Or a little of both. He probably doesn't even know himself. I decide not to pressure him. If he wants to connect with his old man, the puck's on his ice.

After several more seconds of silence, then...

“*Kab-o-om...*” the voice says with a creepy laugh.

Click.

The Black One disconnects from one of his many throw-away prepaid mobiles, then crushes it under his boot, tossing it in the trash. *Hey...*I'm human...gotta have *some* fun. One down, two more to go, then I'm outta here. Time to pull out the RPG launcher and give it a good thorough check out.”

Well now...with my amazing powers of deduction, I doubt it's my kid. That bastard Porter's *fuckin'* with us, like some predator playing with its food before devouring it. Okay, game on you piece of human excrement.

The next morning about 9:30, I get a call from Tara.

“*Mick, I've set up a meeting with DA John Allison, at 2 PM this afternoon at his office. Can you make it?*” she says.

“I'll be there. I'll bring the digital recorder. Hawk will bring the camcorder with video so Allison can watch it through the view finder,” I say.

“*Good.*” Tara says.

“Tara...how'd he sound about the reason for the meeting” I say.

“*Interested...very interested. See ya then,*” Tara says.

Click

At about 10 minutes to two, Hawk and I walk into the reception area of the DA's office, where Tara is seated with her briefcase on her lap. Hawk and I take a seat on either side of her.

"How's my favorite fearless detective duo?" Tara says with a warm smile.

"Not bad...how's Tess Trueheart? Dick Tracy's main squeeze? I say.

"Just dandy. And Sam Catchem?" Tara says to Hawk.

"A little drained today...all this crime stoppin' and collaboratin' with T-How last night...sure tires a private Dick out," Hawk says, causing raised eyebrows then a smile from Tara.

Just about then, the half-frosted glass door with black painted letters, *John Allison District Attorney Cascade County* opens. Standing there, I hardly recognize John Allison. He's haggard and drawn, like he's lost at least 20 pounds the four weeks since the death of his wife and children.

"Good afternoon, please come on in," the DA says, his pants and suit jacket hanging on him like a coat hanger.

He gestures to the two seats in front of his desk, "Please...have a seat...and..." he says.

"I'm fine standing...thanks counselor," Hawk says.

Tara and I take a seat.

"Mr Allison, this is Mick Kozlov...he was a witness to the direct aftermath of the explosion and we believe that he and his associate Mr Shapiro here have developed some probative grounds which may significantly alter the course of this investigation of the pipeline explosion," Tara says.

"Mr Allison...first let me express our most profound condolences on the loss of your wife and children. Do you recall meeting me and Mr Shapiro that night you visited me in the hospital?" I say.

"Thank you...yes of course I remember. I'm in a little better shape now. I've decided to come back to work...in an attempt...albeit futile at times to distract me from..." his voice trailing off.

"Mr Allison, as Ms Takahashi has already informed you by phone, our recent encounter with one Frank Gutowski, in which we have documentary evidence in the form of audio and video, would indicate that he has personal knowledge of a cover-up of the true causation of the explosion on October 10th...that the proximate cause was not an act of Islamic Terrorism, but..." I say when I am interrupted

"*Had*...Mr Kozlov. I'm afraid your...witness and his evidence have now become moot. Unfortunately the Cascadia Sheriff's have had a report of, what witness from homes on the shore recount as a tremendous explosion...of a cabin cruiser, about 6:30 AM this morning on Cascadia Lake less than a mile from the boat launch ramp at Bloedel Donovan Park...about a half mile from shore. A pick-up truck with a boat trailer registered to one Frank Gutowski was

parked in the lot. The boat was indeed registered to a Frank Gutowski...the missing and presumed deceased victim. The Sheriff's patrol boat has been dispatched. All they've found so far was remnants of the boat which was totally disintegrated by the blast. After a long and methodical search...no body...or bodies have been discovered...yet. We have dispatched a team of divers to search the Lake for the body...or bodies of any victims and also to attempt to discover the cause of the blast," Allison says.

"*Jezus! Unbelievable!*" I yell.

I look at Tara, dumbstruck. Her face is ashen.

After about a minute of silence, reflecting on the situation, I compose myself enough to say, "Uh...Mr Allison...with all due respect, even though the presumed death of our witness does uh *hinder*...the progress of the investigation...it does not render the evidence moot. Do you have a preliminary cause for the explosion?" I say.

"In the absence of any compelling evidence to the contrary it is being treated an accidental explosion. The detective assigned to the case believes the explosion *probably resulted from the operator not properly ventilating the bilges and purging accumulated gasoline vapors with a bilge blower, before starting the engine. A common cause of such explosions...*" he says reading from a piece of paper now in his hand.

"Mr Allison...I find that explanation inconsistent with the facts. The C-Dory which Mr Gutowski owned was a twin outboard motor craft. It is highly unlikely that gasoline fumes would accumulate in the bilges, and even if that was the case, there would be no source of ignition as would be the case with an inboard motor craft. And even given the remote possibility it did...it would have ignited immediately upon engaging the ignition switch....not one mile from the launch point," I say.

"Accidental my *tuches*...that explosion was about as accidental as the death of Jenifer Rogers was a suicide," Hawk mutters out loud.

"Mr Shapiro is it? That is a *very* serious accusation. What proof, if any, have you that would support that assertion?" the DA says.

Hawk starts to answer but is waved off by Tara holding up her hand, "Mr Allison...Mr Shapiro's...and Mr Kozlov's assertion is consistent with the forensics as to the causation of the blast. After conferring with, and the results of their investigation...and ours, we now believe that the more likely plausible explanation for the explosion is that it was caused by an internal structural failure of the pipe. Further that the operator negligently allowed the gasoline to continue to flow, undetected, unabated....and more importantly unmitigated for perhaps an hour...because of gross non-feasance slash malfeasance. And it was this delay of the necessary remedial...and *appropriate* action that caused the fuel from a 16-inch-diameter steel pipeline to release as far as we can estimate so far, of almost 250,000 gallons of gasoline to accumulate into the creek. Eventually, igniting a fireball through Moody Falls Park and ultimately downstream into downtown Moody Seaport. And further, that Cascadia

Pipeline is engaged in a massive coverup to conceal the true cause of the explosion,” Tara says.

“And that but for this failure to react and intervene, the unchecked flow of fuel, the resultant fire that incinerated that overpass...could have been prevented. And in addition to the tragic deaths of your wife and children, and many others...the perpetrators of the conspiracy are also responsible and complicit in the murders of Jenifer Rogers and Dr and Mrs Tehrani, the parents of the alleged terrorist Hassan Tehrani. An attempt at a massive cover-up,” I say.

“These are outrageous accusations! Are you now saying that somehow the death of my family was *not* from an act of terrorism...but *just* through...*ordinary* negligence?” he says abruptly leaping up from behind his desk his eyes fierce with emotion, his whole body trembling with anger.

“Sadly...yes. That's *exactly* what we're saying here, the resultant death and destruction of course, anything but *ordinary*,” I say.

“Then I'd suggest you bring me the evidence...and if it in fact does support your accusation...then I promise you on the graves of my wife and children that I will *not* rest until I have prosecuted them to the fullest extent of the law and seek the strongest penalty possible, including capital punishment,” he screams loudly, tears streaming down his cheeks collapsing back down into his swivel office chair, emotionally drained, his arms dangling limply from his hunched shoulders.

Negrito's appetite for killing temporarily satiated with the termination of Frank Gutowski, he now turns his attention to disposing of pesky Kozlov and Shapiro. During the early morning hours, it was easy to climb into the trailered boat undetected...to rig up an explosive device on a ten minute timer that would detonate after the ignition switch for the motor and electric fuel pump was turned on. Since Gutowski was the last threat that could have *directly* testified against him and VP Roland...and NPI, he's feeling pretty good about himself. *Damn I'm good.*

The local paper and radio news are reporting that the explosion of Gutowski's boat, according to the Sheriff's Department spokesperson, was deemed an accident.

The only serious threat that remains is Kozlov and Shapiro. Then I'm home free. So now it's showtime for those two amateurs. I fucked up once not getting Kozlov in Tahoe. I terminated his girlfriend...and one for two, .500 ain't a bad battin' average. But this time I'll make sure personally that he's very dead...and that albino gorilla with him.

- Chapter 26 (69) -

The only sound is the loud snoring of Big Dawg Oso, who's completely spread out occupying most of the other side of my King-size bed and half of mine. As I'm laying in bed staring at the ceiling for the past 2 hours, replaying the astonishing events of the day where once again, like @eagle said, the perps always seem to be at least one step ahead of us. The only witness left who could have directly connected the dots, now he too is dead. *Goddammit!*

My mobile phone which I keep next to the bed begins to sound. I glance at the phone...the caller ID again says *blocked*, the red letters on the digital clock flashing *12:05*. Who'd be calling me at this midnight hour other than Michael, my son. I must admit that this whole exercise of trying to connect with him is becoming tiresome, and I am growing *very* weary of it.

I answer it with, "Michael...why don't you grow up? I'm tired of your childish little games. If you truly want to connect...then I suggest you cut the *shit*...and start acting like a man starting right now! Or as far I'm concerned *fogitaboutit*. Period. Am I making myself clear, here?" I say.

"*Is this uh...Mr Kozlov?*" the voice says full of uncertainty.

"Well who *the hell* else could it be for *Chrissakes?*" I say having worked myself up into a lather.

"*This is uh...Frank...Gutowski. We talked just the other day in front of my house?*" he says very tentatively.

"Frank Gutowski...*un-huh*. Not in the mood for some *fuckin'* prank, you moron. Who *the hell* is this?" I say getting ready to hang up full of displaced anger about my situation with my son.

"*No wait...Mr Kozlov. Really...this is Frank,*" the voice says plaintively.

"Okay. Prove it...tell me how you got my number and make it quick or I hang up," I say.

"*Okay...okay. Uh...you were standing on my front porch. You put your card in the screen door...then the Black Suburban came along that's when I grabbed your card and slammed the door shut,*" he says.

"So Frank...I take it you're *not* dead?" I say.

"*Yes-sir. Uh...no...I'm not dead, I don't think...yet,*" he says his breathing, rapid and shallow. Know the feeling.

"Where are you calling from...and are you in any danger?" I say.

"*I'm in somebody's private boat house...on Cascadia Lake. I swam ashore...been here since I escaped the explosion early this morning. Nobody, not even my wife knows I'm here...or that I'm alive. I was afraid to tell her for fear that murdering asshole Porter is monitoring the house. I didn't know who*

else to call Mr Kozlov. I don't know what to do. I'm kinda scared...ya know?" he says obviously distraught.

"Okay Frank...stay calm, man. Give me explicit directions and I'll come and get ya," I say.

"Okay...okay. I guess I'm going to have to trust you. I don't have any other options. The boathouse is at the end of a wharf...right off Lake Cascadia Boulevard...at Morgan Street. It has a red door. Knock on the door once...then three times...then once again," he says regaining his composure somewhat.

"Okay. I know the spot. Hang on...I'll be there in five minutes," I say as it is near where I often launch my kayak on the lake.

Click.

After I hang up I realize, that this could of course, be an elaborate set-up, like a tethered sacrificial lamb to lure me out in the open, maybe for an ambush. Because of something I heard in his voice, the authentic desperation, and because I kinda feel sorry for the kid... anyway, I decide to go for it. I jump out of bed, get dressed and pull out my Taurus 9 millimeter from my headboard, check the clip to make sure it's a full stick, slide it in my belt, grab my mobile and with Oso in tow, jump into the truck and head over to the boathouse.

As I get close to the boathouse on a deserted residential section of Lake Cascadia Boulevard with residences on one side of the street, and lakefront on the other, I turn off my headlights and drive by very slowly. I make one pass by the boathouse without stopping, then go around the block wait a few minutes then come back around stopping maybe 100 yards from the wharf, with the boathouse at the end. I just sit there for almost 5 minutes waiting for my eyes to get acclimated to the darkness. It's a moonless night, very still. All my senses are aroused to peak capacity.

I look over at Oso, who's sitting in his customary place, the passenger seat, panting with his immense pink lolling tongue, also hyper-aware, seemingly scanning the scene, his ears pricking back and forth for alien sounds. Seeing or hearing nothing that would seem suspicious, I decide to go for it. I reach up and take the bulb out of the interior light fixture of the truck, and place it in one of the drink receptacles on the console. I put the electric windows down on both sides of the truck.

"Stay here boy. I'll be right back...*hopefully*. Don't move unless I call ya with our code. Then come a runnin'...understand *big boy*?" I whisper sinking my hands behind his furry ears playfully shaking his huge head side to side.

A low barely audible "woof-woof"...still rapidly panting, seemingly understanding everything I've said. "That's my smart *booy*..."

I grab a heavy mag-light flashlight out of the console...the kind the cops carry which can double as a baton. I quietly open the door and slide out putting the mag-light under my left arm, then I remove the gun from my belt

and quietly chamber a round. With the flashlight off in my left hand, the gun in my right I crouch down low and slowly make my way toward the wharf, stopping every 10 yards or so, standing perfectly motionless. My eyes and ears straining for any telltale suspicious sounds or movement.

After 5 minutes of this, I'm drenched in sweat from the stress. I'm trying desperately to control my breathing and heart rate that's kicked way up. Finally, I get to the wooden gate to the wharf. I slowly push on it, but it's old. The rusty hinges start to squeak. I stop. It sounds very loud, in actuality, it's not, it's just that every noise in this state of hyper-vigilance seems excruciatingly loud. I slowly push through the gate crouching low, now walking on the wharf toward the red door of the boathouse. The creaking of the planks of the decking is deafening.

I get to the door. I stand there motionless, just listening for any sounds that might reveal the presence of any sensory anomalies for a full minute. Finally, I decide it's now or never.

Standing 3 feet to the left side of the door, "*Knock...knock-knock-knock...knock*" very lightly on the red door. I wait a full minute. Nothing. Again, the same routine only harder with the knock, like some laughable stupid "B" spy movie. I don't know why but sometimes in times of major stress, my mind behaves in ways that I can't control. Probably due to my sometimes not-so-sub-clinical A.D.D. I start thinking of *knock...knock...who's there jokes*...and almost start to laugh out loud, when the red door slowly creaks open a few inches.

"Who's there?" the thin voice says. *Perfect*. Because it sounds so pathetic...so vulnerable, it dissipates my fear...lowering my threat assessment.

"Now this is where I'm supposed to say Koz. Then you say Koz who? Then I say...Koz it's late and I'm getting tired of this bullshit," I say.

"Mr Kozlov...is that *you*?"

"It ain't the Domino's pizza delivery guy. Yea...it's the Koz."

Then the door slowly opens about half way and a head peers around it. I turn on the mag-light and shine it on his face. His eyes flutter shut from the brightness. I turn off the light. It's Gutowski alright. I slide the gun back into my belt. The door now is wide open.

"Man, am I glad to see you, I was beginning to worry you weren't comin'...it's been almost 45 minutes since we talked on the phone. You said 5 minutes," Frank says.

"Sorry Frank...no offense but I had to make sure this wasn't a set-up. That *son-of-a-bitch* Porter has been one step ahead of us...all the way. Okay. Ready to get the hell outta here?" I say.

"Yea. Speaking of pizza I could sure use something to eat...it's been over 16 hours since I've had something. Now what?" he says.

"We'll take care of that when I get you over to my place...hide you out until we can figure out where to go from here. Follow me back to the truck

then get in the back camper shell of the truck and lock it from the inside. Be very quiet until you hear the password, uh...*knock-knock*. Otherwise, don't open it. Got it?"

"Yes *sir*...and thanks," he says shaking my hand with both of his trembling hands. Probably due in no small part from lack of food.

I drive back to *Chez MAK* and back the truck up, right to the garage door and hit the auto-opener, then Oso and I get out. I rap on the rear glass of the camper and whisper, "*knock-knock*". The tailgate springs open and he quickly and with a great natural agility climbs out into the garage. I close the tailgate.

Once we're inside the garage, I close the garage door. We go through the interior door into the kitchen, where I turn on the lights and get my first look at Frank Gutowski in some decent light. He's wearing a camo fisherman's vest and jeans...with no shoes. He's got a crew cut. Must have shed the Seattle M's cap when he swam ashore. No loss. He actually looks pretty good, considering what he must have gone through. Tough kid.

"Whatta ya want to eat, man?" I say.

"Anything's good. Something quick though I'm running on fumes," he says.

"How about the old standby...peanut butter and jelly, fast and filling," I say.

"That sounds great *sir*...thank you. Got anything to drink?"

"Want a beer? I think I could use one myself," I say.

"Yes-*sir*," he says.

Seeing him in the light, his demeanor, I'm suddenly struck with the realization that here's a kid who went to war for this country having served with honor and distinction, putting his life on the line. A decent kid, polite and appreciative. I get the old tennis ball in my throat, sad that he's having to go through such *shit*. Like T-How said...*a good guy...in a bad situation*. It awakens some deep paternal instinct in me to try to protect him from the *what's coming...whatever it is*. It ain't going to be pretty, no matter how it shakes out. His life, and that of his wife and child are about to drastically change along with any sense of normalcy from his prior life. I hand him a beer which he chugs, then another which he commences sipping, while I get busy making P-B 'n J's. As fast as I can make them, they're disappearing. Finally, after four of those he shakes his head. "Enough. That really hit the spot. Thanks."

"Okay, Frank. Let's go upstairs...you can bed down in the guest bedroom. Tomorrow over breakfast we can talk more about where we go from here. But first I'll want hear your story about your involvement and what you know about the cover-up...every last detail," I say.

"Sounds good Mr Kozlov. Sorry *sir*, after I get a little rest, I'll be in better shape tomorrow morning...for a debriefing. And again, thank you *sir*," he

says again shaking my hand effusively.

Debriefing. They trained our warriors well. In the case of Ernest Porter a little *too* well. I show him to his room. “You can call me Koz. And you're welcome...son. *Son?* There's a guest bathroom with a shower down the hall, with towels and guest toothbrush etcetera in the med-cabinet. Good night.”

“Good night, *sir,*” he says.

Then Oso and I retire to my room. I look at the digital red LED clock, it's now almost 2:30 AM, and there ain't no way I am going to go to sleep. Oso jumps up on the bed and is fast asleep in less than five minutes...*dulces sueños, mi amigo...*sweet dreams my friend...*los dos de ustedes...*the both of you.

My attention is captured by the red LED on my answering machine frantically flashing, indicating a message. It must have come in after I left...just past midnight.

I hit the play message button. For about 5 seconds there is nothing. Then when a voice begins to speak—the machine automatically truncates the recording process when it doesn't detect voice.

“Hey, it's *mak-too*. I uh...feel a little awk...” It's a nice voice, *his* voice. Eerily it has my same timbre, like a recording of my *own* voice.

Yikes. That's the voice of my kid...Jezus Christ. Has this been one helluva a day, and night? Yes indeed. I go back downstairs to the living room, and flop in my reading rocking chair, comfortable like an old friend. I lay my Taurus 9 next to me just in case. Rocking back and forth, gazing out at the mesmerizing dancing reflections from the lights of the houses across the lake.

I let my mind just wander where it wants to go, trying to empty it of the depressing darkness of all the unnecessary death and destruction caused by the pipeline explosion, and the murders of innocent folks, caused essentially by the ancient verity *root of all evil...the love of money*.

Although I'm no serious reader of the Bible, truth is truth, no matter where or how you find it. Man innately knows *real truth* when he sees...and hears it—most especially the distillation of the Gospel...or the Bible 2.0, the so-called New Testament. *Do not do onto others as you would not have them do on to you*.

Hmm...over two millenia, and not much has changed. Self-interest, sadly, when given the choice, usually prevails. So just how much hope realistically, can one muster that the considerable human sacrifice necessary to deal with the existential crisis of climate change and the aberrant, corrupt politics that precipitated it? Lotto odds. But it is that slender sliver of hope that somehow always compels one to buy a ticket.

To live without hope is to cease to live. A rare ray of sunlight from the melancholic Slavic author, my peeps, of the dark parable of greed, Crime and Punishment. Having gambled away much of his fortune, unable to pay his

bills or afford proper meals he commits murder. In the process, he slays his own soul with guilt.

The darkness of my spirit slowly begins to lift as the warm light of sunrise slowly starts to illuminate my consciousness...bathing the shore across the lake. Ah...the cycle of life in all its mundane majesty and beauty. The certainty of sunrise comforts me. Fading up from black, the slashes of color, the reds, oranges and yellows. The Fall colors of the Cottonwoods, Alders and Maples never seemed more beautiful, more alive. Once again I'm filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude—the awe and wonderment of the cycle of life and the beauty of *my* cathedral, my sacred place of worship, nature.

Having fallen asleep, still in my rocking chair, I am awakened by some noise coming from the kitchen. I reflexively grab the 9 millimeter immediately hyper aware from the massive injection of adrenalin. But the smell of brewing coffee wafting up my nostrils starts to lower my flight-or-flight response as I start to come down, relaxing my death-grip on the nine.

I turn to face the kitchen and find Frank Gutowski bustling about. He's clean-shaven, fully dressed almost comically so, wearing some clothes of mine that I laid out for him at his bedroom door. The tee-shirt and the pants are floating on him with pant legs rolled up, but at least they're dry and clean. I had also set out a pair of Hawk's old runners which should be big enough, since he had jettisoned his heavy boots just before diving into the icy cold lake water, to save himself from the certain death of the ensuing explosion concocted by Ernest Porter.

The kitchen clock says it's already 8:13 AM. Now what?

Hawk wanders into the kitchen with his Starbuck's coffee bucket grafted to his left hand, walks up to Frank Gutowski, extends his massive paw and says, "Hawk Shapiro."

"Frank Gutowski," he says meeting his gaze extending his hand shaking Hawk's vigorously.

"Frank, aren't you supposed to be uh...*dead*?" Hawk says.

I stand up. Throwing my arms high above me, getting a good stretch, and with a classic Twain-ism. "Uh...the rumors of his death are greatly exaggerated, Hawk," I say.

"My mistake. By the way, uh...Koz, just curious..." he says nodding at Frank.

"Hawkster...it's a *l-o-o-ng st-o-o-ry*. Which we intend to explore in exhaustive detail...after we've had some breakfast," I say.

"Of course...the most important meal of the day. So...have you called Tara or T-How yet and informed them of this uh...miraculous Lazarus redux?" Hawk says.

“Nope...just woke myself. Was kind of a long night, wasn't it Frank? By the way did you sleep okay?” I say.

“Yes-*sir*...thank you. Slept the best I have in over 4 weeks. And it was a *very* long night. One of the longest days...and nights of my life, since my combat days,” Frank says.

“So far,” the Hawkster adds ominously.

“Okay. Frank, you any good in the kitchen?” I say.

Yes-*sir*. I do most of the cooking at home. Cindy my wife is not uh...very domestic. She mostly takes care of our dear daughter who's disabled...it's a 24-7 job,” he says matter-of-factly without a trace of self-pity.

“Okay, then why don't you throw some breakfast together for us...everything you need is in the fridge. Eggs and bacon etcetera,” I say.

“Done, *sir*. But before I make breakfast, do you think I could call my wife? She must be going absolutely crazy...and my dear little girl...thinking I've been killed,” Frank says.

I look at Hawk, he shakes his head, “Frank...sorry, but unless we can be sure that your home phone is still not being monitored by Porter, I'd have to say it's not a good idea. Does she have a mobile phone so you could call or text her?” I say.

“Nope...she's pretty lame with technology,” Frank says.

“Then I'd suggest this. Write out a letter in your own handwriting...we'll help you compose it. Do not disclose your location...and make *damn* sure that she tells no-one and I mean no-one...not even her family that you're *not* dead. Then we'll have it delivered FEDEX to your door. If you...or she tells anyone that you're alive...you, her and your daughter could be in extreme jeopardy. *Do you understand Frank?*” I say.

“Yes-*sir*. After breakfast, I'll write something out. How long will I have to remain in hiding, *sir?*” Frank says.

“Frank...until we can get confirmation from the DA...and the Feds that they are going to give you and your family protection, and relocation, as long as this Porter is at large, you'll need to stay hidden. That's what the video will attempt to do. To demonstrate your cooperation and value to the Feds, to take down the bad guys, including the suits, behind the cover-up. Also, we need to get you a good criminal defense attorney to represent you in the negotiations with the DA and the Feds,” I say.

“Sir, I can't afford a high-priced attorney like that,” Frank says.

“We'll push very hard to get the Feds to pay for it. In the meantime I'll help you out until that gets resolved. Hawk, ya think your Daddy S. G. would enjoy an all expense paid trip to the Pacific Northwest to see the beautiful Fall colors?” I say.

“I could ask. Knowing Pop's appetite for a good underdog legal fight, I wouldn't be surprised. He's always in search for a little fresh meat.”

“On rye?” I say

“Lean...very lean, with a dill pickle and a side of slaw. I'm sure he'd *just* love having an Uncle Sammy sandwich for lunch. I'll call him later today,” Hawk says.

“In the meantime...I'm going to have my first of many, cups of Joe. Then I'm going to call Tara and Terrence and give 'em a heads up and invite them over for our little morning debriefin' session with Frank here,” I say.

“Sir, uh...Koz and Hawk, how do you like your eggs?” Frank says.

“Cooked,” Hawk says

“In keeping with the theme of the day...scrambled of course. Hawk, lets setup two camcorders...both on tripod with a few portable lights for Frank's TV debut. We'll do a fixed two cam shoot...medium...and close-up, while Tara and I are doing the interview with Frank.

You'll run the switcher from Cam 1 to Cam 2 real time, recording on a DV tape deck. Switch to close-up for emphasis on the money shots, on my hand cue. But we'll shoot *iso*...so lock the time codes...recording both audio and video on both camcorders for back-up and in case we want to post the cuts from one cam to the other later on.

And oh, *Monsieur réalisateur*...superimpose the date and time of day continuously on the bottom of the screen to make it legal...for admissibility in a court trial,” I say.

“Got it, *mon capitaine*,” Hawk says disappearing down the stairs to set up everything in our mini-TV studio downstairs.

- Chapter 27 (70) -

By 10 AM, we've finished with breakfast, had our fill of coffee, and have the kitchen put back in order when Tara and Terrence show up. I briefly update them about Frank and our intent to create a video to take to the Feds to negotiate a deal for the kid. They're shocked but relieved that the kid's okay. They agree to help...under certain conditions.

We all go downstairs to the studio, and take a seat at the conference table.

Frank remembers Terrence from his first recorded interview. Terrence is very affable and gracious toward Frank, a fellow vet offering words of encouragement. No guarantees but if he's willing to cooperate...

Tara says, "Mr Gutowski...are you willing to state for the record under oath in front of a camera your involvement in the coverup...and are you further willing without reservation to specifically implicate anyone...and everyone who you may have reason to believe was involved or had knowledge of the cover-up?" she says.

"Yes, ma'am...I am. Honestly, I'm glad this is finally coming to head. I don't care what happens to me...I just want to make sure my family is taken care. My dear daughter, especially who is physically and emotionally challenged and will require care for the rest of her life," Frank says.

Jezus...the poor kid...and the hapless parents.

"Frank do you need any time to review the events...names, dates etcetera?" I say.

"No sir...I think I can remember pretty much everything. When I was in the military...behind enemy lines in Afghanistan we were trained to commit everything to memory so if we were captured by the Taliban they would not have access to any info about us...or what we had done," Frank says.

"Okay...it's showtime Frankie boy. Here's how it will work. We're going to mic you and put you in front of two cameras. Do not look at either of the cameras. Maintain eye contact with me or Ms Takahashi at all times. She will swear you in...and your statement will then be under oath and for the record," I say.

Frank is seated in a chair, mic'd with a black backdrop, like a Charlie Rose interview with low key lighting.

"Ready, Frank?" I say.

"Yes-sir, I am," Frank says.

Frank, Tara and I do a...*testing 1...2...3...* mic test for levels and we're good to go.

“Okay Hawk...*action*,” I say.

“Tape is rolling...*speed*,” Hawk says from the control room. I slate it with a clack to synch the audio on multiple cams, with the time and date, subject's name, and we're off and rolling, with Hawk switching from Cam 1 medium, to Cam 2 closeup to be able to gauge his eyes for veracity and emphasis during crucial parts of his statement.

The video interview lasts almost two hours. Frank's recall is impressive, times, dates...and names. With his natural presence in front of the camera he is a very credible witness. Relaxed, authentic and with a charming military deference...*yes-sir...no-sir and ma'am*. His answers to both Tara's and my questions are in complete sentences, unambiguous and in no way self-serving or evasive.

He starts out by giving all his vitals, full name, age, date of birth etcetera. Then describing his dates of military service, history and his background in pyrotechnics. He then goes on to describe that day when he was working at the Fernwood pipeline monitoring station, in great detail, that he had forgotten to reconnect the Ethernet cable to the VAX computer...everything. That it was an internal failure of the system, that the low pressure sensor shut-off valve had malfunctioned, and that the redundancy had failed to prevent the continued leak, partly because of the inability of the staff to manage the crisis due to inadequate training of the personnel. He absolves Tom Hyatt, the technician on duty at the time of any fault for the malfeasance leading up to the event. And even though he was not present in the monitoring station, during the actual escape event, Frank takes full responsibility for his role in the incident.

He then describes in detail how Porter hired him, and that he received \$5,000 in cash to make it look like an external charge caused the rupture and how he actually accomplished it. He describes the condition of the 16 inch pipeline before he attached the charge...that it had failed from internal forces, as the pipe metal was flayed out.

He names, Ernest Porter, Howard Roland, Corporate VP of NPI, and George Gunderson, the Regional System Administrator, all as having participated or having knowledge of the coverup. He also states that when Ernest Porter paid him the cash for his part in the coverup, that he bragged to him about how it was *so* easy to 'terminate' Jenifer Rogers and the Dr and Mrs Tehrani in Vancouver BC.

