Instantly named Freedom Book of The Month and a major influence in the Cyber-underground, A Lodging of Wayfaring Men is the story of freedom-seekers who create an alternative society on the Internet - a virtual society, with no possibility of oversight or control. It grows so fast that governments and “leaders” are terrified, and fight to co-opt this cyber-society before it undermines the power of the governing elite.

> For those of you who may not have read the marvelous *A Lodging of Wayfaring Men*, I strongly encourage you to do so.
> -- Capital Reward Blog

> The novel leads us through a clever plot where the principles of freedom and individuality lead to a free market, one not controlled by governments or by tax men. The narrative is gripping. The reader cannot lay the book down.
> -- Dr. Thomas Dorman

> As full as my reading schedule is, I plan to make time to return to *A Lodging of Wayfaring Men* in order to glean the most from this interesting, thought-provoking tale.
> -- Sunni Maravillosa, Free-Market.net

> Of the twenty five or so people I worked with last fall, all of them revered *A Lodging of Wayfaring Men* as a bible. They referred to the house and their community effort as a Lodge. We all felt it was modeled on the Free Souls.
> -- HW, underground programmer

> One of the most thought-provoking books to hit the information highway in recent times.
> -- David MacGregor, Sovereign Living

A LODGING OF WAYFARING MEN

BY PAUL ROSENBERG

www.veraverba.com

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For Hurbinek

Chapter One

"God, it feels great to defy the bastards! Doesn't it?"

Dr. George Dimitrios, who was rushing through the darkened laboratory carrying a heavy box, stopped and stood still. Six men surrounded him at a distance, darting in and out of the shadows, and dismantling the chem lab in what seemed a controlled panic. Ever since he had forced himself to enter the lab and begin looting it, barely an hour earlier, he had been completely immersed in the work. He concentrated, partly because it was necessary, and partly to keep from thinking about what could happen if he got caught. It seemed like a bad dream, but one that he could escape from only by seeing it to completion.

Now, in the midst of this confusion, Phillip says, "It feels great to defy the bastards." George wasn't feeling particularly great about it just then.

"Hurry-up, and keep the chemicals upright!" The voice came from an unseen corner of the lab, where several of Phillip's 'guys' were dismantling the equipment with surprising skill. George jumped back into action, his concern for the chemicals and equipment pushing his fear back to the edges of his consciousness.

There was no way of knowing if or when Campus Security might show up, so the half-dozen men packed-up the lab in lots. The most important items were packed and removed first, the second most-important things next, and so on. George was worried about running if security showed-up. Phillip's guys were also worried about the security boys showing up, but their response would not be to run. These men looked like they could be very good at violence if they needed to be.

The first and second batches – cardboard boxes full of tubes, hoses, beakers, bottles, and computers – had made it out of the building and were on their way to a safe storage site. One more load of boxes and all would be well. Or at least as 'well' as things were going to be for a long time.

Finally, they were all gone and only George and Phillip remained. Without a word, they each took separate halves of the building, and made a last check. Everyone involved had worn gloves, so they weren't worried about finger prints, but Phillip did grab a broom, and quickly swept the lab to eliminate traceable foot prints. They exited through the side door and left the broom there, leaning against the dark bricks just outside. They pulled up the hoods of their jackets, shuffled silently to the car, and drove quietly away.

It was done. The lab was cleaned-out, along with all of George's log books and computers. It would take a week to reassemble all the equipment at a new lab – if he ever got one again – but at least his work was safe.

The work… Fourteen years of his life spent in a slow, difficult analysis of biochemical residues and the solving of a dozen molecular riddles. Then, real results, challenged and upheld. George really didn't know how he was able to make such a breakthrough. The truth is that most scientists go their whole careers without making any great discovery; mostly they refine a few ideas and develop more efficient processes. Some day he would have to determine whether he had in fact done something better than the others or whether he was just lucky. But for now, driving through the parking lot, his adrenaline was beginning to subside, while his fear remained. He felt almost sick.

His lay back in his seat as far as possible, hoping at the least to find some physical comfort, if he could find none for his mind. Slowly, his thoughts went back through the events that brought him here. His face grew blank; his mind felt thick and gray. His black eyebrows looked as though they would have liked to pull themselves together in a deep frown, but they simply lacked the strength to do so. Even his hair, usually thick and wavy, seemed flat.

He could have been up for a Nobel Prize, and yet he was here, stealing lab equipment in the dark of night, like a common thief. "God help me," he thought, while his face remained blank, "I *am* a thief!" And it was true. The lab equipment and supplies were not his property. The University held title to the equipment, and they had ordered Campus Security to close down the lab immediately. He knew he was right to protect and preserve his work, but he was also risking jail… months or years in a *real* jail, with real bad guys sleeping next to him every night! As soon as the security guys got there, they'd know that the equipment was gone, and he would be suspect number one! When he begged Phillip to find a group of men to move the equipment, he had told himself that he was a modern Galileo, standing up to ignorant rulers; he hadn't thought about a real jail sentence. In an instant, all his remaining strength withdrew, sucked into a tight knot somewhere in his abdomen. "Oh my God, how stupid have I been?" He felt sick with a primal sort of dread. It was a terrible feeling that he vaguely remembered from long, long ago… "God, this is just too much," he said as the car made its way through a dark alley. It was spoken so quietly that Phillip, driving the car over a poorly-paved surface, didn't hear it.

"Where are we going?" George asked the question with a flat tone that indicated he was too dazed to really care.

"To your place," answered Phillip, "You'll have to clear out everything that matters to you. After tonight, you won't be able to go back there, George. I'm sorry."

* * * * * * *

Dr. George Dimitrios was not only an MD, but also had also earned a PhD in Neurochemistry two years after he had finished medical school. Rather than practicing medicine (as he had planned at first), he fell in love with research. His work with neuropeptides had been hailed as brilliant. His new theories on the

chemical residues of emotions and their long-term effects held tremendous promise, and he had been confirming those theories in the lab. But when he began to apply his findings to psychiatric routines, and to delve into the construction of the subconscious, a wave of opposition rose up against him. Exactly how and why he went from that point, only two years ago, to his present descent into crime, was not yet clear to him. Too many rapid events and too much emotional involvement blurred the causes and effects so badly that he couldn't see a pattern in them. First the scientific journals started turning down his articles, then there were blatantly false criticisms, and then the scandal. The lying, false scandal. His funding dried up, and soon there was nothing left.

"Why did they do it?" He didn't have strength enough to think about it now. Almost as an act of mercy, his body and mind began going numb.

The neuropeptides lab had been housed in one corner of an old factory on the northwest side of Chicago. It had been donated to the University by an industrialist (and an alumnus) who had died about twenty years earlier. A management company leased out half of the building to a trucking company, and various college departments used other portions of the building from time to time. George had his lab there for the past eight years, and had loved being away from the commotion and politics of the campus. All he wanted was to be left alone to pursue his work unimpeded, and working at the factory gave that to him. It had originally been a radio-assembly facility. It was a dark brick building, one story only, but 25 feet from floor to ceiling. There were skylights the length of the building, but almost half of them were obstructed with some type of patch, or had simply been replaced with plywood. There were leaks whenever it rained, but there was room to spare, and quiet. George had two heated and air-conditioned rooms built inside the western wall, on the back side of the building, and kept a large, open laboratory and staging area next to them, in the far northwest corner.

There were three driveways leading to the factory and its parking lots. Two of them fed onto main roads, and one allowed access to the factory parking lot through a residential alley. It was that path that they took on the dark, overcast night of March 24th.

George was already feeling bad when he had driven across town that morning, going from the health club to his lab. His project had been canceled as of March first, but the University had allowed him to continue with his work on his own. He worked at the factory several days a week, as did a few graduate students who volunteered to assist him. But if Dean Carsten wanted to see him again, it could not be for good; the man had publicly referred to his work as "tempting chaos."

It was actually a sense of impending doom that he was feeling, which was made no better by the scenes around him. It was the essential Chicago day: 45 degrees F., rain, deeply overcast, windy, and imbued with an all-pervasive gray that seemed to inhabit all matter in the city.

Almost all of Chicago was built between 1890 and 1930, and in the deep gray hue of a rainy day, it appeared that he was driving through an old black-and-white newsreel. The main streets were lined with three-story brick buildings, each with a store of some sort on the first level and apartments above. The side streets were populated by brick bungalows, two-flats, and three-flats. Almost all were some shade of reddish-brown, with some dull yellows and a few sided houses thrown in, as if for accents. Except for the modern cars on the roads, everything looked as it had in the Roaring Twenties. These were the streets where a million ordinary working people found their way into ten thousand speakeasies every night, and they still looked the same. All of his uncles and grandparents had lived through that time, some in New York, and a few on these streets. The 1920s were their golden years. They never really talked about it, but they all seemed to share secrets about those years that they never told the children.

The first part of the meeting with the Dean was what he expected: The lab was officially closed. George was given one day to remove his personal items and those of his assistants. After that, Campus Security would dismantle the lab, and recycle the equipment for use in other projects. Then, things turned far worse:

Although Dr. Dimitrios had been conducting research and teaching at the University for more than ten years, he had never been officially tenured. That made him subject to dismissal at any time. Dean Carsten, holding court in his red-carpeted, walnut-paneled office, laid down the rules to him, as if they were edicts from Olympus: George could continue teaching at the University, so long as he abandoned all neuropeptide research, and wrote no more about it. It was a demand intended to crush his soul.

When he expressed his shock and horror, the regal Dean replied with "If you wish to stay, those are the rules you will have to follow." He rose from his heavy wing-backed chair, and opened the door, wishing George to leave. "I have appointments with a few of our alumni, Dr. Dimitrios. If you wish to discuss your ongoing duties, you may schedule an appointment in the future." George walked out, stunned.

Now as Phillip drove the two of them away from the lab, they passed through the same gray streets as George had in the morning. Slowly, his thoughts went back to the 1920s, and the secrets that the old folks shared. Again, he wondered what they might have been. But the thought faded quickly out of his mind. The day's events had taken their toll on him. With his adrenaline now gone, it was as if his consciousness had become porous, and could hold thoughts no better than a sieve holds water. He also knew that for the time being, this was probably the best thing. He relaxed into dependence, knowing that his strength was spent, and that there was no one on earth he trusted more than the man who was now driving him home, Phillip Donson.

* * * * * *

March 28th, Los Angeles

The pair of young FBI technical experts sat in their glossy office, sipping a variety of caffeinated drinks, yet attempting to unwind from the most intense day of their careers. The day was spent in a long and difficult search. It wasn't the hardest search they had ever done, but certainly the one that their superiors were most exercised over, which magnified the difficulty. Their assignment was to find the physical location of a computer facility in the L.A. area that was the source of some truly incredible Internet traffic. The number of transmissions was enormous, and the fact that all of the transmissions were encrypted was doubly curious. The two men were given 24 hours to find the site. They had done it in less than twelve and were proud of their results.

Following Internet links, taking routing information from intercepted email, checking root server information and tracking phone calls is difficult work, both exciting and draining at the same time. It has a way of sucking energy right out of your bones, although your energy-level is pumped so high that you don't realize it till it's over. They kicked back in their chairs and discussed whether they would go to a health club, to a quiet bar, or just go home. As their energy began to subside, both of them decided that it would be best just to go home.

John Morales, the more conscientious of the two, turned the radio to a news/talk station and slowly began to pick up the debris from their day – scattered papers, file folders, coffee cups, aluminum cans, and a lot of CDs, some containing special hacking programs, and others containing the data from their search. Then his partner, Timothy Nickelson, sat up, slid his chair over to a side desk, and sent their work onto the FBI's main headquarters; something that they had never done before.

Both young men were the same age, 24, and both had graduated from college two years before and went directly to work for the bureau.

Both of them wondered what this trace was all about. They had never been under any real pressure before, yet here they were, not only ordered to do a tough job very quickly, but also reporting directly to Washington. And it wasn't as if the transmissions they were tracing could tell them anything – they were all encrypted with the PGP program, which meant that there was no way to decode them. There were rumors that a supercomputer at the NSA could break PGP, but that was likely nothing more than wishful thinking, since no one they knew had ever seen it done, and they knew most of the good tech guys at the agency. Anyway, their bosses had expressed no interest even in seeing the transmissions, which meant that they didn't think they could decode them either.

Not ten minutes after they had filed their report, their phone rang. John answered.

"Morales." Pause. "Yes, thank you sir… Pardon?"

John Morales looked as surprised as Tim Nickelson had ever seen him. His large brown eyes were wide open, and the receiver was pressed hard against a face which

was a very light brown now at the end of a winter in which he got very little sun. By the end of the summer it was likely to be much darker.

"But sir, we're not field agents, we only work in the office. Well… okay… I mean thank you, sir… We'll be there, sir. Goodbye."

"Was that the boss, Johnny?" Timothy was looking at him intensely.

"Huh?" was John's half-stunned reply. "Uh, no." It was taking John a moment to digest what he had just heard. As what seemed like a cloud began to clear from his mind, he understood what Johnny was asking, and said, "No, it was *his* boss, in DC! And I'll tell you what else – we have been promoted to acting field agents, and are ordered to go with a strike team in the morning."

"Strike team? You mean we are going on a raid tomorrow morning?"

"That's exactly what I mean. I don't know what the hell this is about Tim, but the big bosses are in on it. Do you realize that an assistant director was sitting in his office, waiting for our report?"

They both sat stunned for an instant. Then they got scared. This was the first really big thing they had ever done. They'd done small projects, and completed them successfully, but this was in a whole new league, and they were feeling a whole new kind of angst.

Tim was the first to be afraid out loud, "Did we really get this right? I mean, what if we show up, and there's nothing there? Could we have screwed up? There is a lot riding on this – a whole strike team, taking our directions – there are some serious consequences riding this! Are we right?"

Slowly and with some fear, they retraced their steps, and satisfied themselves that whatever happened, they did as good a job as anyone else could have done. Something about that train of logic didn't seem quite right, but it was the most comforting line of thought they could find. And besides, it was true, there really was no one else in the agency who could do any better.

* * * * * * *

Timothy Nickelson had always stood out in a crowd. He was well over six feet in height, with reddish brown hair. Always being noticed made him very self-conscious when he was a boy in South Dakota. But by the time high school came around, he found that being the tallest kid gave him an odd sort of status. He liked that. By his third year of college, however, the perk of height began to wane, as his peers began to concern themselves with more adult matters. He missed it.

As he drove home, rather slowly, a steady stream of ideas and feelings were running laps through his mind: "Did they really do the trace correctly?" Yes, they did, and there was no one they knew who could've done better. "What were they

tracing, and why was Washington so concerned?" No answer. "What would they find in the morning?" Again, there was simply no way of knowing, short of driving by the location himself, which would not only get him fired, but, for all he knew, might be dangerous. So, he turned up the car stereo, and tried to think about other things. Slowly, he made his way home, then to bed.

Johnny Morales changed his mind, and did not go home. Instead, he went to the health club. He found a treadmill and a sports magazine that had an article on preparing for a big athletic event. He read the article carefully, as ran his usual two miles. For some reason, he began thinking about his grandfather, who has come to Los Angeles from Mexico with his young wife in the middle of the great depression. Somehow, he quickly obtained a job in the movie business, and ended up as a middle-to-upper level manager for a couple of the big film studios. He had died just a few years prior, and John thought of him occasionally.

Grandfather was a very strong-minded man. Not rigid or legalistic, but not a man to change his mind without compelling reasons. Actually, John almost resented some of the things grandfather had done. He never taught John's father or his uncles to speak Spanish. Neither did they follow Mexican customs. "We left Mexico," he would always say, "we're in America now. If I had wanted that badly to be Mexican, I would have stayed."

Not that grandfather wasn't classically Mexican in many ways, such as the food he ate or the music he listened to, but he didn't define himself as Mexican. Actually, he didn't seem to define himself as anything, as best Johnny could tell.

Running leisurely on the machine, Morales had satisfied himself that they had done their job correctly. He wasn't worried about that any longer. What did worry him was the raid. They had never done this before, and he was not ready to run into some house, guns blazing. All the shoot-em-up stuff sounded cool from a safe distance, but he was about to lose that safety tomorrow morning. This was going to be his body at risk, and he was starting to get nervous. The article in the magazine was only partially useful; it told him plenty about physical preparation, but not how to deal with the fear of a gunfight.

He was too nervous to realize it, but what he was really trying to find was something that would help him handle his anxiety, knowing that he was about to step willingly into a situation where someone would try very hard to hurt him. Hunters living in the jungle face this early in their lives, but it usually comes as a terrible shock to civilized people.

John Morales went to bed with some difficulty that night, and did not sleep well, knowing what was coming the next morning, and knowing that he was emotionally unprepared for any real violence. Tim Nickelson, avoiding any unpleasantries, slept moderately well.

* * * * * * *

Amongst the thousands of newsgroups listed on the Internet, few looked to be more innocuous than alt.games.fz. And, in fact, its level of traffic suggested that there were very few people who regularly accessed it. The group was not private (as many are), but all of the postings on it were encrypted, and in absence of the correct decoding keys, no one but the group's initiates could read them. This was odd for a public newsgroup, but the few people who did stumble upon it generally shrugged their shoulders and moved on.

There was one other thing about alt.games.fz that was noticeably odd: None of the people posting the encrypted notes left a name or address behind. There are several remailer services that make it possible for someone to shield their identity on the net, but in actual practice, it isn't done very frequently. And for every note in a newsgroup to be anonymous is unheard of. But, again, in the vast sea of weird and eccentric newsgroups, this one didn't really stand out.

During the day of March 28th, as usual, there were no new postings, which meant that they were all busy, and that all was going well for them. This was not especially good news to them, as they were getting bored and tired of waiting for the show to begin.

On March 29th, the calm would be broken, and they would go face-to-face with the best technical and investigative minds that the governments of the world could throw at them.

* * * * * * *

The location of the raid was unusual. It was in an industrial area. This much was to be expected; as the amount of traffic going in and out of that facility would require a number of fairly powerful minicomputers, and a high-capacity connection to the Internet. But when they arrived, they found a worn old house, immediately next to the industrial area.