He then goes on to describe the attempt on his life by Ernest Porter to silence him with a bomb planted on his 22 foot outboard C-Dory fishing boat:

Friday and Saturday are my normal days off. I usually go fishing early in the morning...sometimes in the Bay...or on Cascadia Lake. On the

26th of October yesterday morning, uh...Friday...about 6 AM, I launched my boat, the Alicia May named after my daughter, from the Bloedel Donovan Park boat launch. By about 6:30 AM, I was on my way out, on the lake to go fishing.

As is my normal procedure, I opened the hatch to the bilge area, to make sure the bilge pump was operating, and that there was no excessive water in the bilge. Immediately I noticed a suspicious object lashed to the gas tank in the bilge. There was a red LED digital readout connected to it.

I can still remember the numbers...as it was counting down from 1:27 seconds down to zero. From my past experience I immediately recognized that it was a bomb...probably attached to the ignition circuit, with a programmed delay of several minutes from the time it sensed voltage from the ignition.

I was about a half-mile from shore at the time. I had just enough time to pull off of my heavy fishing boots and dive into the water...just before the bomb blasted the boat to smithereens. I knew immediately that it was Ernest Porter's M-O. I swam ashore, terrified. I broke into a boathouse not far from where I landed on shore. I hid there, not knowing what to do...or who to call...for almost 16 hours. I finally remembered Mr Kozlov's card in my wallet. I keep my mobile phone in a water tight compartment in my fishing vest, in case I fall overboard. So I called him about midnight and he came and picked me up.

“Francis Adam Gutowski, has this statement been given voluntarily, and have you understood all the questions you have been asked and have all your answers been true and correct to the best of your knowledge, under penalty of perjury?” I say.

“Yes-sir...they have,” Frank says.

“Have you in any way been forced or coerced...to give this statement under any conditions of duress, or have you been promised any special treatment, such as non-prosecution, or reduction in your sentence, protection or relocation, in exchange for giving this statement under oath?” Tara says.

“No ma'am, I have not,” he says.

“That concludes this statement with Francis Adam Gutowski on Saturday, October 27, 2001 at 12:37 PM.” I say.

It's Saturday night, so *Negrito* has decided to take the night off...all killin' and no playin' makes for a dull Ernie-boy. He's been out at the Royal Bar and Nightclub on Holly Ave, drinking beer and playing pool all night. He's won a lot of money, hustling the local rubes, so about 10:30 he gets bored and decides to return to his hotel room and watch some pay-per-view porn with his winnings.

At about 11 PM, Ernie Porter pulls into the parking lot of the Lakeway Inn, and parks the '97 Ford Explorer right next to the Black Suburban. Parked close by it is an old beat-up Ford Van, rusty with primer spots all over. *Probably some homeless guy, Lot Camping.*

As Porter gets out of the Explorer, and starts walking toward his hotel room, the side door of the old Van silently slides open. Two very large men, wearing ski masks, and gloves, dressed in all black, get out and start walking behind Porter. With great stealth, noiselessly they quickly catch up to him from behind, one of the men puts a Taser on Porter's neck and zaps him. He falls like a stone without making a sound. As he's laying on the ground face down, the man keeps the Taser on his neck, zapping him every 30 seconds to insure the deadly Black Mamba is incapacitated. The other man, removes his gun, tucked in the back of his belt under Porter's three quarter length windbreaker and the car keys to the Explorer from the pocket of his jacket.

The men move with quiet calm, purpose and economy of movement, communicating wordlessly with military precision, using hand signals.

Realizing that there's probably video surveillance on the parking lot 24/7 a third man slowly, with headlights off, inconspicuously drives up to the other men. They place Porter, totally incapacitated by the Taser, inside the van. One of the men ties Porter up, while the other man, quickly wraps duct tape around his head covering his mouth. The man with keys, then gets into the Explorer and follows the van as it slowly drives off heading West on Holly Avenue until eventually they get to the parking lot at Zuanich Point at the marina, where there are lot of old beat-up vehicles that the commercial fishermen leave there for sometimes weeks on end while out fishing. They then park the stolen, hot-wired Van near one of the warehouses for the commercial fisherman storage area from where they had 'borrowed' it, next to some other old beaters. They walk over to the waiting Explorer, idling nearby.

They throw the rear door up, and move Porter from the Van, to the rear cargo compartment of the Explorer, beside the THULE roof box. One of the men locks the Van doors from the outside. The one with the gun climbs in back with Porter...the other one gets behind the wheel, with the third man in the front passenger seat. The whole extraction takes less than 30 minutes.

The man in the passenger seat, takes out his mobile phone, punches in a text message...*paleface geronimo*

Almost immediately a reply text, *geronimo >>>>*

Click.

They drive off into the night, to the Lummish Indian Reservation to deliver their cargo...and await further instructions.

- Chapter 28 (71) -

The following night at about 11:30, the phone rings. Again the caller ID shows *blocked*.

“Hel-lo...” I say impatiently.

“Father?” the voice says...my heart just melts, my eyes fill with tears.

“*Michael?*” I say.

“What...you've got more than one *illegitimate* son?” the voice says.

Jezus...who knew the kid was *Jewish*? That voice, with that attitude...that edge, that definitely confirms...he's my kid. *Great*...an Indian Don Rickles I got for a son. And mit da the Hawkster? *Oy ve*.

“What...*you* were expecting the Lone Ranger uh...*Tonto?*” I say which gets a nice chortle. Yea...the ol' man can *still kill*.

“Okay Paw. You're pretty funny...for a *paleface*,” Michael says with a nice out loud laugh identical to mine.

“It has been many moons, my son,” I say doing a lame Jay Silverheels, “...about 396, but who's counting.”

“Yes, Great *Very White* Father...the Sun has set on many distant horizons...about uh...12,045, but who's counting,” Michael says.

“Did you do *actually do that in your head?*” I ask *very* impressed.

“One of the many skills required for Indian Brave's right of passage into modern manhood is learn calculator app on phone,” he says followed with a grunt.

So we talk for over 2 hours. It's very natural and surprisingly with no awkward silences. He tells me about his childhood and his life on the reservation growing up with his mother and grandfather Leonard Eagle Feather.

When he starts to tell me about his mother, his tone becomes more somber, reverential. I sense the deep bond that he had with his mother, as I still do with mine. *Wait 'til Pia finds out she has a grandson!* I tell him how much I loved his Mother, and how sorry I was to hear of her passing.

“You mean her murder. Even after all these years...neither Grandfather nor I have ever gotten over it. It is a deep wound that refuses to heal...until...” he says.

Finally, he tells me about his work and that with his resources at his job, the whole time he has been able to actually hack our network computers, and to track the whereabouts of Ernest Porter down to his GPS coordinates. He says he hacked our network because he became aware of the intrusion by the bad guys and needed to know what they might know. How? He won't tell me.

He also tells me that he thinks that Hawk and I—that our lives may be in grave danger. That this Porter is a *very bad dude* and to be *very* careful. He gives me the number to his personal mobile phone. And promises to send some photos when he can get around to it.

“Are you going to be in town for the next few weeks? I want you to have some of mother’s things...that are very personal about you and her,” he says.

“Well that would be wonderful...here’s my address...” I start to say.

“Already got it,” he says. *Jesuz...is there anybody who doesn’t* have my address?

“Thanks, J-R. Nope...not going anywhere for a while. Your uh...Uncle Hawk and I have some work to finish up on this investigation of the pipeline blast,” I say.

We sign off with a promise to connect at least weekly by phone. I am in a state of ecstasy. *Gee...what a swell son I’ve got*, I say out loud, already bursting with cliché fatherly pride. I can hardly wait to get the pictures so I can *bore the hell* out of Hawk proudly talking about my...*son*.

Meanwhile, S.G. Shapiro flies in from NYC. He’s staying with Hawk and I and Frank Gutowski, who has made contact with his wife and daughter as arranged, so they now know that he is still alive.

Simon Gabriel Shapiro, is now in his early 80s although he won’t cop to it. He’s everything as advertised. Bombastic and brilliant, and absolutely charming with everyone but Hawk—some lingering *baggage* still there. He still has an eye for the ladies. Hawk has not *come out* with S.G....yet, so there’s that. But I sense that S.G. suspects it. Maybe the reason for his estrangement. Old school...no *bubbelahs*...no grand-kids to dote over, or carry on the venerable and August Shapiro Legal Brand.

S.G. is about 5’6” balding with an enormous, ostrich egg cranium...probably with a brain to match. Runs in da family. His chin is strong and pugnacious, his clear blue penetrating eyes are huge behind his bifocals, like large blue exotic fish swimming in an aquarium. His shirt is a little *100% pure wrinkle-free polyester* heliotrope number with wide black vertical stripes *to give him a little more length*. He still wears *Sans-a-belt* double-knit slacks almost up to his armpits, which went out of style in the late 70s so he must have standing purchase order at the local Value Village for any new arrivals. Finishing up this ensemble of sartorial chaos, is a pair of hot pink Nike trainers...*the price was slashed to half...so unh? I can live mit da color*.

He meets young Frank Gutowski, and immediately they connect. Turns out that Frank’s peeps a few generations ago, are from the Bronx. S.G. views the video interview, and agrees to represent him *pro bono* in negotiating with the Feds for some kind of deal to testify. I feel kinda sorry for the Fed attorneys assigned to the case, blithely walking into The Yiddish Legal Buzz-

saw.

Tara and Terrence are just wrapping up their investigation, and scheduled to leave in the next few days to return to NTSB Western Headquarters in Federal Way, about an hour South of Seattle, about a 3 hour drive away. Hmm. *Very doable.*

More on that...later.

Things seem to be settling back to normal. *Ha!*

A week later, one morning about nine, there's a knock on the door. Oso starts barking and whining...very uncharacteristic for him. He senses something.

With Porter still in free-range mode, I unholster my Taurus which both Hawk and I are now packing, chamber a round, and let hang down by my right leg. I slowly, warily open the door to see an older gentleman. In the background parked on the street, is a newer white Ford Panel Van, with the words *Navajo Nation - Santa Fe New Mexico* on the passenger door. *My gawd*, it's Leonard Eagle Feather standing there, almost 30 years older but still powerfully built, standing erect, with an aura of dignity befitting a Chief. With his now completely white hair pulled back into pony tail—pure male potency.

Next to him is a tall slender young man, with jet black thick hair, in a traditional Brave cut, with a black laptop computer case hanging from his shoulder. The paradox of that image does not escape me. The omnipresent technology seems to seep, permeate and yes, insinuate itself, even into the most resistant of ancient cultures. Sadly, it's inescapable.

The young Brave is holding beautiful hand carved wooden box, almost reverently with both hands.

“We were just in the neighborhood on some business...and decided to stop by and pay you our regards,” Leonard Eagle Feather says, still possessing that ironic twinkle in his eyes that I remember from long ago. Oso immediately runs up to the young man, and starts licking his hand. Hmm...*old pals? My Gawd...is this my son?*

“Michael?” I say in disbelief.

“Hi Paw. I said I'd get these things from mother to you...so here you are,” he says handing the box to me.

“Hamma...hamma...” I say which brings Hawk out from the living room where's he been sitting with S. G. incessantly wrangling about some inane thing.

“What's the matter Ralphie?” he says, then seeing Michael, he just smiles.

I hand the box to Hawk and reach out a grab my son. I give him a big bear hug, with Oso barking and cavorting back and forth. *Gawd he feels good.*

He returns the hug. With tears streaming down my cheeks, I look over to see Leonard with a big wide grin on his face. Then to Hawk who's beaming like the proud Uncle.

Hawk says, "Com'mon in. Mick here, is a little dumbstruck. Enjoy it while you can," he says swinging the door wide. Michael and I walk inside with my arm over his shoulder. He's slender but well-built with wide shoulders and narrow hips, maybe 6'4". He's wearing moccasins. He moves with the smooth rhythmic motion of a cougar. He's got his mother's beautiful features, her mouth and lips, my green eyes, chin, and...*honker*, poor kid. And that lanky lean body, not a bad lookin' combo if I do say so myself...and I do.

The commotion brings S.G. out from the living room. Hawk makes the introductions. "Daddy...this is Leonard Eagle Feather...and Mick's son, Michael," he says.

S.G.'s face lights up, "*The Leonard Eagle Feather, Chief of the Navajo from Santa Fe New Mexico?*" S.G. says.

"Why yes...did our people massacre one of your wagon trains?" Leonard says with that ever-present twinkle in his eyes.

"Not likely...my people, the Shapiro's of da Bronx, couldn't...*no...wouldn't*, be *caught dead* on the prairie. No, we didn't ride the wagons...we just sold them...twice. After a few massacres, thank you very much, one here...one there, pretty soon the pilgrims came back with their tail between their legs. Practically gave 'em away. Conestoga Wagon Resales...an LLC of course," S.G. says.

"*Of course*. And you sir, are *The Simon Gabriel Shapiro...champion of the downtrodden?* Your illustrious reputation precedes you. We Humble Savages salute you *sir*." Leonard says head bowed in exaggerated deference.

"Tisk tisk. But seriously, uh...Chief, I have heard of your courageous fight against the government land grab over that pipeline...and I salute *you more...sir!* The plight of the Noble Savage battling the Juggernaut Uncle Sammy...armed only mit bows and arrows, yet. Absolutely exalting, *sir!*" S.G. says, holding up his hands like Spielberg framing a shot for an epic cinematic saga of the Old West.

This has got the potential of turning into a real cheesy Borscht Belt comedy act. The Rabbi and the Indian Chief. *So a Rabbi walks into a bar...*

We go into the living room, and everybody takes a seat, with me sitting next to Michael on the sofa.

Hawk brings out a tray with a coffee pot, cups and pastries. He can be so domestic when he wants to. Someday, he'll make somebody a good wifey.

"Seriously Leonard...what business have you here?" I say, for the occasion, seamlessly falling into Native American syntax.

“Well...we have some business to conduct with our Native American Brothers...the Lumish Tribe. We are here to pick up something that they are holding for us. And I thought it might be nice if we dropped in...so you could spend some time with your son, Michael. You know, uh...how do you white folks say it...*to bond?*” he says.

“Sure...bonding's good. Works for me. Great...so how long can you stay Michael?” I say.

“I've got a week's vacation. Gotta be back to work in about 5 days...took 2 days to drive here,” he says.

“Great...stay here. We'll transport you back in time for your work...not a problem. We definitely got some serious make-up time...about 30 years worth,” I say.

“Thanks Paw. I hear there are these new fangled things called *airplanes*...that can actually *fly*,” he says.

“Yes, my son...the White-man's Great Silver Bird in the Sky,” I say.

“How about you Leonard?”

“We drove here...so I could personally take delivery. I have to pick up my cargo early tomorrow morning from the Lumish on their reservation, then got to be back to Santa Fe in 3 days...for a big *heapum* uh...*pow wow*,” he says again with the ironic twinkle in his eyes.

“Alright then. Tonight we'll have dinner here...of course everyone can stay here, there's plenty of room for you, Leonard. What does everyone want for dinner? Leonard?”

“Ordinarily I'd have my usual Chicken Cordon Bleu with a luscious cream sauce...but tonight on this rather special occasion, I'm feelin' rather adventurous...how about some barbequed spare ribs...pork baby backs?” Leonard says grinning wryly at S.G.

“S.G.?” I say.

“Chief, what...no Buffalo meat? *Oy ve*...pork spare ribs? Okay, I'll call your bluff Chiefy. Sure...I can put any man unda da table eatin' corned beef brisket, *very* lean of course, *or* spare ribs,” says S.G. the obsessively competitive Great Legal Lion, which is probably why he is such an effective and staunch advocate and formidable adversary.

“I'll grill some beef steaks...in case ya change your mind S.G.” I say.

“New Yoks?” S.G. says.

“Of *co-orse*. Okay. Steaks work for everyone then?” I say.

“Oso?” I say since he eats what I eat, only more.

“woof-woof” he says.

“The motion is carried unanimously. Done,” I say.

After dinner, Hawk, S.G., Leonard, Michael, Frank Gutowski and I...and of course Oso, are discussing the investigation and Frank's difficult situation.

Because Ernest Porter is still at large, Frank's still staying with me for almost a week, while S.G. is negotiating with the Feds to get him the best deal he can in exchange for his testimony, which could blow the whole cover-up and send some suits to some serious slam time. They're close to a deal.

"So S.G., how are the negotiations going with the Feds?" I say

"After they saw the video uh...*deposition*," he says with air quotes "everything is a go...in exchange for Frank's testimony. No jail, plead to criminal negligence and conspiracy, sentence suspended. Protection up to and including the trial, but the stickler is relocation, which we want just in case they don't catch this psycho Porter," S.G. says.

"How long do you think this is going to have to go on. I miss my daughter terribly," Frank says his eyes tearing up.

"I know kid...it's a toughie for ya. Be patient...we're close. Maybe another few days," S.G. says.

"What about the DA?" Hawk asks.

"The local DA Allison will sign off on the deal with Frank...reluctantly, clearing the Jenifer Rogers homicide in the process. But he wants to throw the book, apparently the Old Testament, at the rest. He wants blood...*murder one* for everybody, includin' the receptionist who answers the phone at NPI. The Federal Prosecutor, Chadwick H. Burrows a career politician, is a little more realistic. But his mouth is waterin'. Taking down some Armani's would *not* hurt his considerable political aspirations," S.G. says.

"Koz, in the meantime, do you think we could find a way for me to visit my daughter? She must feel terribly confused and frightened without me there," Frank says.

"Frank...as you well know, this Porter is very desperate and ruthless...and resourceful. If he should find out that you're alive...if your wife has somehow allowed that to become known to him...he could be lying in wait. You're really the only threat left. Without your direct testimony, the Feds really have no case...not one they can win just on circumstantial evidence anyway, even with the recorded deposition."

"Hey Paw...I've got some things of mother's I wanted to give you. Think we could do that now?" Michael says.

"Yea...sure...okay, if you think this is a good time," I say quizzically.

"Can we go someplace kinda private?" he says.

"Sure...my office downstairs...let's go," I say.

Michael walks over to the coffee table in the living room, picks up the wooden box, and we go downstairs. We sit down at the conference table.

“Before we get started with mother's mementos...there's something we need to talk about. That poor guy, Frank's living in constant fear for his family and himself that this psycho Porter is on the loose. What I'm about to tell you of course is in strict confidence, okay Paw?” he says which I like the sound of...*Paw*.

“Okay Michael...of course,” I say

“The *threat vector*...as Ernest Porter aka *El Negrito* refers to anyone he perceives as a danger to him or his operation...has been *neutralized*,” Michael says.

“I don't understand Michael. How could you possibly know this...and how can you be so sure?” I say.

“I'll get to that a little later, Paw. As I told you on the phone. Grandfather and I have never forgotten that mother was murdered on that dark deserted desert highway...it was a terrible death. As we drove up...as we tried desperately to rescue her from the flaming wreckage. The last words that left her lips as she was dying...was your name...*Mickey*... *Mickey*...she yelled,” he says.

“*My gawd!* Michael...” I say absolutely overwhelmed with emotion, tears pouring down my cheeks.

“Yes...she loved you deeply. *Only you*...as far as I know she never was with another man,” he says.

I immediately break-down and begin sobbing uncontrollably. Michael comes over to me, stands me up and wraps his long strong arms around me, hugging me tightly, comforting me with, “It's okay Paw...it's okay. Let it out. We all miss her terribly...the void, the unfathomable pain, has never left...it never will. But for Grandfather, me...and now you, the first step toward healing is to seek, and render justice for mother. That's why Grandfather is here. To pick up *not* something...but *someone*. To bring the murderer, Ernest Porter to justice...in accordance with our tribal customs,” he says, now the comforting adult in the relationship.

“Are you saying that you have located Porter?” I say pulling back.

“Yes...he's been more than located. An *Injun extradition*. And that is all I think you should know. But just know that after all these years, justice is finally being served for mother...for Grandfather, me and now...you,” he says smiling benignly. *An old soul...such wisdom for his years*.

“What are you going to do with Porter?” I say.

“He will be returned to Santa Fe...to stand trial, a tribal trial, with the sentence being carried out in accordance with tribal custom. Like punishment for the crime. *Fire*. Again...that's all I think I should I tell you,” he says.

“Mikey, if your Grandfather or you are implicated in his uh...extradition and or Porter's death...you could be facing serious criminal charges, son,” I say worried sick.

“We know that Paw. But what you don't know is how much I know about Porter...from the work I do. He has no one...that loves or even cares about him...not really...no wife or children. He's a poster psychopath. His disappearance would be like taking your hand out of pail of water...that is the impression he will have left when he's gone. He's like a vicious animal with rabies...that must be *put-down*.” he says with an almost disquieting ferocity, from his warrior gene pool?

“Okay, son. I can see that you...and Leonard have given this a lot of thought. I won't try to talk you out of it. I guess deep down inside I feel the same way about justice for your dear mother. But frankly, I doubt that I would have had the courage to do what you're doing. Closed subject. Done deal,” I say giving Michael a hug.

“Okay...one last thing on Porter. Frank Gutowski and I have kinda connected...and we're going to stay in touch. He's good guy, Paw. In light of this information, I think it may be safe now for Frank to be reunited with his family...with his little girl whom he obviously loves very much,” he says.

“Agreed. Okay...I'll set it up. Thank you, son for your kindness in thinking about Frank's situation. You got that from your dear mother...always thinking of others first,” I say.

“And from *you* I got what? My smart mouth? *Thanks a lot*,” he says grinning, playfully punching my arm.

“*Coulda* done worse...” I say.

“Yea. Much...*much* worse. So...I'm going to leave you alone with these mementos from mother. They will be very personal for you. I read them right after her death...I cried for days. Here Paw,” he says handing me the box.

“Okay, son. Thanks. I think I'd like to spend some time alone...with this. We'll talk later,” I say.

“Sure...anytime. Anytime at all,” he says getting up leaving me alone with the box giving me a reassuring pat on my shoulder.

I pry open the lid of the box to reveal maybe 10 letters wrapped with pink ribbon neatly tied with a bow, still in their original tear-stained envelopes, addressed but never mailed to me at my old address in L.A. I carefully, reverentially untie the pink ribbon...then open the first letter dated almost 30 years ago, and begin reading with my teardrops adding to the already tear-stained letter.

Dearest Mickey...we have a son!

- Chapter 29 (72) -

Well...the Feds finally reach agreement on the disposition of Frank Gutowski's case. In exchange for his testimony, no jail, and at S.G.'s urging, an Alford guilty plea is entered, where he proclaims he is innocent of the crime, but admits that the prosecution has enough evidence to convict, for criminal negligence and conspiracy with a suspended sentence, for his part in the disaster. After I confide in S.G. about Porter's *extradition*, he removes the demand for FBI relocation and the deal flies through the Byzantine Bureaucracy. As Frank Gutowski embarks on a new chapter in his life, he knows that we'll always be there for him...Uncle Koz and Uncle Hawk.

The first order of business is to get Frank into treatment at the VA for his PTSD, to give him at least a shot at some semblance of a normal life. He's an articulate kid...kind and caring. And he's expressed an interest in returning to teaching, maybe working with physically and emotionally challenged children like his daughter. If he can get the PTSD under control, he could become a very talented, effective educator.

On November 6th, in a major national media event, the Federal Prosecutor Chadwick H. Burrows, calls a press conference. Carefully choreographed and scheduled to maximize national viewing, standing beside him is the now erect DA John Allison in a newly purchased well-tailored suit. It is carried by CNN and all the major broadcast affiliates, with video cutaways of the perps in handcuffs being ignominiously frog-marched into the gyrating blue and red flashing lights of waiting police cars. Behind a podium on the steps of the Federal Building with the iconic Space Needle of Seattle in the background, in front of a gaggle of microphones and TV cameras and the constant cacophony of clacking and flashes of cameras:

Good morning. My name is Chadwick H. Burrows, I am the Federal Prosecutor for the Northwest Region.

Pausing dramatically, impeccably sartorial in *Brooks Brothers*, hair perfectly coiffed posing for the cameras, allowing his name to seep into the deep dark crevices of the *machina ex politica* punctuated by *Clack-flash clack-flash*.

On October 10, 2001 at approximately 3 PM local time, the City of Moody Seaport was rocked by the explosion of a gasoline pipeline. Resulting in the death of 26 people, with many serious, some critical injuries and many millions of dollars in property damage.

The cause of the horrific explosion of the pipeline was initially thought to be from an Islamist Terrorist attack on the American Homeland. The revelation of certain subsequent substantive facts coming to light have proved that initial assumption to be an incorrect one.

Due to an exhaustive investigation by the NTSB, and others, it was revealed that the actual cause of the explosion was due to systemic failure of the pipeline exclusively from internal causes. The resultant loss of life, bodily injury and massive property damage, was primarily caused by gross negligence by the pipeline operator for failure to properly repair and maintain the pipeline, and to mitigate the flow of the deadly accelerant in a timely fashion after the rupture.

Also uncovered by the FBI at the direction of Special Agent Charles Cunningham of the Seattle office, working in concert with local law enforcement and Cascadia County District Attorney John Allison, was an elaborate conspiracy of a cover-up by employees, and agents acting at the direction of certain individuals in management of the parent company, National Petroleum Incorporated, and its subsidiary Cascadia Pipeline, that operate the pipeline.

This morning I am announcing the indictment of the following individuals.

Mr Howard Roland Vice President of Operations NPI, on the charge of criminal conspiracy, and conspiracy to commit murder, who is currently in custody in Houston Texas.

Mr George Gunderson Regional System Manager of Cascadia Pipeline, on a charge of criminal conspiracy. Mr Gunderson is currently in custody in Cascadia County jail. He is cooperating completely with authorities in the continuing investigation. Further indictments are expected as this conspiracy is further unraveled.

Mr Ernest Porter, who is the owner and operator of Silent Hand Ops, a contract corporate security company, the charge of criminal conspiracy has been filed. Mr Porter also been indicted for murder in the first degree of a Ms Jenifer Rogers, and her unborn fetus, of Moody Seaport. And, Mr Porter has also been charged in absentia by British Columbia law enforcement in the premeditated murders of Dr and Mrs Tehrani of Vancouver BC.

Ernest Porter remains at large. He is considered armed and extremely dangerous. There is a substantial reward being offered for information leading to the apprehension of Mr Porter.

Additionally, the case has been referred to the Department of Justice, the Environmental Protection Agency and various other, local, state and federal agencies for review for possible civil prosecution for environmental damage, remediation, and the imposition of substantial fines and penalties.

We would anticipate many, many civil suits to be filed on behalf the victims and their surviving family members and spouses, for willful, wanton and reckless negligence demanding special, general and punitive damages, from National Petroleum Incorporated, its corporate officers and managers, and its various subsidiaries.

And finally, let me be clear. This was not a terrorist event...but that fact should not allow us to become complacent. We, all of us, must remain constantly vigilant to the constant threat posed by Islamic terrorists that would seek to do the American people great harm. I urge you to report to the FBI or local law enforcement, any suspicious activity of anyone whom you might suspect of doing the United States of America harm.

After District Attorney John Allison makes a brief statement, we would be happy to take your questions...

As the Hawkster and I are watching this obscene, political burlesque unfold on TV, a farcical caricature of itself, we both realize that this is just more business as usual. Stage managed by the media for maximum prurient appeal...and ratings.

Looks like the bereaved DA John Allison has recovered sufficiently to resume pursuit of his considerable political ambitions. And maybe after a tasteful interval, even going shopping on Match.com for a suitable arm-piece spouse—a politically correct replacement.

“Overcoming great personal tragedy and loss...demonstrating his tremendous, commitment, dedication and personal sacrifice to serve the people of the great State of Washington,” says Jake Rossitor, Executive Director of the Washington State Republican Caucus shortly thereafter, *“I am proud to announce the support of the Republican Caucus of John “Jack” Allison...as candidate for State Senator.”*

Hmm...never, ever...let a serious crisis to go to waste. If Lawyers are the second oldest profession...gotta be at least a tie for Prostitution and Politicians for the oldest profession?

With the planet facing a 6th Mass Extinction, the political system that precipitated it, irreparably broken, the one thing that immediately comes to mind at such a depressin' moment...

“Hey Hawkster...it's Happy Hour *somewhere*. Care for the specialty of the house? Burnt Bombay Martini, *mon ami*?”

“Thought you'd never ask, Koz...with two olives, *sil vous plait, mon frère*.”

So the bad guys are headed to the slammer. *El Negrito* Porter is well, uh...*toast*. But for me, there is still one piece of unfinished business. As long as one, now U.S. Senator, J. Murdock Mahoney, rumored to be secretly seeking and positioning himself for the Republican nomination for President of the United States, is still roaming and foraging the planet, Captain Ahab and I have a date with destiny...*some-time...some-where...some-day*, for my Marla. *Count on it, Jace...*

Contemplating my recent moral transfiguration, I vow to seek redemption for my own reckless, wanton disregard for the planet and its life forms. I even start to recycle my trash.

And in my rebirth, indeed Michaelangelo's Renaissance, how Koz...and now *secondary* Koz, will in some small measure, seek redress for the centuries of injustice visited upon innocent victims of abject greed and avarice by the oligarchical Corpocracy—including the profound injustice against the First Nations peoples.

Every Revolution starts with the first Rebel.

Still haunting me are the words of the powerful, anthemic speech given at UCB in 1964, today, never more relevant, of my dear friend and Great American Patriot, Mario Savio...

There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part! You can't even passively take part! And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels...upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop! And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

Jezus! Miraculously, only Hawk, Ivan and I have somehow managed to survive 1960s Berkeley, so far...

So RIP:

Mario Savio 1942-1996...53, Sebastopol, California

Charles Washington 1940-1965...25, Selma, Alabama

Byron Brawley 1942-1967...24, Kontum Province, Vietnam

And Trey Mahoney at age 16, Denver, Colorado

You shall not have died for...*nuthin'*...

But as Ruth and Joe Tarnowski had so eloquently defined, it must first be a *Revolution of Consciousness*, through *peaceful non-violent civil disobedience*, based on compassion...and love. I am reminded of the iconic Argentine Marxist revolutionary, Che Guevara.

At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality.

Even though the deaths of Sora Eagle Feather and Marla Dyson, to a degree, have been avenged, I'm left with a hollow sense of justice. My profound sense of loss still, stubbornly lingers. I have accepted that at some level, it will always be there. It is a bittersweet kind of sorrow—one that I do not want to ever completely go away.

But my sorrow is somewhat tempered by the fact that I now have Michael...*my son*, in my life. I am filled with gratitude for that revelation, and for my deep friendship and love for my brother, *mon frere*, whom I have picked and who has picked me for his best pal, one Ad Hoc Shapiro, now *Uncle Hawk*.

Will I ever be able to love a woman so completely so unconditional as Sora Eagle Feather...as Marla Dyson, and even Annie Trudeau? I honestly don't know. But I realize I'll never really *ever* find out unless I'm willing to risk the pain of loss. Maybe I *am* ready...maybe not—only one way to find out.

So maybe...I *will* give Ms Tara Naomi Takahashi aka TNT, a call tonight. Maybe not. Hmm, only 3 hours away...*very doable*.

After a great visit with Michael in which we have some very long and very emotional talks, a real father son bond is created. He's a great kid, confident, funny and incredibly bright. He promises to keep in touch, with me starting to sound like the long-suffering expectant parent waiting breathlessly by the phone, just for the sound of their kid's voice. *Yikes*.

Hawk and Michael bond immediately. They are fast pals, and it's a gratifying sight to see Hawk behaving so, uh...avuncular. Michael is fascinated with Hawk's martial arts and Yoga regimen.

“Sure, Mikie, when you return I'd be happy to share with you my passion for martial arts, Yoga...and ballet.”

Hawk and I drive Michael down to Seattle SeaTac for his flight back to Washington DC, where he is *works*. Exactly where, I know not—probably never will.

As we're waiting for his plane to board, I realize that Michael's presence is causing quite a stir with some of the ladies in the boarding area, gawking at him approvingly. He's totally oblivious to the obviously smitten women, except for one little *squaw* that catches his attention, that he graces with a smile and a wink, bringing a blushing smile to her face. He's got the *gift of the Koz*, alright...more of a curse, the poor kid.

“My son...as you prepare to embark on your journey on the Whiteman's Great Silver Bird, always remember, *We are all one child spinning through Mother Sky*. And don't be a stranger...*Tonto*,” I say trying to put on a stoic cool-breeze exterior. It's failing miserably.

“And as my people say, the moon is not shamed by the barking of the uh...coyote,” Michael says.

“Meaning?” Hawk says.

“I have absolutely no clue. But ya gotta admit, it does sound very uh...original aboriginal,” Michael says with that impish grin that he has already adopted from Uncle Hawk. Quick study.

“*Jesus!* Hawk's bad enough...now I got two of ya? What next, a rimshot? Travel safe, son,” I say giving him a fist bump.

“Sure...*kemo sabe*. Hey, Uncle Hawk, keep on eye this *big paleface* for me will ya? Take care of each other...you're my family now, ya know. *Jesus!* Talk about the Odd Couple?” he says.

Then suddenly he grabs me, giving me a big hug. He gives me a kiss on the cheek, then whispers in my ear, “I love ya, Paw.”

“I love you, son,” I whisper back, returning the kiss on his cheek, patting the back of his head, fighting back the tears, then paternally patting him on his behind as we release.

Then he gives Uncle Hawk a big hug who's also fighting the tears. *Jesus!* What a coupla sentimental old fools.

Michael A. Kozlov, another MAK-a-saurus, turns and saunters down the boarding cave, with his glistening raven hair, in his moccasins with that silent easy, big cat grace. And with one last look back, he waves and flashes that killer smile, then disappears into the belly of the Whiteman's Great Silver Bird in the Sky.

- Chapter 30 (73) -

“Hey Paw...it's been over four days and Grandfather with his uh...cargo, hasn't arrived at the Rez in Santa Fe yet. Left several messages and texts. He hasn't called, he doesn't answer his mobile, it goes right to voice mail...”, my son's message says on my voice mail inflected with no small amount of alarm.

It was late November, 2001 almost 2 months after 9/11, a month since the deadly petroleum pipeline explosion in Moody Seaport which claimed over a dozen lives, with many serious injuries, and caused millions of dollars of damage to the pristine environment.

So the previous several months had been quite a wild ride.

In the meantime, the daily quotidian demands of life and the relatively mundane task of making a living continue on unabated.

My son, Michael Ahiga (Eagle Feather) Kozlov, and now Secondary Koz or K2 as his Uncle Hawk likes to call him, was a relatively recent entry into my life. So I guess that makes me P-K...Primary Koz, or Paleface Koz as my kid delights in calling me.

Until a few months ago, I had had absolutely no idea that I even had a son. When we first connected he was a 28 year old half Ruskie half Navajo Indian, standing about six feet four, a lean and well built Indian Brave with long dense shining raven hair, piercing pale blue eyes with thick dark lashes, and a killer smile framing perfect pearls—the natural born looks of a real heart breaker, of which he was totally oblivious.

Raised on the Navajo Indian Reservation near Santa Fe New Mexico by his biological single mother and extended tribal family mothers, he spent a great deal of time with his maternal Grandfather, learning the tribal ways and customs...including a respect and veneration for his elders. He had instilled in his grandson a deep abiding spiritual reverence for the plants and wildlife that shared the land, and a fierce, inviolable ethic of preservation of the sacred natural resources bestowed and entrusted to the Native peoples by the Great Spirit. The Aborigines were the proto-environmentalists of the continent, millennia before even the existence of America.

So Michael's Grandfather, Chief Leonard Eagle Feather, was bringing the white supremacist, psychopathic killer Ernest Porter, murderer of his daughter, Michael's mother Sora Eagle Feather, to justice in accordance with tribal customs. An Injun extradition from Moody Seaport where he had been “detained”, how and by whom, for plausible deniability I was never told. He was to be returned to the Rez to stand trial—a tribal trial, with the sentence

being carried out in accordance with tribal custom. Like punishment for like crime. Death by fire.

In addition to Ernest Porter, I also had a major score to settle with one Jason Mahoney, make that now second term U.S. *Senator* J. Murdock Mahoney, from the Great Centennial State of Colorado.

Although I never was able to definitively provide enough proof to take it to the authorities to get a conviction much less an indictment, I was certain that Mahoney, then CEO of ACT, American Cable Telecommunication Inc. had hired Porter, who was responsible for the death of my lady, Marla Dyson, in 1983, in a fiery explosion that leveled my home in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, which I also was not supposed to survive.

But I figured that if Porter was dealt the punishment he deserved, a death sentence, I would have to be satisfied with that somewhat bittersweet alternative execution of justice. Now with this latest revelation, all that had changed, reopening some deep psychic scabs that were not yet completely healed...and now, probably never would.

The now politically very powerful Mahoney was so shrewd and cunning in addition to having a genius IQ, he made Machiavelli look like a dilettante. It was rumored that he was mounting a campaign as a far-right conservative Republican nominee for president, if not 2004 then 2008. I knew that I would have to bide my time to settle up with Mahoney. In the meantime I had to be patient, not one of my strongest character traits. As my venerable basketball coach told me many times, “Koz, be patient...and let the game come to you...”

The Chief had left *Chez MAK* in NW Washington over 4 days ago, driving the white Ford panel van emblazoned with *Navajo Reservation - Official Business* with Porter in the back of the van in multiple restraints. Apparently he had never made it back to the Rez. Not good. Our immediate concern was that the slimy Porter, whose disarmingly innocuous Southern Cracker persona he had cultivated belied considerable smarts and shrewdness, had somehow managed to compromise the still virile but aging Chief, holding him captive...or worse.

My other but now less pressing concern was that if Michael and his Grandfather were implicated in this...extradition and or Porter's death, they could be facing some major criminal charges...and serious slam time.

“We know that Paw. But what you don't know is how much I know about Porter..from the work I do. He has no one...who loves or even cares about him...no wife or kids. He's a poster psychopath. His disappearance would be like taking your hand out of pail of water...that is the impression he will have left when he's gone. He's like a vicious animal with rabies...that must be put-down!” Michael had tried to reassure me, with a disquieting calm ferocity. From his matrilineal warrior gene pool with maybe a little barbaric Cossack from my peeps thrown in?

“Hey Paw, how's it goin'?” Michael says from his omnipresent cell phone.

“Not bad...gettin' a little concerned about the Chief. Have you heard anything back from him?” I say.

“Nah...gotta a bad feeling about it, Paw. I pinged his mobile and got GPS coordinates...but the last known location from his mobile was over two days ago. His phone is either turned off...the battery's dead or there's no service. The coordinates 34.53 °N, 108.74 °W at about 5,000 feet elevation placed him about a hundred and forty miles almost due West of Albuquerque near but not on US Highway 40 which could mean he's off the beaten path...perhaps on foot with limited or non-existent cellular service. Been through there many times...rugged country...hot, very hot and dry high desert. Not a good sign...he'd have no reason to leave the highway unless it's an evasion tactic....O-I-T...old Indian trick,” Michael says.

“What do you suggest we do from here? Hawk and I could be at the approximate last known vicinity in two days if we leave today and give it a kick,” I say.

“Okay. Let me do some more investigatin'. I'll run his credit cards through our system...and get last known usage info for fuel etcetera, and get back to ya. May give us a good place to start lookin',” Michael says.

“Okay son. Talk soon,” I say and click off.

Hawk saunters into my office with the ever-present steaming mug of Seattle high-octane caffeine.

“What's K2 got to say about the Chief?” Hawk says.

“He's doing some more checking...but it doesn't look good. He somehow is able to ping the location of the Chief's cell phone and run his credit card purchases real time...” I say.

“Not surprised. If he's doing stuff for the NSA, he has access to all those surveillance data bases. Just from what he has told me in a cursory way, he must have super user system admin privileges which gives him unlimited access to all that top secret surveillance technology.” Hawk says.

“Think he's working for the NSA?” I ask.

“Nah...probably a contract cyber security entity. NSA uses multiple outsourced cyber tech firms to obscure and obfuscate the trail back to them. They frequently recruit young *tres* gifted computer science mavens and hackers, like K2...so they can be proselytized to the neo-liberal corporate sole and sacred priority...the bottom line,” Hawk says

“Stroking stock acquisition and shareholder retention, which *don't* *zackly* *hoit* the Deified market cap value.

“Yeap...since the Reagan years, the neo-liberal mantra has been shareholder supremacy...now the one and only priority for corporations,” Hawk says

“Sounds more than a little Orwellian. Does the FCC or FTC have any regulatory oversight over these cyber crooks?” I ask.

“Nope. As private *gonif* mega-corporations, pardon the tautology...they are essentially unregulated...for now. But it ain't Big Brother we gotta to worry about...yet. It's Little Brother, or Big Other...some of the big Silicon Valley corps....like Google, and my old peeps, Microsoft surreptitiously...and more importantly indiscernibly, do all the heavy lifting of appropriation of data from user's seemingly innocuous search queries, email and cell phone GPS physical location data etcetera.” Hawk says.

“Are you saying that they can capture and retain data from the content of our emails and search keywords, and track our location real time...without our knowledge...or consent?” I say.

“*Bien sur*...can and will. Especially since 9/11 when in a fit of paranoid hysterical rage Congress rushed through and passed the hugely contra-privacy *Patriot* Act in October of 2001. Behavioral surplus they euphemistically call it, like it's just some harmless artifact. They then share it with NSA...which gives NSA plausible deniability about spying on everyone, everywhere...including and especially in the good ol' U.S. of A. In exchange NSA gives them access to the technology, servers and huge databases, and *very* sophisticated data mining software, which we taxpayers pay for...so they can spy on us with impunity and convert the data to huge, unimaginable revenue streams,” Hawk says with alarming insouciance.

“Hmm...a wannabe dictator's wet dream...all the makings of an nascent anti-democratic autocratic secret surveillance state. So how do you know all this shit about the clandestine appropriation of data from internet and cell phone users?” I ask.

“Don't forget, *mon ami* that I worked for Microsoft for over 10 years at the highest level of security and still have my connections there, and sometimes do some contract programming, just to keep my coding chops. Even recently, I've worked on some of these very complex...and comprehensive surveillance A-I, uh artificial intelligence, algorithms myself,” Hawk says.

“And privacy rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights?” I say.

“For the big multinational surveillance capitalist ²corps, like Google, the Fourth and Fifth are now just reduced to antiquated and unnecessary...uh *quaint suggestions*. Only when they're being threatened with oversight and regulation...then they scream the First...and Second, all the way up to the Supremes...with a bullhorn,” Hawk says.

“*Paw, I think something has drastically changed the Chief's itinerary. I'm hoping that it ain't what I think it is. All the credit card activity totally ceased about the same time Grandfather went dark. I think we're going*

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to have to get out there to check it out. If you and Hawk can leave now, you can be in Las Vegas in about two days. I can fly into Vegas where you can pick me up, then we'd head South to Highway 40 and start backtracking his route. I've got a list of his purchases for fuel etcetera. up to Gallup New Mexico. Maybe somebody will remember the Van or the Chief," Michael says on the phone.

“Hawk, we probably ought to leave Oso here with the neighbor. With that thick fur coat in that desert heat, won't be very comfy,” I say.

Oso, a mixed Great Pyrenees-Newfie, is my constant companion and canine accomplice.

Hearing his name, Oso's ears perk up,

“Sorry boy, looks like you're going to have to sit this one out...too damn hot for ya, and if we can locate the Chief, with Michael, the Hawk and I, we're going to have a full load, with no room for you to stretch out, big boy,” I say.

He starts to whine then his signature *basso profundo* bark, which I take to mean, Oso is definitely not happy about being left behind. *Yeap, again well said, boy.*

“Okay boy, got it. We'll be back as soon we can,” I say,

“And Hawk, let's throw the video and still cameras in the truck with extra batteries. While we're at it, probably not a bad idea to include the Mossberg 12 gauge pump, short and long barrel, and the two nine-millimeters with a few extra clips for each and a case of 12 gauge #4 high-velocity buck load. No tellin' what were goin' to run into out there in the middle of the desert,” I say.

“Roger that, *mon ami*...maybe a venomous snake of the two-legged variety...” Hawk says.

- Chapter 31 (74) -

Friday—Late November 2001 @ 2 pm.
McCarran International Airport - Las Vegas, Nevada

Stopping only for fuel, copious doses of high-octane caffeine, fast food and relieving ourselves, after 18 hours of non-stop driving, we navigate to the Delta terminal at the arrival level of McCarran. My kid had already arrived non-stop from his work in San Jose, California, AKA Silicon Valley, connecting by cell phone that he was wheels down about 11:30 that morning.

As we pulled up to the Delta terminal, with the windows up and the A/C going full blast, I spotted all six feet four of K2 standing near the curb with a large duffel carry-on over his shoulder, frantically waving his hands to get our attention. With Hawk driving, I say, “Let’s have a little fun with J-R. Pull up to the curb, but slowly just drive by him, like he’s invisible,” I say.

“Roger that,” the Hawkster says with his high pitched *castrato* giggle.

As we drive by, our eyes straight ahead, he raps the passenger window with his knuckles, but both Hawk and I totally ignore him and keep going. He finally yells, “Hey Paw...stop!”

The truck lurches to a stop, and he walks up to the window and raps on it with more authority, “Come on Paw, open the damn door...I’ve been waitin’ for over two hours...it’s like a sauna out here,” and when he reaches for the crew cab door handle, Hawk pulls forward another 10 feet and stops. He walks up to my window again, and says, “Com’mon Paw, stop with fun and games, I’m dying out here.”

I lower the window a few inches, enough so he can hear me and say, “Who are you supposed to be, and how do we know it’s *really* you? What’s the secret password?” I say.

“Com’mon, open the damn door, assholes!” he says.

I look at Hawk and shaking his immense shaved head from side to side, says “Nope...sorry, assholes is incorrect. Try again.” And Hawk pulls forward another 10 feet. Now it’s gettin’ fun...for us.

In the side view mirror I can see him running up to the door. Now he’s pounding on the window screaming “Open the damn door you Paleface Assholes!”

Hawk turns to me and says, “Does that emotional outburst strike you as being somewhat uh...racist, Koz?”

“Indeed. And insensitive. Perhaps it's time for that long overdue father-son chat...about the political incorrectness of invoking racist stereotypes in a moment of pique. Very unbecoming,” I say.

“And I might add, most inappropriate...and rather unprofessional in today's *extre-eeeemely* ethno-sensitive corporate workplace,” Hawk says.

I look back at Hawk, “And the secret password?” he nods and says, “Paleface? Bingo!” and flashing his hairless eyebrows does a flawless falsetto Groucho Marx You Bet Your Life secret word *schtick*, “tell our lucky contestant what he's won, Koz.”

“Well uh...Groucho, he's won an all expense paid trip to...wait for it...Gallup New Mexico!” I say as Hawk hits the door unlock button with a loud audible click. Hearing this, he throws the crew cab door open, tosses in his duffel, and climbs in, loudly slamming the door.

“Really? I'm speechless...” he says.

“Think nothing of it, “ I say.

“Already have. Ha! Ha! Very funny you two middle-aged juvenile delinquents...” and starts laughing. We join in.

“Hungry? Thirsty? Tired?” I say.

“All the above...I could eat and sure use a cold one. And a good night's sleep wouldn't hurt,” K2 says.

“Okay, we'll spend the night here at the Mirage, so you two can besiege and otherwise attack the famous Vegas seafood buffet for dinner, maybe later catch a stand up comedy lounge act and get an early start tomorrow morning,” I say.

“Sounds good Paw...but I'll pass on da comedy, had enough lame lounge acts for one day...”

- Chapter 32 (75) -

After a good night's sleep, we're up and about at 6 am, and after I fit in a short jog and Hawk and Michael do some Yoga, we shower, get dressed and assault the breakfast buffet.

After filling our quart-sized coffee travel containers, by 8 am we're on the road headed South to connect to Highway 40, and the last known locations of the Chief and his cargo.

With me driving, and Hawk sitting three-quarter, facing Michael straddling the middle of the rear bench seat in the crew cab, he's already got his laptop open and on, and is connecting via a proprietary secure high speed satellite downlink with some contraption acting as satellite antenna and a router sticking out the side window. His cell phone is also connected to the downlink.

“What kind of bandwidth are you getting from that downlink, Mikie?” Hawk says.

“Not bad. Just did a speedtest.net and got almost 100 mbs,” he says.

“What about upload speed?” Hawk says.

“That's both. This is a government high speed dedicated and seriously encrypted network that is used exclusively by U.S. government assets in the field to upload huge amounts of data...including voice and video files, which as you know can be immense,” Michael says.

“Ya mean like CIA spooks and C-I's, uh...spies and confidential informants Koz,” he explains to his cyber-lame pal.

“Thanks for confirming my ignorance, Hawk. Just curious. What's the data bandwidth on our cell phones?” I ask.

“Your cell phones on a 3G mobile network, still in beta roll out in many places, on a good day, might get download and upload speeds at a whopping 3 mbps, uh... megabits per second, Paw,” Michael says.

“Ha! Growing up in the 50s we were still using tin cans with strings and then a quantum leap...crystal sets, which were considered cutting edge. I tell ya...these kids now days,” I say just shaking my head.

“So Mikey, what's the game plan?” Hawk asks.

“Gotta a list of all the stops using Grandfather's credit cards. When we connect to Highway 40 at Kingman Arizona about 350 miles West of Gallup, I think we need to work our way East and checkout each stop for gas, coffee and food, and talk to anybody that might have noticed the Van, the Chief...or anything suspicious etcetera,” he says.

“Okay. Sounds like a plan. Mikey, with all this mysterious high-tech asset...and access that you have, you finally gonna tell us about your day job?”

I ask.

“Well Paw, ya know I'd like to, but...if I tell ya, I'd have to kill both of ya,” Mikie says with his mother's beautiful beguiling smile, which momentarily forms a tennis ball in my throat.

“I'm guessin' either Booz Allen Hamilton, or some equivalent, one of the oldest government contractors, for like over a century, now specializing in cyber-snooping and security contract work for NSA,” Hawk says.

“Uncle Hawk, I can neither confirm nor deny that I work for Booz Allen Hamilton, or any equivalent. But...I can tell ya that Boz is located in McLean Virginia...and I am not,” Mikie says.

“Nice try, Mikie. Doesn't mean ya don't work for Boz...they've got satellite locations all over the U.S. including Hawaii...and very conveniently, Silicon Valley, along with multiple international locations. How do I know this? They tried to recruit me from Microsoft about 20 years ago, before the USSR imploded...to write code for top secret encryption/decryption programs. I passed 'cause I didn't want to leave the Pacific Northwest to live at corporate headquarters in that hot steam bath Virginia,” Hawk says.

Just then Michael looking out the window says, “Hey, there's a 7-11 just ahead. Probably best to fill up, and get some more java...plus I gotta take a leak...big time,” he says artfully dodging the question.

“Okay, Mikie. To be continued,” I say and take the literal and figurative off-ramp...for now.

Back on the road again, we settle into a quiet reflective road trip trance. I'm starting to get a little white line fever and feel drowsy, so I turn on the radio to keep me from dozing off, and to get some local weather and news. Out here literally in the middle of nowhere, other than a few LP, Low Power Christian evangelists broadcasting from their garage, an FM radio signal is almost non-existent. After fishing around, I finally find a local AM Golden Oldie radio station. Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Beatles, and some serious MoTown....all very nostalgic when suddenly it's Dion Warwick, singing her big hit from way back in '68, “Do You Know The Way to San Jose?” written by Burt Bacharach lyrics by Hal David.

Michael interjects, “This is great! Mother used to sing this song to me all the time when I was a kid on the Rez. I can still hear her crystal clear voice...only she changed to words to, *do you know the way to Santa Fe...*” and I just lose it.

“My God, that was our song!” I blurt out to no one in particular. I abruptly swerve and make a mad dash for the right side of the highway and with a jarring stop, I blankly stare straight ahead both hands milking the steering wheel, desperately trying to fight back the tears. After a full minute Michael says, “Paw...are you okay?”

“Been better, Mikie...been better...” I manage to whisper.

“Can you tell us what's goin' on, Paw?” Michael asks.

After a long silence, “Yea, okay...I'll try...it won't be easy. But I think you have a right to know how I met and fell in love with your mother...the love of my life.”

“Okay Paw...take your time...” Michael, now the sage old soul in this relationship says, with Hawk sitting quietly, in Buddha-like stillness.

Guess I'd been luggin' this emotional steamer trunk around long enough...maybe it was time to finally unpack it...ya think?

So, there we are, in the blistering heat of high-noon, in the middle of a hot barren desert in a pickup truck, with three adult men...lives literally on idle on the side the road, fittingly with only the constant melancholy B-flat thrumming of the groaning A/C as background music.

I begin.

“It was back in the 70s, she had left the Rez, and was just starting out on a solo singing career...doing small intimate venues, singing some covers and some of her original songs. It was a small coffee house in Venice Beach, near L.A. and I happened to be in the audience. With the subdued key lighting, I didn't recognize her at first.

We had not reconnected since that night we had first met on the Rez near Santa Fe, when I was doing a big civil investigation for an attorney client into a serious highway accident case involving the death of five members of a family from the Reservation, including five young Native American children. It was a bad one...a common carrier defendant with deep pockets, high seven figure \$\$\$\$ at stake.

After a rancorous, humbling confrontation I had had with this little spitfire over my callous attempts to sign the sole survivor, the father as a client, as I was leaving she came outside to apologize; not for what she had said, but how it was said. In that clear pitch-black night of desert sky under what seemed like billions of stars overhead, her long raven hair glistened in the moonlight with those huge intense luminous eyes, glowing like black pearls. It was magical. I think I must have fallen in love with her right then and there...yea I know, pathetically cliché but truly...at first sight.

So anyway, after her set, I invited her to have a drink. She coyly accepted like she didn't recognize me. We were just sitting there making small talk, and she said, *you look familiar...have we met before?*

Hey, that's my line... I had inanely replied.

She then began to sing the words, in that clear, haunting voice of a Joan Baez, *Do you know the way to Sante Fe?*

"My God! Of course...you're Sora Eagle Feather...a year ago...in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I didn't recognize you with your hair...the make-up!"

"Bingo...AKA Nora Feather...my *nom de guerre*. My showbiz persona for marketing, etcetera."

But after we began to reminisce and became more comfortable with each other, she again beamed that same bewitching smile, like your smile, Mikie, that completely disarms me, as every time I see it...reminds me of her.

We ended up closing the place, and from that moment on, we were never apart...until we weren't. When she told me she was pregnant, because I was such an immature narcissistic ass...I had behaved very badly. The final insult was, very drunk, I had invoked the slur *stupid squaw*. To keep her Chieftain daughter's dignity intact she had decided she *had* to leave.

But...unbeknownst to me, choosing to return to her home, to the Rez...to carry our child to term, carrying you Michael. The Chief was sworn to secrecy by his daughter so that even though I desperately searched for her for a year, I never saw...or heard from her again. I had hurt her very deeply for which I can never forgive myself. So, Michael I never even knew that you existed until just this year when you came barging into my mundane existence. And now...I thank God every day that we found each other," I say

Michael then tenderly places his hand on the nape of my neck, and says, "Thank you Paw. I'll never forget this moment that you have shared with me...and Uncle Hawk."

"Indeed, Mikie..." Hawk somberly whispers.

"And...I think you should know, that you were also the love...the only true love of her life. In all my years of being around her, I can't recall her being even remotely interested in another man...not for lack of plenty of offers.

And, because Uncle Hawk is so deeply connected to you...and now me...as family, I'd like to share with him a little more intimate parts of the circumstances surrounding her death, if it's okay with you Paw," Mikie says.

"Hawk and I have no secrets...he is my brother...of another mother...go ahead with the story, " I say.

"Okay, Paw, " he says

"So this is a tough one for me as well to even tell, Uncle Hawk, but I think you should know just how much my mother meant to just about everyone who ever met her...and to her family and our people...to which you are now a part of...an *extremely* large part," Mikie says smiling, gently laying his hand on Hawk's shoulder.

"Thank you Mikie...and Koz for including me. Not sure I'd want to be a member of family that would have me as member, but all kidding aside, I consider it an honor and a privilege. I'm deeply moved by the gesture, please go on Mikie," Hawk says.

Mikie, closing his eyes, takes a long deep breath, then continues, "As she lay dying in that fiery truck wreck caused by that bastard Ernest Porter, murdered...while, because of the intense heat from the engulfing flames, Grandfather and I could only helplessly watch, the final words she uttered with her last breaths, was your name...Mickey..." Michael says his hand gently squeezing my shoulder then releasing it.

And that's when I have a total meltdown, throw the door open and jump out of the truck. For about 5 minutes, I'm a hot mess, sobbing while manically pacing back and forth, with Hawk and Michael, my best and dearest friend and my dear lost, but now found son sitting quietly, waiting patiently...lovingly.

With all the countless mundane songs that have been frivolously composed about love...probably for the first time in my many years, with my son, I had had the privilege to experience it...to receive...and give unconditional love, to perhaps glimpse the true meaning of life.

After I finally I pull myself together, "Now I'm not a religious man...but as I enter ACT III, having been humbled countless times by the vagaries of life, including the premature senseless deaths of those who I have deeply loved...for eternity, I finally began to understand...no behold, that there is something greater, some immanent, transcendent meta-level of consciousness...the *Other*. Some may call it God, others Karma...your people, Mikie call it Great Spirit or Great Father.

But it seems to me that all the great belief systems enduring over the millennia in the history of civilization, have some genesis with spiritual or mystical experience, including all the Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Moslem...all with a common central tenet. Pretty simple really...*Do unto others as you would have them do on to you, and This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you,*" I say.

As I start the truck and we slowly re-enter the prosaic on-ramp of life...I am reminded of Rumi...*silence is the language of god, all else is poor translation*, and for the next hour there is complete and utter silence in the cab...a deep emotional, unspoken supremely powerful connection, yes unconditional love, with Mikie and Hawk that mere words fail miserably to describe...indeed, only a *poor translation*.

- Chapter 33 (76) -

By 1 pm after we exit the cathartic cul de sac of my unscheduled emotional detour, we're back on mission, approaching Kingman Arizona on Highway 40 East.

“Kingman is the first credit card fuel stop on 40 East at just about this time of day, 4 days ago. I think we should stay on the same time frame in backtracking to improve our chances of talking to the same person that might have been working that shift. I've got an image of the Chief, one of Porter and of the van from the Rez on my phone to show around. According to the GPS, take the next turn-off, and I'll check it out,” Michael says.

I pull into the service area, in front of the 7-11 and Michael hops out, to go inside, while Hawk and I wait with engine running, the A/C on max is barely keeping up.

“The thermometer near the front door says 110...it's like planet Mercury. How do people live in this? And don't try to tell me it's a dry heat,” I say.

“No argument from me Koz. A blast furnace is also a dry heat... After living in the Pacific Northwest all these years with average summer temp at 75, I could never deal with this heat,” Hawk says.

Just then Michael exits the 7-11 with 3 large 16 oz coffees which he hands to Hawk as the window whirrs down. We pour the contents into our travel mugs, and toss the paper cups and holder in the trash.