By 8:00 a.m. all eight members of the team had signed-in at the observation location, about a block down from the old house. The senior members, none of whom the two young 'Acting Agents' knew, were planning their entry to the house, deciding which rooms they would secure first, and who would guard which doors. They also discussed their lines of fire, so that they would only shoot the bad guys, not each other.

Discussing firing angles made both of the young men nervous. Tim Nickelson, who had so successfully put the subject out of his mind the night before, began to tremble involuntarily. Morales was also afraid, but had made enough peace with the

situation overnight that he at least retained full bodily function. One of the older men noticed Nickelson's condition, and walked up to him.

"Nervous, son?"

Nickelson was slow to respond, not wanting to show weakness, but unable to formulate a good reply.

"Don't worry too much, we didn't call you out here to get into the action. You two boys can wait here until we call you in. We just want you to analyze the equipment and data once we clear the house."

The agent patted Nickelson on the back, and turned to Morales. "You okay, son?"

"Well, sir, I'm pretty nervous… have been since last night, but I think I'm okay."

"I take it this is the first action you've seen?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, don't worry about the jitters, son. Violence is not something that comes naturally to human beings. You're supposed to get nervous. The truth is, after a tough operation, half the guys end up puking in the bushes. The human body just doesn't take well to that kind of strain. You stay back this time, and just make sure that you're ready to analyze that equipment, okay?"

"Yes, sir, we can do that."

John felt much better about the situation and relaxed a bit. Tim was looking better, but still shaking a little bit. John talked to him for a while, and had him sit down. He hoped Tim would be ready when it came time to analyze the equipment.

The older men decided that the raid would commence at 10:15 a.m., and all the agents made their final checks, reviewed their notes, and waited.

When it seemed like a good time, Morales walked over to the agent that had spoken to him earlier. He stood next to him nervously for a few moments, wondering whether he should speak, or shut up and walk back to where he had been.

"What's on your mind, son."

"Well, I know it's not my place to ask questions, sir, but we haven't observed anything dangerous in this house have we?"

Agent Garosian turned and faced Morales squarely, and spoke with conviction.

"Your name is Johnny, correct?"

"Yes sir it is."

"All right then, John, you listen to me. It *is* your place to ask questions. You are part of this team, and you asking questions might just keep us alive some day. Now, to answer your question… No. We've had the place under surveillance all night, and we've seen nothing that indicates any danger at all."

“Then why so much firepower?”

“Well, as best I know, they are up to some pretty serious shit in there, son. I thought you and your buddy were involved with tracking them. You don’t know what’s going on?”

“No, we don’t know anything. We tracked their transmissions, but we can’t read any of them. And we’re not altogether sure we know who they are communicating with. I’m really a bit confused here, sir, the information we got didn’t indicate any type of dangerous activity at all. What kind of crime are these guys supposed to be into?”

The older man looked down at his watch, took a breath, and stood up to begin his move toward the house, with the other team members following his lead. He turned back at Morales, and in a monotone voice said, “Treason against the United States of America.”

* * * * * * *

James Farber was a rather unique man in more ways than one. He was half-Korean and half-Jewish, and he appeared to be something akin to Greek, or perhaps Tibetan. It was an unusual mix of nationalities, and not one that was easily identified. This is not to say that he was not attractive – a number of women thought him quite attractive – but he when you looked at him, you could not quite figure out his nationality or mix of nationalities. Farber always dressed in excellent taste, though frequently in less-than-formal attire. On this day he had worn a business suit, but had removed the jacket and loosened his tie prior to Frances Marsden’s arrival for an interview.

In his early years James Farber had been known as the angry young man of finance. He backed risky start-ups and liquidated old established conglomerates, while taking no interest in the safe, prearranged deals that had made his father a prominent financier.

The Farber family’s dealing in finance began with his grandfather Herman, the son of German Jewish immigrants. Herman was born in 1889, and was raised in Chicago when it was still run by deal-makers, scoundrels, and hustlers who built a city for their own sake, with a chorus of moralists raising their voices in opposition. Although Herman spent fifty years as a full-time rabbi, he became active in business as a boy, and never gave it up. While attending Yeshiva, he bought his first piece of real estate, and during his years as a rabbi, he built up a small real estate empire in his free time.

It was from grandfather (Rabbi) Farber that James got his love for business. During his childhood years, the old man would stop by James’ house, pick up the boy, and

take him along on his daily rounds. He went with his grandfather to collect rent checks, to meet with contractors, and even to attend zoning meetings at City Hall. Before he was finished with high school, James knew many of the rich and powerful of Chicago by their first names. He saw how they operated, he observed their attitudes and habits, and, most importantly, he knew that he could do what they did.

He did not, at that time, know much of what his father did. Benjamin Farber, James' father, graduated from the University of Chicago with a degree in Economics, and went into the Investment Banking business. By any standard, his success surpassed that of his father. Bilmer & Kannet, the firm that Benjamin Farber took over at the age of forty, became a major player in not only US, but global finance. They were deeply involved in the industrialization of Japan and Germany, in addition to a great deal of financing in the United States. But this was not work that a ten-year-old boy could be included in, or even that he would understand. So, for better or worse, James Farber got his basic understanding of business from his grandfather, Rabbi Herman Farber the Real Estate Man.

Grandfather died just after James completed high school. While James' mother and father had always been the stability in his young life, it was Grandfather who provided the color and the entertainment. The year following Grandpa's passing was a turning point for James; he was forced to switch from basking in the glow of his grandfather's world to the difficult task of building his own.

* * * * * * *

Dr. George Dimitrios began to come out of his tunnel-vision in a private jet, somewhere above South Carolina. He looked out the window at 22,000 feet, and watched the lights of farms far below. There were a few discernable roadways and large buildings with lit parking lots. Above was a clear black sky full of stars. He briefly thought that the stars didn't seem like objects as much as they did like a million open doorways in the amazingly vast distance, light shining through from whatever was on the other side. He wasn't sure if he felt more precarious, or freer, than he had ever been.

At first he felt himself to be in danger – in a small plane, several miles above the earth's surface, the law of gravity still very much in effect. But at almost the same time, he noticed that he had a small but persistent feeling that he had left mundane matters behind, and was going forward to his proper place.

Phillip and George had driven from George's apartment to Meigs Field, a small private airport on the lakefront, just a few minutes away from the center of town. All that George knew of the jet they boarded was that it belonged to a friend of Phillip's. "Honestly, Phillip," he had said as they boarded, "it seems like you have more unusual friends than anyone I've ever known."

“Perhaps so,” Phillip had replied, “but the guy who owns this plane is one of my very best friends.”

George relaxed as he looked out the window, and quickly fell back asleep for a few hours. Phillip, on the other hand, was busy making phone calls, his face with the same intense look as a dog playing with its favorite toy.

The small private resort where they ended up was beautiful. Each of them had their own little cottage, overlooking the crystal clear ocean on a small Bahamian island. The man who owned the resort was yet another friend of Phillip’s, named Tino. He was obviously an American by birth, and Tino was certainly not his real name.

George had slept through breakfast, leaving Phillip and Tino several hours to catch up on each other’s news, reminisce about good old times, and to argue the value of assorted ideas. George rose in time for the early afternoon snack, and the three men ate together.

For all his travails with the University and the scientific journals over the past two years, his face showed little wear. George had always had something of a baby face, so perhaps it was just his smooth skin that saved him from the ravages of stress. Or, from the *appearance* of stress damage.

“Okay, George, we have to talk about where we’re going from here. Have you had enough time to relax a little bit?”

“Yeah, I’m still a bit shell-shocked, but I’m all right.”

“Good. Listen, we aren’t going to reach any big decisions today, but I want to tell you about what is in front of you now. And don’t worry, you can stay here with Tino for as long as you like, there is no rush.”

George looked over to Tino, who nodded his head as if to say, “Yes, it is okay.”

“Honestly, Phillip, I feel pretty good about this, except for a recurrent sense of doom. I’m actually a criminal now Phillip! If I walked back onto campus, they could arrest me. I’ve never felt this way before and I don’t like it.”

“But what about your work?”

George looked slightly downward and took a breath. “That’s what makes me feel better. My work would have been destroyed, or at least forgotten. I can’t let that happen. Jail would be worth it to save my work. This is really important science… God, I can’t believe that I’m really talking about jail… damn, Phillip, I don’t think I’m ready to be that much of a hero.”

“I’ll let you in on a secret, George, even the best heroes don’t feel up to the job. They’re scared stiff, just like you are. A heroic act is just something that you have to do because you know it’s more important than the risks.

“But let’s go back to feeling like a criminal. It is true that you’ve taken equipment that was someone else’s property. Fine, then you’ll want to begin to fix the situation

by making restitution. We'll set you up with a blind email account, and you can send the Dean a note saying that you want to pay the University back for the equipment you took, and that if they will send you a bill, you will pay it. If not, you'll estimate the amount yourself and send them an itemization and payment."

"What about the fact that I took it without permission?"

"Well, if you can plead necessity – and I think you can – then it is legally permitted to take the stuff and pay for it later. For example, what if you were dying of thirst in a dessert, then came upon an empty house, and you saw through the window that there were bottles of water inside? You could break in, drink some water, and then pay for the water and damages later. Under extreme necessity, common law allows you to break, enter, and steal, so long as you make full restitution later. If you like, we can have a lawyer pursue this in the courts for you."

"Yes, I would like that. But Phillip, who is the 'we' that can pursue this for me? Doing something like that isn't cheap, and I don't have that much money."

"Remember the friend I mentioned – the guy who owns the plane? He and I do this kind of thing occasionally. You're not the first guy to have your work squashed by an institution." George looked up with a look on his face that conveyed both question and shock. He felt like he was encountering something that existed only in the movies. Phillip went on:

"Now, George, you'll have to decide what you want to do. We can help you arrange your affairs lots of different ways, but you'll have to choose which one."

"Well, I'd like to continue with my work. I know it'll be a lot slower now, but that's better than nothing. I'll get some type of job, and work on my experiments on evenings and weekends."

"And if I could show you a way to work faster rather than slower, would you be interested?"

"Are you kidding? Of course I'd be interested!"

"Well, don't get excited too quickly, it's a little more complicated than you think. You would make yourself quite an outsider. You would have a lab, but not in the US. And you know that you would be a complete outcast to most of the scientific establishment. Not only will they give you no assistance, but they'll fight against you. Anyone who published your work or associated with you would be cast out of the club. And listen to me now – there is an off-chance that you could be treated as a criminal. They've put scientific mavericks in prison and burned their books in our lifetimes; given the right circumstances, they'll come after you too."

"Why? I wouldn't be doing anything wrong."

Phillip smiled with compassion. "That doesn't matter, George. They'll find some type of public-health violations or medical practice rules to hang you on. Maybe that

will happen, and maybe not, but if you want to be a pioneer, you have to expect some incoming arrows.

"I've talked this over with some of my associates, and we can take this however far you'd like. But you had better think about this for a while first. Your life will never be as placid as it once was. You have to decide if your work is that important to you. I don't mean to scare you, or tell you that your life will be miserable. Actually, you'll probably enjoy it, but your life will never be the same as it was."

"And you are sure that you can set me up so I can pursue my work?"

"Completely."

"And what's in it for you and your friend? Why should you do this? It won't be cheap."

"We believe in what you've been doing, George. We'll want to treat this as an investment. If and when you make money on this, we want a share. We'll set it all up, and you'll own 51% of the operation, and you won't owe us anything unless we make money. And there is one other reason we do this – we want your work to exist for our own benefit."

"All right then, I'll let you know for sure in a couple of days."

"Perfect. Tell Tino when you've reached a decision, and I'll come back to work out the details. Right now I have to fly to back to the States."

Phillip and George rose and embraced. Forty years of friendship were encompassed in the embrace, and the fact that huge parts of each man's life were unknown to the other was of no importance – they knew each other's soul – had known it in childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and now in maturity. Details were secondary.

Phillip spoke, "Really George, whatever you choose will be fine, I don't want you to do this unless you really want to for your own reasons."

"Fair enough, Phillip. I think I'll do it, but I really do want to think about it. This would be a real change."

Again they embraced, and Phillip walked off to a waiting car. While getting into the car, he suggested to Tino that he could help George understand what kind of life was ahead of him. "Tell him the good and the bad, Dick; help him make an informed decision." Having lived the life of an outsider for the previous fifteen years, Dick (Tino) was the perfect person to help George understand what it would be like.

* * * * * * *

The FBI team leader, Agent Garosian, and the four other agents divided themselves, and approached the house from a variety of angles. They were all dressed in street clothes, costumed as local factory workers.

One member of the assault group, Bobby K., was positioned behind the house, in an old car, with listening devices trained on the house. He had been there all morning, and had been doing very well picking up the sounds from the inside of the house with a reflective laser device that detects the microscopic movements of the windows caused by sound waves hitting them from inside the house.

Garosian spoke quietly and calmly into his concealed microphone as the team began their half-block walk up to the house: "Bobby, have you got any activity?"

"Yeah, a little bit, boss, but like I said before, most of it is in east European dialects. I can make out most of the Russian words, but I'm not getting everything; it's a mix of languages. I think they're having a hard time understanding each other."

"OK, Bobby, but what is the content? What are they saying?"

"Computer stuff: Signal throughput, hardware, connections… that's pretty much everything I've been able to make out. That and 'Hey Sasha, make another pot of coffee.' "

"OK, Bobby, I want you to give us a running report of everything you hear, OK?"

"Affirmative."

"Ryan, are you go?", said Garosian into the com system. "Yes!"

"Morton?" "Go!"

"Colt?" "Go!"

"Charles?" "Go!"

"All right men, 100 yards to go, take it slow – we are construction workers on our break. Bobby, begin your play-by-play."

"OK… Have you checked everything on the list?… Of course I did, I am a professional… Yeah, but a very bored professional… laughing… There's a noise, like a buzzer!… Sasha, look outside!..oh shit!, hit the button now, now!… everybody together… now… hurry…"

Garosian screamed into his microphone: "GO, GO, GO, hit it quick!" They were now within 40 yards of the house, and it would be only eight or ten seconds before they were at their positions, and ready to break down the front door.

Bobby kept his report going: "… Get into the living room… still… hands up… Valentine – good English… they come…"

As Agent Garosian and his old friend agent Morton stepped up next to the front door, they heard one of the men inside the house screaming at them, "The door is open. We are not armed. The door is opened. We are not armed."

They jumped through the door to find four men, ranging in age from their mid-twenties to at least fort-five, standing still in the center of the living room, their hands raised in the air, and repeating in passable English, “We have no weapons, do not shoot!”; then, when violence no longer seemed imminent, “We want attorney.”

By this time two more agents had come in through the back door, and the four agents made themselves busy handcuffing the four men, and seating them on the large sofa that sat against the living room wall. Two more agents waited outside until every room of the house was checked for more people. Finding none, the full six-man assault team assembled themselves in the living room. As the agents began to search the house for any type of evidence against the four foreign men, whoever they were, Garosian called Nickelson and Morales on his radio.

“Nickelson, Morales, you there?”

“Yes, sir, we’re here.”

“OK boys, house secured… come on down and do your thing.”

“Yes sir… No shooting sir?”

“Not a bit, son, this one was easy… too easy. Now hurry down here and figure this stuff out. There’s one hellacious amount of computer stuff in here.”

Three hours later at the FBI building, the four east Europeans were finally brought into a conference room. Waiting for them were four senior FBI officials and, surprisingly, the men’s attorney.

“How the hell did you find out that we had these guys?”

Gus Van Zant, boss of the Cyber-crimes Unit, wanted to know how Anthony Bari, a well-known criminal attorney, knew to come to FBI headquarters, and how he ended up representing these men.

Van Zant was an imposing man, of ordinary stature, but radiating a fierceness that would intimidate almost anyone short of a professional fighter. His brooding eyes were nearly black, and his dark thinning hair was in a near-crew cut.

“How I found out that you had my clients in custody is none of your business, Agent Van Zant. With what are you charging my clients?”

“Treason.”

Bari laughed out loud, not for a brief outburst, but for a several seconds. “Treason? You’ve really got delusions of grandeur, Van Zant. Treason for running a computer network? You’ve got to be kidding!”

Van Zant looked at Bari with contempt and anger. This was his way of overcoming his fear of embarrassment. His face showed his anger at Bari for making him face such a fear. He collected himself and continued: “We believe that these men are part of a plot to bankrupt the government of the United States. We have been gathering evidence on them for some time, and we will convict them of treason.”

“And you think you’ve got enough evidence?”

“Absolutely.”

The bail hearing was held that evening, with a Federal judge refusing any request for bond. Bari held a half-hour meeting with the four men, and instructed his clients not to speak to anyone – guards, cell-mates, even to each other. He also called the State Attorney General, and requested a meeting for the next day. He said he wanted to deal.

* * * * * * *

Frances Marsden sat with James Farber in a room which did not look at all like the office of an international financier. It was the larger room of a modest, two room office, with one desk in each, and a variety of tables and equipment carts in the larger room. The lighting was brighter than in most offices, and the furnishings were at least ten years out of date. There seemed to be plenty of computer equipment about, arranged very well and impeccably organized, with no stray cords. In fact, both offices were extremely neat and organized; it was only the dated decor that made them seem slightly disheveled.

James Farber had been something of a mystery to her. He was a very successful financier, but he had very few friends in the industry. He avoided publicity, never contributed money to the requisite social organizations and political parties, and seldom attended industry events. The people who had worked with him all reported that he was pleasant, honest, and competent, but few of them worked with him often. In the last few years particularly, no one was entirely sure what he was doing, aside from some currency trading.

Frances had been one of only a few writers to whom Farber had given an interview, and certainly the first one in several years. She wondered why. It wasn’t unusual for a financier to try to influence a financial writer; was he trying to get her to plant a story? Not likely; that didn’t seem to be Farber’s style. Sure, she had requested the interview, but so had a half-dozen others. Again she wondered, “Why me?”

They sat down and made a few minutes’ worth of small talk, getting acquainted with each other. Then, Farber began commenting on her work, even quoting a number of her articles. She couldn’t help but showing her surprise, feeling more than a little bit flattered. She blushed.

Although Frances Marsden was extremely talented, and although her articles were as good as anyone’s, she was not one of the top people in her profession. That path had been wide open to her a few years prior, but she had slammed it shut herself, and was now relegated to selling freelance pieces to the highest bidder.