“Any luck?” I say.

“Nope. No one saw nothin'. This one was a long shot anyway. I am able to view the complete sales receipt, and this was for gas only, so I doubt if the Chief, or God forbid Porter would have even gone inside. The next stop is about 300 miles or about 6 hours East, Defiance, a wide spot in the road about 20 miles West of Gallup. The sales receipt shows coffee, a couple of hot dogs and nachos, which probably included a piss break, so somebody may have seen something,” Michael says.

“Defiance? Ha! Perfect...*andale...vamos amigos*,” I say, throw it in drive and floor it.

About 7 pm we make Defiance, and pull into the AM-PM mini-mart and gas station. It's now totally dark. We all go inside to take a leak, while we leave the truck fueling up, with the engine still running to keep the A/C on. Michael walks up to counter where there's a young Native American girl, in her early twenties. She's a beauty...her fine features and cafe latte complexion remind me of Sora. She probably lives on the Ramah Navajo Indian Reservation, maybe 20 miles South East.

As we're standing at the coffee counter, watching these kids navigate the age-old dance of mutual attraction with the opposite sex unfold I'm somehow consumed with a wistful recognition that those days are long gone and over for me. O-hhh, to be young again...I wasn't much older than Michael when I had first met Sora.

"Hi, how are you doing?" he says in his native Navajo tongue flashing that 1000 watt smile. She is obviously instantaneously smitten by this tall, dark and handsome young buck and that electric smile, but manages to stammer a flustered response back in Navajo, "Uh...fine...good. And you?" Her name plate gives her name as Catori

Now in English so we can understand the conversation, "Good, thanks. Your name is Catori? A *beautiful* name, it suits you...it was my grandmother's name."

She blushes, and smiles shyly her eyes momentarily downcast, then looks up, "Thank you! What's your name?" she says.

"I'm Michael...*very* nice to meet you. I'm wondering if maybe you would be able to help me out. We're trying to locate my Grandfather. He went missing about 3 days ago, on his way to the Navajo Rez in Santa Fe. He would have stopped here for gas, some food and maybe to use the restroom. I have a picture of him...and his vehicle, a large white van from the Rez," Michael says.

"Okay. Let me see the pictures," she says still beaming.

Michael takes out his phone and starts scrolling through the images. When she sees the picture of Porter, she yells, "Stop...I remember this creepy guy...dirty, unshaven and he stunk...he had big tatt of a snake on his fore arm. He came in, got some food and coffee, paid with a credit card then he tried to hit on me...big time...to get me to come out to his van. What a creep!" she says.

"Was this the van?" Michael asks showing her the picture on his phone.

"Yeap...that's it," she says.

"Do you remember if it was headed East or West?" he says.

"I can't be sure, but...I think the van pulled in from Gallup and was headed West toward Kingman," she says.

"Do you remember seeing this elderly man...he's my grandfather, Chief Eagle Feather from the Rez in Santa Fe?" Michael says, showing her the picture of the Chief.

"No...I don't remember seeing him. But...now that you mention it, I overheard my father, who is an elder in the tribe, talking about someone who had wandered into the Rez a few days ago He was an older gentleman...in pretty bad shape," she says.

"Can you call your father, and ask him to talk to me?" Michael says.

"I can do better than that...father is the manager here...he's in the back doing paper work. Do you want me to get him?" she says obviously eager

to please her new acquaintance.

Hearing this Hawk and I non-nonchalantly wander over to the counter area next to Michael.

“Yes! Please...thank you!” he says, then nodding toward us, he says, “by the way, this is my Paw...and my uncle.”

She nods quizzically at the Paleface odd-couple, shrugs, then disappears into the back of the store and soon returns with a middle-aged Native American gentleman with the bearing and dignity of an elder. His facial features are not coarse, but more refined like there are some European genes from somewhere along the way. He's handsome guy with intelligent kind coffee eyes. His daughter has the same look about her. His long graying hair is in a single braid down his back held by a beaded barrette.

“This is my father Edward Lone Dove. Paw, this is Michael and his father and uncle...they're looking for this gentleman,” she gestures toward the photo on the phone which Michael holds up to him.

Edward Lone Dove politely nods to Hawk and I, and with a faint sardonic smile, pulls his glasses out of his breast pocket, and looks at the photo, studying it for what seemed like a long time.

“I think it could be the gentleman that wandered into the Rez several days ago, but I can't be positive,” he says.

“What kind of condition was he in?” Michael asks

“I'm no doctor but I'd have to say, he was in near critical condition...close to death. His face had been badly beaten...almost unrecognizable...and he had been stabbed in his right side. He had lost a lot of blood. He was disoriented from lack of water, and loss of blood...could barely speak. His wallet and ID were missing...and he had no cell phone. We had no way to contact anybody for him. But he was adamant about one thing. He refused to go to the hospital, and asked for the tribal Medicine Man. With his age, it's a wonder he survived out there in that desert without water.” he says, from his diction and vocabulary, obviously well educated.

“Where is he now?” Michael asks.

“He's still at the Rez...the Medicine Man says that he's a tough old buck...and that he thinks he'll survive. But unfortunately he doesn't remember much about what happened to him...or about himself. Apparently he has a concussion from being hit on the head...numerous times.” he says.

“Can you take us to him?” Michael says.

“Yes. You can follow me back to the Rez, we can leave now if you like,” he says intuitively sensing the urgency of the situation.

“Thank you...very generous of you, and your lovely daughter...we're right behind you in that dark blue Ford pick-up.” Michael says.

Then he reaches over and takes Catori's hand, gently squeezing it and says, “Thank you, Catori...I'll have to find a way to show you my deep

appreciation. Any suggestions, here's my cell phone number.” Which puts a broad, beautiful smile on her lovely face. Smooth...very smooth...and very sweet. The kid got the kindness gene from his mother...from me he got 'the gift' with women...which in my case turned out to be a curse...sadly for the women, as well as myself. More on that later.

He then scribbles his number on a napkin, smiles broadly at her, and with the fuel topped off, we're off to join up with the Chief.

- Chapter 34 (77) -

Following Edward Lone Dove, gives us some time to assess and discuss the situation. There's no doubt now, that somehow the Chief was overpowered and that Porter is now in the wild.

“Porter's pretty savvy about tech stuff, so I doubt he'll turn on the Chief's phone again. He must realize by now the Chief's disappearance will have triggered a response from us...or the authorities. So he can't keep using the Chief's credit card without revealing his approximate location,” Hawk says.

“My guess is, if he hasn't already, he will steal or hijack a car, probably the later so he could have access to the vic's phone, credit cards, and cash if any, like forcing a sizable ATM cash withdrawal...maybe hold them hostage for insurance. By now, I'm sure he's ditched the van...too conspicuous. Michael, can you query the system to see if there is a recently reported car jacking and kidnapping in the area, a Federal offense, which would trigger an FBI referral and response?” I say.

“Okay. I'm on it.” a few minutes later, “Bingo, Paw. Yesterday evening...in Kingman. A car jacking, and kidnapping of the owner...still missing. Looks like the car is older and not GPS traceable like the On-star models...an inconspicuous 95 Chevy, a mini van driven by a mother of two teenage girls, from a supermarket parking lot. There's already a statewide B-O-L-O, A-Z and N-M. The husband reported her missing when she didn't pick up the kids from soccer practice. He can keep her restrained and hidden in the back of the van indefinitely...no problem. I hope that's all he does to her...that bastard,” Michael says.

“Okay, according to the highway signs, it looks like we're just now entering the Ramah Navajo Indian Reservation. We'll have to pick this up later after we can assess the Chief's condition, and ability to travel,” I say.

It's a fairly typical ramshackle Reservation, sorely in need of major maintenance and repair. It had taken us about 30 minutes and now away from city lights, pitch dark. It is more than vaguely reminiscent of my visit to the Navajo rez many many uh...moons ago, where I first encountered Chief Leonard Eagle Feather, and the beautiful beguiling Sora Eagle Feather, Michael's mother. Tragically, I suspect no different than most so-called reservations...with the same faint ambient scent of hopeless despair...sadly not much has changed from over 20 years ago.

As we approach the center of the housing area, I am beset with an intense *deja vu*...the same decrepit, unmaintained buildings, the stench of untreated sewage. As our headlights play on several groups of young braves on a porch with the Community Center sign ominously hanging askew from one end, eerily swinging in the the breeze. It could be the same young men...drinking beer, laughing loudly, yelling and singing with a boom box

blaring heavy metal in the background, the pungent smell of pot is pervasive. Again, as before, by 8 pm they are already stupid fall-down drunk.

The same distrust of any outsider, especially White men. To them, after decades of invasive visits from the Bureau of Indian Affairs officials, and Federal law enforcement like the FBI, any white man must look like an undercover cop...or worse, a narc—and trouble. We get the same the hard stare of hostility, with a few of the bucks repeating the same obscenity...*Ch'iidii off* in Navajo along with the universal middle finger salute, meaning the same in any language. But the tragic reality on the Rez, like most third world impoverished places...*nothing changes much, if nothing changes...*

As we make our way through the Rez, Michael just shakes his head, “Such poverty and privation...heartbreaking...sadly it reminds me of growing up. It's so damn unfair. These folks, our people, are forced to live in sub-human conditions, like totally disposable social cast-offs...which they are. Statistically, probably half of those young braves will be dead before 40, from either alcoholism, suicide or car accidents from drunkenness. That doesn't even include an epidemic of highly contagious hepatitis C from I-V sharing drug use, rampant obesity and untreated diabetes which killed my mother's mother at a relatively young age, leaving mother to raise the other kids.”

I catch Michael's eyes in the rear view mirror, “Michael, I am so thankful that you found a way out of this. Maybe someday in some small way, perhaps as a role model for the youth, you can help others to escape the cycle of despair of the Rez.”

“Yea...but if it wasn't for Grandfather, I probably would have been on that porch myself...getting wasted before most every sundown. I owe him everything, Paw. God, I pray that he's okay...I don't know what I'd do if...” Michael says, a single tear streaming down his cheek.

“He must know that country like it's his backyard...if anyone can survive out there with nuthin'...it's probably him,” Uncle Hawk says trying to console the kid.

We continue to follow Edward Lone Dove until he stops at one of the units, which looks more like a weathered old abandoned army barrack, gets out of his truck and motions us to follow him into the unit.

Knowing what he had been through, because of the Chief's age, I prepare myself for the worst. It was just a few weeks ago that I had answered a knock on the door. My gawd, it was Chief Leonard Eagle Feather standing there, with for the first time, my son Michael, almost 30 years older but still powerfully built, standing erect, with an aura of dignity befitting a Chief. With his now completely white hair pulled back into pony tail—pure male potency.

We go inside, a dimly lit room with a single bare light bulb nakedly hanging from a wire from the ceiling. The dank smell of mold and mildew permeate the room. There, sitting on a folding chair at an old folding card table facing us is the Chief, face black and blue with cuts and abrasions, still very swollen, talking to another man who we assume is the Medicine Man.

Michael yells, “Grandfather!” and rushes toward him. The Chief stands, looking disoriented and confused, and says, “Sorry, young man, but do I know you?” Michael freezes, his face betraying alarm and distress and says,, “It’s me, your grandson, Michael!” then with a big grin, the Chief takes Michael into his outstretched open arms and consoles him, “I’m fine, Michael, I knew you’d find me...but what the hell took you so long?” hugging Michael tightly winking at me.

“Oh *real* cute. *Everybody’s* a fuckin’ frustrated comedian...” Michael says grinning.

I’m amazed at how well he looks. He’s lost some weight but is in remarkably good condition considering what he must have gone through. The Medicine Man was right...he’s one tough old buck.

Michael draws back smiling, “Well you coulda’ made it *a little* easier...some smoke signals would have been a nice Injun touch. What the hell happened?”

“It is humiliating, but if I must. At one of the stops we made along the road, he said he had to take a shit. He was acting like he was very weak with dysentery. I wasn’t going to wipe his ass and I didn’t want to deal with the stink of diarrhea the rest of the trip. Said he needed help just to be able to stand up...and I bought it. Stupid. So, in a mental lapse...I released one of his hands so he could wipe his ass. That’s when he got the better of me, threw me in the back of van, and drove me out to the desert.

After beating on me for awhile, he finally got tired and stabbed me with my buck knife I always carry, in the right side to finish me off. Thankfully he missed anything important. I played dead...frankly one of my better performances, an O-P-T. Playin’ dead convincingly, lying perfectly still is a much underrated skill. So anyway he left me out there for coyote food. I knew I was near the Rez, and the general direction was North, so I just started walking...mostly in the cooler early morning and at night using the North star for bearings. Took me two days. When I finally got here, with no water and down a quart or so of blood, I was not in very good shape.

But I did not want to be taken to the hospital, for fear the authorities would get involved. So I acted like I couldn’t remember what happened or who I was until I was well enough to leave. Because you were raised as a Navajo Brave, a warrior, I knew you would come for me. We still have some unfinished business...for your mother, with that bastard Porter, which I will personally, and with great pleasure, execute, “The old warrior Chief says filled with a chilling vengeful payback.

“O-P-T, playin’ dead, an Old Possum Trick?” I ask

“Nope...Ol’ Paleface Trick...Battle of Little Big Horn, Jack Crabb, who survived the massacre playin’ dead, played by Dustin Hoffman, 1970 in “Little Big Man”. Watched many times, my all-time favorite movie. Custer’s Last Stand...final score, Redskins 272, U.S. Cavalry 31 And we’ve been payin’ for it ever since...” the Chief says.

“How do you feel now, Grandfather?” Michael asks.

“I’ve been better, but I’m okay to travel. Porter’s got a three day head start on us...and my great grandfather’s scalping knife. Maybe we shall see if it still does the job, so let’s *vamos*,” the Chief says.

“But Grandfather...would that old knife even be sharp enough?” Michael asks.

“The duller...the better,” the stone faced Chief says.

I look over at Hawk. He just smiles and says, “Hard wired...”

“Uh okay...But first I think we need to report the Chief’s van stolen, so it can be located and recovered, which may give us a starting location.

Michael, call the local police and tell ‘em you’re reporting the theft...in Kingman, for you aging grandfather who doesn’t remember much, and is too ill to talk on the phone. But keep it vague,” I say.

“Done Paw,” Michael says.

We thank Elder Edward Lone Dove and the Medicine Man George Sitting Bear for all the care, kindness and generosity they have shown the Chief and offer to compensate them for their time. They politely refuse. “You can repay us by getting that Paleface bastard,” Edward Lone Dove says with the same warrior vehemence.

So, with our first priority to close the distance with Porter, we’re on the road again, heading due West for the last known whereabouts of one Ernest Porter AKA Black Mamba.

- Chapter 35 (78) -

On the road, Michael gets more detailed information about the car jacking, “It was at a Walmart...in the parking lot. No known wits according to the P-R.”

“The P-R must list the address, more than likely, that's where we'll find the Chief's van,” I say.

“I've got an ignition key in a magnetic hide-a-key in the left front wheel well,” the Chief says from the rear seat.

“Sounds like another O-P-T,” I say

“Nope...like our land, yet another thing the White Man has *appropriated* from the Indian. We were hiding keys, before there were cars...or even locks,” the Chief says with a twinkle in his eye.

“Okay Chief, if you say so. Anyway...let's head straight to the Walmart. Maybe we get lucky before the cops find it, so we can report it recovered and not have to answer any inconvenient questions about the circumstances of the theft, etcetera,” I say.

At about 3 am we pull into the deserted Walmart parking lot. It doesn't take us very long to spot the Chief's white van, parked way in the back, backed in with the front license plate missing, among the several old beat up cars and trucks of blue-tarp-duct-tape homeless urban campers. Porter probably stashed it there to delay the cops finding it to buy some time and maybe not connect it with the car jacking from the same parking lot.

We all get out, and the Chief, locates the hide-a-key, where he finds a broken window with the driver door unlocked. He just smiles, shakes his head, and says, “Whoever took what was useable in the truck, I'm sure they needed it more than I...” slides behind wheel and turns the key in the ignition. It starts right up.

The truck appears none the worse for wear and drivable, with enough gas to get to a gas station. Over the thrum of goosing the accelerator the Chief yells, “The front license plate and screws are on the front seat. I think it can be driven back to the Rez in Santa Fe...no problem.”

“Well, I really don't think there's much more we can do here in Kingman. Porter's probably switched cars by now, and is in the wind, so I don't see any point in sticking around this pizza oven. I think Michael and the Chief should drive back to the Rez, and Michael can return to San Jose out of Albuquerque,” I say.

Okay, Paw...then what?” Mikie says.

“We'll talk more after we're all back home, and decompressed. And I think that the Chief should get checked out at a hospital, at least by a doctor. A

concussion is nothing to take lightly,” I say.

“Sounds like a plan, Paw. Thanks for everything Paw and Uncle Hawk,” Michael says giving us both a bear hug.

“Indeed, my thanks to you both,” the unusually laconic Chief says shaking both of our hands with a palpable tremor, the reality of his ordeal now visibly registering its toll on the aging Chief.

“Okay. Michael, call the local P-D around 8 am and report the vehicle recovered at the Walmart...and that it's drivable and you're going to return it to your grandfather in Santa Fe. And don't forget to tell them to remove the N-M license plate and description from the B-O-L-O so you don't get busted for G-T-A, grand theft auto,” I say smiling.

“What if the cops ask me how we found the vehicle?” Michael says.

“Tell them that your grandfather Chief Eagle Feather is a Shaman, and that he had a vision...” Hawk says smiling..

“And a voice whispered to him, *always low prices...*” I say.

“That works for me. Done Paw...love ya both,” Michael says grinning.

“Thanks son, back at ya. Travel safe and give us a call when you get home,” I say.

As Hawk and I watch Michael and the Chief drive off, I am left with a bone deep, dark sense of foreboding that as long as Ernest Porter is in the wind, until Porter's sentence is carried out, we'll never have any peace or closure.

Like punishment for like crime...make that crimes.

As we were driving back to Moody Seaport, with a lot of time to talk, I asked Hawk, “So what do we know about Porter that could inform us of his next moves on the board, and where we should go from here?”

“I've got a contact at the Southern Poverty Law Center, an NGO domestic terrorist watchdog organization—a cousin, Uncle Irving's daughter, Sarah Shapiro's a staff lawyer. After the Chief disappeared, I asked her to dig up what she could on Porter. They've got a whole file on that bastard. According to Sarah, he's a very bad dude. And *tres* dangerous,” Hawk says.

“Ya think?” I say.

“She warned us to be very, very careful. Even though he presents a good ol' boy Cracker image, he's no dummy. Do not underestimate his smarts, and cunning. Just yesterday I received an email from her with a huge pdf file attached, SPLC's file on him. This morning about an hour ago was the first opportunity I've had to take look at it.” Hawk says.

“Can you forward it to me, with the attachment?” I say.

“Done,” Hawk says.

“While we've got some time to kill driving, can you give me the distilled Cliff-notes version? I'll review the file in more depth when we get back home,” I say.

“Okay. First a little background. As we already know, in November of 2001, The U.S. Justice Department indicted National Petroleum for the attempted cover-up for the grossly negligent underground pipeline disaster in October of 2001 in Moody Seaport, in which Ernest Porter was a named indicted co-conspirator, still at large. Porter was President and CEO of SHOPs, Silent Hand OPs at the time. A nice turn of phrase on the father of free market capitalism, Adam Smith's "invisible hand" of the controlling forces of the marketplace in lieu of government regulation.” Hawk says.

“Location? Any specific details that would fill in the picture a little more than we already know?” I ask.

“According to Sarah's excellent summary narrative which she generously created, the home office was strategically located in Chula Vista, California about 5 miles from the Mexico Border. Which we already knew, the recently constructed Rad-right Crowd-funded multimillion dollar 500 square acre training facility and armory for domestic paramilitary like White Nationalists, is a convenient logistical gateway for access to oil rich South America where many petro-corporations, and an occasional drug cartel, had need of his services,” Hawk says.

“Not a paramilitary corporation like Blackwater?” I ask.

“Nope. But just to review from what we already know, SHOPs, unlike the paramilitary equivalent of Blackwater Worldwide, founded in 1997, a private military company, most of the clients of Silent Hand OPs are non-governmental organizations, NGOs, large multi-national corporations, huge international energy, like National Petroleum, and manufacturing conglomerates, who occasionally need clandestine special OPs,” Hawk says.

“What's his background and training?” I ask

“Porter, who founded SHOPs in 1998, is an ex-caseworker, from the Special Activities Division, SAD, of the CIA, specializing in "black OPs". Formed in 1947 by the National Security Act, the CIA's mission was to obtain "through any means necessary" Signal Intelligence or SIGINT, including audio and/or video, and photography surveillance, and Human Intelligence or HUMINT, "to get eyes on" intel, and if possible, to compromise security of US political enemies, of which there was no shortage, according to the leadership of the CIA,” Hawk says.

“So what is it that animates Porter's radical right world view...his radical juices? What's his sort of *raison d'etre*?” I ask.

“Sarah believes that before Porter turned the rad corner, he was just a passionate *very vanilla* advocate for Hayek's jeremiad, Road to Serfdom, and Ayn Rand's libertarian fictional tome, Atlas Shrugged, progenitor of radical right neo-liberal free market economics. That, like many terrorists, foreign and

domestic, of which she believes he most certainly is, he became more radicalized as the internet gained world wide popularity and penetration, a positive feedback loop of an all-you-can-eat buffet of assorted anti-academia nuts and world wide stage for every crackpot, and conspiracy theorists in the U.S. indeed *tout le monde*. A greenhouse for virtual domestic proto-terrorist cells in chat rooms, forums and websites, essentially overnight,” Hawk says.

“So SPLC classifies him as a domestic terrorist...and a threat to national security?” I ask.

“Yeap. A poster boy. As a self-proclaimed white supremacist, he was a true believer in the white supremacist D-I-Y insurrectionist Bible, the 1978 novel, *The Turner Diaries*...which meshed nicely with an avowed belief in Hitler's paradigmatic inherent genetic superiority of the Aryan race.

As a Jew, I'm well acquainted with that Teutonic Twerp, Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Nazi Minister of Propaganda, one of the masterminds of the Final Solution, AKA The Holocaust. Taking advantage of the economically destitute, desperately vulnerable German people during the worldwide Great Depression, and exploiting the Draconian measures imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles ending W-W one. Then Goebbels resurrected, no pun intended, the tired anti-Semitic trope that Jews, even though it was the Romans who nailed him to the cross, collectively murdered Jesus, also referred to as “deicide,” which has been used to justify violence against Jews for centuries. Demonizing the Jews, The Christ Killers, as the eponymous Martin Luther, a virulent anti-Semite preached in the 16th century, was at the root of most if not all of Germany's problems for millenia, Hitler had seductively and successfully repackaged Nietzsche's *ubermensch* as an invincible, and anti-Semitic, German super-race—more Master-race Mojo bullshit,” Hawk says.

“And, as usual, Villie, mit a W as the Krauts would say, Shakespeare got there first by some 400 years, with his anti-Semitic stereotypical Shylock. Where was Porter born and raised?” I ask.

“Born is too benign a term. Humans are born, reptiles are reproduced from eggs. He was hatched and grew up in the South, South Carolina, where the secessionist fired the first shot of the Civil War...that they're still fightin'. He's as one of 2 kids, his young sickly sister sibling born to a late mid-life mother, S-I-D'ed, Sudden Infant Death, or a crib death,” Hawk says.

“Or maybe a crib snuff...Ernie's first notch on his belt against defective genes?” I say

“Young Ernie boy was identified as having attended KKK lynchings of Black folk...and KKK tailgate parties as a regular Sunday afternoon family outing. A family that *hangs*, together...stays together...” Hawk says.

By the way speaking of reptiles, anymore than we already know about the origin of his sobriquet, Black Mamba?” I ask.

“Porter's special ops code name *Black Mamba*, a rich irony from his Force Recon days, was named after one of the most deadly venomous snakes

in the world, the Black Mamba. Was curious so I Googled it. Just to reinforce the threat assessment to us...they are known for their stealth, highly aggressive behavior, and ability to strike with deadly precision. They are also the fastest land snake in the world, capable of reaching speeds of up to 13 miles per hour,” Hawk says.

“Sounds like a one man-mayhem band,” I say.

“A real sweetheart. At six foot two, a wiry, lean and *very* mean, professional killing machine, a perfect made-in-America specimen of the U.S. military. Your tax dollars at work. And oh...on the circumference of his right forearm, he sports a tattoo of three coils of a Black Mamba, with the long forked tongue flicking from the head spelling “*El Negrito*” on the back of his right hand,” Hawk says.

“Sounds positively *tres noir chic*. What's his history of military service?” I ask.

“Because of his ability, like the Black Mamba, to move undetected in the dark recesses, to attack with surgical precision and legendary lethality, then quickly disappear into the darkness, he was particularly adept at Black Ops—liquidating perceived enemies of the U.S. government sponsored Contras, against the Sandanistas of the socialist Nicaraguan nationalists *coup de etat* of the dictator strongman Samozza in the eighties. Eventually, he came to be known simply by his Spanish speaking *compadres* in the clandestine proxy war orchestrated by the CIA, subsidized by the U.S., as *Negrito...Blackie*,” Hawk says.

“Yeap, dark...very dark,” I say.

“And in addition to his extensive Special Ops training, he had highly honed his skills at staging accidental deaths of political enemies of the U.S. government, which served him well with his corporate clients in the private sector. Sadly you have personal experience of his consummate killing skills...the deaths of your beloved Sora Eagle Feather...and Marla Dyson, both by fire,” Hawk says.

“Not just deaths...brutal premeditated murders masterfully made to look like accidents by that bastard! For Porter, and especially Mahoney, forget the so-called judicial system...he's too slimy, and can either delay or buy his way out with his deep pockets,” I say

“Where due process takes a highly paid recess,” Hawk adds.

“Like I said Hawk, like punishment...for like crimes...in a time and place...and a manner of *our* choosing...” I say.

“Should go without saying, but it time to start playin' offense. We've been stuck on the 50 yard line long enough...reaction instead of proaction. time to cause some major pain...some smash mouth in the trenches grinding ground game. I'm all-in with ya my brother,” Hawk says.

“Thanks, brother...I know that...but thanks for saying it,” I say reaching across giving the Hawkster a fist bump.

“So any way, Koz, fast-forward to the present. Sarah's sense of Porter's end-game is that because of his *good ol' boy* demeanor which he has consciously cultivated to gain the confidence of his unsuspecting targets...he is particularly skilled at prosylyzation of the alienated, relatively uneducated, aggrieved white males of the U.S. working class to the White Nationalist Rad-right agenda. A True Believer, using Hitler's playbook of demonizing everyone that ain't lily white as Goebbels, the oft quoted darling on Rad-right websites had famously espoused: *Successful propaganda is nothing more than gradually, through constant repetition, allowing your audience to absorb, habituate and eventually normalize the lie,*” Hawk says.

“But Hawk, does Sarah *really* think that the potential for the White Nationalist, make that Supremacists movement, could become that widespread and powerful?” I ask.

“Well, why don't you ask her yourself...she's coming to Seattle in two weeks for a national NGO symposium, Radical Right Nativistic Nationalism...a keynote speaker on the alarming rise of populism and domestic violent extremism in America,” Hawk says.

“Sounds like something we might want to take in...maybe pick up a night of Japanese jazz at Jazz Alley...keyboardist extraordinaire Kieko Matsui's in town that week,” I say.

“I'll give her a heads up...see if we can get together with her for dinner etcetera. By the way...on top of being brilliant, ain't too hard on da eyes, *mon frere,*” Hawk says with a grin, always the Yiddish *mamaleh* matchmaker.

“Great...just what I'd need...another beautiful brilliant broad with a big brain, *oye vey,*” I say.

“Clever...poetic even mit da cutsey *B* alliteration...and add to your *B* list, bold...*bo-dacious* even. Knowing Sarah...bring your *A* game, man.

“Double *oy vey.*”

“At least she's not a *shiksa* alpha...maybe a little kosher karma is *zackly* what you need. So, anyway...in a chilling coda to her summary, Sarah quotes Porter directly from one of his radical right chat room discussions as he invokes the Overton window, a metaphor invented in the 1990s by a libertarian think tank to explain how cultural vocabularies fluctuate over time. Namely, that ideas in the center of the Overton window are universally acceptable, so mainstream that they are taken for granted. The outer panes of the window represent more controversial opinions; radical opinions are close to the window's edge; outside the window are ideas that are not just unpopular but unthinkable.

The point of the metaphor is that unthinkability is a temporary condition. With constant promulgation of a lie, over time, slowly, almost imperceptibly the window can be made to shift to make a conspiracy theory, first possible with a patina of plausibility...then through constant repetition eventually a call to arms mantra.

*“Right now we're seen as fringe lunatics. But there are more of us than people realize, and we've tapped into something more powerful than they understand. The window is not static. They can't keep calling us fringe forever. Wait two years, five years, ten years. You'll see.”*¹³ Hawk says turning off his phone, reclining the seat, and closing his eyes for a nap before taking the wheel for another shift.

13 Marantz, Andrew - “Antisocial”- Copyright © 2019 by Andrew Marantz

- Chapter 36 (79) -

We're anxious to get back, as I have a hard time getting any kind of quality sleep with my six foot six frame on a regular hotel bed. Besides, Oso doing his sentry duty pacing back and forth, will be wearing a rut in the carpet, restlessly waiting for us until we're back home, safe and secure.

Alternating driving duties, it takes us about 20 hours to drive straight through to return to Moody Seaport.

When we pull into the driveway around noon, Oso is laying on the front porch, keeping vigil, immense white head resting on outstretched webbed paws, eyes patiently fixed on the driveway. He spies the truck and sits up on his haunches, ears twitching.

As I exit the truck, "Oso...come here boy! Come to papa bear!" I yell slapping my chest with both hands.

Barking frantically, cavorting side to side to me, tail furiously wagging he rises up on his hind legs and puts his massive paws on my shoulders, almost bowling me over, barking and whining, lapping my face with his huge pink sandpaper tongue. Grabbing his huge head shaking it side to side, then give him a big hug.

"*Osito!* Did ya miss me big boy?"

Hawk just rolls his eyes, "Missed ya...ya think? I guess now with Michael, ya got two progeny in the family," with a hint of wistfulness in his voice as Hawk is an only child with no kids, and being gay not likely to have any, much to the not-so-silent disappointment of his estranged father, S.G. Shapiro, a legendary legal lion who had hoped to perpetuate the family legacy and prestigious legal brand. So for Hawk, I am the closest thing to a sibling...and family. Physically, we could not be more different—Hawk about a foot shorter, with a shaved head, and massive upper body development. A *brutha* from a different *mutha*—more than any blood brother could ever be to me, who would lay down in traffic for me, and I for him.

And when I lost my Marla in 1983, brutally murdered by Ernest Porter, he was right there for me. Without Hawk, I would not have survived the immense, overwhelming grief...and yes, guilt, because at the very least I had been contributory to her...demise.

"Hawk...she's gone. I'm not sure I want to...go on, pal," I say starting to tear up again.

"I know Mickey...I know, but for Marla's sake, you have to go on, man. Porter and Mahoney have to be held accountable. I'm all in with ya brother...until the end. Let's finish this...for Marla...for Sora," Hawk says.

And, as Sora Eagle Feather, was Marla Dyson another victim of the Curse of Koz who would both die by fire? More Koz Karma? I am reminded of Seneca's, "Fate leads the willing and drags along the reluctant." *Okay, dammit, ya got my attention! Enough already mit da kismet...and the draggin'!*

So it's time to regroup...and recalibrate our strategy to be more proactive and aggressive in dealing with Porter, and by extension, Jason Mahoney. I'm particularly interested in Sarah Shapiro's analysis of the white nationalist, essentially white male supremacy component, and the possible connection with radical right PACs in providing sophisticated political leadership, technical resource and tactics along with funding, to attempt to control the narrative in the media, including the emerging social media platforms.

It is not lost on me that the historical clandestine meeting of the Captains of Capitalism, the American Aristocracy convened by Mahoney I had attended back in 1982 of the ECC, now ripened and honed by 20 years of *beta testing* could now conceivably be an integral part of the genesis for the redefining of political power based on a radical oligarchical distribution of wealth in the world. And more importantly who controls it, how to keep it, and to what lengths it will be wielded.

To do so would first require in-the-trenches soldiers to do the heavy lifting, so-called armed *Christian soldiers*, Lenin's *useful idiots*, to create pandemonium through violent acts of terrorism and insurrection, enhanced by the resultant anarchy fueled by the increasing social chaos from climate change. Enabling the Chosen People, the plutocrats to fill...and exploit the void of governance left by the gradual emasculation of governmental institutions, and finally the eventual and complete violent overthrow of the democratically elected government.

Still reverberating in the dark recesses of my consciousness, the now U.S. Senator Mahoney's statement after the summit, his little Atlas Shrugged Libertarian rant about the inevitable chaos caused by climate change, *never, ever...let a serious crisis to go to waste. This crisis will provide the opportunity for us, the ruling class to do things that we could not do before.*

- Chapter 37 (80) -

*Nothing vast enters the life of mortals
without a curse...
- Sophocles*

Seattle WA Convention Center

Hawk and I meet up with Sarah Shapiro after her very impressive, and well received keynote speech at the NGO symposium Radical Right Nativistic Nationalism, with considerable prolonged applause.

At first glimpse, as Sarah Shapiro gave her speech, is attractive, but not what I would characterize as beautiful. She's tastefully and professionally attired, wearing a modest charcoal pants suit. In her mid-forties, maybe five feet five inches, *zaftig* but not overweight, nicely rounded in all the right places. Her perhaps prematurely aging natural platinum hair, professionally coiffed into a short bob with bangs, nicely accentuating her high cheekbones.

With large tortoise shell thick rimmed owlsh glasses which amplifies the size of her kind, warm coffee eyes. Her lips are full and wide, revealing the obligatory very perfect and very white perhaps capped teeth, of a Jewish Princess growing up in a prosperous family. Her smooth preternatural porcelain Vermeer skin, unblemished and untouched by the effects of harsh sunlight...ever, her makeup understated and modest. She somehow radiates a kindness and compassion to go along with her self-possessed confidence and aura of great intellect.

Afterward, we head over to Marco's one of my favorite restaurants in Seattle. Even without reservations, because I know the owner we score a large candle-lit four top, way in the back where it's quiet, order a round of cocktails, and peruse the menu. The more she interacted with Hawk, her first cousin, with a playful *kibitzing* familiarity, as only family members can, something within me started to stir. Her directness and her unblinking eye contact when she spoke, or intently listened...the distinct NYC cadence softened by the uniquely feminine timber of her gentle voice, only intensified her authenticity...and yes, her beauty. As the evening wore on, her appeal began to grow. She was nothing like any other woman I had been attracted to, or involved with before...in appearance or personality. But, here I was, suddenly, unexpectedly, feeling that I would like to get to know her better...intellectually of course, but perhaps, maybe even in a uh...more intimate level. *Oye vey!*

Is it possible that for the first time in my life of the many past checkered relationships with women, that I was beginning to actually entertain a mature connection with a woman based on her wholeness, and depth of character...and considerable intellect as a priority...to subordinate beauty as a

first priority? Had somehow, with the revelation that I now have a son, transformed and matured my shallow priorities? I believe the psychotherapist term of art is sapiosexual...seduced by smarts.

Ah, a another, if belated, very encouraging break-through Mr Kozlov...but I'm sorry we have no more time left today...we'll have to pick up this thread in your next session, next Tuesday...

After a second round of Johnny Walker, and requisite socially appropriate small talk, we briefly discuss her branch of the family Shapiro tree. Her father Irving, Hawk's uncle, S.G.'s younger and only sibling by 6 years is in real estate in NYC...“*of coorce*” mostly large multi-floor residential essentially tenements, in Queens where she grew up and came by her faint, charming hip NYC edge always just below the surface. Undergrad at Columbia, political science with a minor in sociology, then a J.D. from Yale law, *cum laude*...again *of coorce*.

As we began to discuss her work at the Southern Poverty Law Center, she indicated that she is an associate counsel, not required to physically work from the home base of SPLC in Montgomery Alabama.

“SPLC was founded in 1971 by Morris Dees, Joe Levin and Julian Bond, Black civil rights activist and close *confidant* of Dr Martin Luther King Jr as you know, tragically assassinated in Memphis Tennessee in 1968, the same year Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles which a long with the JFK assassination in '63, accelerated a sense of urgency about dealing with the alarming rise of domestic violent extremism in America. It operates as a 501(c)(3) non-profit tax deductible corporation with a staff of about 250,” she says.

“Where's your personal home base?” I ask.

“Because I handle much of the Left coast litigation under the jurisdiction of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, located in San Francisco, usually the last stop before the Supremes, I'm currently living in an apartment in the Richmond District...near the University of San Francisco. When not traveling for litigation purposes, like depositions or trials, I work from home online, most of the time...or the USF Law Library, just a short walk,” she says.

“So Sarah, just want to say thanks for all of the time and effort you have spent getting us up to speed with the White supremacy movement...Mick and I are very grateful,” Hawk says.

“Indeed, a *merci beaucoup*. As I have a personal interest in what inspires and animates racism, hate groups and violent extremism in particular,” I say.

“*Bien sur*, Mick. Hawk briefly confided in me about the current situation you two are facing and the tragic loss of your beloved. I'm so sorry for your loss, Mick,” she says with sincere compassion reaching over to place her left hand on top of mine on the table lingering for just a moment with a gentle squeeze...sans wedding or engagement band. Again mit da...*oye vey*...

“Thanks very much. So Sarah, your file on Ernest Porter indicates that he has deep roots in the South, that he’s a strident anti-Semite as well as an anti-Black racist...a white supremacist. It seems to me that the Blacks of the South and Jews have had to endure similar treatment of centuries of dehumanization, bigotry and injustice, and that they would want to unite against the common enemy of Rad-right White Supremacist, who do not believe that Jews are racially white,” I say.

“You’d think, Mick. The problem is, as history has tragically demonstrated many times, the sad paradox that even the oppressed have their own set of cultural prejudices developed over centuries against other oppressed groups which they consider inferior. For many, because they’re so poor and treated with such contempt and disrespect by the ruling class, that’s all they have left to cling to, that they’re better than somebody...anybody, to retain some measure of dignity and self respect.

“So Sarah, what’s the answer...how should we be looking at the problem of all this hate and lack of compassion and empathy?” I ask.

“Mick, the true enemy is not hate per se...but fear, channeled into *amorphous* anger which left unresolved, inevitably evolves into violence. The longer the grievances remain unaddressed, the more violent the social response. As FDR poignantly said at the onset of the Great Depression, *the only thing we have to fear...is fear itself*. The growing widespread misanthropy, unless it is addressed with an utmost sense of urgency, is merely a portentous symptom, a prelude to possibly another, God forbid, Civil War.

And by now we should know that you can’t cure a disease by just treating the symptom. No, the underlying cause of this alarming increase...pandemic if you will, of hate is the consequence of historical widespread and deep institutional poverty, and not just of the South. To have any chance of even slowing the spread of hate, let alone reversing it, we first have to address the massive income inequality and disparity of wealth, lack of social mobility and of course unequal educational opportunity, including job retraining and continuing technical education to replace jobs lost to automation. We *must* also increase social programs, like access to affordable universal healthcare, to instill some realistic sense of security...and most importantly hope for the poor, and their children, for a better future.

And last, but by no means least, we have to encourage worker solidarity...to resocialize and empower the workforce, to take control their own economic and social destiny...to restore self-respect, dignity and pride in doing a good day’s work for fair pay. This can...and *must* happen only by creating and protecting collective bargaining institutions, like labor unions...and workers right to go out on strike when being treated unfairly by employers.

That is why the compassionate folks I work with who are so dedicated to this socio-melioristic cause, for not much money I might add, call themselves the Southern *Poverty* Law Center,” Sarah says with a benign smile.

“Like the poor so-called white trash in the South,” I say

“Mick, in some sense they are also victims of the *Big Lie*, that since the Civil War, cohere to the *Great Alibi* that the South never *really* lost the war...that it wasn't a *fair fight* “ in air quotes “ the South was just out-muscled by the overwhelming size of the army and asset of the North. Oppressed and martyred underdogs victimized by the tyranny of the Wicked Yankees of the North. The Manichean belief that the war was *really* about the righteous *Good South* against the diabolical *Evil North*...each side fervently believing that God was on *their* side,” Sarah says.

“So this guy walks into a bar...” Hawk starts with smirk,

“Oh *puleeze*...spare us another borscht belt *shtick*,” I say.

As always, undaunted, “a cracker with a major paranoid attitude, excuse the tautology, a cocky *little shit* as usual, struts up to this huge bouncer, the biggest guy in the place and declares, *hey, I don't care how big you are, it's my God Given right to do anything I want in this bar...and anyplace else, and don't you or anyone else, try to stop me.* The bouncer politely advises him, *not when you're in this bar, so just be reasonable, behave, follow the rules and you can stay.* So the guy says, *you're trampling on my, again mit da whole God Given rights bit,* The bouncer, just sighs then calmly replies, *when you decided to come into this bar, you agreed to adhere to our rules...not just yours.*

So the guy sucker punches the bouncer in the face, hard, and when the bouncer retaliates out of self-defense, the guy cries foul, and whines, *hey, no fair, he's much bigger than me,*” Hawk says.

“Ha! Indeed, Hawk. Even with the most meticulously documented conflict in American history, many in the South, to this day, refuse to concede that the true *casus belli* was the economics and inhumanity of slavery. That includes many members of Congress from the South that still persist in the *Big Lie* of some ersatz overblown chivalrous states rights issue, George Washington's *imposters of pretended patriotism.*

Here's an interesting footnote in history, as to the ability, indeed some would argue culpability, of fictional literature to be powerful agents of social change...and not always for good. To rationalize the defeat, Southerners had retreated even more deeply into a complex victimized gestalt, where the true cause of the war was just and righteous...the noble protection of a mythical Southern Camelot, Margaret Mitchell's *Tara*, adopted from some of the most widely read novels in the antebellum South of Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott, like *Ivanhoe*...knight in shining armor syndrome. So much so, Mark Twain wrote, *Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war.* Even now...” Sarah says.

“Pure Fantasyland. As the ol' war saw goes, *the first casualty of war is truth*...”

“*And, every just war...becomes just a war...*” I say.

“And I think one could make a good case for the fact that the novels, the anti-Semitic tract, Protocols of the Elders of Zion of 1903 and again The Turner Diaries of 1978, by the way a copy of which was found in the truck of the 1995 Oklahoma City Bomber, Timothy McVeigh, was highly contributory to the radicalization of the White Supremacists movement. As you well know Sarah...it depicts a violent revolution in the United States which leads to the overthrow of the federal government, a nuclear war, and, ultimately, a race war which leads to the systematic extermination of non-whites.

Like the Bible, it's on the obligatory reading list of Thomas Paine's *summer soldier and the sunshine patriot* wannabe White Supremacist,” Hawk says.

“Indeed Hawk. And that many of even the poorest of white folk in the Jim Crow South, inculcated for generations, still maintain that they are...and always will be, genetically and every other way, superior to *any* Blackman. Ever. Period.” Sarah says.

“Yeap. In short, more White Nationalists Reductionism, Scarlet O'hara's paternalistic plantation paradise for Blacks mythology bullshit,” Hawk says

“And historical revisionism...also known as alternate reality...to feed their gerrymandered base just enough red meat to keep their cynical asses in Congress,” I say.

“While the social stigma has forced the institution of the Klan to go underground, perhaps only temporarily dormant, the virulent, and now not-so-latent violent spirit of the despicable KKK still lives on. Again, sadly that mentality...caused by the plight of the white working man...unemployment, stagnant wages and a severe decrease in perceived general quality of life, big time, has now proliferated all over the good ol' U-S-of-A. As a result, white supremacy has been steadily migrating North with the radical right, exploiting and yes, exporting the hell out it,” Sarah says with candid NYC directness.

“So you perceive that the nominally Christian KKK, is capable of a uh...*resurrection*?” I say.

“From current trends of increasing reports of terrorist-racist activity against Blacks...and Jews, I do indeed. After the release of the over 3 hour racist propaganda film in 1914, The Birth of Nation, the Klan reconstituted itself, at its peak in the mid-1920s, the organization claimed to include about 15% of the nation's eligible population, approximately 4–5 million men. Culminating in 1925 with a resurgence, as evidenced by an estimated 50,000 KKK, men, women and *children* in the light of day, in full hooded costume waving Old Glory, brazenly marching down the streets of Washington D.C. The pathology of the internet now *the* predominate toxic influence, order of magnitude of a Birth of a Nation.” Sarah says.

“Do you think the internet is the now prime mover...the most efficient vector of the fear and hate mongering out there?” I ask

“Again yes, I do. The internet is now the greatest single...and unprecedented massive toxic addiction...far greater than even an Oxycontin...not just in America, but globally. Like a biological drug addiction, it stimulates the release of the feel-good neurotransmitter, dopamine...which over time requires greater and greater stimulation, as the brain becomes more enured to the high.

Initiating a perpetual positive feedback loop that's self-reinforcing, where the user...essentially the addict, through complex data collection algorithms is only feed predigested siloed content very specific to that unique user that funnels and confirms their biases, and tragically, their racial prejudices,” Sarah says.

“If I may, Sarah...because I have actually coded some very complex algorithms...these algorithms are crafted to increase maximum viewership of content, ratings based on mouse clicks, and comments calculated to feed the users addiction. The more the number of reads, the higher the ratings, so that controversial misinformation, creates an inherent moral hazard based on users natural affinity, indeed addiction, to conflict which again is a positive feedback loop. Accurate, or uncontroversial content, by its very vanilla nature does not have the same prurient appeal...causing low algorithmic readings...lower ratings.

The social media platforms have the resource, and talent to craft algorithms that could...and should filter out almost all deliberate disinformation. Through machine learning or Artificial Intelligence, if they can figure out how to create algorithms for the very subjective, extremely complex task of driverless cars, and facial recognition, they could, if forced through federal legislation and regulation, miraculously overnight, filter out at least 90% of all deliberate obviously false misinformation.

What the social platforms are not willing to openly admit, much like Big Tobacco until the huge 1994 financial settlements with the states, is the highly addictive properties of the constant immersion and habituation of internet use. Like the CEOs of all the major tobacco corporations, the CEOs of major social media platforms, have denied, and lied under oath to Congress, that their product is not addictive, or a mental major health hazard.

So until, unless the social media platforms are held legally accountable with hundreds of billions of dollars of class action civil liability settlements, and vigorous enforcement of government regulation, they have absolutely no reason to change, as they see any regulation, as a direct threat to their already obscene profit margins,” Hawk says.

“Where do you start...when the internet is essentially no longer a commodity...but more like a utility, but with no legal accountability?” I say.

“Again, the first step, repeal, or amend Section 230 of the United States Communications Decency Act of 1996, that generally provides immunity for website platforms with respect to third-party content,” Hawk says.

“Indeed. Thanks Hawk. And, what users don't realize is that because there is no overt charge for the use of the services...it is far from free, that if you are not paying for the product...you *are* the product. Like the pusher that first gets you hooked on a drug by giving it to you for free. Holding the hearts and minds of internet users hostage...for fear of having to deal with the very real physical withdrawal pains of even moderating their addiction.

The other component that drives extremism is the very basic need of security in numbers...social acceptance by belonging to a community of like-minded. Now, actual physical communities are being replaced by virtual internet group-think communities that filter out most if not all non-reinforcing content...with little if any grasp of the past...of the doomed history of all radical extremism. Essentially virtual or cyber-tribalism.

And perhaps the most basic primal human need...for attention, which some may confuse with love. We see this in its rawest, most naked form in children when they have a public tantrum...now manifested in White Nationalism rallies...acting out on real or imaginary grievances, but unlike a childish tantrum, far from harmless, again, sometimes with lethal consequences.

The *new and improved* Klan aren't necessarily your ignorant Jim Crow Klu Klux *Klutzes*...nope, this ain't your daddy's KKK. They're now much more sophisticated...and nuanced about media, and messaging, especially on social networks. They've already begun to reinvent and rebrand themselves into more socially acceptable seemingly patriotic benign names like the evangelical Christian militia, *The Commitment Keepers* formed in 2001, right after 9/11 in your NW Washington.

The most disturbing recent development is the confluence and convergence of different hate groups, each with a slightly different flavor, spin and agenda on White Nationalism, who seem to be coalescing under one virtual political big-tent...of fear, hate and basic distrust of government institutions,” she says.

“Which groups are you most concerned about?” I ask.

“Well, *just* for starters, fascist neo-Nazis, Christo-Millennialists, and INCEL, Involuntary Celibates...” she says.

“Essentially a bunch of White fatso schlubs...that even threatening with an AR-15, couldn't get laid...” Hawk says.

“Redefines male coyote ugly. Acting out on unfulfilled sexual drive...a Freudian wet dream,” I say.

“Fear breeds hate...hardwired in the species, man,” Hawk says.

“To a certain extent Hawk, that's true. But through the millennia, there exists a highly evolved, finely honed primal survival mechanism. Now, morphed into radical organic *revanchism*. The Rad-right, and fundamentalist religious groups, because of the democracy...and exponential penetration and growth of the internet, in order to survive in an increasingly competitive

universe for hearts and minds, have been forced to retool their methods of proselytization...and retention.

To change that toxic mindset of hate beginning to pervade the culture, you first have to *collectively* change the message...from one of paralyzing paranoid fear...to a more expansive, ameliorative hope. Simply, from *me...*to *we...*requiring a very long term, patient strategy, and with our severely truncated attention span I'm not sure we, the populace, are still capable of any sustained effort, not to even mention a sense of shared sacrifice." Sarah says.

"As is the obvious case with the public response, or lack thereof, to the now imminent threat of climate change," Hawk says.

"Are you saying that it may already be too late to even stem the growing tide of domestic violent extremism?" I ask.

"Mick, it's the belief of those of us at SPLC, that the constant 24/7 cacophony of vitriol and polarizing rhetoric of the unregulated, uncurated content on the internet, social networks etcetera, unless there is some way to remedy that, and very soon, it does not bode well for the future of the democracy. In the end, economics, politics and...religion, over centuries nothing's changed much, it's still all about the inherent power of branding...differentiation, and growing and maintaining market share.

"Yea, being raised Catholic, that whole Garden of Eden original sin B-S...like a crib death of an innocent infant, unless baptized by a priest, spending an eternity in limbo. Or my fav, burning in hell for eternity, just for eatin' a Big Mac on a Friday...unless you beg for forgiveness from a priest in confession? Oh *puleeze*." I say.

"All the while, sodomizing young, innocent, probably poor and defenseless boys, on the side...leaving many evangelical so-called Christians with the unshakeable, vicious lie that conflates pedophilia...with homosexuality," Hawk says, just being an openly gay man, himself having felt the sting of being accused of being a pedophile.

"Indeed religion, the Lutherans, after the eponymous Martin Luther of the 16th century Protestant Reformation in Germany, who himself, was a very vocal and ardent anti-Semite.

History informs us that the social phenomenon of the White Nationalists hysteria, the mass emotional...and political takeover of essentially a whole country, resulting in a Nazi Germany, with little or no resistance from the populace was made possible by the same tactics we're seeing today...only with much greater reach, rapidity and effectiveness with the advent of internet," Sarah says

"Sarah, do you really believe that the country could descend into a civil war?" I ask

"The only component presently missing for an eventual Rad-right attempt at a *coup d'etat* is the rise of a charismatic essentially sociopathic

fascist autocrat, that like a Hitler, can exploit, convince and unify the vulnerable aggrieved populace through non-stop propaganda that he, and only he, can *painlessly* solve all their problems and grievances. Instead of Hitler's Volkswagen in every garage, an American made Ford pickup truck..." Sarah says.

"Yeap...and why a Ford? Most students of the history of Anti-Semitism in the U.S. understand that Henry Ford, the Elder, was an open, virulent Anti-Semite...an apologist and spreader of the anti-Semitic jeremiad, the novel, once again, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion...which posited that Jews were guilty of a cabal, a massive international conspiracy to create a new world order run by Jews...until he became *enlightened*...only because it began to damage his bottom line." Hawk says.

"And, for the particularly ripe, Rad-right evangelical Christians...and Millennialists, desperate for the fulfillment of Biblical End Times Prophecy, this creates the tremendous moral hazard for the apotheosis of a charlatan into a long waited Second Coming of Christ," Sarah says.

"So...take one part *useful idiots*, add one part charlatan demagogue, sprinkle with a little xenophobic racism, stir vigorously, and garnish with a generous slice of non-stop, White Nationalist propaganda, and *voila*," Hawk says.

"Yeap Hawk, sadly, indeed a recipe for civil unrest, with a high potential for armed conflict...with Americans killing Americans on the streets of our cities and towns of the Good ol' U.S of A. But for that to happen, first they need to find, or create, a common enemy, *the other*...to dehumanize...a *bete noir*, that real or imaginary, existentially threatens their ideology. Fundamentalist religion...killing in the name of God, over the millennia, has caused many of the wars, and much of the unnecessary suffering, human misery...and death in the world," Sarah says.

"Do you see any correlation including financial support, direct or indirect to the various hate groups, through radical right PACs?" I ask.

"Good question. If you're asking me if there's any evidence that PACs are buying the bullets for the Rad-right Millennialist militia crazies...the answer is no...not yet anyway. While radical conservative PACs are being very cagey about publicly supporting hate groups in general, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that they indirectly, leaving no discernible paper trail, subsidize expenses through layers of non-profit corps for things like providing for transportation, and other expenses including, website hosting, signage, placards, tee-shirts and hats etcetera emblazoned with Rad-right rhetoric for national events and mass rallies, in an effort to lend credibility and confer the appearance of widespread acceptance of the dogma." Sarah says.

"Not a bad ROI, return on investment, when you can buy someone's undying loyalty...and vote with a cheap, free hat...or tee-shirt. Sad...very sad.

With CASMO, corporate advertising subsidized media octopi desperately seeking ratings to enhance their CPM rate, the witting and

shameless handmaidens of the Rad-right, bestowing legitimacy of their radical extremist message.

The term of art, *Reality TV...news-infotainment* of covering polarizing rallies and speeches...and supportive political commentary by on-air personalities, shameless hacks with little or no journalistic integrity. And with relatively minor editing and mostly point-and-shoot camera production costs...garnering windfall profits to the sacred shareholder bottom line.

Now, the successful model for dramatically increasing revenue for satellite networks is relatively inexpensively produced 24/7 essentially political infomercials...shamelessly partisan advertising by talking heads...self-anointed political gurus, or pundits with a deliberately rancorous, provocative style...furnishing a steady daily diet of fresh meat for their dedicated *true believer* viewers,” I say.

“Now take Fox News...anybody...please,” Hawk says

“But before Fox News, Hawk, it's progenitor was A-M talk radio, broadcast media's rad-right essentially first *beta test* propaganda machine, which succeeded beyond its wildest expectations. Emboldened by that success, starting in the 1980s as well, the right's project expanded beyond the Wall Street Journal editorial pages to genuinely mass media.¹⁴

Most important to note here. The Reagan administration *did away with the federal Fairness Doctrine, which had been in place since the early broadcast era to prevent radio and TV news programs from having distinct ideological or partisan tilts.* With fairness and balance no longer required, Rush Limbaugh, et al A-M wannabes, led the way, making talk radio practically synonymous with right-wing proselytizing,” Sarah says,

“Sarah, in a prior life, working in upper management of the cable TV industry at ACT Inc. I distinctly recall in the 1980s when Aussie media mogul Rupert Murdoch, moved into television, spending the equivalent of \$5 billion to buy TV stations in seven of the ten biggest cities, to preemptively attack and thwart his major competitors aging mogul Brit Reginald Meade CEO and Chairman of World Media Inc....and Jason Mahoney CEO of ACT Inc.

To counter and better compete with Murdoch's burgeoning TV media empire, World Media then merged with its arch rival ACT, forming ACT World Media Inc., which along with Fox Network, formed the biggest cable TV and mass media duopoly in the U.S., indeed globally.

There was not so much as a raised eyebrow from the political appointees, the AG of the DOJ, and the respective chairmen of the FTC...or the FCC, supposedly the watch dog agencies entrusted with the regulation against such naked anti-trust cabals. This is where I first encountered sociopath CEO J. C. Mahoney AKA Captain Ahab...more later on that *bastard*, who glibly bragged to me that any attempts at regulation was a non-starter...that he had the regulators already *in his pocket*.

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But, The Fox New Network was now well-positioned in most major broadcast markets, including cable TV with prime channel location in the channel 2 through 13 VHF band off air, and on the very basic cable channel line ups, enabling essentially anybody with a TV to view the Fox Network programming without having a UHF equipped TV, cable converter or special hardware.

And, born-again, now fervent neo-liberal apologist president Reagan helped his corporate media pals who made vast political contributions to Republicans...and not just seeking national office. The unspoken *quid pro quo* of always portraying Ronnie Reagan in a folksy Americana favorable light, as a great and heroic 'Merican patriot including during the Iran-Contra debacle.

He fast-tracked Murdoch for U.S. citizenship so that his company could get around the federal law forbidding foreigners from owning stations, then waived the federal rule forbidding anyone from owning a TV station and a newspaper in the same city, as Murdoch suddenly did in New York and Boston. The footings were now in place to build the important final piece of the right's counter-Establishment.

After Reagan, the first Bush administration had suspended the federal antitrust rule forbidding networks from also owning the shows they aired, then New York's Mayor Rudy Giuliani successfully pressured the local cable operator, owned by Time Warner, to carry Fox News...a huge demographic of about 8 million," I say

"There is also considerable congruency in their tactics...and political long term strategy. Namely to sow discord, divisiveness, and a basic distrust of governmental institutions...general political distemper, again a polarizing positive feedback loop dynamic, where each sector feeds off the other, resulting in a constantly escalating activity...and intensity of extremism of radical rhetoric. Essentially slowly, inexorably expanding the so-called Overton Window.

I do *not* think the pathological impact of mainstream radical right media like A-M radio, the constant Libertarian drumbeat of a Rush Limbaugh, and on TV, Fox News Network in particular...in the polarization of the American public, can be overstated.

But there's a very important distinction in their respective visions of the end game. The neo-liberal PACs do not want to crash the system to the extent of making it economically dysfunctional, which would cause a serious decrease or end their treasured cash-flow. No, they just want the workers to bow and genuflect, be grateful for the scraps provided by the *noblesse oblige* of the ruling class, but still show up for work...for less money," she says

"Yeap...*some body* still gotta pick *dat* cotton," I say.

"In contrast, the Rad-right Militias and hate groups, essentially nihilistic anarchists, have no coherent vision of how the country would function after the so-called revolution. Their primary goal, motivated by an *amorphous* fear...and grievance is to break something, anything...like the

explosive tantrum of an *enfant terrible*, only with lethal toys, destroying governmental institutions with no viable alternative to the ensuing chaos and anarchy. They don't and won't realize that they were in fact...your *useful idiots*, pawns of the neo-liberals, that they've been cleverly duped into acting against their own self-interest...until it's too late. And when they do...a Reign of Terror 2.0," Sarah says.