Frances got the interview started:

"I read the interview in *Playboy* Mr. Farber, where you talked about the old piece of paper containing the secret of your success, but the article never said what was actually on the piece of paper. Care to enlighten me?" They looked at each other and smiled.

"Sure," Farber said. "I would have shown it to the *Playboy* people, but the interview took place at their offices, not mine. Actually, it's not really that impressive, just a few sentences that made a big impression on me when I was young, and that were good enough to keep on my wall. And, yes, I really do look at it frequently, and think about it." As he spoke, Farber swiveled around in his chair, reached up, and pulled a small picture frame off of the wall. He turned and handed it to Frances. "This is not what you expected, is it?"

Frances looked at the piece of paper, and said with restrained amusement, "Well, no, it's not." She felt tense, fearing that she would insult Farber's "secret of success," as the *Playboy* interviewer called it; but she looked up at Farber, and he was chuckling. They both broke into laughter together.

"Oh, God, I'm so glad you're laughing… I guess I was expecting something 300 years old with some mysterious ancient wisdom on it." Frances half-laughed, half-spoke. "This is a piece of school paper."

"Hell yeah, it's school paper!" laughed James, "I was nine or ten years old! What would you expect?"

"All right… all right…," Frances tried to stop laughing, or at least to wind down, "now that I am thoroughly underwhelmed, let me take a good look at this and figure out why it is so important."

One last smile passed between them, and Frances read the paper very slowly.

There were three short sentences on the little piece of paper:

That which I have seen and heard, I bear witness to.

I believe my own senses.

I believe my own mind.

Frances paused, sensing that there was something very important in the three lines, but not knowing exactly what. At first glance they were quite simple and obvious, but she had a feeling that there was far more beneath the surface. She read it again, very slowly, and waited for her thoughts to sift themselves.

“Does something about my paper strike you Ms. Marsden?” She realized that her mind had been wandering for quite a while, and reoriented herself to the interview.

“Yes, it really does. The first sentence is actually a scripture. It’s from the Gospel of John, isn’t it?” Farber’s face softened into a half smile.

“Actually, it’s from the first epistle of John, and I’m impressed that you recognized it; not many business writers would.”

“And businessmen are great students of scripture?” said Frances, turning the comment back at him.

Farber snickered at himself. “Well… point well taken, Ms. Marsden; what else interests you about it?”

“Tell me the story,” she said. She put down her pen and paper, leaned forward, and spoke to Farber with a very serious yet relaxed tone and posture. “There has to be a story behind a ten-year-old boy writing this. Tell me.” It was more a request for a favor to be granted than an interview question.

“All right.” Farber looked a bit concerned. “You’re right. There is a story behind this: It was actually a few things combined.” Farber tried not to notice how attractive Frances was. Her face, framed in her dark brown hair, was almost child-like is its honesty, and her dark eyes seemed to contain an ocean’s worth of something… something that he liked, but couldn’t quite identify. He took a deep breath, readjusted himself in his chair, and continued.

“I was about nine or ten years old, and like all the boys in my neighborhood, I liked to ride my bicycle around during the summer. One day I was riding down one of the streets on the edge of our neighborhood, and I looked in through a large living room window to see a man hit his wife. He punched her in the head – hard. She fell down. I was stunned. I was confused and scared, and I kept riding. You see, my childhood was quite good. My parents loved each other, and they loved me. My friends all had two parents and good, stable homes. The sight of a man purposely hurting his wife was not something that fit into my universe. It was the first time in my life I had actually encountered that kind of malevolence.

“It was such a perverse surprise that I had a very hard time believing that I had actually seen it. I stopped my bike in the park and tried to collect myself. The really odd thing about it was that I wanted to convince myself that I had made it all up – that I had just imagined it, and that I should forget the entire episode. And strangely enough, it would have been very easy to forget it just then. But I remembered my father saying something along the lines of ‘there’s no use pretending it isn’t so.’ In regard to what I have no idea. So I stopped, and tried to analyze it again. But it wasn’t easy, I was only a boy, and I couldn’t come up with a good answer. So I decided to do what my dad said, and I said, out loud, ‘I did see that. That man did hurt his wife.’ I felt a pain in my stomach while I said the words, but I did what my dad said, and repeated it again. I wouldn’t let myself pretend that it didn’t happen.”

Neither of them spoke for about ten seconds. Then Frances slowly asked "What else?" Again, she was asking as a friend, not as an interviewer.

"Well, a number of days later, I rode through the Midway at the University of Chicago. It was close to our house; one of my usual spots. There was a preacher who came there once in a while, one of the Hippie Jesus People. Actually, he talked to people more than preached… I really liked the guy. I didn't understand much of what he said, and agreed with less, but you could tell that he was really a good person, kind, sincere, honest. He seemed brave, too, though I wasn't sure why. Anyway, he was talking to a few college students, so I rode over and listened in. He quoted this verse from First John, and said that John and the others believed what they saw and told the world about it, even though they were hated and sometimes killed for doing so. 'They refused to deny what they saw,' he said. That was all I heard. After that, those words went through my mind again and again. 'They refused to deny what they saw.' 'I refuse to deny what I see.'

"But the important thing was that I knew I *could* deny what I saw. I had almost done it less than a week earlier! That night I wrote my little manifesto on this piece of paper, and decided that I would forever be very careful not to deny anything I saw, or any logical conclusions coming from what I saw. So I wrote, 'I believe my senses. I believe my mind.'

"As time went on, I saw a lot of instances of my friends shutting down their minds at certain times, and almost invariably suffering from it. That kind of cemented it for me.

"Believe me Frances, this may sound simple, but actually living by these words would scare the hell out of most people. I had a huge advantage by learning this lesson when I did. And it is probably the biggest reason I have had unusual success – that and working harder than anyone else."

Frances paused, and thought for a moment. Farber sat still, watching her intently, and wondering what her response would be. Normally Frances liked her interviews to be mostly one-sided, with her asking questions and writing down answers. But Farber's story was so intimate that she had long since ceased being an interviewer, and found herself immersed in one of the more meaningful conversations of her life.

"When I was a girl," said Frances, "my grandmother used to tell me a story of how she saved her family from the Nazis." Now it was Farber was sitting eagerly, waiting for her words. He had spoken to her as one friend opening his soul to the other. Now he listened to Frances with the same attitude. He leaned forward and looked slightly up and into her eyes, silently encouraging her to please continue.

"They were Jews, living in Hungary. When she began to understand what the Nazis were doing, she ordered newspapers from Germany, and had her neighbor translate them for her. Then she began to talk to my grandfather about what was going on in Germany, and what would happen if Hitler invaded Hungary. When the Germans started looting and burning Jewish assets, they made plans to leave.

Eventually they did go, and were one of the very few Jewish families from their area that survived the war.

"But Grandma always said that the hardest thing was not the leaving, but going against the community. At that time, the leading writers and even the rabbis were saying that Germany was too cultured a country to go into pure barbarism, and that this threat, like others, would soon pass. And since times weren't too bad, everybody was minded to believe them. She said that almost all of their friends mistrusted and opposed them. They'd say 'So, you know more than the Rabbi, do you?' and 'The only thing you are accomplishing is to frighten your own children, and ours as well.'

"When Grandpa sold his business, someone threw a rock through their window. Grandmother said it took far more courage to defy their friends and relatives than anything else she ever did. That's what you're talking about, isn't it."

Farber sat still for a few seconds. In a slow, quiet voice, he said "You are exactly right, Frances; your grandmother must have been an exceptional woman." Then he paused again, for a reason that eluded Frances.

He continued in a subdued but very controlled voice. "You know, I'm very sorry, but I just remembered something that I absolutely have to do. I would love to continue this interview in a few days, but I'll have to close it off for now. Will you call me in the next day or two, and set up a new date?"

"I'll be glad to," said Frances, "but are you sure we can't continue this evening? I'll sit in the front office and wait if you like." She had come to the realization that this man had a lot of interesting things to say, and she didn't want to leave. It could take hours to get a second session moving like this one, and no one else had ever gotten James Farber to talk about his personal or business philosophies. This could be not only an interview, but a best-selling book.

Farber rose from his chair and began walking toward the door. "Thank you very much, but I simply cannot tonight. But I do want to continue the interview soon. You will call me?"

"Yes," said Frances, and they walked to the front door of the office. They thanked each other again, and Frances took the elevator down to the parking garage, where she got into her car, and hurried home to write.

James Farber closed the office door behind her, leaned against it for support, and wept.

* * * * * * *

Within 24 hours of raid in Los Angeles, ten messages were posted to alt.games.fz, several times as many messages as usual for one day. Susan Quansantien (who was usually called "Suzy Q," since the name was not only cute, but also a lot easier to

pronounce than her real name) was one of the ten people in the world who had the encryption key to alt.games.fz. As was her habit, she checked the newsgroup early in the morning of March 30th as she was getting ready for work. She was surprised to see that everyone else in the group had posted new messages there since the previous afternoon. She quickly downloaded all of the new messages and decoded them, at the same time sipping some coffee, combing her long black hair, and pulling on a pair of sheer pantyhose.

The first message came up on her screen:

Guys: The LA site was raided this morning!!! I can't believe it - we are really doing this!! OK, OK - No one was hurt, and the lawyer is taking care of the legal things. Everything technical seems to have worked as designed. I am turning day-to-day operations of my company over to my brother today. GERONIMOOOOOOO……

Rob

PS - Ellison, please verify that you got all the backup.

The second message came up:

WOW! OK, I'll get out of my day-to-days too. Keep us informed of any details. I will set up a meeting with our friend right away. Everybody please check-in, and verify your personal and technical status.

Michael

The rest of the messages expressed essentially the same things: Surprise, fear, and the reordering of one's business.

Suzy Q quickly posted a similar message (encrypted, of course), then called her office, and told them that she would be a few hours late. For all of the preparation that she had done, Suzy was still insufficiently prepared for the shock that would hit her when it actually went into operation. She felt dazed, scared, and like a traitor to her parents.

Susan Quansantien was the daughter of Vietnamese refugees. They had come to America, weary from a lifetime of dodging battlefields. They were determined to start a new life and to raise children who were free and successful. More than anything else, they wanted to break the succession of sorrowful, decimated generations that had followed their families through the better part of a century. Their

children were to be the beneficiaries and the embodiments of all their dreams. And although the parents were unable to understand it, Suzy and her brother were the victims of those dreams as well.

Her older brother Jimmy was doing well as an anesthesiologist. He was always a whiz at science, and went through school like a blur, his parents working very hard to remove every obstacle from his path and to keep him focused on his studies. But at about the time Jimmy finished his residency, he went into a depression. He found that he could no longer ignore all of the things he had missed in life – friends, athletics, movies, concerts, and, especially, girls. Jimmy found himself to be quite proficient in his professional life, but lost in his private life. His depression, though short-term, was very real. Worse than this was the fact that everyone expected Jimmy to take the medical world by storm. It was speculated that he would soon be lecturing overseas, teaching at Harvard, or developing revolutionary new medical techniques. But Jimmy did none of these things. He began to coast in his work. Their parents were disappointed, but what could they really say? Jimmy was an anesthesiologist. They had escaped a war, and come to America with nothing. Now, their son was a doctor! This would have to be enough, for it was all that Jimmy could give them. Doing well, but no more, in his professional life, Jimmy would spend the next decade of his life in therapy, trying to put his psyche back together again.

Suzy had always been close to Jimmy, and she slowly became aware of what was happening to him. By the time she went away to college, she knew that she would have to do something different, or Jimmy's fate would be hers as well. She eventually came up with a two-part plan:

First of all, she really did want to do well for her parents. Because of their unfortunate young lives, they would never be able to achieve many of the things they had wanted. They had accepted that fact, and realized that they could provide a way for their children to live good and happy lives. They had devoted their lives to the prospect of their children reaching goals they would have liked for themselves, but would never reach, having been born in the wrong place. They deserved her success. With effort, Suzy had overcome her guilt, but a feeling of necessity was simply in her bones. She would never be happy with herself if she did not give her parents joy.

Her second credo was that she refused to spend more time and energy on success than was necessary. She had to have her own life, separate from her mom and dad's desires. If not, she'd end up an unhappy genius like Jimmy.

While Suzy was never the star Jimmy was, she did have the ability to focus very well. Whereas Jimmy aced every subject in school, she aced only the half she focused on; the rest she passed with Cs. This was something of a problem in high school, and led to long arguments with her parents. But in college, Suzy was able to stick with what she was good at, and she flowered. Now eight years out of school, she was a well-paid programmer in Silicon Valley. In fact, she had written the operating software that was used in the most advanced cellular telephones. Because

of her special skills, Suzy was sought-after by a number of firms, and worked as a highly-paid independent contractor. When she worked, she made a lot of money, and she could afford to take time off in-between projects.

In her off-time, Suzy tried skiing, horse back riding, painting, a variety of intellectual studies, and playing the flute. To her surprise, she discovered that she loved skiing and studying history. Both of these were entirely unexpected, but nonetheless, she found that her idea of a perfect life revolved around a great guy (of course), ski slopes, obscure history books, and writing dense software. A bit unusual for a Vietnamese girl, perhaps, but that was what she liked, stereotypes be damned.

On the morning of March 30th, Susan Quansantien knew that she was facing something very big. The raid in LA had meant that what she and her friends were doing had gone from an entertaining hobby to something very, very serious. She knew this day would come. She planned for it, she imagined it, yet now that it was here, she was scared.

Suzy paced through her house like a prisoner waiting for her sentence. Her brow was furrowed into a knot, her eyes teary, and she moved aimlessly through the house with her head lowered, staring at the floor.

"How did I end-up here?" she asked herself. "I am party to crimes that could not only get me thrown in jail, but could also break my parents' hearts. Why did I do this?"

Actually, Suzy knew exactly why she had "done this." It was her study of history that had led her here. That and her ability to write great software. She had spent weeks at a time studying on every historical subject that related to this venture. She had put together an irrefutable argument as to why this must be done. But now, doubts were assailing her logic. "What if I was wrong? After all, I don't have a degree in history. I know I've studied more real history than most professors, but what if there was something that I missed?" The visceral fear in Susan's consciousness was that she was, in effect, standing up to acknowledged experts in the field, and declaring that she was right, and they were wrong.

Suzy pulled up her 'why we must do this' file, and slowly went through the facts. Each of them checked-out. "Okay," she slowly said out loud, "If I have the facts on my side, what am I afraid of? I am right, and this is necessary. Either I do this, or I will regret it on my deathbed."

She walked to the bathroom and washed her face. The cool water seemed to wash away some of her fears as well. Then, she got back to the newsgroup, and began posting a new note:

Guys:

From now on, we have to be able to communicate instantly. Please download the file that I have posted, named “CUSTOM-1.” Follow the setup instructions and it will keep you connected at all times. When you get an email from one of us, it will notify you three different ways:

1. It will interrupt your computer, and display an “Important Mail” note. If no reply within 30 seconds, it will:

2. Ring you on your cell phone (the ones I supplied to you only). If that fails, it will:

3. Page you (only on the beepers I gave you).

Obviously, you’ll have to have your main computer stations on and connected to the net at all times.

Let me know if you have any trouble.

This is gut-check time boys and girls. Don’t be scared if I need a shoulder to cry on one of these days.

Suzy Q the brave (sort of).

Late in the evening, a new note was posted to alt.games.fz. Michael, the coordinator, posted it, and it read thus:

Hi,

I talked with two friends today, and have a message for all of you from one of them. It follows.

God Bless,

Mike

>Hi gang,

>

>Well, it has hit the fan for real now. I’ll bet all of you are

>nervous. Remember that I warned you about this. It is a

>normal reaction. Frankly, I’m a bit nervous myself. But we all

>knew what we were doing getting into this, and we

>analyzed it all carefully and calmly. We were right then, and

>we are right still.

>

>Everything seems to be running perfectly. We lost
>no data from LA, and business is picking-up continually.
>Within the next few weeks, we should reach our 10,000th
>customer. I take this as confirmation that although we may
>be the first into this, there will be many, many more to
>follow.
>
>All of our back-up plans remain in place, and there have
>been no changes.
>
>Press forward and buckle your helmets, this is going to get
>fun.
>
>P.

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Four hours after his interview with Frances Marsden, James Farber left his office and sought solace in the night fog that frequently descends on the city of Chicago on cool spring nights. Farber's office was on the outskirts of Chicago's financial district. He had always preferred to be separated from the glitter cities of the financial world; he found it less distracting, and more conducive to good decision-making. From his Chicago office, he could walk two blocks to the world's greatest (and still largely underrated) commodities and futures exchanges, and to world-class financial institutions of all sorts – all in anonymity, and without the never-ending rumor and intrigue of the New York financial district.

The late-night walk home through a silent, fog-covered city was one of Farber's rituals. It began when he was a teenager, and had only grown more important to him through the years. His walks had brought him solutions for a host of questions and problems, both business and personal. He tried never to miss such opportunities.

When he walked silently through the fog, he felt as if he were the first settler in an open place where there was no one to place limits upon him or his deeds. He also liked the way the fog drew a mental curtain around him, separating his mind from the hollow and obnoxious concerns of mundane events and washed-out people. He would walk along, throw questions out at the wall of fog, and wait for an answer to bounce back. Most of the time, the questions themselves led him to the answers.

But tonight, things were different. The interview with Frances was too troubling for him to put out of his mind. This walk in the fog paid few dividends. Through the forty-minute walk home, he kept replaying their conversation in his mind. He tried, over and over, to find some flaw in his thinking, but he could find no flaw, and no comfort. Even in the fog, he found no comfort. He made it into bed, and tried to fall asleep through his tears. Turning uncomfortably in his bed half the night, Farber could not get away from a single thought – that he had been right about Frances Marsden.

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As they reached the computer house in LA, Nickelson and Morales were told to wait outside for a few minutes more, while the equipment was double-checked for explosives. Hearing that, both of them got nervous again.

Agent Garosian stuck his head out the door. “OK, boys. All clear. You can come in and do your thing now.”

“You sure none of the computers are going to blow up at us, sir?”

Garosian laughed. “You bet, son. My man Ryan is the best in the business. If he says they are okay, you can dance naked in front of them.”