"Just might be a good time to buy up all the torches, rope and pitchforks...www.u-r-forked.com?" Hawk says,

"Hey Hawk, startin' to sound like a closet crypto-capitalist, *mon ami*," I say.

"Furnishing ropes and pitchforks to the exploited masses ain't capitalism, man...it's a public service...called social justice," Hawk says.

As I listened to Sarah Mary Shapiro eloquently discuss her life's work with such profound commitment and passion...such authenticity, I suddenly was struck by an image, the apparition of a young Ruth nee Silverman Tarnowski, how, as a vernal woman must have captivated the mind...and heart of Joseph Tarnowski...at the very least his intellectual equal, life-long companion and professional collaborator. Her dazzling brilliance...and humility in her eloquence...*pure* is the only word I can muster of what I was feeling at that instant.

Yea, I know...way premature...*lets not get ahead of ourselves here, Mick*. But...with the *je ne sais quoi* of Sarah's aura, overwhelming my normal hyper-pragmatism, I finally decide to surrender to it.

So...could a moax like me of not much better than average smarts be equal to the task of being a Joseph, a partner, worthy intellectual fellow traveler and collaborator...and yes lover to a Ruth? While admittedly, with no small measure of grandiosity...another Joseph to *the* Mary, literally another saint of a woman, Mary, mother of the Prince of Peace. Of course, mit out that whole immaculate conception bit. *Still got a little core work to do there, eh Mick?* Yikes! Redefines *verklemt*.

Much of what I was hearing from Sarah was born and bred from the same cloth...of a deep compassion and empathy that I had heard on that transformative, indeed transcendental evening Hawk and I had spent with Ruth and Joe Tarnowski, and their son, my rediscovered friend Ivan and his beautiful wife Sanjana.

That the true *original sin* of man, was not the mythical fall of Eve's seduction by the devil, but rather the all too facile, convenient acceptance of the existence of extreme poverty, unfairness and inequity, and abject greed...and fundamental lack of compassion. Replaying Ruth's variation of the so-called Golden Rule...*Do not do unto others as you would not have them do to onto you*, it continues to haunt me.

Okay..sorry 'bout that, I'm back.

“Indeed. The Abrahamic religions that profess to believe in and worship the *same* God, Jehovah...Allah et al. Using orthodox scriptural texts, The Tora or Old Testament, the Bible 2.0 or New Testament and the Koran, of Judaism, Christianity and Islam respectively, as a perverse justification for the slaughtering of each other in the name of *their* God...most pointedly the attacks on 9/11,” I say.

“For the Muslim radical extremists of 9/11, some convoluted unfinished payback for Christians...for the 11th century Crusades, then and now, invaders and occupiers of their homeland, that lasted almost two centuries,” Hawk adds.

“Yeap, and to think it all started rather innocently with Adam and Eve blissfully cavorting naked in that verdant garden...then that damn sneaky snake rears his ugly head, flicking that forked serpent tongue...and ever since Eve has never really been forgiven,” I say.

“And Adam and gets a free pass in the Bible, and to this day was just an *innocent* bystander...also a victim *of Eve's original sin*...seduced by the devil, *Frailty, thy name is woman*...and betrayal of mankind for all eternity. The roots of the injustice of misogyny stretch long and deep,” Sarah says with sigh.

“And not a particularly good time for snakes, either,” I say.

“But, hey...the upside for apple growers of our Washington state, the *cache* of the apple, as a seductive aphrodisiac...a symbol of forbidden fruit...” Hawk says.

After we close Marco's, we all head back to Hawk's Haz-mat House, which he still owns on Capitol Hill, where Sarah will be staying in the guest room while in Seattle. I also have my own bedroom there for when we do production business in metro Seattle. Sarah is curious about Seattle, and Hawk and I have agreed to be her tour guide for the next several days until her flight back from SEATAC to SFO.

About 3am that night, as I lay awake in bed at Chez Hawk...just reflecting on the joy of having met Sarah Shapiro, the bedroom door is slowly creaking open.

The reverie about the prior evening is quickly dispelled with the reflexive revival of the fact that assassin Ernest Porter, is still at large, suddenly launching me into full fight or flight adrenalin pumping mode...my heart racing, preparing for potential mortal combat. Not at home where I normally keep a loaded 9 millimeter hand gun near my bed, I feel defenseless.

The door now fully open reveals the silhouette of a human figure, detecting my movement in preparation for battle, the familiar voice says, “Are you asleep?”

“Nope...Not that I know of...unless I'm dreaming...are you asleep, maybe sleep walking?” I say.

“No...I'm...eyes wide open...” the voice says.

Without another word, the figure noiselessly now at the bed, the muffled sound of a garment falling to the floor...the covers being peeled back, as the warm soft, delicious naked body of Sarah Shapiro lays down beside me. The nipples of her firm ample breasts aroused and hard, her mound, moist with anticipation. Her body, surprisingly firm and toned under her soft smooth skin.

Gentle caresses and deep kissing, slowly increasing to a fierce...and yes, desperate intensity with mutual multiple orgasms. *Mon dieu...* such passion...such primal joy...*so still waters do indeed run deep?* It feels so familiar...so natural...and yes, *pure*. No words are spoken...other than gasps and cries of passionate delight for hours...until the morning sunlight begins creeping in through the window as she falls into a deep slumber in my arms.

Well now...apparently I'm not the only one with some serious pent up demand. Can I get an *oye vey*?

As I lay awake, facing the open doorway, with Sarah's back nestled against my chest, peacefully still asleep with a faint blissful smile, her lovely breasts cupped in my hands as I deeply inhale the natural musk scent on her slender nape...still moist with the salty perspiration of intense lovemaking. I spy Hawk walking past the door. Without a word, he briefly makes eye contact with me, just smiles broadly, benignly and continues on.

With a gentle wet kiss on her neck, slowly, Sarah begins to stir, placing her hand first on my thigh than inching downward finding its intended destination.

“Good morning...” she whispers with a playful squeeze.

“Tis indeed...sleep well?” I say.

Turning to face me, she takes my face in both hands and with a deep kiss, smiles contently. The dawn light, revealing her classic Rubenesque feminine contours...even in the harsh morning light, without makeup the aura of her natural beauty...radiating kindness, compassion...and authenticity, overwhelms me...bringing tears to my eyes.

“What little sleep I did get was, well the best damn sleep...etcetera, *especially* the etcetera, in years, maybe *ever*, *Et tu?*” she says.

“Tisk tisk...” I say air drumming my fingers. “Didn't get much sleep...as something very compelling, and *very* hard to ignore uh...came up. Not complain'...just man 'splainin',” I say.

“Oh Mick...you must think I'm a terribly loose woman...barely knowing each other, that I would...” I interrupt her.

“Okay...on the count of three...let's both get this out of the way. One...two...three...*I've never done this before...with anyone.*” we both chant in chorus, then breaking into hysterical laughter. Guess ya had to be there.

All those smarts, a lovely, *extremely* willing and *very* able body...and on top of it all, what ESP? Not only do I have to be careful what I say that would reveal my considerable ignorance...now, I also have to worry about what I'm *thinking?* *Yikes!*

Hearing the raucous laughter, Hawk is in the doorway.

“Hey, you two, don't mean to be...Monsieur Interruptus, but what would ya like for breakfast? We've got a lot to show and tell Sarah about the Emerald City, so let's *allons-y mes amies*,” Hawk says.

So, after showing Sarah the usual tourist attractions, the iconic Space Needle, Pike Place Market etcetera, and quick tour of the lovely still relatively pristine San Juan Islands, because jazz pianist Kieko Matsui is in town, we decide to take in some live music at Jazz Alley, the Seattle jazz mecca. We are not disappointed...her wide range of repertoire, a melange of her classically trained piano fused with a distinctly Eastern inflection is as always, nothing short of superb with three encores of appreciation.

The next day, we bid farewell to Sarah Shapiro at SEATAC, as she is being beckoned by the demands of her dedicated work, after a brief and uh...intimate R and R, to return to the front lines, and resume the long, slow trudging battle in the trenches against fear, hate and racism.

For me it was indeed an especially good visit, as Sarah and I, in a very short period of time, have formed a deep, and profound connection, that aside from my dearly beloved, but now departed Marla Dyson I had never experienced before with any woman over such a short time...even with Sora Eagle Feather or Annie Trudeau. So is this what it feels like to be a sapio-sexual? Not bad. Nope...not too B-A-D.

After Sarah's gone, I confide in *mon frere*, “I gotta confess Hawk, I felt an inchoate sense of guilt...perhaps even betrayal, in my growing relationship with Sarah.

I was holding back...like I still loved the *other woman*...the one that got away...that was taken from me. That Sarah may have sensed that she was competing for the love and affection against another woman...an apparition of perfection, a difficult if not impossible, and very unfair proposition...that probably would not end well.”

“Mickey, after spending time with you and Marla when you came for a visit...just before her passing...on your way back to Lake Tahoe, I have to tell you, that I could see how deeply you loved each other. And...when you love someone so completely, so unconditionally that you care more about their happiness and welfare, than your own....

Well...let me ask you this. If your situations were reversed, if Marla had survived, and not you, do you think that you would have wanted nothing less for her...than her complete happiness...to go on with her life, of course never forgetting you...and what you had?” Hawk says.

“Yea...maybe so, Hawk...maybe so, assuming of course that she had commissioned a full size nude bronze statue of *moi* for her bedroom...” I say with a sheepish grin.

“Well that's more like it...that's the self-absorbed narcissistic Mickey that I know and love,” he says with a fist bump.

“Hey...thanks, I think...Dr Phil...” I say.

Sarah and I agree to stay connected, at least weekly by phone, promising to give me a call when she arrives back home. And...to even visit me in Moody Seaport, when and if she can find the time. I offer to fly down to the Bay area to visit her, San Francisco being one of my favorite towns, which she heartily encourages.

Just might be time for a nostalgia tour across the Bay, to UC Berkeley...to pay homage to the hell-raisin' Biz-erkley Berkeley Boys of the 60s, C-Wash, Mario Savio and Byron Brawley...sadly all gone now, with the Hawkster, Ivan and I, the only survivors.

- Chapter 38 (81) -

Now back home at Chez MAK, over our routine morning caffeine fix, “Hey man, it's been three days since we saw Sarah off at SEATAC. Have you heard anything from her?” I ask.

“Nothin'...no email, text message...or phone call. Nada. Being the consummate pro...not like her man, to not follow through as promised,” Hawk says.

“Well I could understand if it was just me...maybe she had a chance to think over our connection...that maybe I didn't quite measure up intellectually...or in uh...*other* ways, and she's having second thoughts,” I say.

“Well, with you there's always that possibility...but all kidding aside Mick, but, before she left to go back to S.F., she confided in me that she was really quite smitten by your charms...etcetera...especially the *etcetera* part, despite my attempts out of a sense of protective familial duty, to try to talk her out of it...” Hawk says with grin.

“Well, it ain't like she's your sister...but for you I guess the closest thing to it...so yea, I'm okay with it. But...because I didn't want appear overly eager...or overbearing, I decided to give her the first move after returning home to think things over. But now, frankly I'm starting to get a little concerned,” I say.

“Yea, I'll give her a call today to see what gives...she's probably just digging out after being gone for a week,” Hawk says.

“Thanks man, let me know as soon as you hear back from her, Okay?” I say.

“Roger that...” Hawk says.

Later that afternoon, Hawk wanders in to my office, “Mick...I've called her landline...and her mobile...twice, and left voice mail messages each time. Nothing yet. Why don't you send her an email...maybe you'll have better luck...could be she's still just savoring post connubial bliss...and does not wish to be distracted by Monsieur Interruptus...again,” Hawk says.

About two hours after I send an email to Sarah, telling her how much I enjoyed our visit...and the etcetera part. I get a response.

Dearst Mick

Thank for the email. I'm real bizzzy. Can't talk rite now.

Sara

“Hey Hawk, get in here, man...you gotta see this...” I yell.

Hawk wanders in with his grafted coffee mug in hand, “What's going on...what's up mit da yelling?” Hawk says.

“Have a look at this response from Sarah...something's not right, man..I can feel it...” I say.

“Hmm...yea, replete with typos and the spelling of her own name wrong...and the lame jargon *bizzy*? Not like her man...” Hawk says.

“So where do we go from here?” I ask.

“Let's contact our in-house super cyber snoop, Mikie, as a starting place, have him ping her mobile phone, to get the GPS coordinates...to see where its been and current location, along with any usage metadata, Do you want to contact Mikey, or do you want me to?” Hawk says.

“Go ahead, Uncle Hawk...I'm sure you can explain it much quicker...and better technically, than me. I'll just listen in on speaker phone,” I say.

“*Hey guys, how's the odd-couple...oldest living, perhaps even non-living, 60s juvenile delinquents?*,” Mikie says on his mobile.

“Hey, don't look at me, Mick he's obviously your kid...through and through,” Hawk says with a grin

“Cute Mikie. Hey, at the risk of hopefully interrupting the so-called *good guys*, from starting a nuclear holocaust, we need a little assistance with a personal matter,” I say.

“Naw, since it's Tuesday, our normal war-starting days are Mondays...start the week off with a uh...rather large bang. Tuesday to reload, then Wednesday's hump day, for hosing the place down that we just obliterated, so U.S. defense contractors can start billing for the rebuild...and uh...some serious civilian collateral death and casualties in order to save 'em...from a fate worse than death?”

Then for three days...it's Drone Days...a little more surgical, than going fishin' with tactical nuke hand grenades. And finally, Sundays...a Sabbath day of rest for the good ol' boy Christian masterminds of all this carnage to go to church, after some serious chasin' of bad guys....even soldiers of The Prince of Peace, need a little quality time with the fam...ya know, good ol' 'merican picnics, softball games etcetera. Then, rinse and repeat. So sure Paw, as we say in the biz, shoot...whadya need?” Mikie says.

“Only if will not put you at any risk at your work...” I say.

“No worries, Paw. Done,” Mikie says.

“Mikie we need you to track a mobile phone from three days ago, to current real time. Location tracking, usage inbound and outbound phone numbers, internet browsing history, text messages, and email if any and any

metadata like duration, and if you can, any voice mail messages left on the device,” Uncle Hawk says.

“Sure Uncle Hawk, give me the phone number and I’ll check it out. But first I’d like you tell me the reason for all this sub rosa? And a little context info,” Mikie says.

“Sure Mikie, the phone number is assigned to my cousin Sarah Shapiro...415...624..1212, works for the the Southern Poverty Law Center, out of San Francisco...ya know the anti-hate, anti-racists and anti-domestic terrorist NGO. She’s staff lawyer...and we’ve been unable to contract her...for over three days now...gettin’ a little concerned. By the way, her residence is in the Richmond district, not far from the USF campus,” Uncle Hawk says.

“So Sarah’s family? Well...*Su familia es mi familia*. Yea, SPLC...they do good work...we exchange intel and liais with them when we’re bird-doggin’ domestic bad dudes...like an Ernest Porter,” Mikie says.

The mere mention of Porter gives me a reflexive chill.

“Thanks son...when do think you could have something for us?” I ask.

“Since she’s one of our peeps, I’m on it, Paw...two maybe three hours. I’ll call ya with a heads up and follow up with pdf files of the data attached to P-K, uh Paleface Koz...Paw’s email, CC to U-Hawk,” Can-do Mikie says.

“Thanks again son, *luv yis*...from *da boat-of-us*,” I say.

“*Back atcha da boat-a-yis*,” Mikie says with a *click*.

- Chapter 39 (82) -

“Hey Paw, I’ve got some more data. Can you put me on speaker so Uncle Hawk can hear?” Mikie says a little over two hours after our phone call.

“Sure, Mikie...hang on, Hawk's right here...” I say.

“Can you both hear me okay...lots to cover...so I want to make sure you don't miss anything, okay?” he says.

“All good, loud and clear...go ahead, Mikie,” I say.

“Okay, by now you should have received the pdf meta data file attachments on your respective email accounts. I'd suggest you open them before we start so you can follow along. Let me know when you're ready to proceed with the debriefing,” he says, now lapsing into serious professional spook debriefing mode. Not a good sign.

“Okay, Mikie, we've both got the pdfs loaded and open on our respective apple laptops...shoot,” I say.

“Good. I was able to locate the records of the subject phone number, the time that it left Seattle, SEATAC, but...no wheels down at SFO, as listed on the GPS logs attached. Do you know any reason that she may have detoured from the destination of SFO or her apartment in the Richmond district...’cause the phone GPS log says that the phone at least, for the past three days never made it there, right up to about three hours ago,” he says.

“Can you tell where the phone was up to the last known GPS coordinates about an hour ago?” Hawk asks.

“Yea, if you look on the GPS logs attachment you'll see the GPS coordinates, but you'll have to use a lookup program to decipher the coordinates into a user friendly location, like a city. I suggest you open Google Earth released in 2001 as a beta, so it's probably still a little buggy...but if you enter the coordinates and it should take you right to the location within 30 feet of actual physical location on the map, including elevation. If you click and tick the box for the overlay for streets, highways and buildings etcetera, it'll show you the cross streets on the map...zoom in to see the building footprint,” he says.

Hawk's fingers are a blur on the keyboard, finally he says, “Impossible, man. The coordinates show the location of the phone to be in North Cascadia county less than 20 miles North of us...” Hawk says.

“Go to the SPLC website, <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map?state=WA> and look at North County GPS coordinates, and you'll see all of the hate groups filtered by ideologies, by clicking the various filters. Way up in the upper left hand corner near the BC Canada border you'll see a white dot, click it...a White Nationalist group who call themselves The Commitment

Keepers...a Christo-White Supremacy Militia. Known to be heavily armed...self appointed guardians, vigilantes...patrolling the Canadian US border for unlawful entry. That name ring any alarm bells? Our records show, some pretty radical shit coming out of there, small membership, but they make up for it with their true-believer Apocalyptic End Times radical ideology," he says.

"Unbelievable man. How could the phone end up near here?" I say.

"Unless...hey Mikie does the call log indicate the location of any inbound or outbound calls...from say Southern California...like near the Mexican border, South of San Diego?" Hawk says.

"*Yeap, how could you know that Uncle Hawk?*" he says.

"Yea, Uncle Hawk, what the *fuck's* going on here? And isn't the *Commitment Keepers* the White Supremacist Militia Sarah mentioned?" I say.

"Yeap. Okay Mick, just give me a minute here...Mikie any other calls in or out in the last three days?" Hawk says.

"*Again, yeap...look on the call log for yesterday...inbound, area code 843, at 4am local...about 7am from origin...looks like Charleston, South Carolina. Short...about 2 minutes duration...left as a voice mail,*" he says.

"Can you do a lookup on that phone number, whether it's landline or mobile and who it's assigned to?" Hawk says.

"*Sure. Hang on,*" he says.

"Hawk, where is this goin' man...talk to me man, I'm dyeing over here..." I say.

"*Beauregard J. Porter of Charleston S.C...a landline,*" Mikie says.

"Can you query that name in all the federal databases, including military?" Hawk says.

"*Hang on...hmmm...interesting...ex-military, a Marine...A Major...lifer, 30 years, retired. DOB indicates that he's now 68, two purple hearts in Nam...68 and 69, a field promotion from Captain in Nam. Very rare for a officer, a Captain to receive a purple heart let alone two. Hard core...Semper Fi type.*" he says.

"Family status...married, children etcetera?" Hawk says.

"*Okay...Married with two kids...one deceased...the other also ex-Marine, Force Recon. Holy Shit! Fucking unbelievable...Ernest Fucking Porter!*" he says.

"*Jesus...South Carolina...again...not only did they start the secession, beginning the Great Civil War...those folks down there in the post-bellum virulently Jim Crow South, have never stopped re-litigating the defeat of the Confederacy. Like the man said, a congressman from South Carolina, South Carolina's too small for a republic...and to big for an insane asylum,*" I say.

"Yes Mick. Historically a very tough neighborhood, even today, for Black folks. South Carolina and Mississippi have the highest poverty rates and lowest per capita income for Blacks," Sarah says.

Okay...movin' on. Here's my hypo on this deal. Sarah never made it to S.F....she must have been intercepted in Seattle...at SEATAC. It's got to be Porter behind this. He's obviously been surveilling us, just waitin' for the right opportunity to lure us into trap. He probably has been in constant contact with his fellow traveler nut jobs in North County...from when he was here...doing his dirty work for NPI, with the pipeline blast.

I wouldn't be surprised if he were within 20 miles North of us since his escape from Chief Eagle Feather in New Mexico...just bidding his time. Hiding in plain sight...quite possibly looking very different now, maybe with a beard...and a lot more hair from his *high and tight* military neo-Nazi haircut before. He must have found out that Sarah's my cousin...easy with same last name...and that we would probably be attending the symposium in Seattle, which was probably highly publicized, including I'm sure on the Rad-right social media platforms," Hawk says.

"So Hawk...why now...why here?" I say.

"Mikie, you're the professional spook on this team...what's your opinion on Porter's end game...what's his next play?" Hawk says.

"Well guys...sadly, I think poor Sarah has been snatched...and he'll attempt use her as a hostage...a bargaining chip. I am hoping that he has not hurt her...or worse...that she's even alive. I suspect she is because he would expect you to ask for proof of life before you'd agree to any kind of resolution," Mikie says.

"I agree, Mikie. But I'm sensing that Porter has allowed this to become a personal vendetta...an obsession, which may cloud his cold assassin's objectivity...that could operate to our advantage. He's got something to prove...to himself...maybe even somebody else...that he's not a loser." Hawk says.

"So where do we go from here? *Goddamit*...poor Sarah...the Curse of Koz Karma, man...for the unfortunate women in my life...I'm just sick about it, Hawk..." I say.

"I know Mickey...it's a toughie, like *deja vu*, man. But it's not over...until we say it's over...at a time and place of our choosing. Important thing is to stay calm and focused..." Hawk says.

"To like...panic intelligently..." I say trying desperately to lighten the moment.

"Yea, something like that..." Hawk says with a smile and fist bump.

"Hawk and I are all in on this, Paw. So try to keep a positive attitude about Sarah. Porter may be good...but we're better, right Uncle Hawk?" Mike says.

"No contest, *mes freres*..." Hawk says leaving off the...*I hope*.

"Mikie you said the phone call from S.C. left a voice mail...can you resurrect the content of it?" I ask.

“Already done, Paw. I'll send it to you as an attachment...an mp3 audio file so you can listen to it. Okay. Done.” Mikie says.

We download the mp3 file.

“Ernest...this hiya's ya fatha.” says the deep voice, thick with South Carolina drawl still reeking with an imperious military bearing even at the age of 68.

“Ernest, you have not called ya motha for ova two weeks... again. Where da hell are ya boy, and that there voice mail... this is Sarah Shapiro please leave a message bullshit...you shacked up with some whore named Sarah? Shapiro...sounds like a Jew name ta me.. the retired Marine Major barks.

“This is not acceptable! Call your motha...today! That's a direct orda. Do not make me call ya again...you do not want to make me come out there! And...do not disappoint me again you worthless EX-cuse for a marine. Are we clear on that?” he says with the all too familiar menacing malevolent tone of little Ernie's abused childhood.

“Well now, sounds like Little Ernie Boy has some uh...Major Daddy issues. Papa Bear's a real sweetheart. I suspect that the reason the voice mail showed up on Sarah's phone is because Porter's got his personal cell phone forwarding to Sarah's phone...probably a prepaid with cash...or an account under an assumed identity, of which he probably has many,” I say.

“This definitely puts a different spin on who we're dealing with. Maybe we can capitalize on his insecurity about his fitness as a Marine...to maybe take more risk than he ordinarily would...to impress the ol' man,” Hawk says.

“At least we've got the element of surprise on our side...as I doubt he's aware that we're on to him...and his location. He's obviously got some plan to attempt to lure us out to a place and time of *his* choosing,” I say.

“As the neighboring Canucks, my peeps like to say...the puck's on his ice. We wait for his next move...remember like you always say, let the game come to us,” Hawk says.

“Think it's time to get the Feds involved...kidnapping is an FBI kinda deal?” I say.

“Mick, probably best to wait...to see if he makes a demand...then we'd have something tangible to take to the Feds. I don't have to remind you how indifferent the cops were to the death of Marla from the fire...dismissing it out of hand as nothing more than an accident, for lack of any *prosecutable* proof,” Hawk says.

“Yea...don't *even* get me started on that one...” I say.

We let Mikie sign off for today, and just wait for the next move by Porter.

We do not have to wait long. The next day, at 8am through an untraceable anonymous email server, the demand arrives sent to my email address.

Hey, clever boys that you are, by now you have probably figured out that Sarah Shapiro never made it to the Gay Bay. So it's time to get bizzy...with our demands for her return...or not. :)

We are the Aryan Christian Soldiers of God.

Our mission is to preserve the purity of the superior White Aryan Christian race, uncontaminated with Jewish or Nigger blood through miscegenation.

We are many more than you can possibly imagine, all heavily armed, willing and able to die for our cause of perpetuating White Supremacy purity.

Because of Sarah Shapiro's affiliation with the Southern Poverty Law Center, and because she consistently has attacked the White Supremacy Movement with lies and falsehoods, we are holding the Jew, Sarah Shapiro as a political prisoner and enemy combatant.

Here are our demands to secure her release.

They are not negotiable.

All the demands must be met at the exactly specified time and place or the Jew will be publicly executed on the internet, burned at the stake as all non-Christian heretics must.

- 1. \$100,000US in unmarked, in circulation, small denomination US no larger than \$100 bills for the first \$50,000, no larger than \$20 bills for the balance delivered at a time and place of our choosing.*
- 2. A complete written apology and recanting of all the anti-White Supremacy lies and propaganda against our movement replacing the homepage, with no other links to other pages of the Southern Poverty Law Center website www.splc.org using the exact text to be supplied at a later date, for an uninterrupted seven days. To show good faith, you will be required to execute this order before proceeding further with*

:: AMERICAN ALGORITHM — m.a.kominsky ::

the release of Sarah Shapiro.

3. *Upon confirmation by viewing the website, you will then be recontacted with exact instruction to deliver the monetary penalty and fine assessed by ACSG for the viscous canard...the libeling and slandering the White Supremacy movement.*
4. *That the cash money listed in item number 2 above, be delivered, by both and only, M. Kozlov and A. Shapiro.*
5. *Finally, DO NOT contact any law enforcement, including local, state and federal, including the FBI, or you will have signed and sealed Sarah's Shapiro's death sentence, to be executed live on a website to be named and publicized later on all major social media platforms, at a prescribed date and time to maximize public viewership.*

If you have any doubts as to the validity of this demand, I'd advise you to send a text message to the cell phone of Sarah Shapiro the following exact words at exactly 12am PST tonight...you will have a window of exactly two minutes to comply with the following text.

“Message received loud and clear”

You will then receive confirmation of receipt by anonymous server email within 8 hours of receipt of the text by us with:

“Sieg Heil!”

Along with a current short time-stamped video attached of Sarah Shapiro indicating that she is still alive and well.

You will then be supplied with the exact wording of the replacement wording for the SPLC website homepage.

White is Rite! God Bless America!

*Commandant Siegfried
ACSG*

PS

So just to remind you...from past experience, of that Squaw bitch, and your whore Marla Dyson...do not even think of fucking with me, man...or Sarah Shapiro with end up the same way...medium rare. :)

- Chapter 40 (83) -

"I'm gonna to *fuckin'* kill that *mutha fucka*...with my bare hands...rip his *fuckin'* throat out...I'll..." I scream out-loud pounding the desk with my fist...spilling coffee all over the table top, as I fall back into the chair, my whole body trembling with rage.

"Whoa, man...what the hell's going on Mick?" Hawks say quickly entering my office.

"Read this, man..." I say my voice quivering with uncontrollable emotion.

Hawk walks over to look at the computer screen, after a minute, "Yea, man...I get it. Hey Mickey, I'm really sorry that you're dealing with this bullshit...the baiting and the trash talk...but we *gotta* stay calm...and focused, man. He's trying to push our emotional buttons...to lose our cool and start making mistakes," Hawk says.

"Well...it's *fuckin'* workin' then..." I say.

"But it does confirm what we suspected...that this has now become *very* personal with Porter...he's obsessed, man...which means he'll start having flaws in his judgment. So take some long, slow deep breaths...calm yourself, and get your head back in the game," Hawk says, with a brotherly pat on my shoulder.

"Okay man...okay. I'm going to forward this over to Mikie...I think he should see this, see where he thinks we should go from here," I say.

"Good...in the meantime I going to make list of what we're going to need for Mikie to get for us...to formulate a counter offensive...no more defensive *bullshit*. Sarah was right...if it is just Porter, ain't no dummy. At first read, he's built in a lot of protection and safeguards from detection and apprehension...a real pro," Hawk says with grudging admiration .

"Frankly, I'm startin' to suspect that the money angle is just a smokescreen...that the primary motivation and mission here is to take us out. Don't think he has any intention of letting, you, me...or sadly Sarah live through this deal. Poor Sarah getting hooked up with me...how sad.

Let's have Mikie research this ACSG, perhaps a *nom de guerre* of the local terrorist-racist *Comittment Keepers* militia. I can not imagine any real militia expecting to survive a major criminal, perhaps even Congressional investigation after a major domestic terrorist event like this goes down. Like the Kingfish says, *the plot be thickenin'*," I say.

Hey...but like Mikie said...we're better. So bring it on Ernie Boy...showtime!" Hawk says.

"Let's hope so, *mon frere*...because it's not only our lives are on the line...but dear Sarah's, which is my main concern right now.

Hawk, do you think there's a possibility Porter's not the brains behind this...looks very Machiavellian, that someone very smart and very ruthless, is behind the curtain pulling the levers. Very clever...a little too clever, even for Ernie Boy. The vocabulary seems a little too sophisticated for Porter...and the complex strategy seemingly to think of every possible contingency," I say.

"Yea...I'm getting that vibe too. Someone with lots of smarts and cunning like uh...a Jason Mahoney? There, I said it out-loud," Hawk says.

"Yea...man, great minds etcetera. The intro and that little PS at the end...vintage Porter...the rest, not so much. If it is Mahoney...we're now going to be punching *way* over our weight, man...and over our heads. But in my heart of hearts I always knew that this day would come...like I said, that if I waited long enough, the game would come to me," I say

"Where's his home base now?" Hawk asks.

"He's senior Senator...from Colorado. Talk is he's about to mount a serious campaign for president...or VP...in 2004, with 2008 his prime target. If so, he can't afford to have any inconvenient not-so-little loose ends out there...like *moi*.

With Pauly Berman, and my beloved Marla, RIP... now uh...gone and buried, I'm the last surviving member from the original crew...the corporate ship of fools of which I was one *very* big useful idiot, of the doomed Pequod Inc. Since I'm the only one left that knows enough about Mahoney that could raise some very uncomfortable questions for a prez candidate about his past as CEO of ACT Inc. and the ECC...for Captain Ahab it just might be time to invite Mick to take a long walk on a short plank...to once and for all go *sleep wit da fishes*," I say.

"From what you've told me about him, one thing you can be sure of, he won't get his hands dirty, and there will be no kind of trail, no how, no way connecting Mahoney with this deal," Hawk says

"Unless, we can flush him out, from his highly insulated official government bunker...dangle a little bait on the hook, that I remember some stuff, that he might want to deal with now...sooner than later. Remind him of the secret VHS tapes of the ECC summit meeting in 1982...which oh, by the way, I have copies of.

His monstrous ego, especially with *moi*, is probably his greatest vulnerability...maybe forcing him to take some additional risk, just to punish me for my perceived betrayal. Maybe a few well placed hints...so he'd be willing to attempt to throw some cash at it...just to draw me in close, where he'd try to finish me off. One thing for sure, if that happens, only one of us going to survive it...and I do not plan on it *not* being me," I say.

- Chapter 41 (84) -

“Paw, I've searched all of our thousands of databases, up, down, continuous and often...there's absolutely nothin' on this Aryan Christian Soldiers of God, or ACSG. If they in fact exist, it's probably a start up. But anything in existence for over a month would show up in a search,” Mikie says on his cell phone.

“So Mikie, what's your take on the next move by Porter?”

“Well, guys...as of the date the demand was sent, Sarah's phone is no longer visible on the cellular networks. Probably turned-off to avoid pinging the GPS co-ords. Doubt that it will be turned on again, except to check for the text message from you, probably with a spoofed phony GPS location, confirming receipt of the demand...for maybe less than a minute...within 8 hours after the text was sent...so we can't detect the location.

After reviewing the situation, with few of my uh...colleagues, hypothetically of course, I'm convinced that we may be forced to consider a preemptive strike...at the last known location. I think that they expect you to attempt to negotiate a compromise on the outrageous SPLC website homepage sabotage. My guess is that they will reluctantly concede that stipulation, to throw you a bone, so that you'll proceed with the exchange, and think that they're acting in good faith.

It's pretty obvious to me, that this whole elaborate demand scenario, is a red herring...that the true priority is to terminate the threat vector, that you and Uncle Hawk pose, and in the process, as an added bonus, probably still execute poor Sarah, to send a message to SPLC and other anti-terrorist NGOs to not fuck with the bad-ass White Supremacists. Basic Hostage Terrorism 101. But what he doesn't get...yet, is that I too, will not rest until my mother's tragic death is avenged. Until that mutha fucker is toast! Period.” Mikie says.

“That supports our take on this, as well. Mikie, what do you mean by preemptive strike? The location where Sarah's being held must be fortified by heavily armed militia extremists,” Hawk says.

“Can't be sure that's the case...won't know for sure until we can get more intel. Although he may be hunkered down with them, it's possible that Porter would not want them to know about the hostage deal, because one, way out of their league and feels that the weekend-warriors might chicken out on him...maybe rat him out. Two...for fear one of the local militia nut job's big-mouth wannabes might start bragging on-line about it...and blow up the whole deal. And finally three, or even the remote possibility of infiltration by a C-I of the Feds.

So we definitely need to get more intel. I'll check the surveillance spy satellite schedules, to see if we can get daylight eyes on the last known

location from a normal fly-by. Once we confirm the location, and the surrounding topography, then, we may have to invest in a rather sophisticated aftermarket drone, to get more detail, and to track activity in and out. That will require my presence, to put all this together, so I'm going to take a leave of absence here, so we can create a tactical base of operations. Rather than fly into Seattle. I'll drive up with my wheels from here, as I'll need to transport some uh...assets, tools of the trade of the craft of persuasion," Mikie says.

"Okay, Mikie...if you're sure you won't become vulnerable to being sacked...or worse, we'll see ya soon. Anything we can do on this end before you get here?" I ask

"No worries. Paw, we may need some kinda boots on the ground backup, someone who's seen some combat action. Frank Gutowski, and I have remained in contact...he's a seasoned pro doing special ops...and I-E-Ds, especially under fire, which this has a potential for. I'm going to give him a call, see if he's open to helping us out," Mikie says.

"Now that you mention it, I think Terrence Howard from the NTSB, might be willing to give us a hand...did the first Gulf War...and very handy with uh...his side arms etcetera. Give me an excuse to reconnect..." Hawk says.

"With your Goy Boy Toy...Yea, T-How's a good man, seen some serious action...and he did offer to back us up with his side arm during the pipeline investigation," I say.

"One other thing Paw. There's no way, I would ever try to keep this op from Grandfather...and you know as well as I, he'll want to be in on this...and I don't care how old he is...I for one would not want to be the one to try tell Chief Eagle Feather of the Navajo Nation...uh, sorry, but you can not come? No thank you," Mikie says.

"Especially comin' from a Paleface...like *moi*. Sure...why not. Okay, sounds like a full house. Maybe the Chief's got a few useful O-I-Ts, Old Indian Tricks, tucked away in the ol' war bonnet. I'll also include our big dawg *Osito*, *pobrecito perro* as he's been feeling kinda left out of late," I say punctuated with Oso's three strong tail thumps on the floor, which of course means, *vámonos andale, muchachos!* Let's go boys!

- Chapter 42 (85) -

Chez MAK – Moody Seaport – Cascadia County, Washington

The Mission:

The first to arrive around noon, is Mikie, driving a 97 Ford Explorer SUV, with Frank Gutowski ridin' shotgun, who he has picked up along the way from Seattle, where Frank is now living..heading up a pilot program teaching children with mental and physical disabilities, like his beloved daughter Alicia.

“Hi Frankie,” we shake, then hug.

“Hey, Mick..really good to see ya, man,” he says.

Mikie, Hawk and I hug,”Hey, why didn't you just fly in...we could've picked ya up at SEATAC, no problem,” I say.

“Well...might have been a little bit of problem getting through airport security,” he says lifting the rear hatch, exposing a THULE roof mounted cargo box in the back of the SUV, next to a large very long USMC duffel bag with name Sgt. F. Gutowski stenciled on the side of it.

“How, so Mikie, hey isn't that the same kind of carrier Porter used on his Suburban?” Hawk says.

“Yeap...the very same,” Mikie says with a grin, opening the carrier revealing a Bushmaster Sniper Rifle with a Scope, and an RPG-7, a portable, unguided, shoulder-launched, anti-tank rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

“A donation, courtesy of *El Negrito*, Ernest Porter,” he says.

“Yea...I take your point,” Hawk says with a smile and fist bump with Mikie.

“Something tells me, I do not *even* want to guess how you ended up with Porter's toys of termination, Mikie,” I say.

Without a word, Mikie makes with the zipper move across his mouth, followed with his mother's 1,000 watt smile.

The next to arrive that afternoon is the Chief, driving a blood red vintage '62 Ford Thunderbird convertible, about a block-long, with the top down in a full war bonnet....complete with rear wheel skirts and a continental kit...a real banana boat.

“Hey, Chief, nice wheels...where'd ya find 'em,” I say.

“According to you Palefaces...the T-bird is a symbol of male potency and masculinity...so in honor of the occasion, I summoned the Great Spirit to find me one, battle red of course, which obviously he did...she is a beauty, no?” he says stroking the upholstery-matching turquoise dashboard hump, caressing

it like a lover's bosom.

“Definitely...and so appropriate for a man of your August stature...nothing less would be befitting a Chief. So the Great Spirit, what, just flew a red T-Bird, out of the blue sky for ya, landing right there on the rez?” I say.

“Yes, it is so. Of course with a little help from eBay...and some hardball negotiation,” still with the twinkle in his eye as over twenty years before.

“And by the way, a nice touch...the way you accessorized that whole Chief-ish look mit da headdress,” Hawk says.

In the backseat of the T-bird is a full array of bows, arrows, quivers, tomahawks, spears and war shields.

“Uh...grandfather...what's up with all the weapons of uh...past destruction in the backseat,” Mikie asks.

“Just tools of the trade, my son...for Little Big Horn 2.0,” he says.

The last to arrive of this self-appointed posse of *revanche*, is Terrence Howard. Hawk and I welcome T-How, with a hug, “Thanks for comin' man...really appreciate it,” I say.

“Yeap...indeed thanks for uh...comin;” Hawk says with a grin.

“Wouldn't miss it...my chance for a little general payback for the good guys, for a change,

By the way, Tara T. sends her regards and would *very* much like to hear from you. She's now working out of LA., right after the very positive resolution of the pipeline investigation here, promoted to Deputy Director of the Western Region of NTSB,” he says.

“Confirming the old bureaucratic axiom, that no good deed goes unpunished,” Hawk says.

“Yea, that would explain why we never connected...still married to the company store, eh?” I say

“At least until she gets a better offer...know what I'm sayin' ma man?” Hawk says with a smiling fist bump. *Oye vey...*

We get everybody feed and assigned sleeping quarters, then call it a night.

The next morning after breakfast, over coffee in the downstairs office with the entire ensemble cast of characters assembled around the conference table, we get started.

“Let me begin with a heartfelt thanks to all you for being here. Because all of you have some level of either, professional or personal experience, directly or indirectly with the target of this extra-legal mission, one Ernest Porter, I need not remind you just how lethally dangerous and cunning Porter is. I will briefly outline my reasons for *not* pursuing the execution of this operation *with* law enforcement, including the FBI.

First, we do not have the luxury of taking the time necessary to get the law enforcement bureaucracy, local and federal up to speed. Time is of the essence. And frankly, because we do not want to lose tactical control of the situation to a bunch of lifer bureaucrats who have no skin in the game. It is absolutely imperative that we remain agile and able to adjust our actions quickly to any changing situations on the ground without first having to confer with the Feds...or any one else.

Second, the extortionists have specifically warned us that they would summarily execute the victim if any law enforcement is involved, which I believe could be easily detected...so we can't afford to take that chance. For this, and this only, I take them at their word.

Third, we cannot be certain, that there are not personnel within Cascadia County...as *muy mucho* folks of North county where Sarah is being held are known to have extreme right-wing leanings...that law enforcement who might be sympathetic, or perhaps are clandestinely members of the suspected accomplices...might tip off the White Supremacists...Commitment Keepers, of our efforts. Especially since the victim in this case is Jewish.

Finally, and most importantly, Fourth, one of the first personally known victims of Porter was a wonderful Native American lady, Sora Eagle Feather, someone very dear to me, mother of my son, Michael and her father, Leonard Eagle Feather, present here.

Because The First Nations are recognized as a separate sovereign nation in Indian American treaty law, I believe that they, in this case Chief Eagle Feather, has the first legal priority and right to decide if they want to exercise the solemn duty to prosecute and administer justice, including the execution of a verdict and sentence, in accordance with their tribal laws and customs...or defer to federal authorities.

If anyone here is not willing to proceed on that basis, now's the time to speak up. You can leave now and no one will think any less of you.

So let me see the raised right hand of everyone who affirmatively agrees to participate, explicit with the vow, *never* to discuss this meeting or the ensuing resolution, with anyone outside of this room...*ever*.

Seeing all present have raised their hand in agreement, let us now proceed with the business at hand.

That said, our first priority is to locate and extract unharmed Ms Sarah Shapiro, a lawyer for the Southern Poverty Law Center, who is being held hostage against her will by Porter and possibly others, potentially heavily armed and dangerous accomplices.

Then, and only then, after the resolution of the hostage situation, one way or the other, will we focus our efforts to bring Ernest Porter to justice...again, one way or the other. Let me be clear that we undertake this mission with no intent to gratuitously inflict harm or kill anyone, but any resistance will be met with equal and appropriate response, including if

necessary termination of the threat vector.

So, I'd like to begin with introductions, with each one of us stating your name, and your connection to this mission, starting with me, Mick Kozlov, father of Michael Eagle Feather Kozlov." I say

"Hawk Shapiro, brother of Mickey Kozlov," Hawk says.

"Michael Eagle Feather Kozlov, son of Sora Eagle Feather, and of Mick Kozlov, grandson of Chief Eagle Feather...and nephew of Hawk Shapiro," Mikie says looking over toward Hawk with a grin.

"Chief Leonard Eagle Feather, father of Sora Eagle Feather, grandfather of Michael Eagle Feather," the Chief says.

"Frank Gutowski, deeply indebted friend of Mick and Mikie Kozlov," Frank says.

"Terrence Howard, a *very* good friend of Hawk Shapiro," T-How says smiling at Hawk.

"Since the base of tactical operations is here at my place, and the initial contact was made to me directly...and because it would appear that Porter's main priority is to terminate Hawk and myself, I will assume the responsibility of being the lead person, handling all communication with Porter et al. However, I want to reinforce that this is a team effort, and that Hawk and I are very open to your input, and defer to your knowledge and experience in such matters, especially your tactical combat expertise.

Okay. I'm now going to turn the meeting over to Mikie Kozlov who has some intel to share with us," I say.

"Thanks Paw. Because of the line of work I'm in, which I am *not* at liberty to discuss or divulge, I have access to some highly sophisticated clandestine technology. Included in that arsenal, is access to very high resolution spy satellite imagery.

Here's what we can glean so far from the last known pinged location of Sarah's phone of a satellite fly-by about 24 hours ago...about 30 miles due North of here...in a marina, in Blaine Washington. The resolution of the image zoomed to maximum shows three possible locations within a 30 ft radius...three boats in adjacent slips. At that altitude, any text like signage etcetera will be highly pixelated...but here are the three candidates, the text greeked out, but perhaps still decipherable," Mikie says, sliding his laptop over to me and Hawk, showing the satellite image full screen.

"Of the three boats, two are very large yachts, power boats...the rear transom essentially vertical makes the name of the boat not visible from high above, but the third, a very large sailboat, with the text on the slanted rear transom is somewhat visible," Mikie says.

"Looking at the image...I think I can make out a few letters...an M...an...S, an R...then maybe a P...uh, then possibly a D and then an O," Hawk says squinting, whose eyes are better than mine even with cheaters.

“M..S...R..P...D...O...Holy shit! *Mas Rapido*...that's the name of Jason Mahoney's racing sloop!” I say.

“Are you sure Mick?” Hawk says.

“*Abso-fucking-lutely* positive, man, in '82, his study had huge pictures of the boat all over the walls. He's a big time serious off-shore regatta racer...won lots of races...the big boys, *my* expensive 12 meter class hardcore racing sloops. Typically the boats range from 65 to 75 feet long,” I say.

“Okay, let me have the computer,” Mikie says, his fingers a blur on the keyboard.

“Doing a Google search for Jason Mahoney *and* Mas Rapido...okay...okay...bingo! Finished first in the prestigious biennial June 2001 Van Isle 360 circumnavigation race around Vancouver Island, about 600 miles over 9 days. Apparently, a big deal in sailboat racing,” Mike says.

“Makes sense...since Vancouver Island is just North of us...that he would keep the boat in Blaine, maybe even leave it there for an extended period, to sail the Pacific...ain't a whole lot of off-shore ocean sailing in Denver Colorado,” I say

“Hey, Mikie what do you make of the image of what looks like a human figure, sitting in the cockpit of the sailboat...looks like he's got a rifle on his lap?” I say.

“Could be a sentry...perhaps guarding Sarah, who's possibly restrained below deck,” Mike says.

“Okay, gentlemen, assuming we *may* have located where Sara Shapiro is being held, let's open it up for discussion,” I say.

“Well, Mick...frankly I don't think we gotta enough intel, to make any kind of a realistic extraction plan. We need to confirm with a much higher probability that the vic is there...or we could blow our advantage of the element of surprise if it turns out to be a dry well,” Frank Gutowski says.

“I agree with Frank, Paw. That's why I ordered a high end copter drone online before I left home, capable of sustained hovering at an undetectable altitude, with a high rez camera, with IR night vision and an infrared thermal sensor to pick up any large heat signature of a human below the deck...which would allow us to monitor the activity at the location before committing to a course of action. Should be here tomorrow,” Mikie says.

“Great. Anybody else?” I say.

“In the meantime...I think we should take an inventory of all our assets, including weapons...like handguns and long guns, and who uses what. Rules of engagement...incendiary devices and especially crucial, intra-communication headset devices...to test and ensure that everyone knows how to use them, and establish a protocol, to prevent confusion, not if, but when it gets dicey. Should have at least one for each of us, with two spare backups,” T-How says.

“T-How, can you handle that for us?” I ask.

“Yes sir, Mick...glad to, since I was a logistics officer during the first Gulf War. By the way, I brought 10 headsets that we use at the NTSB when investigating major catastrophic systems failures. Frank can you give me a hand with that?” T-How says.

“Sure T...no problem,” Frank says.

“Okay...thank you gentlemen. I suggest we spend the rest of the day in preparation,” I say.

I take Hawk aside and hand him 3 VHS tapes of the summit of the merry band of plutocrats of the ECC in '82, “Can you run these tapes through our analog to digital transcoder, in case we need to post them online to uh...*persuade Monsieur* Malone that we got some game?”

“Done, Mick...” Hawk says.

The next day, by mid-morning FED-EX has delivered the package containing the surveillance drone Mikie had ordered before leaving home.

Within an hour, he's got the thing assembled, with the wireless connection interface installed on his laptop to communicate and control this modern marvel of technology. Fully assembled, maybe 3 feet across, with a copter rotor at each corner, a high rez zoomable camera, with IR night vision and the thermal sensor as an upgrade to detect heat signature, which is displayed on the corner of the screen, a color histogram within a box.

I am constantly amazed at the facility and insouciant confidence Mikie and his generation in general, have with technology...everything seemingly within his instant grasp.

“Okay, Paw...showtime!” Mikie says, as we place the drone on the deck, and actuates it with a click of mouse. The blades instantly start rotating, then in an instant it leaves the deck and begins a rapid vertical climb. Now about a few hundred feet directly above us, Mikie initiates the camera with our image far below suddenly appearing on the laptop screen.

“Smile...you're on candid camera Hawk and Paw,” he says waving toward the camera with very impressive resolution. He then zooms in tight on my mug...then pans over to Hawks using the mouse.

“See the heat signature in the histogram...you can make out the outline of the human figure, in this case you guys. Notice the stronger the sig, the darker red predominates the core outline,” Mikie says.

“How long can this little beauty stay up there and how high,” Hawk asks.

“Specs say as long as 6 hours with a full charge, at a max of about 2 thousand feet using wireless interface. So, to go higher, we can also use the native radio control joystick unit to control the device...but wireless interface allows us to see data like live imagery and heat sensing real time on the laptop

zoomed to full screen, which also allows us to record the imagery and histogram as an mpeg video file on the hard drive.

I ordered two additional batteries for the drone, which we can keep charged and alternate every 5 or 6 hours. The wireless interface also connects to the internet, so we can control to a limited extent, and monitor it at another remote location, as long as we have an internet connection, which as you know we have with my portable encrypted satellite router up-down link at 100mbs,” Mikie matter-of-factly says.

“Very impressive, Mikie,” I say just shaking my head, “so what's our next move to get more intel on the suspect location Sarah's probably being held?” I say.

“Well, Paw...guess it's showtime. I'd suggest we head over to the marina, find an inconspicuous OP, observation post, where we have eyes on, launch the drone, sit back with some popcorn, and watch the show...see what can see,” he says.

About that time the Chief, quietly, motionlessly standing on the deck behinds us, for how long I have no idea, says “I would like to attend the maiden voyage of Daedalus...the drone. But before the launch, a little christening ceremony, with some burning sage and some of my people's incantations, you Palefaces call prayer, to the Great Spirit for a successful voyage.” the Chief says.

“Sure...why not. But why Daedalus, grandfather?” Mikie says.

“Besides having a nice uh...alliterative ring to it...perhaps one of your white folk family here, can explain the allegory of the myth, which the Greeks obviously appropriated from the Native peoples, who roamed the land long before any Greeks or Romans,” the Chief says again with a twinkle in his eye.

From my discussions with the brilliant Boys of Berkeley, Savio, C-Wash and Brawley, indelibly engraved in my fond memories, I recall the in-depth discussions about Greek classical literature, “Daedalus warns his son Icarus first of complacency and then of hubris, instructing him not to fly too close to the sun, causing the wax in his wings to melt. The kid, a know-it-all hotshot, tumbles out of the sky, falls into the sea, and drowns.

“In utta woids, don't fly too damn close to da sun, uh....Sonny,” Hawks says.

“Got it,” Mikie alias Icarus, always a quick study, says with a smile.

After a brief ceremony where the Chief waves burning sage incense over the now christened Daedalus, followed by a few aboriginal chants, we load up the truck.

“Paw, let's include Frank, he's got a lot of experience in recon. And he knows how to use that sniper rifle far better than I,” Mike says.

I call out Frank's name, who noiselessly appears out of nowhere, startling me with his stealth, “What's up Mick,” Frank says.

“Uh...hey, Frank...why don't you join us on the recon,” I say.

“Sure, let me get my gear,” Frank says.

A few minutes later Frank places his USMC duffel in the rear bed of the truck and hops in the backseat of the crew cab with Mikie who's setting up the portable satellite internet connection.

The Chief carefully places his bow and a quiver of arrows in the bed of the truck beside Frank's duffel with 6 walkie-talkie headsets inside, the soft cased Bushmaster Sniper Rifle with a Scope with a full clip, and the fully assembled, RC Daedalus, along with Oso, who after many relentless attempts has finally managed to include himself.

The Chief now in the front passenger seat, I say to Hawk, “Hawk, why don't you drive...I'll ride in the back, some quality time with Big Dawg, Okay big boy, you can go...sorry if I've been neglectin' ya.” I say with Oso, licking my mug in appreciation.

“Roger that,” Hawk says, and with Hawk, Mikie, Frank and I packing semi-automatic 9mm side arms, by 4pm, in less than 30 minutes we're driving through the parking lot of the marina in Blaine, until we locate the Gate that provides access to the slip where *Mas Rapido* is moored.

Frank looking through the high powered binoculars hanging from his neck, says, “Hawk, I can see the sloop...nobody on the deck, but the cabin door is open. Let's try to get a higher vantage point to launch the drone, so we can have undetected...better eyes on the boat...and any activity. How about the next left up that hill?” Hawk says.

“How's this?” Hawk says now about 50 yards from the gate.

“That works, Hawk. Turn us around so we're facing the slip and we're good to go,” which Hawk deftly does, “Mikie, are you ready to launch the drone?” Frank says.

“Roger that...hey Paw, time to have a little pow-wow,” says through the open rear sliding window. Mikie, Frank, Hawk and I convene at the rear tailgate of the truck, sans the Chief still in the cab snoring loudly, taking his customary New Mexico afternoon siesta.

Frank slowly slides the sniper rifle from the soft case, inserts the 10 round magazine with a loud click, which has the unspoken effect of grounding everybody to the potential lethality of the situation.

Mikie places Daedalus on the pavement, then lays his laptop on the tailgate where we can all view the screen.

“Paw, I going to make a test run with drone before we actually deploy it over the boat,” he says then initiating the drone on the keyboard, right next to RC joystick module. The drone starts its very rapid noiseless ascent, in less than a minute, its almost a 1,000 feet above us. He turns on the camera, and focuses it on us, “The camera does have a built-in directional microphone, but at operating attitude not much audio is useful...notice the thermal signatures of the three of us...and grandfather in the front of the truck in the

histogram. I'm going to do a few aerobatics just to confirm we've got full control, with no latency," he says

He then puts the drone through a series rapid changes of direction and altitude using the laptop, then the RC module joystick.

"Good to go, Paw," Mikie says.

"Amazing...absolutely amazing. Can you do a fly-over the sailboat, from this altitude?" I ask.

"Done, " he says.

The first images of *Mas Rapido* appear, with the camera now zooming in on the empty cockpit of the boat, littered with empty beer cans and a pizza box from Domino's Pizza.

"Can you come in tighter on the open door to the cabin?" I ask.

"Ah...interesting...see the heat signature...looks like three bodies, with a smaller one closer to the front, then 2 larger ones not far from the doorway...close together...maybe sitting at table," he says.

"This is really amazing, Mikie...but I think we need some *humint* uh...human intelligence to get a better idea of who and what we're dealing with," Frank says.

"Okay...how 'bout this...gettin' close to dinner time, let's comp those terrorist-racist bastards a pizza, and a six-pack," Hawk says.

"Sort of a last not-so-happy meal...kinda deal," Frank says with the disquieting smile of a US trained lethal warrior, picking up the sniper rifle and racking the chamber.

"Uh...okay Frankster...but hold that thought...etcetera. I'll call Domino's and have them deliver their usual order with a sixer. We intercept the delivery guy at the gate to the slip, then one of us makes the delivery and get's a closer look maybe even a peek inside the cabin," Hawk says.

"I like it..." I say.

"Brilliant, Hawk," Frank says with a fist bump.

"Okay...but here's the deal, if Porter's one of the perps, probably the only one he's never seen, physically or photos in this merry band of pranksters, is Mikie, so if we're going to pull this off, Mikie will have to be *da pizza man*," I say.

"Hey, no problem, Paw. But I think someone should man the drone. Uncle Hawk can do that, no prob. Just hit the function key, F8 to start and stop recording...which we should have running from the time I'm in the frame...I'll get it lower to about 500 feet for better resolution," Mikie says.

At a little past five a kid driving a car with a Domino's sign on the roof of his beater, shows up at the gate where is he intercepted by Mikie.

"Hey, man how much is it...I'll pay for it...and deliver it to my pals so you don't have waste your time looking for the slip. And hey cool, kinda camp

lid man with the Domino's logo, want to sell it?" Mikie says with the intercom on.

"Uh...\$22.50, um...I guess so," the kid says.

"Okay...\$30 for the delivery including your tip, and another \$10 for the lid, deal?" Mikie says.

"Yeah, man...thanks. Here, take the hat, we get 'em for free... part of our huge fringe benefits plan," the kid says with a smirk.

Mikie hands the kid two \$20s, "Thanks, man...have a good day, " grabs the six pack and the pizza box then looks up at the drone, and makes a thumbs up, and says over the intercom, "Okay...any suggestions on how this should go down?" Mikie says.

"See if you can position yourself at the rear of the boat so you see inside the cabin as best you can, before you announce yourself," Frank says.

"Roger that. Anything else?" Mikie says.

"Is the safety off on your side arm, inconspicuous under your shirt...and are you racked and loaded?" I say over the intercom.

"Yeap...all good. Okay...here goes," Mikie says walking toward the slip.

"And...goes without sayin' don't push too hard, and get the hell outta der as soon as you get all the intel you can get," I say.

"Roger that, Paw" Mikie says.

With Frank watching the action with his high-powered binos, and Hawk and I, now joined by Chief watching on the laptop screen Mikie nonchalantly strolls up to the rear of *Mas Rapido*. Pulling the bill down on his hat shielding his eyes from the setting sun, he looks into the cabin, allowing his eyes to adjust for about a minute, then continues on walking past the boat like he's searching for the slip, and says into the intercom, "Pretty dark inside that cabin, but I think I see 2 males sitting a table, maybe playing cards...a much smaller figure about half way back...the head with a white sheet or possibly white hair," he says.

"Could be Sarah...she's got platinum hair...or not." Hawk says.

"Okay, good job...go ahead and make the delivery...Frank's got ya covered with the sniper rifle," I say over the intercom.

Mikie walks back to the rear of the boat. Leans over the real railing and says loudly, "Domino's pizza...delivery!"

"Okay Mikie, I'm gonna call Sarah's phone that Porter's been using with one of Frank's burners...tell me if ya hear it...now!" I say pressing the send button putting the phone on speaker.

We hear the Beep-beep...beep-beep...over the intercom " Yel-low, *yel-low*! Who da hell is dis?" the voice impatiently answers with a thick Southern drawl. I discont.

Then a man exits the cabin, and walks up to Mikie, and says, “Hey ya'll...I didn't order no damn pizza...no how, now hit the road pal!”

“Hey...sorry, I guess I got the wrong slip...sorry to bother ya man,” Mikie says as he starts to walk back toward the gate.

“Hey you...” he says.

“What?” Mikie says over his shoulder still walking away.

“Ya'll turn around and face me...when I'm talkin' ta ya, boy! Right now!” he says.

A palpable collective off the charts pulse rate increase hits the not-so-merry pranksters.

Mikie turns around feigning fear, and says obsequiously, “Yes sir...very sorry uh...sir, what do want?”

“Easy, Frank...easy, man. I'll green light ya if...and when it's time, but we gotta be sure no one else will take her out,” I say to Frank peering through the scope on the rifle.