Morales and Nickelson busied themselves securing, analyzing, and cataloging the computer equipment they found there. There were twelve PCs in the house, connected to each other in a way that neither of them recognized.

Furthermore, there were a variety of cables that had been disconnected, and others that left the house entirely.

Morales’ cell phone rang. “Morales here.”

“Morales, this is Van Zant. I want to know what you’ve uncovered so far.”

“Well sir, we are still trying to figure out exactly what types of hardware these people were using. We haven’t seen any data at all.”

“How long will it take, Morales?” Van Zant seemed angry.

“At least a few days, sir; there are twelve computers here, plus a lot of other equipment.”

“Damn it! Well, I want you to get it done as fast as you can. Not only is your ass on the line, but mine is too. I’ve taken four calls from Washington so far today. They want some answers.”

“Yes, sir, we’ll go as fast as we can. But sir, it would really help if we knew what was going on here. Right now, we’re doing an overall examination. If we knew exactly what we were looking for, it would be a lot easier.”

"Would it speed you up?"

"Yes sir, I think it would."

"All right, I'll see if I can get you briefed soon. But hurry-up anyway!"

Working at a site secured by ten heavily-armed FBI agents and policemen is a heady experience. Outside are a variety of curious onlookers: Neighbors, people who work in the area, and reporters. All of these are kept a safe distance by the armed guardians. But you need only glance at the guards to come or go any time you please. You are the elite; the strongmen are there to keep you and your work untouched. The crowd outside looks on, wondering what it is you are doing, and wondering what type of special person you must be. In this environment, a relaxed energy comes easily, and making correct decisions seems your natural role in life. Every evidence tells you that you are the expert, the important one. All who watch you there pay silent homage.

By mid-afternoon, Nickelson and Morales had all of the equipment cataloged, and they began to analyze each machine in depth. All were the same – blank. There was no data present. The hard drive of every machine had been wiped clean several times. Recovering any data from these machines would be very difficult and probably quite partial, requiring analysis at the FBI labs in Washington. The two technicians bagged each of the hard drives, and sent them to Washington by special courier.

There were two surprises that showed-up in the LA computer shack, as they came to call it. The first was a small satellite uplink, hidden in the attic. It had apparently been used to transmit signals to a satellite relay, but somehow, in the course of the investigation, it had been knocked from its mounting, and it was impossible to tell in which direction it had been pointed when in use. Also, they found two pairs of optical fibers leading out from the house, toward the industrial area to the rear. They were picking up a great deal of traffic, but at a fairly low power level. It was impossible to say how much signal they were taking in and out of the computer shack, or if they had ever really been used at all. A private contractor was called in to dig up the fiber, and see where it led. This also involved the work of several lawyers. The risks associated with damaging optical fibers are enormous. A single fiber can carry millions of financial transactions in just a few minutes. Contractors who work with live optical cables must be insured for damages that can easily reach millions of dollars per hour. It would be three days before the cable could be traced and they would find out where it led.

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Among financial writers and publishers, Frances Marsden was considered an unfortunate lost cause – obviously talented, but having thrown away a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that any other writer would have done anything to obtain.

Three years previous, Frances was writing a column for the New York Times. She was well-paid and well-respected. But in one day – in one hour actually – she had gone from working contentedly to telling the Times that they could "shove the job," and walking out the door, never to return. Only her boss really understood why, and he wasn't minded to talk about it.

Frances had dark eyes (from her mother) and a light complexion (from her father). It was a rather striking contrast. Her face was usually framed in medium-brown hair, which was a 50-50 mix of her mother's nearly black hair and her father's nearly blond.

Frances' mother Margarite still spoke with a trace of the Hungarian accent she gained as a child. She carried the quick, independent mind that was found in so many of her countrymen of that time. But she was also a product of World War Two, having come of age as the war progressed through Europe. Her family had fled Hungary for England as the war began to rage. Being an intelligent young girl in war-time London, she was given a crash-course in nursing, and immediately employed treating war injuries; first civilians injured by German bombing raids, and later, wounded soldiers who had been sent home to recover.

Margarite was a bright, attractive girl, and as one would expect, there were more than a few soldiers who pursued her affections. But the sufferings of war had made a deep impression upon her, and she did not want a relationship that was tainted with its stench. She didn't want to love a man whom she had met there… among bodies and minds torn apart by the unexpected depths of evil men can sink to. She was still young and tender when the war began, and so monstrous an event was overwhelming. She wanted no more of it, forever.

As the war ended, Margarite met a kind young chemist by the name of Richard Marsden. Richard worked during the war in the development of manmade materials, especially new types of polymers. Like Margarite, he had been horrified by the evils of war, although he was far more insulated from it than she had been. He worked in an isolated facility most of the time, and mercifully avoided death and mutilation for the most part. But Richard also wanted to leave it all behind. His only brother and two of his cousins had died in France, and he had watched this turn his father from a gallant aristocrat into a mentally broken, frail old man. The father died just days after the war ended.

Richard and Marjorie quickly married, and made their way to America within the year. Here was a land, not only bristling with opportunity, but one that had not been the site of bloodshed. There were a few injured soldiers, but no widespread devastation.

More than anything else, Richard and Margarite wanted to set up a pleasant, happy household, and to live quiet, peaceful lives. They loved each other deeply, and each day they put between their new lives and the old was a blessing. Richard was quickly hired by the DuPont company, who were at the time desperate for anyone with

experience in plastics. Within a few months they had settled-down into a quiet suburban lifestyle. Two years later they moved in to a new house, and it was there that Frances and her brothers were raised.

The Marsden children had a warm, pleasant upbringing, and all of the children went on to successful professional lives. Once the children were grown, their mother became a locally well-know artist, exhibiting works in galleries all along the east coast. Their father excelled in his work, and obtained at least sixteen patents for various materials and processes.

As a child, probably the best way to describe Frances would have been "feisty." Not angry or rebellious, but aggressive and persistent. Frances was embarrassed by women caving-in and accepting defeat from men. She didn't mind if the boys beat her legitimately, but she simply could not stand for girls to give in without trying. Images of willingly impotent girls on the playground used to haunt her. She didn't understand it and she didn't like it. Frances always played fiercely against the boys. The other girls thought that she was unable to accept the fact that they were stronger, but that was not it – she simply wouldn't accept unearned defeat. She became a Judo player and insisted on sparring with the young men. She lost frequently, but never willingly.

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The instructions that Anthony Bari, the lawyer representing the four technicians, had received a year previous to the LA raid were these:

> A retainer of $10,000.00 has been transferred to your account number 4182164391 at the Los Angeles Trust and Savings Bank as a retainer to represent our employees, should they be charged with any crime related to their work for us. They are computer operators, maintaining a part of our network. Our company is involved in no type of violent or immoral activity. If our employees are charged with a crime, you are to:
>
> 1. See to it that their charges are dropped, by any legal means available.
>
> 2. If the charges cannot be dropped, have them expelled from the United States, and returned to their home countries. (They are immigrants from eastern Europe.)
>
> Our employees have been instructed to work with you fully, and to hide nothing from you. If necessary, they are to cooperate with the state completely, and tell everything they know. But, such cooperation should occur only when part of a plea-bargain (or similar agreement) that gains them the maximum advantage.

Should there be any circumstances which may compel such action, you are hereby released to disclose any and all of your communications with us to the state; however, you must do so only if compelled.

If any need for your services arises, we will notify you immediately, and will increase the amount of your retainer.

Thank you,

CE Management

At noon on March 30th, Anthony Bari was in the San Francisco office of the US Attorney General, California District, Robert Coopersmith. It was an opulent office, with a private bar and bath. Nonetheless, it was in an old Federal building in downtown San Francisco, and it was somewhat dark and gloomy. Coopersmith, a tall, thin man of about sixty years, carefully projected an air of importance, and even intimidation. It was his technique of protecting himself from unexpected and unpleasant questions. He had developed this habit after spending decades in stuffy department meetings, where the people in attendance were less concerned with solving problems than with appearing to be confident and in control. By some unwritten rule in that world, it is better to equivocate than to take a constructive opinion that might be proven wrong at a later date. After a few embarrassing incidents early in his career, he had decided that to move up, he would have to carefully avoid being shown wrong. Eventually, he stumbled upon the fact that intimidated people ask few questions. So, instilling the necessary fear of his wrath when such situations arose, he went on a partially-premeditated course of intimidating everyone he dealt with. It served him well in the Federal bureaucracy, where he had risen to a fairly high level. It served him less well at home, where he and his wife had become so distant from each other that neither of them could bring themselves to care much about it. From time to time his wife wished for the warmth and connectedness that they had felt as a young couple, but she simply had no idea of what should be done. They were now getting old, and they both thought it better to stay in a tolerable situation, rather than suffering the indignity of divorce and the strain of reordering their lives.

Bari had never dealt with Coopersmith, but he had met him at legal functions a few times, and knew from other attorneys what to expect from him. The district Attorney General stood up from behind his large desk, and paced slowly around the room, as Bari remained seated in his chair.

“Well, Bari, what is it that is on your mind?” Coopersmith spoke while circling behind Bari for maximum effect.

“I’m going to be wide-open with you Coopersmith. You are up shit creek and you know it. You’re charging my clients with treason, but you have no evidence to prove it. You have computer transmissions, but you can’t read any of them, and you don’t

know where they came from and went to. Also, you know that they are pawns, and probably know nothing that is of any value to you.

"Now, here's your big problem: You can't let it be known that they are charged with treason. I checked the daily briefings on my way up, and now they say that my clients are charged with computer fraud, rather than treason. What is it that the big boys are afraid of, Coopersmith?"

"You listen, Bari." Coopersmith had become less confident and more defiant. "Whether we get them on one charge or another, your commie-boys are sunk. There's no way out of this for them. You don't have anything you can do for me, Bari. The big boys, as you call them, will do whatever it takes to hurt these guys. If we have to charge them for child pornography, we'll do it. They are dead men, and nothing you can do will make a bit of difference. Why don't you give back the few rubles they paid you, Bari? This is way over your head."

The intimidation machinery was still functioning. Coopersmith circled Bari while talking, raising and lowering his voice for maximum effect, and chuckling at the end to stress the foolishness of Bari's position.

Bari had received an email with no sender address that morning:

Mr. Bari,

Thank you for your prompt response to our employees' problems. You should be aware of the following:

1. These men are technicians, and have no idea what the equipment in their charge was being used for. They knew only that they were being paid to keep it running properly.

2. It is certain that the FBI is not able to read any of the communications handled by our network. We send test messages regularly to verify this fact.

3. It is almost certain (99% or better) that the FBI cannot determine the routing information for the messages we send through our network. All addresses are coded, and do not follow the standard protocols. They do not know where the messages came from, and where they were going.

4. It is rumored that our men were charged with Treason. This charge will not be made public, because the government would have to say why they think it is treason, which they do not want to do.

Please get our men out of this situation as quickly as possible; and again, I want to assure you, that we are in no way involved with violence or anything immoral. Neither is it our purpose to harm the US Government.

Thank you,

CE Management

PS - Your retainer is being raised to $20,000.00

Bari abruptly swiveled in his chair and faced Coopersmith squarely. “You know what Mr. Coopersmith? I have a question for you: How do you know that these men are involved with treason?”

Coopersmith was silent. After an uncomfortable pause, he answered with the best thing he could think of. “You’ll have to wait for discovery procedures to find out. It is not proper procedure to give you that information.”

“You and your bosses are really afraid of this, aren’t you, Coopersmith? If you’ve got the full machinery of the state behind you and you’re still scared, then you’re in much deeper shit than my clients are. I’ll tell you what, I’m going to give you a way to save your ass.

“You can’t let people find out that something big and bad is going on, and since trials are still public events, you can’t have one, can you? Everyone would learn your secret.” Bari laughed. “It must have killed you that these people hired a loudmouth dago attorney like me.” He laughed again, knowing that Coopersmith was already calling him ‘Dago’ or ‘Greaseball’ in his thoughts.

“So, Coopersmith, here’s what you are going to do: My clients will tell you everything they know – which isn’t much – and you’ll charge them with misdemeanor computer fraud. Under the plea-bargain agreement, charges will be dropped.”

Bari stood up, and walked to the door. He opened it, and turned to face Coopersmith again, whose face was frozen in place, either from fear, anger, control, or some combination of the above. Obviously enjoying his afternoon’s work, Bari threw one final volley at the AG:

“And, Mr. Attorney General, if you don’t take my agreement, I will be presenting this whole affair to every newspaper, Internet site, and broadcaster I can find. Remember, I still have paperwork from the LA FBI office with the ‘T word’ all over it. You have till tomorrow morning. After that, I’m going to Oregon for a couple of days, and I have promised to conclude these affairs before I leave. Ciao.”

Coopersmith was in a daze as Bari walked out. For Bari, it was the kind of day he dreamt about in Law School.

The charges against the four technicians were indeed resolved on April 1st, with two stipulations: First, that the men were to be deported, and secondly, that Bari surrender all of his paperwork to the AG; specifically, everything that had the word “Treason” on it. Bari accepted promptly and drove to Lake Tahoe, not Oregon, for his vacation. His paralegal saw the four men to their planes at LAX two days later.

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By April 4th, Nickelson and Morales had the computer shack mostly figured out, and the contractor had finished digging up the optical fibers that led from the house. They also had volumes of analysis on the hard drives from the Washington lab.

The computer equipment in the shack was a network center. It had built-in redundancies, and fail-safes. It also had at least three means of communication: Optical fiber, satellite, and digital telephone lines. The computers had apparently been set-up with an automatic erase routine. There had been a small motor which pulled the satellite transmitter off its base once the erase-everything routine had been engaged.

The two pairs of fibers running into the back yard were a surprise. They fed directly into a main cross-country Internet line. This was the main line between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City – one of the Internet's original links. Because of the immense importance of this link, the contractor was forced to dig up the last five feet by hand. No shovels or tools; fingers digging in the dirt. The fibers were connected to the main lines by a very ingenious homemade optical tap. There was no record of this tap being made, and no way to find out who did it.

The two technicians were putting their report together when Van Zant and another important-looking man showed up at the shack. Even Van Zant seemed intimidated by this guy. He was perhaps fifty years old, a rather dark black man, impeccably dressed.

"Nickelson, Morales, this is Assistant Director Jones, just back from Washington. Tell us what you know."

The two made things as clear as they could to their superiors, and answered their technical questions carefully.

Assistant Director Jones appeared to be very intelligent, and up to date on technology.

"So, what we have is a redundant network hub running through the Internet, probably at very high speeds."

Morales answered. "Yes sir. Actually, the optical interface cards we salvaged were the best on the market. They were probably capable of a hundred Gigabits per second or more."

"Were they careful about covering their tracks?"

"Yes, sir, they were great at it."

Jones glared at Morales when he said "they were great at it." He looked as fierce as Van Zant, and a lot more intelligent. Morales paused at the sight of Jones' anger, and said no more.

After a brief pause, Jones continued. “Okay, men, listen to me carefully: Your job is now to analyze every piece of data you can find on these guys and track them down. We’ve already interrogated the technicians, but we didn’t learn anything. So it’s up to you. Take a day off and rest. Show up the day after that, and do nothing except track these guys. If you need anything, Van Zant will get it for you. You have an unlimited budget, and immediate access to any of our labs. Do you understand me?”

They both answered they understood. Nickelson added, “Then our other cases will be given to someone else?”

“That’s right, son, and you’ll report, daily, to Van Zant from now on. And one more thing: You are going to be provided with a briefing on this project; we think that it will help you track these guys down. This briefing is Classified. If you leak any of it, you’ll be spending a lot of time in Federal prison. You men copy?”

“Yes, sir” they both replied, feeling more like boys than men just then.

“Okay, get out of here” snapped Van Zant. “And go get drunk or something tonight. Clear your heads.”

Morales and Nickelson walked to their cars slowly. “I’ll call you,” said Nickelson.

“Good,” said Morales, “I’ll be home.”

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“John, this is some serious deep shit we’re in. What is going on?”

“I wish I knew Tim, but we’ll sure as hell find out tomorrow morning. Whatever it is, it is big.”

“And, John, what’s up with this Jones guy?”

“I wish I knew that too; but I’ll tell you what Tim, he scares me. He’s smart enough to get what he wants, and amoral enough to sacrifice us along the way.”

“Well, I don’t know if he’s that bad. After all, he’s a high official.”

“Yeah. Well, there’s nothing we can do now. I think Van Zant has a point, we should relax today, and deal with all of this tomorrow.”

“All right. I’m going to watch a ball game and take a nap. See you tomorrow.”

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“Where the hell did I put those glasses?”

James Farber had not entertained a woman in his home in several years, and wasn't sure that he still remembered all of the details that should go into such an evening. After three or four runs through the kitchen and living room, he assured himself that the condo was sufficiently clean, and that the table was appropriately set.

Dinner at the condo was Farber's idea; he suggested that it would be a more comfortable setting. Frances, with a note of amusement in her voice, agreed. Frances was due at 7:00 p.m., and it was now 6:30, leaving Farber with half an hour to think about the interview, and about Frances.

The sun was setting as Farber sat down in front of a floor-to-ceiling window and looked out from sixty floors above Chicago.

The phone rang at a minute or two before seven. It took three or four rings to pull Farber out of the near-trance he had been in for half an hour. He picked up the telephone, which was next to him on a small table. It was the doorman, sending Frances up.

When she arrived at the door, Farber was still a bit dazed, and welcomed Frances into a completely dark apartment. Frances stepped in, realizing that Farber was half-asleep, and said, "You know, I've had men tell me that they did their best work in the dark, but I never got the impression that they were talking about interviews!" She walked past him with a smirk on her face, and proceeded slowly toward one of the windows overlooking the city.

Farber, on the other hand, was beginning to recognize how dark the condo was, and what Frances had said. His face flushed as he tried to apologize without stammering or showing his embarrassment. Frances turned and walked back to him, laughing quietly, and took him by his hands. She looked at him till he stopped talking and said "I'm teasing you; don't worry about it. Why don't you go splash some water in your face and wake yourself up. I'll figure out where the light switches are."

Farber murmured a "thanks" and went off to the washroom. "Funny," thought Frances, "That look of confusion… it's the same look they have as little boys… the same one."

When Farber came back from the washroom a few minutes later, he found Frances busy in the kitchen, pulling dinner from the oven. "Five more minutes and we'd be ordering Chinese," she said. "I see you get your food from the Frozen Gourmet. I do, too, sometimes. It's good food, and just sticking it in the oven is a lot easier than preparing it yourself."

Farber stood next to the table, and stayed out of Frances' way. "Yeah, that is from Frozen Gourmet, although I really can cook myself."

"Really? Well maybe next time, you can show me. But for now, why don't you pour some wine in the glasses, and have a seat. I think we're ready."

The dinner conversation began a bit slowly, but was pleasant. They discussed where they had grown up, and their jobs – personal small talk.

"So, did you fall asleep on the couch before I came?"

Farber laughed. "Not really. I had just gotten everything ready for the evening, and sat down to relax for a moment, I started thinking about the past, and my life now. I may have been partially asleep, but mostly just lost in thought."

"You seemed sad when you opened the door. Is everything all right?"

"Oh, yes, it's just that I had been remembering some sad things from the past."

With that, Frances suggested that since they had both finished eating, they could move to the living room, and talk about the world of finance, which was, after all, her reason for being there. Farber sat on a large chair next to the window, and Frances on a couch adjacent to it. She pulled out her note pad, and began:

"All right, I want to start by asking you to comment on a few things from the *Playboy* interview. First of all, they have one comment off on the side that is not tied to anything else. It says 'My God, I love commerce.' Tell me about that. What exactly is meant by that sentiment?"

"Ah, good question. That was really just a comment I made to the interviewer as we walked out of my office, on our way to his. My computer supplier is an Indian man, and he was delivering a computer to me. I looked at the man, and remembered a story he told me of his childhood. You know, there are hundreds of stories like his: A poor kid in a small village, living in the same primitive squalor that his great, great, great, grandfather did. He gets a chance to come to a market-based society, works very hard, lives responsibly, and makes a beautiful life for himself, for his wife, and for his children. It's commerce that makes that possible! Nothing else!"

Now Farber was beginning to really relax and to open up. He slid forward in his chair.

"This might surprise you, but I spend a lot of time studying history."

"Really?" Frances turned sideways and brought her legs up on the couch and curled them around next to her. "I actually minored in history in college. Keep talking."

"Okay. Many years ago, a friend of mine made an interesting comment to me. He said, 'Most of the history books tell nothing more than the chronicles of kings and governments. What they should tell you about is the progress of people.' Ever since, I tried to ignore the litany of kings, presidents, and laws, and study how people lived and thought. And whenever I looked through history, one of the things that jumped out at me was that the real good of mankind came not from governments or religions, but from business: From traders, from the financiers who make trade possible, from hustlers, inventors, entrepreneurs, and small business people of all sorts.

Governments and religions generally just get in the way to a greater or lesser extent. Commerce frees people from poverty and grim lives of bare subsistence."

"Well, I am minded to agree with you, but there are plenty of smart people who would disagree."

Farber got serious. "Sure! But there is a huge difference between those people and me: Their arguments are based on their ideology. Mine are based on reality.

"The people you are talking about have pre-set opinions. If they happen to stumble across any contradictory facts, they simply find a way to fit them into their chosen conclusions. And they hold these opinions, not so much because they are right, but because holding and defending those opinions is good for their social status or for their careers. My opinions come from direct experience with the real world. If I am not right, I can lose a lot of money. That teaches you to let go of pre-set opinions right away."

"Okay, fair enough answer."

Farber laughed. "All right, Miss Almost-Historian, I'm going to ask you a question. It's a hard one, so I won't expect you to answer it right now, but some day I want an answer from you."

Frances laughed and felt flushed. If James was saying "some day I want an answer," that meant that he intended on knowing her for a long time. She sat a bit straighter and took the challenge. "I'm game; what is it?"

"Think about this, Frances: For the past several thousand years of recorded history, humans lived at the edge of starvation, usually in abject poverty, perpetually at risk. But in just the past few centuries, and primarily in only one or two parts of the world, we suddenly develop medical science, cars, telephones, airplanes, refrigeration, central heating, electrical power, computers, and spaceships. Why here? And why now?"

Frances paused to consider the question. "Wow. I've never heard that one before. All right, I'll see if I can find an answer for you. No promise on exactly when."

The next few hours passed with both Frances and Farber talking, making notes, drawing on pieces of paper, and referring to economic figures from half a dozen books. They agreed on the Austrian School of economics and disagreed on styles of music as they drank and spilled coffee, and ate dessert over scratch paper, pens, and a calculator.

Following a quick stop in the bathroom, Frances decided that it really was getting late, and she really did have to go home. As she gathered up her papers and found her jacket, she tried to analyze the evening, and to remember if there was anything else she had wanted to ask.

"Say, while I'm getting ready to go, there is one other thing I wanted to ask you. Earlier you said the first generation of a business is peopled by productive, honest,

and energetic people; that once a leveling off is reached, a new type of person comes on board. Later, you said that the third generation ended up as people looking for sweetheart deals and monopoly arrangements. But you passed over the second generation. Who are they?

"Those are the ones who look for safe harbor." Farber paused and thought, then continued. "These guys don't trust in their own virtues. They don't believe that they have it in them to create what they want by their own minds and their own efforts."

"These guys? What about women?" She smiled, and had spoken with a friendly tone of voice that implied correction rather than accusation. They were now standing at the front door.

"Oh… I use the term 'guys' generically. I'm sure there are plenty of women who do the same thing."

A blank look came over Frances' face, as if all her energy were directed inwards. She stood still, tilted her head and looked up to Farber, and said "Yeah, but they usually do it in their personal lives."

Farber looked back at her, as if requesting some further explanation. Frances shook her head, and said "No, I'll let you know when I've thought about it more."

As he opened the door, Farber said "Thank you for coming Frances, I haven't enjoyed myself so much in a long time."

Frances stepped forward, rose up on her toes, and kissed Farber briefly, but on the lips. "Thank you James. I enjoyed myself too."

Frances' face was covered with a sly smile as she said "Goodnight," turned and walked briskly to the elevator. "That same look," she thought. "The same cute-little-boy confusion."

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The phone call came on April 5th.

"Phillip, he wants to do it full-out."

"And you're sure he understands what that means?"

"Yeah, he does. He's really smart, you know."

"About that there is no question. All right, I'll send you an email in a day or two telling you when we'll arrive. I'll bring Farber and McCoy, and we'll have to spend a few days there."

"No problem, I've got plenty of vacancies all through April."

“Great. Thank you again, Dick, and tell George to start putting his plans together. We’ll need detailed plans, and lists of every critical facet of this. Tell him to put together a detailed business plan and proposal. And listen, we’re really busy right now, so it may be a week before we get there.”

“Not a problem. I’ve been entertaining the Doc, and I don’t think he’s in any hurry. I think he needed some time off.”

“Thanks, Dick. See ya.”

* * * * * * *

“Have a seat please gentlemen, and we’ll get started.” The man speaking was not FBI, but from the National Security Agency. Only Nickelson, Morales, Van Zant, and Assistant Director Jones were in attendance. The conference room was fairly large, with the standard impressive table dominating the room, and a screen at one end. The NSA man was showing slides from his lap-top computer on the screen, and each person attending was given a paper copy of the slides.

“You all realize, I assume, that this is top secret information, and that anyone who discloses this information without authorization is in violation of several felony statutes, and possibly the capital offense of treason. Please act accordingly.”

John Morales looked at the first inside page of the material that sat on the table in front of him:

CLASSIFIED

Department of the Treasury

UNTRACEABLE COMMERCE AND TAX EVASION

Overview

Current Threat to US Government

Account Imbalances

Implications

Actions

Memo of January 1995

The whole of the report was not contained in the material, only a few excerpts. Mr. NSA went on:

“Gentlemen, this report was prepared three months ago, in response to account imbalances that have begun showing up on Treasury Department ledgers. What we are finding is that a portion of the sovereign economic activity of the United States is occurring off the books. Now, this has always occurred, but previously the amounts in question were relatively small. Since all significant financial transactions could be traced, the fear factor forced people to keep most of the rules most of the time. In short, it was only small-fries and a few serious bad guys that didn’t keep the rules. This is different.

“Our current problem is that technology has made it possible for average people to conduct business invisibly. You’ll notice that on page four of your report we talk about Untraceable Commerce. As you know, the Internet is presently flooded with free encryption software that we cannot break. What you don’t know is that someone – and we don’t yet know who – has set up a fully encrypted form of electronic cash. We are not sure how it works, or even what an e-cash file would look like, but we are sure that a lot of commerce is being done outside of the normal channels. Any questions thus far?”

Morales spoke up. “Yes sir, do we know what kind of business is being done, or who is doing it?”

“No, we don’t; but this is not traditional criminal business – drugs, prostitution, and so on.”

“And how do we know that, sir?”

“Because of the volume of missing transactions, and because real bad guys prefer traditional financial channels run by people they bribe. There just aren’t that many drug dealers and pimps using the Internet. These are primarily ordinary people. Almost certainly these are small companies and one-man operations: Entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, salesmen, and consultants. People who are small enough not to draw a lot of attention, and arrogant enough to spit at the rules.

“Let me continue a bit further. This is not a small problem; the amounts of money are fairly significant, and, more importantly, they are growing rapidly. Apparently word is getting around, and people are seeing that this can be done without getting caught. If this continues, tax revenues will be cut dramatically.

For this reason, we have not classified this as just a financial crime, but as Treason. We consider this an assault on the sovereign economy of the United States.”

“Now, gentlemen, if you will turn to page seven, entitled Actions, we’ll get to the important part of this, and the part that pertains to you.

“We have three primary objectives:

1. Track down the computer centers handling this commerce. Shut them down, read their records, and identify the people involved, both operators and customers.

2. Mole into the system. That is, find people who are involved with this, make friends with them, and get involved as a participant. Then find out who these people are, and bring them down.

3. Prosecute people involved with this scheme. Prosecute them publicly, punish them harshly, and make everyone else too afraid to get involved.

"Nickelson, Morales… you will be responsible for items number one and two. We have other people who'll take care of number three. We'll give you whatever support you need, and we are going to have Agent Garosian work along with you. You know the tech stuff, and he knows how to get things done."

Both Nickelson and Morales were relieved that Garosian would be working with them. At this stage of their careers, and while being thrown into a completely new and difficult assignment, they really needed an older, experienced man to lean on.

Tim Nickelson spoke up now. "Sir, what about the Memo of January 1995? It shows up on the first page, but nothing more is said about it."

"That was in internal report we put together after the Internet leapt into public use. That was not something we expected, and we were not prepared for it. Once the bomb hit, we had to scramble to figure out how the Internet would be used, and how we could be hurt by it."

"Would it be possible to get a copy of that memo, sir? I'd like to see the analysis."

"No, it would not be possible – that memo has never left the White House. But I can tell you that what we are talking about today was one of the primary issues raised in it. Once commerce can be done privately, we cannot force people to pay taxes. And without taxes, no government in the world can survive. And while I'm thinking of it, remember that at some point agents from the UK and the UN may be working with you. Right now this is a primarily US problem, but it is probably spreading already."

"One more question please, sir?" John Morales asked.

"All right." The NSA man was looking at his watch, evidently in a hurry to leave.

"I just want to clarify this for myself. The people involved in this are not specifically hurting anyone, aren't selling secrets to the Chinese… they're just not paying taxes."

The NSA man glared at Morales; not in anger, but in disgust that the young man would not know better than to ask such a question. He spoke as one would speak to a misled adolescent, "Yes, son, they are hurting people. Perhaps not with violence, but

they are depriving the people of their government." That being said, he gathered his bags and left.

* * * * * * *

Phillip Donson, James Faber, and their associate Bill McCoy blew into the resort on a Thursday afternoon. "The three forces of nature have arrived," was how Tino described it. George, who had been sunning himself by the pool, washed up and made his way out to the main dining area, which was covered with a large thatched roof but otherwise open.

"George, I'd like you to meet my good friends James Farber and Bill McCoy. Guys, this is my old friend and brilliant neuroscientist George Dimitrios."

Like most of Phillip's friends, both Farber and McCoy seemed quite intelligent, and quite unique. George thought that both men looked to be in their mid-forties. McCoy looked as though he could have been either English or all-American, while Farber looked slightly middle-eastern, but not quite. Phillip introduced Farber as a financier. George had seen his photo in the papers once, but beyond that knew little about him.

McCoy was introduced simply as "an old pirate." The three 'forces of nature' laughed at that, and Phillip added, "I'll explain that to you some other time." George laughed to himself. He thought that McCoy looked like a younger version of Sir George Martin, the music producer. Granted he was more muscular that Sir George, and looked just a bit fierce, but the resemblance was striking. Longish, straight, light-colored hair, very distinct features, clean-shaven, and a slightly thin face.

After a bit of introductory small talk, a pitcher of strawberry Margarita was placed on the main table, and Phillip began to speak.

"Now George, I've told these guys about your work, and a bit about its utility. Would you please explain a bit more?"

"Sure." Out of habit, George stood up to explain his findings. "We've actually known for some time that emotions are not just a mental thing. When you experience almost any strong emotion, special molecules called neuropeptides pour into your bloodstream. These molecules bind with receptors on other cells… and cells can have thousands, or even a million receptors each. In this way, your emotions are transmitted all through your body. This can be either beneficial or detrimental, depending upon the situation you are facing. In general, it seems to have served us well as a basic survival tool, but has been a drag on higher mental functioning. When a great deal of these neuropeptides are repetitively produced, especially those associated with some of the negative emotions – fear, anger, guilt, shock, and deep

sorrow – they may stay fixed in these receptors. This is good neither for violent self defense, nor for rational analysis.

"We studied this for some time, and found types of blockages and/or deposits associated with specific neuropeptide molecules. We can now associate a number of them with certain chronic psychological difficulties. In other words, gentlemen, we have found the molecules that either contribute to or cause various psychiatric ailments. And we have recently been developing other chemicals and treatments that can actually break up these deposits and clear these blocked receptors."

Dr. Dimitrios paused to let this sink in to the men at the table. McCoy muttered, "My God, this is huge!" Phillip and Farber locked eyes momentarily, silently communicating something that only they knew.

Phillip looked directly at Dr. Dimitrios again. "George, explain about the subconscious and psychiatry."

George's face grew darker. "Yes… there is a theory that has been thrown around the neurological and psychiatric community for some years that there is a major connection between the body's neurochemistry and the subconscious. This theory has never been welcomed by the mainstream and has remained on the fringes. Our experiments, however, gave it legs. We didn't by any means prove it, but our work did support it to a significant degree. Here's what happened:

"For our experiments, we had to use people with written psychiatric histories. Otherwise, you have only anecdotal data. 'I felt better' isn't useable for science. So, we had some fairly messed-up people in our trials. First of all, we found that we could break up the neuropeptides we were going for, and, usually, clear them from the receptors. They more or less fell out as they broke up. We were also able to verify that there were no health risks associated with this. After all, these are simply chains of amino acids, which your body is full of anyway.

"Then, as the therapeutic reports began to come in, it got complicated. The first results were that many of the patients' acute symptoms, such as anxiety, were reduced. So far, so good. But the reports also showed that many problems the therapists had earlier defined as 'subconscious' just faded away. In other words, our treatment seemed to dissolve subconscious structures. This gave great support to the idea that your subconscious mind is substantially composed of old data stored in your body's neurochemistry, much of it in the form of neuropeptide residues. Now, the truth may not be quite as simple as that, but there does seem to be a strong linkage."

George stopped again, waiting for the others to assimilate what he had just told them.

"Well," said Farber, "it sounds terrific. Why are you here now?"

George sat down at the table, across from them. He looked both sad and angry at the same time. "Our papers drew a lot of attention. Probably too much… certain people didn't like them."

“Certain people like whom?” asked Farber.

“Like the Psychiatric Association. They never quite called it a fraud, but they ripped our experiments any way they could. And then…” He stopped, now looking very sad. The other men let him take his time, and sat politely, waiting for him to regroup himself.

“… And then we had a test subject attempt suicide. But the funny thing is that I never considered it much of a problem until I saw it in all the psychiatric journals! I mean, these were psychiatric patients! This guy in particular had a long history of instability. Hell, two women in one of our placebo groups either threatened or attempted suicide!

“But, you see, none of that mattered. They applied the word ‘Discredited’ to everything we had ever done. With all of the experiments we’ve done, I can demonstrate to four decimal places that our treatments are completely harmless. But none of that mattered. Every scientific journal had swallowed the word from the Holy Mount that we were discredited, and they haven’t published anything for almost two years.

“You know, I always thought that people who talked about conspiracies were cranks, and now I’m one of them.”

Phillip put his arm around his old friend’s shoulders, and George let his head hang in sorrow.

Farber spoke up. “The truth is, George, that a lot of those conspiracy people are cranks. But there is an explanation for why this happened to you. Would you like to hear it?”

George’s head almost snapped up. Phillip withdrew his arm. “Yes! What is it?”

“Well, it is what we call an incentive trap. Large organizations, such as your psychiatric and medical associations, almost always act to sustain themselves. They may react in many ways to many things, but the most essential reactions of any large organization come from an amoral need to sustain itself. Your work provided a threat, and the organizations responded by attacking that threat and sustaining themselves.”

“Yes, Mr. Farber, but these are not amoral people who made these decisions. These were doctors who honestly care about saving lives… or at least I’m fairly sure they do.”

“Oh, I’m sure most of them do. But that is not the issue. These organizations are very large and multi-layered, correct?”

“Yes.”

“And what would be your guess as to how many people had to sign-off on the actions taken against you in one of these organizations?”

“Oh, probably seven, maybe eight or nine.”

“All right, that is where the incentive trap comes into play. Here’s what happens:

“Large systems distribute their actions among many levels. So, the action taken by any single individual may not be excessive, but when you take the actions of seven or eight people, and add them all together, the result can be grossly excessive.

“Let me put this another way: The organization faces an external threat. Everyone in the organization sees it fairly clearly. Let’s assign a numerical value to this threat of 5. That’s just an arbitrary number that I am making up for this illustration… still with me?”

“Yes, please continue.”