“How much do ya want for dat der pizza and sixer?” he says.

“Well, sir...I can't do that...cuz somebody ordered it ya know...and I could lose my job if I don't deliver it,” the pizza man says, *for the best break-out performance in a leading role, the nominations are Michael Kozlov uh...Jr...*

“I'll give ya \$40 for the pizza and beer...cash!” he says.

“Well...I don't know...make it \$50 and I'll tell the manager that this great big mean ol' guy took the pizza and stiffed me,” Mike impressively improvises.

“Okay...deal...” he says reaching into his wallet, pulling out two \$20s and a \$10 handing them to Mikie with his right hand revealing a cursive tattoo of *Negrito* on the back his hand.

Mikie hands the pizza and sixer across the rear transom and says, “Thank you...uh...*suh*...ya'll have a nice day now, ya hear,” he says with smirk.

Mikie gets to gate, then says over the intercom, “Yeap...with the tat on his right hand, even with the long hair and beard...it's Porter alright. Couldn't see the other male, but there is definitely at least a third person in the cabin. By the way, not too shabby an ROI, return on investment...25%, ya'll...we're up 10 bucks,” Mikie says with that 1000 watt smile.

“Hey, if the spy gig doesn't work out...could be the beginning of new career path, *with huge fringe benefits*, for ya Mikie,” Hawk says.

“Rog that, Unc,” Mikie says

- Chapter 43 (86) -

The four of us reconvene at the rear tailgate around the laptop.

“Okay, I think there's enough probable data to support the strong possibility that Sarah is being held in the cabin of the boat. Let's open this up for discussion on some possible extraction strategies. Frank why don't you lead off,” I say.

“Okay Mick. My suggestion is to continue to observe the target to attempt to determine how many potential combatants are a threat. Mikie, that drone camera has IR night vision, correct” Frank says.

“Yea...it can be controlled on or off with the click of a mouse,” Mikie says.

“I think it's a safe assumption that the nut case Porter is not going surrender peacefully if we mount an assault, which could put Sarah in extreme danger as a hostage. I think we've got to find a way to get Porter off the boat, away from Sarah, and isolate the remaining sentry, somehow lure him out of the cabin where we can disable him. Any suggestions on how to get Porter off the boat?” Franks says.

“Ya know, Porter's got some real issues with the old man. How about we somehow broadcast that humiliating voice mail message from Major Daddy over the marina loud enough for him to hear it...and maybe leave the boat to investigate the origin,” I say.

“That might work. But how are we going get it loud enough so he can hear it down at the boat?” Hawk says.

“Here's one option. You've got high powered speakers in both front door panels of the truck. We back the truck up to the gate...leave the doors wide open, I input the audio out of the laptop into the auxiliary in jack in the sound system of the truck...then put the mp3 on loop mode on the laptop, and blast it over the marina. Should get his attention,” Mikie says.

“Okay...then what...when he comes to investigate?” I say.

“I don't think we can rule out the possibility that the paranoid and cunning Porter might send the other sentry to investigate. In any case his suspicions will definitely be aroused...so we gotta move fast to free Sarah. Should be fully dark by then...we continue to monitor the boat with the drone IR night vision camera. Concealed in the shadows of parked cars, we'll have the element of surprise, we very quietly take him down at the truck...maybe get some intel,” Frank says.

“Yes, it shall be so...using some O-I-T...Old Indian Torture persuasion techniques, he will tell us much...very quickly,” the Chief says while meticulously applying multi-colored war paint on his visage in the side

view mirror of the truck, “Michael, does this war point make me look...as you palefaces say...uh fat?”

“Nope...and takes 10 years off, at least, grandfather. Uncle Hawk?” Mikie says.

“If you're going for the complete package...the whole blood thirsty savage kinda sensibility ya nailed it...and the organic earth tones nicely compliment the war bonnet,” Hawk says.

“Uh right, Chief...then lure the remaining male in the cabin outside,” Frank says with a smile.

“Sounds workable...any one else?” I say

“All good here,” Hawk says.

“Chief?” I say.

“No matter how we end up with Porter...I want him alive, to carry out the tribal sentence...personally,” the Chief says.

“Okay...one other thing. In my duffel bag there's already an I-E-D in a smaller duffel especially prepared for the occasion...similar to the one Porter used to blow up my boat...with me on it...which as you recall, Mick, I barely survived. As a backup plan, and yea, some *karmic* payback, it's a nice night for a swim...so I think I'll just take a little dip and deposit it on the foredeck of the boat, then swim back, and towel off for the reception party.” Frank says then removing the smaller duffel from the much larger one.

“Uh...Frank...don't suppose anybody here is going to be able to talk you out this little mission of revenge,” I say.

“Mick...and you others...this is more than just personal vengeance for me...it is something I have to do...to hopefully atone for all the *very* bad shit I've done for Porter. And for his attempt on my life, threats on my family from that *bastard*, especially toward my innocent helpless daughter, Alicia. Living in constant terror...bad *karma*. Big time. No *fuckin'* way to have to live your life, man,” Frank says.

“Okay, Frankie...I think we all get it. God's speed...safe passage for you, son. And for Alicia's sake...come back to us safe,” I say giving him a fist bump.

He nods, then from the larger duffel, removes a spare large black trash bag that he uses for a liner for the diesel fuel, ammonium nitrate fertilizer explosive. He unzips the smaller duffel, making some connections, then takes a burner out of his cargo pants, presses autodial ringing the phone in the duffel.

“Good to go,” he says making final connections, zipping the duffel closed, placing it in the waterproof trash bag and inflating the bag with 10 breaths of air, then tying a knot tightly at the top of the inflated bag.

“In case this goes South...Mickey, luv ya, man...and you too Mikie, thanks for everything. And please make sure by daughter Alicia is taken care of,” Frank says first hugging me hard, then Mikie.

“You got it, Frank,” I say.

“Back atcha, Frankie,” Mikie says.

Stripping down to his boxer shorts, revealing his still USMC lean, fit and muscular body, he walks down the ramp to the slips, setting the trash bag down near the edge, the splendid warrior stealthily slips into the dark, cold, murky water, grabbing the trash bag, and says with a boyish grin “See you boys in about half an hour...and don't start the fuckin' reception party without me.”.

Doing the breast stroke, with the floating trash bag in front him, Frank disappears into the black moonless night.

“I've got the camera set on night vision...should be able to see Frank when he gets to the boat. In the meantime until Frank returns I'll set up the audio to broadcast it over the marina.” Mikie says.

“Okay...let's all check our side arms...everyone do a com check on the intercom...Mikie, you'll be on the sniper rifle...while we wait for Frank's return,” I say.

The truck is now in position in front of the gate, with the doors swung wide open, ignition on with laptop plugged into the sound system, poised ready to play the voice mail, with Mikie sitting on the front seat monitoring the hovering drone overhead with the IR night vision camera. Hawk using Frank's binoculars, with eyes on the boat.

About 15 minutes later, “I can see Frank is now at the bow of the boat...he's now out of the water on the slip. Looks like he's placing the duffel on the front of the boat. Okay...he's back in the water...unscathed...should be here in about 10 minutes. Time for us to get into our positions for the show,” Mikie says.

Hawk, the Chief and I, and Oso, take a position behind the bed of a pick-up maybe 20 yards from the gate. A few minutes later Frank emerges from the gate entrance, gets dressed and joins us behind the pick-up.

“How'd it go Frank,” I ask.

“No problem...didn't want to step on boat for fear that it might cause some detectable movement...so I stashed it on the foredeck under the collapsed headsail...so it shouldn't be noticeable,” Frank says.

“Okay, Mikie...we're all in position...start the show, then get in position behind the red SUV about 10 yards from you. We've got the sniper rifle here with Frank,” I say.

“Roger that. Showtime!” Mikie says hitting the play on the laptop, turning the volume up to max, which thunders through the parking lot, and into the marina.

Ernest...this hiya's ya fatha.

Ernest, you have not called ya motha for ova two weeks... again.

Where da hell are ya boy, and that there voice mail... this is Sarah Shapiro please leave a message bullshit...you shacked up with some

whore named Sarah? Shapiro...sounds like a Jew name ta me.. This is not acceptable! Call your motha...today! That's a direct orda. Do not make me call ya again...you do not want to make me come out there! And...do not disappoint me again you worthless EX-cuse for a marine. Are we clear on that?"

About the second time it plays, we can hear loud cursing and yelling coming from the boat, then Hawk spies somebody coming out of the cabin...in camo, carrying an assault rifle, walking briskly toward the truck.

"It ain't Porter...he's playing it safe and sending probably one of his own security guys...a very big dude...looks and moves like a pro. And, Porter's now exiting the cabin...he's got Sarah in front him...her hands tied in front of her, now sitting in the cockpit. Poor gal, she looks okay considering...wearin' jeans and a man's oversized hoody...barefoot, seems to be able to move okay. Looks like he's fixin' to rabbit...he's removing all the dock lines. Now he's startin' the engine," Hawk says.

'Okay...we don't want Porter to hear any gunfire and split...so we'll try to immobilize the sentry without tipping off Porter," I say.

The sentry is now at the truck, "What the fuck is this bullshit," he says looking inside the cab, then crouching low, scanning the parking lot, starts walking toward the SUV that Mikie is hiding behind with the assault rifle at the ready...locked and loaded.

I whisper over the intercom,"Mikie, he's coming toward you...get your side arm racked and ready...stay low and don't move. Okay everybody...no noise...even with voice mail playin', the sniper rifle's probably too loud." I say

"And the muzzle flash...but he's gettin' close...too close to Mikie's position...say when Mick, and he's down," Frank says scoping the sentry with the sniper rifle, his finger now on the trigger.

"If anybody's got an idea on how to quietly dispose of the sentry...now would a good time to say something. Okay, stay ready Frank. I'll count it down for ya as he gets closer to threatening Mikie, Five...four...steady...three..."

Behind my left ear, I hear a dull snap, then feel a whoosh whistle past my ear. The arrow hits the sentry right in the center of his back, probably piercing his heart...killed instantly before noiselessly collapsing face-down on the ground, skittering his assault rifle across the parking lot pavement.

"Well...there's that..." Hawk says.

I turn around to face the Chief, who now looks about 20 years younger, with the intensity of a young warrior brave on his face, "Another O-I-T specialty...stealth...and by the way...I still got it! Now, on to George Armstrong," he says with a triumphant smile.

“You mean Ernest Porter...” I say fearing the Chief is still a little confused, from the severe concussion Porter gave him when he escaped.

“Nope, George Armstrong...as in Custer...2.0” he says.

“Got it,” I say with grin, then over the intercom, “Okay...stand down everybody, sadly the threat vector had to be terminated as he was a direct threat to Mikie's life. So...let's regroup this uh...war party, and head down to boat, see if we can negotiate some kind of peaceful resolution for Sarah's release...with Porter,” I say.

“Good luck with that,” Mikie says.

“Frank can you give Hawk a hand putting the sentry in the bed of the truck? Don't want to litter the landscape with terrorist garbage, now do we?” I say.

“Rog, that,” Frank says.

“Man, he's a large dude...fit and strong, by the looks of him, probably ex-military. Too bad he got hooked up with Porter...now he's doing the The Big Sleep. What a sad, tragic waste, man. Guess he drank the Kool-aid,” Hawk says as he and Frank deposit the corpse of the terrorist in the back of the truck propped upright like he's taking a nap.

We all assemble at the truck, Mikie turns off the ignition, pockets the keys and stops the playback on the laptop. He picks up the laptop, slams the truck doors, and we all walk through the gate, with Oso in tow, toward the *Mas Rapido*.

- Chapter 44 (87) -

As we're walking toward the slip, "Okay...single file, spread out, side arms in hand...when we get to the boat, stay at least 10 feet apart. I'll do the negotiation with Porter. Frank, keep the sniper rifle trained on him the whole time," I say.

When we get to the boat, Porter is standing in the cockpit his arm around Sarah's neck using her as a shield, a handgun pointed at her head, the smoke and nauseating pungent smell of diesel exhaust from the idling boat engine permeate the air.

"Well..well, well...if it ain't my favorite bunch of losers, Kozlov and his pet albino gorilla...and Frankie boy," Porter says.

"Sarah, are you okay...has he harmed you in any way?" Hawk says his voice cracking with emotion.

"No, nothing physical any way. Been better...definitely not one of my top 10 little getaways, but hey, I'm okay...just kinda a stressed, ya know?" plucky Sarah says.

Ya think?

"Porter, give it up, man. There ain't no way you can get out of this alive...unless you put down the gun, and let her go." I say.

"Ha! I'm holding all the cards here, asshole. You make any moves and I splatter her brains all over this boat,

"Then you'll be dead before your miserable ass hits the ground. By the way, have ya called your mommy yet? Sounds like Daddy's a little upset with little Ernie Boy, like you've disappointed him...again. Don't quite measure up, do ya Ernie. So anyway, I think you should call your mother...at least to say goodbye." I say deliberately try to bait him to give Frank, with the cross hairs of the scope following Porter's bobbing head, a better shot.

"Y'all shut the fuck up! I'm warning you asshole...do not fuck with me," he says tightening his grip around Sarah's neck pressing the gun with more force. "So in about 5 minutes I'm going to take this big beautiful boat here, South, to ol *May-heco*...and she's coming along for the ride...then trust me, no one will even want to look at her including y'all when I get done with her," he says. For the first time I see terror in Sarah's eyes.

"So help me out here, Ernie...how'd you end up on Jason Mahoney's boat? Is he part of this?" I ask.

"You're a smart guy...so whattya think? Duh?" he says.

"I'll take that as a yes. Final offer, Porter...drop the gun, and let her go...or this will not end well for you," I say.

“No fucking way, man. I'm outta here,” he says, turning around to put the propeller in gear, with the boat starting to pull out of the slip, placing his foot on the bottom of the large wheel which turns the rudder, guiding the boat straight ahead.

As the boat slowly starts pulling out of the slip, Frank says, “Sorry Mick...I can't get a clear enough shot...he's movin' around too damn much..I might hit her.”

We all stand there feeling totally useless...helpless to stop this psycho from making good his escape...again. Hawk is beside himself...pacing frantically back and forth on the deck.

The boat is now about fifty yards from the slip, when Porter feeling more confident now relaxing his grip on Sarah, turns around to increase the throttle, when suddenly Sarah elbows him in the groin hard, buckling his knees, which allows her to break free, and in one fluid motion, jumps overboard, diving deep into the sea. Porter flummoxed by this, frantically fires several desultory rounds into the water, but she is no where in sight.

I yell, “Oso...go get her boy,” A jet propelled Oso hurtles off the end of slip and starts paddling furiously toward Sarah, with Hawk right behind, unable to keep up with those big webbed Newfie paws. Within a minute, as Sarah bobs to the surface, Oso is on her. He grips the hood of the hoodie within his jaws from behind and starts dragging her backward, toward us, now about 25 yards away. Finally Hawk gets to them, a sputtering Sarah being held afloat by Oso and Hawk, slowly towing her toward the dock and safety.

Porter, facing us now using both hands is flipping us off...dancing and laughing manically in the cockpit of the *Mas Rapido*.

Frank lays the rifle down, walks over to the Chief, takes the burner phone out of his cargo pants, and says, “Chief...I know this won't be nearly as satisfying...but think of it as a uh...virtual execution of tribal justice. When you're ready, just press the send button...and send that bastard straight to hell.”

The Chief takes the phone from Frank, and summons Mikie over to join him.

“Michael, after all these years of pain and sorrow...it is time to fill the hole left in our hearts...to move on...so while the time has finally come for us to avenge your mother's death according to our tribal customs, I now give you the final decision...to press the button, or not...to finally, once and for all time, be done with it,” he says.

“I don't know grandfather...I thought that it would be easier than this...to punish Porter's crimes with like punishment. All this death...and years of consuming vengeful anger and hate. I'm just so tired of it..all of it. I just can't...grandfather. Something deep inside me...just can not let me do it. Paw, what should I do? Help me, Paw. You loved her as much as grandfather and I...but...”

“Mikie, thank God, you are so much like your beloved mother. In your core, you've been blessed with the very best of her...her kindness and infinite capacity for love and compassion for others. And I must confess that in my heart of hearts, I too have a deep desire for revenge...my beloved Marla...having been taken from me. But as has been said, while seeking revenge, dig two graves—one for yourself.

If you do this, it is something that you will carry with you, for the rest of your life, the bitter aftertaste of temporal sweet revenge. It is your decision son...but know this, I will be there for you...with you always, no matter what you decide. I love you my son.” I say taking him into my arms and hugging his now, convulsing sobbing body, then joined by the Chief, the three of us huddled together against the heavy evil darkness of the moment.

“We three...touched by the infinite grace and love of Sora Eagle Feather...and of Marla Dyson, who shall always be with us...for an eternity and beyond. Henceforth, as a guiding beacon, we hereby choose life over more death and despair...hope over fear...and love and compassion over hate...and revenge,” I say.

“Hmm...yes, it is so, my son...that somehow, the Great Spirit has chosen this kind and loving white man, your father Mick, now in spirit one of our people. The Great Spirit has spoken through him. And as the pale face like to say, even while committing grave injustices to our people...Amen brothers and sisters, Amen and Halleluiah!” the Chief says with that twinkle in his eye.

Mikie, then turns to Frank, “Thank you Frankie, for your generosity and love...for your great gesture of kindness, but we've made up our minds. Here,” he says handing the phone back to Frank.

“I understand...and respect your decision, Mikie,” Frank says taking the phone.

Frank, the fierce but compassionate warrior...gazing out in to the distance, with Porter still taunting us, the vast expanse of the comforting timeless sea, somehow quiets the conflict raging in his own soul, “This is for the souls of those unfinished sacred lives who, while their voices has been silenced, we seek final justice on their behalf, Sora Eagle Feather and Mick's Marla...and Jenifer Rogers and her unborn child! *Adios mutha fucker!* Go to hell, *mas rapido!*” and presses the send button

KA-BOOM

The massive explosion catapults Porter, kicking and screaming in agony, clothing fully engulfed in flames, cartwheeling 50 feet in to the air.

Frank, the reflection of the ensuing fire and flames dancing in his piercing, now softening fierce warrior's eyes, then bows his head, “Like punishment...for like crime. It is done. Amen,”

- Chapter 45 (88) -

Within minutes of the massive off-shore explosion, the nearing wail of multiple sirens from fire, police and first responders, is loud and constant.

We pull Sarah and Hawk out of the water on the dock of the now empty slip, gasping for air, exhausted from the physical and emotional ordeal. I throw a blanket, which I normally carry in the truck, over Sarah, shivering with cold and emotion.

Hawk is quickly up and about, and helps Oso out of the water on to the dock, “Good boy, Oso...” grabbing his head in both hands, shaking it playfully, with Oso's, huge pink tongue lapping his mug, his tail wagging furiously.

“You okay, man?” I say to Hawk.

“Yea, that was special...cut that one a little close,” Hawk says.

“Osito? You okay big dawg?” I say.

“Woof, woof, “ which of course means “Oh-kay”

I kneel down beside Sarah, she immediately throws her arms around my neck, and pulls herself up to hug me, sobbing convulsively.

“Oh Mick...I really thought that I was going to die out there...but strangely, the emotion on the top of my mind was that I wasn't going to see you again...ever,” Sarah says hugging me tightly.

For over a minute, no words are spoken, then I say, “I could never let anything happen to you Sarah...ever,” then taking her still dripping wet head, and shivering face into both hands, give her a deep and long kiss.

“Sarah, I'm going to have to leave you for a moment...to deal with the police. I'll send the medics down to help you to an ambulance, and to the hospital. So don't try to move around. Okay? Everything...and I mean *everything*, and is going to be just fine. Hawk, why don't stay with Sarah, until they arrive,” I say releasing her with a gentle kiss, and a squeeze of her hand, and then begin walking up to the parking lot to deal with bureaucratic maelstrom, sure to follow.

“Done...Oso and I, are on it, okay Cuz?” Hawk says with a smile at Sarah. She nods, smiles wanly, then slowly lays back down, obviously still in shock.

Within minutes a flotilla of firetrucks and first responders, with a phalanx of police cars are on the scene flooding the parking lot, a fog of red and blue flashing lights casting an eerie funereal pall over the scene. Mikie, Frank and the Chief, are in the parking lot, standing near the truck, when I arrive.

“Hey, Paw...are Sarah and Hawk okay?” Mikie says.

“Hawk's fine...and I think Sarah's going to okay...but just to be safe let's get her to the hospital to have her checked out. She's understandably pretty shaken, but she's strong...and plucky. Everybody here okay” I say.

They all nod yes, “Except for our terrorist friend in the uh...bed of the truck...who's taking a *very long nap*. S'pose we oughta talk about how we're going to explain how he ended up with an arrow sticking out of his back,” Frank says.

“Ya think?” Mikie says.

“Chief, any ideas? With the arrow in his back, self defense seems like it might be a hard sell, ” I say.

“Well, as you will recall, I am an attorney in good standing with the New Mexico Bar. So...while the statute may vary slightly from state to state...the legal standard is an objectively reasonable fear of injury or death. Double check, to which the courts have held not just to one's self...but, as in this case, serious injury or death to others. Namely the perp was threatening the life of my grandson Michael with lethal force.

Based on those facts, I do not believe that any District Attorney, would be willing to even file,” the Chief says.

“Impressive legal analysis, Chief. And with your J.D., Juris Doctorate, the full package...Doctor, lawyer...and an Indian Chief,” I say

“Yes...it is so. And as you pale faces like to say...that I still have *all* of my marbles,” the Chief says with that irrepressible twinkle in his eye.

A minute or so later, a cop walks over to us, and says, “I am Sergeant Hansen, from the Blaine Police. Who's the spokesman for this group to explain what the hell is goin' on here, with that massive explosion?”

“I'll speak for the group, Sergeant,” I say.

It takes me about half an hour to get through the whole convoluted story, including the drone, hostage situation and the resolution, with the explosion and sinking of *Mas Rapido*, and death of Ernest Porter, including the cadaver in the back of the truck.

“Man, this sounds so farfetched, as to be impossible to have even been made up. Way outta my pay grade. I going to refer this to the Detectives to sort it out. They will be in touch...with a lot more questions. In meantime I want all of you, including your people down on the dock, to furnish full information, including your driver's license or ID, to one of my officers here...before anybody leaves. I would advise you all to stay in town until the detectives contact you. Any questions?” he says.

We all nod in agreement.

The medics are now loading Sarah into an ambulance with Hawk and Oso, now joining us.

The coroners office removes the cadaver from the truck, and an hour later, we're all sitting in the Irish pub, The Shamrock and Thistle getting stupid drunk on copious pints of Guinness, decompressing and rehashing the crazy events of the day, with T-How joining us with a thousand questions, wistfully regretting having not been part of the action.

The next day, with everyone major hung over, we meet for Bloody Mary's, and a final breakfast debriefing at the venerable Horseshoe, with an emotional farewell, with everyone promising to stay in touch, returning back home to resume their relatively normal, tranquil lives.

I take Mikie aside before he leaves, "Well son, you really came through for us. I'm so very proud of you. Hawk and I...and of course Sarah, deeply thank you for everything. Unfortunately there is still some unfinished business with Jason Mahoney, who Porter implicated in this conspiracy, just before he died. I think we got his attention when we blew up his million dollar toy, *Mas Rapido*. So I would expect to be hearing from him...sooner than later, one way or another. I'll keep ya posted. Take care my son...talk soon. Luv yis."

"Sure Paw. But whatever happens, I'm all in, and I think I can speak for rest of the guys of uh...Team Kozmick...if we need them again to backup you and Uncle. Luv yis, Paw. Give my best to Unc, okay?," Mikie says with a big hug, then climbs into the Ford Explorer with Porters's toys of termination still in the THULE case, which ominously portends the necessity for keeping them available, and heads back to the Bay area, to his work...which I still have no idea who he works for or what he does...

The incident makes the headlines in the local newspapers, including the Seattle Times, with several follow-up articles above the fold for a week about the presence of several domestic violent extremist militias in North Cascadia County.

With Mikie having recorded the entire hostage incident of Porter on the dock with the hovering drone camera on his laptop, within two weeks, the District Attorney as the Chief predicted, clears all of us of any criminal charges.

He closes the investigation of the incident, with a referral to the FBI because of the kidnapping, who also close the case within a month.

I put Sarah on a plane back to San Francisco after we spend a blissful week together at Chez MAK. More on that later...

Now, with Jason Mahoney realizing that his Nemesis, that would be *moi*, is still a threat to his lofty political ambitions, Hawk and I start to mentally prepare ourselves for the inevitable attempts to silence us. We both agree, we're tired of being constantly on defense, and begin making plans to go on preemptive offense. Time for Captain Ahab to walk the plank...

To be continued in the next installment of The American Entropy Trilogy, American Anarchy.

About

Michaelalonzo Kominsky, currently lives in Bellingham Washington, near Lake Whatcom less than a mile from “Ground Zero” of the explosion of the Olympic petroleum pipeline of June 10, 1999.

His production company MetaMEDIA Communications on occasion still produces films, usually a bio-pic documentary, often about self-absorbed, obsessive compulsive creatives of which he has considerable personal insight.

When not chasin' bad guys around the page he can often be found in his studio, 'throwing some paint'. His art can be viewed at: themakgallery.com

It would be greatly appreciated by the author, if you come across any factual errors, to let the author know. Your questions and comments are welcome. Thanks.

~mak



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Epilogue

Like many progressives, after the United States Presidential Election of 2016, I was in shock, indeed total disbelief that Hillary Clinton, polling as a heavy favorite up to election night, was not declared the victor. This despite the fact she had received over three million more popular votes than Donald Trump; the margin of victory by the Electoral College, was less than 80,000 total votes over many millions of votes cast.

How could this happen? Was this just some Black Swan. A once in a generation outlier? A one-off sociological aberration? The more important question is could it happen again? There is widespread agreement among social and political scientists that the predominant proliferation and strategic manipulation of untruthful propaganda ubiquitously propagated on social media had a profound effect on the outcome of the election(s), at both federal and state levels.

So yes, indeed it could happen again...unless and until we demand that Congress pass regulatory legislation that the purveyors of internet content, most especially social media, including Google, Microsoft, LinkedIn, Facebook, Tweeter and Reddit, are held legally accountable for the curation and removal of demonstrably deliberate and nefarious disinformation and falsehoods.

This novel attempts to explain how powerful anti-democratic forces, including the state-sponsored Russian Media Mafia and government, and Alt-right propaganda mills, of which I include Fox News channel, could again execute a pernicious concerted canard to surreptitiously and indiscernibly affect, and illegally influence/modify voter behavior.

It is the opinion of many constitutional legal scholars, including Lawrence Tribe and Lawrence Lessig esteemed Harvard Law Professors, that an intentional disinformation and dissembling campaign, resulted in voter suppression through the hijacking of social media on the internet illegally tampered with and influenced the outcome of the 2016 election in favor of Donald Trump.

Art as a Powerful Agent of Social Change

Through the millennia, the innate human compulsion to connect with his fellow man beyond the quotidian task of survival through various art forms has somehow survived, despite desperate attempts by despots to silence it. Art is a meta-level of consciousness: An affirmation of the human condition and all its wonder, and it must not be left unsaid, its foibles and flaws. To create is as intrinsic in the human spirit as the biological urge to procreate.

Early manifestations of art as a powerful agent of social change can be found in the art form of the novel. The novel with a purpose is, one contends, a preaching novel. But it preaches by telling things and showing things. The preaching, the moralizing is the result not of direct appeal by the writer, but is made—should be made—to the reader by the very incidents of the story. It is the complaint of the coward, this cry against the novel with a purpose, because it brings the tragedies and grief of others to notice. Take this element from fiction, take from it the power and opportunity to prove that injustice, crime and inequality do exist and what is left? Just the amusing novels that entertain.

Throughout history, some of the greatest agents of social change have been ignited through works of fiction—including classics: Harriet Beecher Stowe (*Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*—1852), Charles Dickens (*A Tale of Two Cities*—1859), Herman Melville (*Moby-Dick; or The Whale*—1851), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*—1932), John Steinbeck (*Grapes of Wrath*—1939), and George Orwell (1984—1949).

So just as the opening question in Ayn Rand's iconic Libertarian novel "*Atlas Shrugged*", is, "Who is John Galt?"—he is no longer a person but a symbol for Libertarian ideology and unfettered free-market capitalism. Howard Beale the anti-hero in the film *Network* (1976 - <http://howardbeale.org>) is the liberal antithesis of Galt...raging against the inequities of a rigged corporate system of hyper-capitalistic greed and avarice. Capitalism run amok.

It is through this ancient and sacred tradition of allegory, of striving to deliver their moral payload, that is documented as far back as the Paleolithic cave paintings of Lascaux 20,000 years ago. By connecting to the primordial instinct to share the experience of the human condition through captivating storytelling, in all its art forms, thus passing on cumulative wisdom and tradition through parable for generations to follow. I believe the highest and indispensable calling of the artist is to be a prophet, essentially a healing secular shaman, historian and conscience of civilization.

The exponential technological evolution of the forms of artistic expression now allows us to put words to music, and more cogently, words and music to moving images, and through the internet essentially dismantling the traditional broadcast paradigm from one to many, to...many to many. In its highest form unfettered democracy unleashed—it can promote a synergy of magnanimous ideals and enlightenment. Or sadly, a powerful force for the promulgation of malice and far too often, willful arrogant ignorance—a cacophony of disinformation; unregulated, unfettered hate speech on the internet—threatening the very core of our democratic institutions.

To the artists: Noli Timere!! (Be not afraid! The dying words of Irish poet Seamus Heaney). Speak truth to power living out loud, with your art!

Michael Kominsky 2021

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