“All right. So, we have a number 5 threat. Now, let’s say that Administrator number one sees this threat, and decides that some type of response is necessary. Not wanting to go overboard, he reacts at what we would call a number 2 level.” James looked around the table to see if he needed to repeat himself.

“So, having reacted at 2, he passes the matter on to Administrator number two; who, similarly not wanting to be excessive, assigns a number 2 response as well. Administrator number three is a hot-head, and assigns a number 3.5. Administrator four assigns a 2.5, and Administrator five is very gentle, and assigns only a 1.”

James had been sketching all of this on a piece of paper as he spoke, and holding it close to the center of the table so all could see it as he did. “Now, if we add this up, we see that the organization, composed mostly of people who didn’t want to overreact, responded to a number 5 threat with a number 11 response, more than twice the appropriate level.”

They all looked at Farber’s addition. George acknowledged the mathematics first, then began to analyze the people involved at the organizations. He envisioned them as each inhabiting a single floor of a multistory building, and each assigning a number that was placed in a column next to each level, then added up, with the total placed at the bottom of the column. It made sense.

“This is an inherent flaw in large organizations,” said Farber, “and predisposes them to errors.” George was nodding in agreement and understanding.

“I learned about this years ago, not too long after the Berlin Wall fell. A great radio show in Chicago spent an evening on the Stasi… the East German Secret Police. They did a lot of very bad things. Anyhow, there was an author who had gone through their records, interviewed all sorts of people who were involved, and so on. He did an excellent job, and when he was finished, he had this to say: ‘If only I had met, on this search, a single person who was clearly evil. But they were all just weak, shaped by circumstances, self-deceiving, human, all too human. Yet the sum of their actions was a great evil.’

“Your medical organizations are susceptible to the same types of errors, though hopefully not of that magnitude.”

George looked up at Farber thoughtfully. “Thank you,” was all he said.

After waiting a few seconds, McCoy spoke up. “I just want to know if it works, and if it significantly improves life on earth. Does it?”

George was very firm in his response. “Yes, it works very well. And, yes, it improves life substantially, especially for people who have been hurt the worst.”

The men looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders. “What else do we need to know?” McCoy said, “that’s enough for me.”

George interjected. “Before I get you too excited about this, let me tell you that this treatment is not as easy as swallowing a pill and being happy in the morning. It may be some day, but it’s not now. The treatments we have identified are not instant. Our best is a three-day program, involving intravenous delivery.”

Again they looked at each other, as if to say, “doesn’t sound too difficult to me.”

* * * * * * *

The Free Souls were an assortment of college-aged kids from at least ten US states and three foreign countries. All from middle or upper-middle class backgrounds and decent homes, their lives were anything but traditional. Granted, most college towns are half-full of large houses occupied by assorted and colorful young characters, but these colorful characters and their large house were something quite different.

By a recent informal count, one of the boys living in the house determined there to be at least twenty five people who wandered in and out of the house regularly. Almost all of them were either enrolled in, recently graduated from, or associated with Florida State University, next to whose campus stood their large, old, poorly air-conditioned house. There were rooms that belonged to certain people and others that were open to any friends who came. A few of the more athletic guys looked after security, and a few of the girls made sure that there was edible food available, and that food gone bad was actually removed. Two older couples who lived nearby provided a bit of adult supervision – mostly seeing that their ‘fine young maniacs’ kept themselves properly attired, avoided serious drug use, and called home to their parents regularly.

The first clue that would indicate something unusual about the house and its residents was the sign that hung over the inside door to the house – within the screened porch, just outside of public view. It read:

“Enter. There are no rules here. That which causes benefit is welcomed. That which causes harm is repulsed.”

Throughout the main rooms of the house were other messages and murals, all hand painted by the present and previous occupants of the house.

A painted banner reading "Welcome to Freedonia" crowned a huge portrait of Groucho Marx, captured with his most mischievous expression.

A complex mural in the main hallway showed a variety of armed government agents, legal orders, school teachers, and state leaders past, present, foreign, and domestic. It bore the inscription "Our Morality Is Better Than Yours."

Another large mural looked at first to be the classic painting of the Bolshevik revolution, with masses of people walking through the streets of St. Petersburg, carrying huge signs. But on this sign was written "Merchants of the World, Unite!" Once you looked closer, you could see that the individuals in the mural were butchers, shoemakers, tailors, businessmen, engineers, managers, store keepers, florists, old-style traders, and others; all involved in the varied activities of commerce, many with their families at their sides.

Perhaps the most common inscriptions were biblical. The Hebrew 'Shemah' was beautifully inscribed in gold leaf up and down the doorposts of the main entry way. There was another Hebrew inscription at the top of a hallway. This one bore the translation below it, reading "Let us have a King like the other nations," and, "They have not rejected you Samuel, they have rejected me."

Another quotation in the living room read "Know ye not of your own selves what is right?" "Let your light shine before men," "According to your estimation it is done unto you," and others were present. The ceiling molding circling the living room was emblazoned with the words "Proclaim good news to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, and set at liberty them that are bruised."

For a college house, it was quite clean, and aside from the inscriptions and necessary household furnishings, the primary indications were that this was a place of business. There were computers everywhere, cables, telephones, filing cabinets, bulletin boards, book shelves, even office cubicles.

The final odd thing was that there were a great many musical instruments all through the house, and very little stereo equipment. The house was very frequently filled with music, but usually live music – made by, and frequently written by, the residents. Almost all of them could play something, or at least sing fairly well. The others were learning.

Such an oddly-appointed house was the appropriate setting for the cast of characters that occupied it. While most of these people were students at FSU, only a few of them were enrolled full-time. With very few exceptions, they carried only about half of the full-time work load, and spent the rest of their time in commercial pursuits. And the commercial pursuit that had occupied most of them for the past few

years had been Tango, a huge, distributed game on the Internet. A type of game usually known as an MMOG – Massively Multiplayer Online Game.

They had developed Tango over a period of several years, with work on the project being traded among various of the Free Soul programmers. Tango had at this time approximately 150,000 active players. The game was like most video games, but much, much larger, with endless interactions with other players, and with ever-changing circumstances. The game evolved continually. In other words, it was never, ever, boring or repetitive.

Two years prior, the best of the Free Soul programmers, Ellison and Pearson, had begun doing some special modifications of the programming for a new investor in the project – a friend of some of the old Free Souls – a man named James Farber.

* * * * * * *

"Hello James? This is Frances. Listen, I'm working on my article, and I'd like to talk it over with you. Any chance you could meet me for coffee this afternoon?"

"Well, I'd be glad to, but I'm stuck on the North side all night; although I do have a break from about six o'clock till eight o'clock. How about meeting me at Morgan's?"

"All right, that could work. I know the place."

"Wonderful. I'll see you at six."

Farber noted well that Frances had now dropped the use of their last names. He was pleased, but still a bit worried by it. He had so much to lose by getting close to Frances Marsden. She was brilliant, attractive, and had a wonderful sense of purpose. Exactly the kind of woman he wanted. But there was such risk involved. The risk of it failing was bad; the risk of it succeeding seemed worse.

* * * * * * *

The crowd at Morgan's was thin that night, allowing James and Frances to get a table in a quiet corner. James had coffee, and Frances a cappuccino.

"James, I'm having a hard time putting the material from our interviews into a good business article. We've been talking about some great stuff, but it's really a mix of philosophy and psychology, more than business."

"Yes, but isn't that what makes human creativity work? That's the real source of productivity and wealth, isn't it?"

“Certainly it is, James, but I am employed to write business articles, not philosophy.”

Farber sat quietly, and thought for a couple of minutes, thinking intensely, and saying nothing more than, “Hang on for a minute. Let me think.”

Farber lifted up his head and spoke with a hint of urgency in his voice, “Frances, what’s the absolute best thing you could make from your material? Forget about what you’re expected to write; what’s the very best thing you could make of it?”

She paused for a moment, wondering if Farber would think her silly for what she was about to say. “James, as strange as it may sound, I keep wanting to write an article on how women view relationships, and to analyze the whole thing in a sort of economic way. I know that sounds crazy, and I’m probably not explaining it well, but every time I go through this stuff, I keep coming back to that.”

Farber laughed. “Well, that’s not something I expected, but if that’s what’s coming out of you, go for it. Don’t worry about writing a business article right away. Take the material you have and write something great – the highest and best thing you can make of it. Afterward write the kind of article that your editor wants. Greatness should come first.”

They engaged in some follow-on talk about editors and articles for a few minutes, and Farber grew sullen and serious.

“Something’s on your mind James. What is it?”

“Oh, I was thinking about telling you to write the highest and best thing you could.” He was speaking slowly now. Frances noticed something about him that she didn’t understand – a sort of tortured look passing over his face from time to time. Something worried him and threatened to tear him. She was familiar enough with him now that she could tell, but she had no idea as to what it might be, and she was sure that she didn’t yet know him well enough to ask about it. Maybe soon.

Farber wasn’t really sure he should keep talking. One part of him needed desperately to open his soul to Frances, and the other was afraid of the consequences. His mouth opened, almost of its own mind.

“Frances, it is very important for people like you and me to create the highest and best things we are capable of. Obviously that is good for everyone to do, but it is really important for people like you and me.”

“James, what are you talking about, ‘you and me’? I don’t understand.” She was looking for clues in him. His voice was lowered; he was obviously telling her something he wouldn’t tell other people. She halted between wondering where this would lead and paying complete attention to his words.

“All right, let me tell you a story. Several years ago, I went to visit a friend in Warsaw. While I was there, we went to see the old Jewish cemetery there. It was a very surreal, spiritual experience. You see, I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood, and

nearly all of my American relatives are Jewish. I walked slowly and meditatively through the cemetery. It had a sort of primal forest look to it. It was almost winter, the ground was deeply covered with fallen leaves, and there was a cold breeze and an overcast sky. The air was hazy, almost misty. Then I looked at the names on the tombstones. They were the same names as my relatives and friends. The same exact names! But the names on the tombstones had lived and died a couple of centuries earlier."

Frances was now paying complete attention to James' story, and the thought passed very quickly through her mind that she would postpone her analysis of his motives till later, and be sure to take in all of this conversation.

"I knew these people, Frances; I lived most of my life with their direct decedents. Hundreds of thousands of them buried there, and I could tell, in detail, how they lived, how they played as kids, how they worked as young adults, how they raised their kids, and how they grew old. I could almost pick out which of the men had been better athletes, which were kinder, and which coarser. I could tell you who were the kind, nurturing mothers, and which were the nasty ones. Aside from their clothing and a few customs, these are exactly the same people I grew up with. I saw back in time, Frances, and the progression of generation after generation. It moved something within me." James' eyes were the picture of sincerity. Not the energetic sincerity of an enthusiastic young man, but the informed, powerful sincerity of a full, mature man.

"And then we walked through a section of the cemetery set apart for notable persons. This huge cemetery full of people – all raised in the same place, in nearly identical circumstances, yet only a fraction of them were able to create great things. The rest of them held the clan together and continued it, but that's all.

"You know, as a kid, one of the relatively few mistakes my parents made was to give me the idea that everyone should be equal – that I should not be any better than anyone else… and all the while making sure that I got top grades at school!" They both laughed at the contradiction, then James, serious again, continued.

"At first, the idea of these people being removed from the 'ordinary' people struck me as arrogant and rude. But the more I looked at the cemetery, I saw that the notables sanctified the others, and even paid homage to them."

"And how do you get paying homage?"

"Because it took the group of ordinaries to produce the notables. This culture of people had lived in the area for several hundred years, and a certain number of every generation were able to rise above the ordinary and become great. The larger group produced them, almost at random.

"Listen, Frances, it's the same with us. People like you and me who have a shot at greatness, we are the few. We sanctify the others. You and I have the ability to do great things, but it's partly just dumb luck that we're the ones in this situation."

“James, how can you say that? I got to where I am – wherever that is – by working night and day. When the other reporters were at the bar knocking back beers, I was at my desk working. That’s how I did it, and that’s how you did it too!”

“Of course you’re right, Frances, but that’s not all there is to it. Working hard is one part of it – an essential part – and it is certainly not accidental. But the ideas people are raised with are so pivotal. For one thing, most people just don’t believe that they are capable of great things. So, they never try.”

Frances stopped moving. James paused, looking at her, and knowing that she was processing a series of thoughts. Then she spoke.

“You know, I had an interesting experience with that exact thing a few weeks ago, and it really bothered me.”

He leaned forward. “Tell me about it.”

“Well, strangely enough, I had just seen a new study of geniuses, and the interesting thing was that every one of them had the same comment. ‘I’m not doing anything special, anyone else could do what I do if they tried.’ A couple of days later, I met a young woman at a book signing, and she told me how much she enjoyed my work, and how I was a genius. I thanked her and told her – almost word for word – what the study had the geniuses saying: ‘Oh, it’s not really all that hard, you could do it too if you spent the time that I do.’”

“And?”

“And she laughed! She thought I was just trying to be polite. She said, ‘Oh no, I can’t do that.’ But I said, ‘Oh sure you could, it just takes a bunch of time and effort.’”

“And then?”

“Then she looked angry… more like suspicious, I suppose. She just walked away, disappointed in me.”

“I’m sure she was.”

“But James, she could do what I do! It’s not all that hard. That woman could do it! Why is that so hard for her to accept? Isn’t having ability something to be pleased with? James, can you tell me why?”

“Yes, I think I can. You have to remember that most people really don’t believe that they can do big things. Such thoughts have been fixed in their minds as long as they remember. Once you start telling them that they can do what you do, you cause a conflict. The basic assumption that they can’t has been in their head for decades, and they have all sorts of other ideas growing from it – like the interconnected roots of trees in a dense forest. So, when your ideas come up against that deeply-rooted assumption, yours have to be judged as false or deceptive. Accepting your ideas would throw too much into turmoil.

“Usually, they start to wonder what you’re trying to get out of them.”

“Good God.” Frances had a look of hopelessness on her face. If this was really true, and these people not only held false assumptions, but were psychologically unable to change them, then the world was a lot worse off than she thought.

“Frances, did you ever really doubt that you were capable of doing great things?”

“I did sometimes. Well… not exactly. When I was younger, I wondered if I would ever actually achieve anything great, but I think I always felt that I had that ability in me.”

“My story’s almost exactly the same. I wondered a few times, and I got depressed a few times, but that mostly concerned people I needed to work with, not enduring doubts about my own ability.

“But listen to me Frances: Most people hearing us talk like this would think that we are either inherently superior, or are lying to ourselves. Now the truth is that the only meaningful difference between us and many of those people is in our estimations of our selves. But getting people to believe that – to even consider that – is sometimes impossible.

“And there is one more thing. There are a lot of people who are deeply talented, but they are damaged. Usually, they’ve had massively screwed-up childhoods and will never accomplish much. Wouldn’t you agree?”

She paused. “Yeah, I would. I know people like that. It’s terrible, James. My friend Maria – she has tremendous talent, but her parents were a disaster, and she’s an emotional mess. She couldn’t work as hard as I do, no matter how much she wanted to. It’s not right; it’s a crime.”

“You’re right Frances, it’s horrifying. Nonetheless, there are some of us who somehow escaped deep emotional scars, and who also had the right combination of genetics and circumstances that allowed us to do things of note. I don’t honestly know what percentage of people that is, but I do know that it is relatively low. Working hard to make something of yourself is a separate issue, as important and necessary as it may be. There are not many of us that have an operational ability to do great things.”

Frances lifted up her head to look at James directly; her eyes were watering, about to overflow. “And you think I am one of those people? That I can do the really important things on earth?”

“I’m sure of it Frances.”

At that, she began to weep outright. James moved himself next to her, and pulled her head against his shoulder. He stroked her hair, sitting silently for several minutes, and holding her gently.

“James, I’ve always been told that thinking such things about myself would make me arrogant. Am I going to turn into a loudmouth braggart if I believe this?”

“Do you feel arrogant now?”

“No. I feel humble… And I feel like I want to work all the harder. If I am one of the few who can do this, I want to do it right. Not for my sake, but for the people who, through no real fault of their own, can’t.”

“That’s what I thought. That’s how I felt as I walked through that cemetery.”

She now lifted her head. “All right. But, James, what about the others? Are they doomed to lives of obscurity?”

“Not if we can help it.”

Frances became still. The word we was spoken with too much conviction; he wasn’t talking about her. There was something meant by it, a specific “we,” with specific plans to deal with this situation. James sat motionless; the words had fallen out of his mouth without him thinking about them. He realized that he had developed an instinctive trust in Frances. He was telling her things that he told no one else, without even thinking about it first.

“Who is ‘we,’ James? And what in God’s name could you do to change a situation like this one?”

Farber spoke slowly and carefully: “Frances, please do me a favor and let me stop this conversation right here; I’ve already said more to you than I had planned. And please, do not repeat any of this.”

“All right James, I’ll let it alone for now, but I do want to pick it up again in the future. And yes, I will certainly keep this private.”

“Thank you, Frances; I trust you.”

No words were spoken as the last few ounces of coffee were consumed and they both wiped tears from their eyes. Then Farber offered to walk Frances to her car, and they left the coffee shop. James walked along the street with Frances, aching to tell her more – to bring her fully into his life. But there was so much to explain, and it was such a very big step for him. Nonetheless, the urge to talk about his passions with a woman who could understand them was irresistible. It had been so many years.

A thought passed through his mind, and he laughed just a little bit. Frances looked up, brightly. “What?”

“Oh, I’m just laughing at myself for making up a truly silly name for what we’ve been calling the ordinary people.”

“Silly? I’ve never heard of you being silly.”

“Well, it’s really almost stupid, but I didn’t know what to call those people. I was going to call them ‘average Joes,’ but since they were Polish Jews, ‘Joe’ just didn’t seem appropriate.”

She smiled. “All right, Mr. Appropriate, what did you call them?”

“The Shlomos.”

“The Shloe-moes?”

“Yeah, it’s the Hebrew name for Solomon. It was a very common name on the tombstones I saw, and had a very strange sound to my American ear. That, and I guess I needed something light after all my heavy thoughts in the cemetery.”

“You’re right, that is certifiably silly. But James – and I’m thinking only of what I should do myself – what do I do about the Shlomos?”

“You honor the Shlomos of the past, and work to redeem the Shlomos of the future. But I really can’t talk any more about it now.”

“That’s fine. That was all the answer I wanted.”

They were both very quiet as they rounded the corner and headed up the street to Frances’ car. Frances was running the whole night’s conversation through her mind. James had obviously spent a lot of time and energy on analyzing all of this… or someone had.

“James, how do you know all of this?” Then she paused for a split-second, laughed a little bit, and said “Or are you about to tell me that I too could figure it out with ease, if I just believed that I could?”

Now he laughed. “Well, it wasn’t just me; though I suppose that if we spent enough time and effort on it, you and I could figure this stuff out. But it was mostly a friend of mine.”

“Is this the friend you discuss history with as well?”

“Yeah, the same one. Good memory by the way!”

“And this guy comes up with all these ideas?”

“Pretty much, although he swears that he gets a lot of ideas from other people’s stuff. He reads all the time, and sometimes spends time just thinking. Then he dashes to a computer, or a piece of paper, and writes fanatically for five or ten minutes, and hands you a piece of paper with ideas on it that had never occurred to you before. And yes, he swears that other people could do it, if they had paid the dues he’s paid.”

“What kind of dues?”

“Well, a bunch of things, really, but he’s pretty private and I don’t know which stories I should tell you and which I shouldn’t. Suffice it to say that he’s done a lot of very interesting things.”

“James, I want to meet this guy. If he really does know all this, I need to talk to him.”

Somehow, the urgency in Frances’ voice pushed Farber over the edge. She was desperate, violent, in her lust for knowledge. He kept his face firm, but he was

convinced, Frances Marsden was the woman he wanted. Now the only question was how much to tell her, and when.

She was still looking at him with urgency. “James, you have to introduce me to this guy.” Again the words came out of his mouth involuntarily: “All right, I’ll call him, and we’ll all go out to dinner together.”

“Fantastic. Set it up soon, okay?”

“I will.”

“Thanks.” Frances flashed James a bright but brief smile, her mind filled with important ideas. She got into her car and drove slowly home. Farber forsook the rest of his night’s activities. He made an apologetic phone call, and walked home through a light fog.

* * * * * * *

The two young acting Field Agents, Nickelson and Morales, were back in their office on the 8th of April, planning their strategy for finding the person or persons who were subverting the tax structure of the United States. Something about their task struck both men as a bit ugly, but they followed their orders nonetheless.

They divided their work into two parts, although they agreed to help each other whenever necessary. They compared notes regularly, and took on an administrative assistant. Agent Garosian spent a few hours with them each day, teaching them about field work, and analyzing their plans before the implemented them.

Morales went about tracking down the points of origination of the criminal Internet traffic. This was no small job, as whoever was sending them used strange addresses and covered their tracks very well. It was slow, laborious work.

Nickelson’s job was to get at these people from the other end. He began to create an identity for himself as a networking consultant who wanted to hide income from the IRS. He and Garosian first bought an existing but unused corporation. They took over the corporation’s bank account, paid the owner a few thousand dollars, and began creating a false business history with dummy clients and financial transactions. They formally moved from the corp’s legal address, and set up a new office in the LA business district. Then, Garosian set Nickelson up with a new identity. With a bit of interagency cooperation, they were able to find the name of a young man who had died as a child, but was close to Nickelson’s age. This provided a real identity with a social security number. A friend at Central Intelligence got the credit reporting agencies to set up a false credit history for the new identity – Patrick Steven Flynn.

It was the end of April before his false identity was firmly established, and he could go on-line to begin finding the front door of this establishment, wherever it was.

* * * * * * *

Three days after the European technicians were deported, Anthony Bari received another anonymous email:

Mr. Bari,

Thank you for the fine job you did for our employees. We have confirmed that they are back home, and are doing fine. Please send us a bill at your leisure. You may get it to us by posting it to a newsgroup entitled alt.games.fz (Please do not allow anyone else to learn of this address.) I am attaching a PGP Public Key to this message for you to use in all your future correspondences with us. Please send me yours as well, so we can communicate privately from now on.

As you know, the FBI is seeking to track us down, and to stop our operations. I have already assured you that we are not involved in any immoral or destructive activities. Nonetheless, I will be glad to answer any questions you may have. Just post your encrypted question to that newsgroup, and I will respond promptly.

Now, as to the FBI's continuing activities against us: We would like to know what they are doing, and how. If you are able to give us any such information, we will be pleased to pay you for your time spent gathering and transmitting it. But we do not want you to put yourself in jeopardy. If doing so will violate your ethics, please feel no pressure from us. We just want to find out anything we can.

Thank you again, and we will look forward to receiving your public key, and any questions you may have.

CE Management.

"Damn, I like these guys. No BS. Polite. And they pay their bills. What the hell is it that they are up to?" Bari sent his key and signature to the newsgroup, and added a short note:

A few pieces of info I'd like from you:

1. What is it that you do?
2. Why does the gov. consider it treason?

3. How about a name? I am much more comfortable dealing with a person.

Bari

The response was posted only ten minutes later, although Bari did not read it till the next morning:

Bari,

1.We run a private market. Many types of commerce are conducted in our market, but all of it private - details of the transactions are known only to the parties involved. Almost all types of commerce are conducted here. We have doctors, financiers, accountants, truck drivers, cabbies, investors, a great many computer professionals; even a few lawyers and politicians. We do not knowingly do business with drug dealers, pornographers, or purveyors of violence. If we were to find one of them in our market (we haven't yet), we would kick them out.

2. The US Gov. considers this treason because our system makes it possible for people to avoid reporting income to the IRS. We do not tell people that they should do such a thing, but many of them must. However, very few of our people want privacy for the primary purpose of beating the IRS. For example, most of our physicians have told us that they want to run their business privately because they don't want the gov's fingers in everything they do. We have a number of 'retired' doctors offering their services only through our market. We have others who want to provide their patients with treatments that are not FDA approved. Our system allows them to do so. We have several letters of thanks from people who would have died without these special treatments. (Feels nice.)

The gov. wants a monopoly on commerce - they don't want any transactions that they can't trace. We don't help them, and they call it treason. It's BS. Our customers can report their income if they want to, but we don't consider it our business to make them.

3. My name is Mike. May I call you Anthony?

Take care.

PS: My personal email address is tango1@gamma.kz

* * * * * * *

Morales had the tough, boring job. He attempted to trace emails and decipher codes. He had located several computer centers like the one in LA, but they now seemed to move. They could be in one location one day, and in another place the next. He was working with agent Garosian to search some of these temporary locations, but as of May 1st, no searches had yet been made.

Tim Nickelson's work was also slow – unexpectedly so. He began by hanging around the more rabid e-commerce and laissez-faire sites on the net. He visited long with the crypto-anarchists and the cypherpunks. These were certainly the types of people who would be all for untraceable commerce, but he could find no mention of the people he was looking for. These people had the theory of private markets, but no apparent applications.

On May 1st, Morales was visited by Assistant Director Jones again.

"All right Morales what've you got?"

"Well, not much yet, sir; although I have identified a large number of people who are very likely to be involved."

"And what makes you think that these people might be involved?"

"The things they say, sir. They talk all the time about 'untraceable commerce,' 'involuntary equals immoral,' 'cracks in the matrix,' and things like that."

"What the hell is a 'crack in the matrix'?"

"The matrix is the government, laws, and regulations. A crack in the matrix is some thing, or some action, that has not yet been regulated and is not under government observation or control."

"Really? Well, let me add one small item to your duties Morales; when you or your friend Nickelson find one of these cracks, you report it to me, all right?" Morales did not like the way Jones said this. He looked and sounded like an old cartoon he saw as a kid – the Big Bad Wolf drooling and leering at Little Red Riding Hood. Nonetheless, he responded correctly: "Yes, sir."

"Now, Morales; let's begin making sense of this: You can identify likely people, but they haven't told you anything about this scheme of theirs. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir, that is correct."

"Fine, then let's move on to the next step. You'll have to start finding information that they don't want to give you." This made Morales nervous. Although he was

pleased to use his position at the FBI for nailing bad guys, he was uncomfortable digging through the private property of people who were probably innocent. “Sir, that would mean hacking into these people’s computers, stealing their files, and reading their private stuff.”

“That’s right. Does something about that bother you Morales?”

“Yes sir, it does. I don’t think it’s a decent thing to do.”

As Morales spoke, Jones’ cell phone rang. He arose, stepped away, and talked for several minutes. When he returned, it was obvious that he was getting ready to leave the office.

“Morales! I’m going to help you out on this. You put together a plan for hacking these computers, and make a list of names. After work today, you meet me at Maxie’s Tavern. Ask the bartender for me. I’ll be in the back room. And bring your buddy Nickelson with you too.”

“Yes sir.”

* * * * * * *

Maxie’s Tavern was struggling valiantly to become an upscale establishment, but never quite succeeded. It was located about one block from FBI headquarters in downtown LA, not quite the right location for an upscale establishment. Max the owner understood this limitation, but he tried anyway.

All sorts of business people populated the main room of the Tavern, with a smaller, private room set aside for “bureau guys.” This room was dark and loud, usually about half-full, with a private waitress.

Maxie Kaminski was a retired FBI agent. Sixty-six years old, he had retired at sixty-two, and had been running the bar full-time since then. He had purchased it from another ex-agent. For Max, the important thing was not the income it generated for him, but that it kept him engaged in his chosen world.

Max took good care of the FBI people. In return, he got nearly all of their business. The back room was set aside for them. It was a room in which they could unwind and not be seen by the general public – people who simply do not understand why making jokes about murder victims is necessary to preserve a man’s mental health. Nickelson and Morales didn’t understand either and had never gone back to Maxie’s after one or two visits. These young men were not agents who dealt with gruesome murder scenes and bereaved relatives. They were techno-agents – computer jockeys in the service of the FBI. Nickelson had joined the Bureau, partly because he seemed suited to it, and partly because he wanted to be able to say, “I am Special Agent Nickelson of the FBI.” Morales, partly because he didn’t really know what else to do with his unusual computer skills, and partly because he liked the idea of being the

watchman on the wall, who keeps the world safe. When he committed to join the FBI, being skilled at computer hacking was considered a bad thing. People used to call hackers "the black hats." Morales loved hacking, but didn't want to be a "black hat."

At about 6:00 p.m., they made their way into Maxie's back room, and found Jones.

"Where the hell were you guys? I thought you went home."

"No, sir, we came as soon as we were done. Actually we got here early. A lot of times we work later."

"Hey, kid!" Max had shown the two young men into the back room, and overheard the beginnings of their conversation. "Listen up kid! If you start calling people 'sir' in here, we'll throw you out. None of that bullshit here! Call him Hey You, or call him Jones, or call him asshole if you like, but no sirs. You got it?"

"Yess… Uh, yeah, you bet!"

"That's better, now you can stay."

The look on Jones' face said that he had been drinking. "All right, Morales, I did you a big favor today. Just so you don't have to strain your ignorant little conscience, I got you these. All you have to do is type in the name of the person whose computer you want to hack, and you are as legal as pie. Feel better now?"

Morales watched with amazement as Jones handed him a stack of search warrants. All signed by a judge. All having the particulars of the searches left blank.

"But… Jones, how can I have these ahead of time, and blank?" Morales was more confused than he was aroused by this overt flaunting of the laws on the issuance of search warrants. He had never expected anything like this. Certainly a search warrant made his hacking legal, but did it also make it right? And how could Jones get them all signed ahead of time? Was that legal too? Was it right?

"Hey Max! I pulled some real weight with this case!" It was now obvious that Jones had knocked down more than one or two drinks, and it was also obvious that he was pleased to have this case. Mostly he seemed to like it because it gave him some extra power to use. "Max, I got that tight-ass Judge Loudon to sign fifteen search warrants in advance. No names, no dates!" Morales looked at the warrants that Jones had handed him. There were only ten, leaving five more for God knows what.

"You must have had some real pressure to put on him this time, Jonesy. Big case?"

"Huge Max, huge. This one will keep my boys busy for a long time…" he motioned to Nickelson and Morales as he spoke, "and me sittin' fat for the rest of my career."

Nickelson, who had been in the Men's Room, was stepping over to Morales and taking a posture that indicated that he wanted to be told what had been going on. The

two men talked quietly. At the same time, they moved, slowly, almost unconsciously, away from Jones and Max, who continued to discuss Jones' career.

Nickelson was shocked when Morales showed him the search warrants. "John, you're not supposed to be able to do this. These are fill-in-the-blank search orders. You could use them on anyone."

"That's what I thought. I don't think you're supposed to be able to get these."

"Hell no. I know that for sure."

"Damn, Tim, this is starting to feel kind of ugly."

"Yeah, I know what you mean. But don't worry about it, you can't get in any trouble, but I'm not so sure about that Judge."

"Well, I'm glad that I won't get in trouble, but I don't like it anyway. It's not right."

Tim Nickelson shrugged his shoulders. "Whatever. I'd just be glad that I was out of the line of fire. Jones gave them to you and told you what to do. That would be enough for me."

John Morales said no more, but his thought was, "that doesn't make it all right, and that's not enough for me."

The two young agents moved to the bar and ordered a couple of drinks. They watched the baseball game on the TV and talked about sports. After a short while Jones came by on his way out the door. He spoke briefly to Nickelson and told the pair that he'd stop in to see them in a few days.

Tim Nickelson suggested that it might be a good time to go home. Morales wanted to stay. "Go on Tim, I want to sit here for a while and just watch these guys. There's something about them that I just don't understand. I'd like to figure it out."

Nickelson laughed, "Yeah, well, good luck."

"Well, I'm going to hang around for a while anyway."

"All right, see you in the morning." With that, Nickelson went home for the evening, and Morales moved over to the end of the bar, where he had a better view of the entire establishment. He drank slowly, and had some food. He didn't want to get too drunk to think well. Max watched him as the evening continued.

"So kid, who ya watchin'?"

Morales was taken by surprise. "Well, everyone really." It seemed a bit unconventional for Morales to admit to Max what he was doing, but he decided that he would tell him the truth anyway. "I'm just trying to understand these guys." He wanted to finish his statement with "sir," but said "Max" instead.

"What do you mean kid?"

“Well Max, I’m not the usual agent type. I’m a computer jockey. These guys all seem to be different than me, and I’m not sure why or how. I’m trying to figure it out.”

Max paused and looked at Morales carefully. “What’s your name, kid?”

“John Morales.”

“Well, John, you’ve got a good mind, and you’re honest. I like that. Now I’ve only got a few minutes tonight, but if you come back and hang around more often, I’ll educate you.”

“Yes, I would like that.”

“Good, you show up, and I’ll get you some free food. You pay for drinks. Now, let me get you started: You were never a tough-guy, were you?”

Morales suddenly felt small and weak. “No, I wasn’t.”

“And you probably feel like these guys are a lot tougher than you, and that you’d never be able to match their courage, right?” Morales nodded. “Well, you listen to me kid. Most of these guys became tough outwardly because of their inner weakness. You think they’re a lot stronger than you. But inside, you’re the strong one. I can teach you to be tough. That’s just a set of skills you can train yourself in. But it’s much harder to teach those guys to feel happy with themselves inside.” Morales was stunned by what Max had said, but there was no question of his sincerity.

“There are a few of them that have what you have inside son, but not many. You’re not weak, son; you’re strong.

“All right Morales, I’ve got business to attend to. You come see me again.”

“Thank you Max,” Morales said quietly, “I’ll be back tomorrow or the next day.”

* * * * * * *

“All right George, I’ve gone over all of your documents, and we’ve come up with a plan.” George Dimitrios knew that this was a pivotal moment for him. He had now been at the resort for nearly two weeks, and the relaxing and emotional regrouping he needed had been done. Now it was time to decide where his life would go from here. Sitting back at the big table with Phillip, Farber, and McCoy, he had the next several years of his life laid out in front of him in an intelligent, organized manner that was slightly comforting, and slightly troubling to him. Really, he had already made his decision to stay with his work, but it was a scary path to take. He had already broken laws. He could recover from those with not too much long-term suffering, but this decision was different; it meant that he was an outsider – probably for the rest of his life. All of the facts he could put down on paper (which he had done several times)

led to the same conclusion, that he should pursue his work. But still, something about being an outsider scared him, though he didn't know why.

Farber now took over from Phillip: "George, we're ready to set you up with a complete lab, and to fund your work fully. We'll pay you a salary as well, and McCoy will see to your security and your supplies." McCoy nodded his consent to the statement. "When we begin to make money on this, we'll be paid back first for all of our expenses. And after that you get half of the money, and we share half of the money. I hope this sounds like a fair deal to you."

It was not just an acceptable deal, but a far, far better deal than most scientists ever see. George was more than willing to accept it. "Yes," he said, "I think it's more than fair."

Phillip spoke up. "George, I know that your work is desperately important to you, and I know that you want to pursue this. But you are my friend, and I know your face. Something has you uneasy about this. What is it?"

"I don't know, Phillip. All of this makes perfect sense when written on paper, and I do desperately want to pursue my work. But when I think about being an outsider, something inside of me coils up and trembles. I just don't know."

Phillip paused and nodded that he understood. "James, Bill… I think George and I should take a walk and talk about this. Why don't you guys go relax for the first time in your lives, and let us sort this out?"

The spring scenery of the island was beautiful – vibrant flowers growing everywhere, lush green ground cover, and fresh sea air. The pair walked slowly, armed with water bottles, large hats, and two full tubes of sunscreen.

"I know what you're feeling George; I've had similar experiences."

"You have?"

"Yeah, I have. It's actually kind of a universal thing, although few people are in situations to experience it like you are now.

"George, you know how much time and effort I've spent in philosophy and theology."

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I've come to believe that this is a really important experience. I call it 'the separation from the tribe.' I really began to understand it when my kids were still all at home. I was reading to them one night, and ran through a passage that talked about the importance of living. The author was talking about actively living, as opposed to simply existing.

"Anyway, while I was reading this to my kids, I remembered an old quote that says 'we are always getting to live, but never living.' In other words, we are always preparing to really live, but never actually doing it. After the kids and Julia went to

bed, I sat at my desk and thought about it for quite a while. I made a hard decision that I was henceforth living, not getting ready to live." He paused for a moment. "Do you ever remember me talking about 'flipping an internal switch'?

"No, I'm not sure I do; but I do remember you talking about making hard decisions."

Phillip smiled. "Well, it seemed to me that I was flipping an internal switch. I really decided that I would begin living.

"That night, I had a really disturbing dream. I don't remember all of the details, but I do remember that I broke with the pack, and was living according to my own judgment. But I was reckless, harmful, and ended up running from the law, in fear. When I woke up in the morning, I felt compelled to find some complete solitude. In my case, this involved walking the dog." The two smiled at each other.

"I knew that I needed to sort this all out with my subconscious. So, the dog got a nice long walk, and I got some iso-time to figure it all out. It was hard. I had to struggle with myself. Really, I was afraid of living. I had somehow absorbed a fear that living according to my own judgment was dangerous, and would lead to my destruction. I had to analyze my own soul, step by step. It took a lot of effort, but after careful analysis I honestly concluded that I was not a destroyer – that I naturally preferred to cause life and blessing, and that I detested destruction. But convincing myself that I ought to live without restraint seemed impossible. After all the time and effort I had put in to find the truth and to develop myself, I was running against a wall. So I went back to basics, and followed a logical progression, step by step. I evaluated whether feeling afraid of living was sensible. I concluded that restraint made sense if living would lead to me hurting others. My dream clearly showed me that I was afraid of this. But any objective evaluation of either the facts of my life, or of my inner desires, led to the opposite conclusion. There was a logical, mathematic certainty to the conclusion, even though my feelings were quite mixed."

"So, how did you solve it?"

"I decided that evidence-based logic was right, and that my negative feelings were a result of conditioning. I stopped, got deeply meditative, and commanded my subconscious to conform with the truth. I used a lot of energy in doing this. I was absolutely firm in it, almost violent with myself."

"And?"

"And I felt something snap inside of me, and I shuddered. Then I felt better."

"And that was it? You never had any more problems with it?"

"No, I can't say that, but it got me over the hump."

By this time, the pair had been walking for some time, and were ready for some rest. Ahead of them lay a grassy field and a thick group of trees. Phillip laid down on

the grass, tipped his hat forward over his eyes, and dozed off. George explored the area for a while, mumbling to himself.

* * * * * * *

"All right Phillip, we'd better get going back; you've been asleep for two hours."

"Really? Okay, give me just a second."

Back on the road, Phillip made some small conversation over how long he had slept, and which was the best way back to Tino's. George did little more than grunt an occasional agreement, his mind occupied elsewhere. Finally, he re-engaged their former conversation.

"Okay, I've spent some time 'talking to myself' as you call it. I think I'm ready now, Phillip. Or at least almost ready. Was there anything else that was significant about this?"

"Well, I can tell you that I gave it a lot of thought, and that I came to some conclusions that I've stuck with ever since."

"What kinds of conclusions?"

"Well, first of all, I already knew from long study that the human mind works its magic individually, not collectively. So, I began to think about the effectiveness of staying tethered, or separating from the tribe. Then I remembered a bunch of examples of people separating from the tribe, and what they did. Did you ever see the piece I wrote on 'The Magic of The Founder'?"

"No, I don't think I have."

"Well, if you look at the great religious founders – or almost any great originator for that matter – they all had the same thing in common – they separated from the tribe. They all went out alone – separated themselves from the pack – before they received their understanding and strength. Abraham did, Moses did, Jesus did, and a hundred others. Actually, the special thing about Jesus and his earliest followers was that he was trying to get all of them to separate themselves. 'Forsaking all' is how it comes across in our records. He was trying to make every man a founder, not just one or two special people."

"That's interesting Phillip, but that's not a conclusion."

"Oh, right. I decided that I would never allow myself to be tethered to humanity in general. Not that I wouldn't value people, just that I would not allow myself to be tied to them. Being tethered is a form of restraint; it takes the life out of respect and cooperation, turning it into a duty and a loss."

The next morning, George Dimitrios signed his agreements with Farber, McCoy and Phillip. Farber flew them all back to New York on his jet. Phillip and Farber went on to Chicago, and McCoy stayed with George in Manhattan. Over the next two weeks, they were to set up a new lab, get George a new identity, and begin setting up the equipment. Farber's lawyers filed the appropriate papers to make amends with the University, and McCoy began to contact a few of George's graduate students, to see if they wanted to continue their work.

Chapter Two

It was now April 30th – one month since the raid on the LA computer facility and the date set for each member of the computer group to report on their progress and to coordinate their activities. Michael, the coordinator, had sent notes out to Ellison, Suzy Q, and to a few others, requesting their reports by midnight Greenwich mean time. He had already received most of the reports by noon, and was busy reading through them and making notes. Michael was a psychologist. He was not only bright and educated, but he was also extremely reliable. For these reasons, he was appointed coordinators of the small group.

The actions of the small group were completely secret, even from family and friends. But they were carefully coordinated together. Once they were entirely operational – and that would certainly be soon – their creation would be the first truly free trade zone in modern human history. They called it Gamma, and it formed a completely independent, completely free marketplace, resident only on the Internet. The foundation of Gamma already existed in their original version, called Tango2.

Tango2 was an outgrowth of the popular Tango game. As Tango and similar on-line games grew, they developed into cyber-communities. The players began to buy and sell more than game pieces. The owners of most of the MMOG games were opposed to community developments. It was as if they had created something that took on a life of its own, and was no longer controllable. This frightened the owners, and they did their best to maintain control.

Tango2 was an experiment in letting the new MMOG communities develop unimpeded; to grow however they might. Tango2 functioned simultaneously with the original Tango game, but with a twist. In order to play the game, you needed to purchase game pieces, at one dollar each. These pieces were used by every player, whether in Tango or Tango2. But people who were introduced to Tango2 could also use the pieces as currency, to buy and sell any commodity or service imaginable.

Tango2 became the first self-created community in cyberspace. All sorts of services sprung up, some of which endured, and others which did not. There were endless arguments over the best ways to run things in a cyber-only economy. There were problems with nasty game players and in developing ways to prevent them from causing damage. There were problems with financial accountability, contract disagreements, and even questions of libel. But the problems were eventually solved by the players themselves. When a problem sprung up, someone selling a solution inevitably followed. Now, in the aftermath of the chaotic development of Tango2, they were completing a second version, Gamma, which incorporated everything they had learned.

Michael went through a pile of flow charts, highlighting the pieces that were in place, and noting the few remaining gaps. For the first time, all of the missing pieces were assigned to particular people, and had deliverable dates. It was nearly done. By midnight, he wrote his report to James Farber, the venture's primary backer and creditor of last resort.

Chief,

Excellent news: The whole system will be completed within one month, with the exception of the monetary system, which will take until August 1st. (We knew going in that it would be the most difficult part.) Once we have all of this going, there will be a few other things that will follow, such as a secure title registry and virtual stock exchange, but we are reaching substantial completion now. Everything will be in final testing in two weeks, and operational in a month. How are McCoy and RS doing with the physical facilities?

See you soon?

Michael

Farber replied only half an hour later:

Michael,

I'm so pleased that you're almost done. One thing concerns me: You've got to get the monetary system up and running very soon – August 1st is far too late. The volume of transactions is growing daily. We now have over 12,000 people who have used the system. I've got no real problem handling them all (and I am starting to make some money on them), but I'm running some of the finances through a well-known company, and pretty soon the numbers are going to be noticeable. We both know that it is only a matter of time before some government guys trace something to us. Hell, they must already know the size of the situation if they wanted to charge our guys with treason! I am not ready for them to start asking questions. Throw your utility infielder at the problem, and one or two of the programmers as well. We are not ready to be found out – it would be dangerous for us all.

Please make sure that you tell the whole team that P and I think they are absolutely wonderful – which they truly are.

Once we've got this done, we should all take a few days off and celebrate. Meet me at Tino's then?

Best always,

JF

PS: The physical facilities are doing pretty well. It's amazing how quickly RS's guys can get these things set up. We could, however, use a few more good technicians. Hopefully guys who can be deported to safety like the others. Please see if your team knows of any prospects; we'll pay them very well.

* * * * * * *

"James, I've not only finished it, but it will be in print tomorrow, and I'm looking at it on the net right now." Farber sat stiffly at the desk in his living room. It had been so long since he was seriously interested in a woman that he was worried about talking to Frances – afraid that he might say the wrong thing. He had been happily looking down on the city lights along Lake Shore Drive before the phone rang, and contemplating retirement from the financial world. He didn't want to do only that forever.

"Uh, what exactly are you talking about Frances?"

"James! Remember the article that you told me I should write? The best and highest I could?"

"Oh, sure! I didn't know that's what you meant. You've got it done already? It's only been a few days."

"Yeah. Four days. And I think you're going to like this. Get over to my paper's web site and go to 'Opinions'. Call me back when you're done, okay?"

"Absolutely. I'm on the other line right now, but I'll be off in a couple of minutes; then I'll get right to it."

* * * * * * *

James Farber read the article, then sat for several minutes in silence. Then he forwarded the article to Phillip and sat some more. For a week or more, he had been sure that Frances was the woman he wanted; this article made him desperate. If some fluke separated the two of them… he didn't want to think about it. She was the one, and he knew now that he couldn't take a chance on her slipping away. He'd have to get serious with her now, not later. If that meant bearing his soul to her, if it meant taking the risk of telling her about his private business, then so be it.

He sent a quick email to Phillip:

P,

Just sent you F's new article. You'll love it. She wants to meet you (I've recounted some of our philosophical conversations to her). How fast can you set up a nice dinner with you, me, her, and Julia? I don't ask you for many favors; how about Friday night? Let me know right away please.

J

Now he needed to call Frances. He couldn't wait long, but he needed to have a plan. He needed to win her now, not later. He tried to think clearly about it… that didn't work very well, so he decided to wing it. She answered the phone:

"Hi, it's me."

"Well…"

"Well it's fantastic! I loved it!"

"You did?" Her voice had the sound of a little girl's.

"You bet I did. Frances, that was great."

"Specific compliments," he thought to himself, "that's what Maggie always wanted, specific compliments."

"Oh, Frances, your explanation of economics pertaining to anything that is exchanged was brilliant. Elegant, simple, brilliant. Half of his consciousness broke off for a fraction of a second, and he noticed that his voice was sounding smooth and melodic, as if he were trying to caress her with it. "Very, very well put."

The conversation went on for some time. About ten minutes in, James noticed that a new email had just come in from Phillip. While still talking, he clicked it open:

Jim, if you don't grab this girl, you haven't got a hair on your ass. And, hey… I saw her picture on the web page; she's cute too!

I know that Julia and I are both free Friday. You tell us where to show up and we'll be there. I think that nothing on earth could stop Julia from meeting a girl you are courting.

See ya!

"James, are you there?"

Now he realized that Phillip had completely knocked him sideways, as he often did. He had missed only a few of her sentences, but the conversation was so animated that it showed up right away. “Oh, I’m sorry Frances… an email just popped-up on my computer.”

“Oh, do you need to go?” She sounded sad.

“No, no! I just got distracted for a minute.” He recovered himself while speaking. “But listen, remember my friend that you wanted to meet?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I just set up dinner for Friday night – you don’t have anything planned, do you?” Jim’s voice was now clearly conveying a message that he was interested, that he wanted her to come so that he could spend time with her.

“Nothing important. You bet I’ll go! Where are we going to meet?”

“I’m not sure yet, I’ve only set up the time, not the place. I’m thinking of Anthony’s.”

The conversation went on, the two of them discussing restaurants, economics, old friends, work projects and Friday’s dinner, until two o’clock in the morning. Both of them had enough experience to understand what they were doing – they were each bringing the other into their lives. By the end of the conversation, not much doubt remained in either mind as to where this would lead. Frances feigned astonishment when she looked at her clock, and said she really needed to get some sleep, which was indeed true. James bade her goodnight, and promised to call the next day with firm arrangements for Friday night.

* * * * * * *

“Frances?”

“Oh, hi Mom! What’s new?”

“Frances, honey, I need to talk to you about this article that ran yesterday.”

“Well, sure Mom, but you sound troubled, did something in it bother you?”

Margarite Marsden began to cry.

“Mom, what is it? That article couldn’t have been that bad, could it?”

Frances waited, listening to see whether her mom would calm down, or begin to really weep.

“Oh, no, no, Frances,” she said through a mix of urgency and tears, “the article is good. Will you hold on for a minute while I wash my face?”

“Sure Mom, take your time, I’m in no hurry.” Frances was surprised by her mother’s emotions. Margarite cried fairly seldom, although when she did cry, it frequently developed into profuse weeping. Frances remembered being scared by it as a child. While she waited, she surprised herself by remembering an incident where her mother’s weeping bothered her. “Good grief,” she thought, “I couldn’t have been more than three years old.” Actually, she remembered that the weeping made her feel sorry and embarrassed for her mother, more than scared. “How,” she wondered, “could I have known at the age of three that my mom… had been damaged… and that I had not?” She had no idea. But she was sure that she had known – even at that early age.

“All right darling, I’m back.”

“Mom, are you all right? Is everything all right with Daddy?”

“Oh yes, Frances, everything is fine and normal. It’s just that this article of yours… well…” Her voice trailed off, but with the unmistakable quality of someone who is gathering strength for an important point. Frances waited silently.

“Frances, did you ever talk to my mother about these things?”

“About the things in the article?” She was a bit incredulous.

“Yes, about the things in your article.”

“No Mom, never… although I do remember her saying a few things to me about the traditional roles of men and women being out of whack… or things like that.”

“Did she say much about that?”

“No, Mom, it was just a few things, when I was a teenager. She was sick then, so it must have been in the last few months of her life.”

“Okay, that’s what I wanted to know.”

“Mom, what is this about? You can’t just call me up crying, and not tell me what it is!”

Margarite paused for a long time. Frances waited her out.

“Frances, when my mother was sick, she and I talked a lot about this. Do you remember me sending you home from the hospital, and me staying late to talk with her?”

“Yeah, I do.”

“Well, this is what we talked about.”

“Whoa! Really?”

“Yes, really. Listen to me Frances, can you come down and spend some time with me? We have a lot to talk about.”

“Wow, I guess we do. All right Mom. I have a dinner tomorrow night, and an article to complete right after that. How about if I fly down Monday afternoon.”

“That will be fine darling. I’ll put clean sheets on your old bed.”

“Oh God,” she thought, “my old bed?”

“All right Mom, I’ll see you then.”

* * * * * * *

Anthony’s restaurant was one of the best and most authentic Italian restaurants in Chicago. It was set on the edge of the old Taylor Street neighborhood, off the usual tourist trails. The food was excellent, and the service, superb. There were more local patrons than outsiders.

Farber had offered to pick Frances up at her apartment. Frances agreed. As they made arrangements over the phone, they were both aware that this was really a double date, albeit a rather complex one. Frances wondered if she’d like this mysterious friend of James’, and if she would like this guy’s wife. She really wasn’t worried about James; they had all but said out loud that they were very serious about each other. Dinner was to be at 8:00 p.m.

Phillip and Julia arrived fifteen minutes early and waited at the bar. They leaned forward and spoke to each other excitedly, but quietly enough to maintain privacy. Both were eager to meet the first woman James had been serious about since Maggie died, which was now ten years ago.

Some people knew one aspect of Phillip Donson’s life and some knew others, but no one except Julia knew the whole man. Even Farber was missing one or two pieces of the puzzle. Phillip was by all accounts unique. When you met him, the thing the stood out was that this man was satisfied with himself. This had a strange effect upon people; some enjoyed being around him for that reason alone, and others were troubled and repelled by it.

Phillip stood about six feet tall, with a moderately athletic build, brown hair, and brown eyes. His faced looked pan-European, as if he could conceivably be from almost anywhere above the Mediterranean. His general muscle tension and bearing made him look as though he was in his mid-or late-forties, but he was actually in his fifties. Phillip was nice-looking, although not strikingly handsome. If you looked for it, you could see intelligence, sincerity, and kindness in his eyes. He was usually well-dressed, such as he was this evening, wearing an English sports coat and an exquisite Italian overcoat that Julia had helped him pick-out that afternoon.

To the people who had passed by and seen Phillip that day, he seemed quite normal. But if they had followed him, some of his differences would have been difficult to miss. Phillip was always smiling at people who looked productive,

sharing a conspiratorial moment with them; his eyes expressing his appreciation of their labors. Even though these moments consisted of little more than a glance, most of these people understood Phillip's intent. At most opportunities, he offered directions to people who seemed lost. He held doors open for elderly people, people carrying loads, and for people who seemed in a productive hurry. Most people doing such things are acting on some sense of obligation or duty. Phillip did these things only because he wanted to help these people birth benefit into the world. He enjoyed making their paths slightly easier. "Lubricating progress, one drop at a time," was the way he once explained it to Julia.

While Phillip was a man of many lives, Julia was of only a few lives. They had met in the middle of Phillip's second (or was it third?) 'life.' They were both very young, adventurous, hyper-serious, and lived in the belief that great things of one sort or another were just around the next corner. They instantly became inseparable, were engaged a month later, and married only a month after that, to the anger and dismay of both families. Both sides boycotted the wedding; only Phillip's mother showed up. The isolation was more difficult on Julia than it was on Phillip, although she tried not to show it.

Julia had a dignity and confidence that is common only in women somewhat older than she appeared to be. She was perhaps six or eight inches shorter than Phillip, and very nicely dressed. She wore her medium-brown hair in a mid-length style, although for most of her life she had worn it quite long. She had a very open look to her face, and seemed to put people at ease with her presence. She laughed frequently and heartily.

James and Frances showed up just at eight o'clock. Both were dressed in business clothes, and, as both Phillip and Julia guessed, they had both come directly from their offices.

"Well, I'm glad you guys were able to pull yourselves away from your desks." Phillip was standing up, smiling broadly, and extending his hand to Frances. "You must be Frances. I'm pleased to meet you."

"Yes… and you must be Phillip. I'm very pleased to meet you."

Julia leaned in front of Phillip, nudging him to the side. "Manners, Phillip?"

"Of course. Frances, this is Julia."

"Very nice to meet you, Frances. I've heard nice things about you."

Frances felt much better after Julia's greeting. She had been fairly nervous walking in the door. 'Nice things about you' would have to mean that Julia was minded to be friendly, that she thought well of her. "Thank you."

Frances watched carefully as James greeted the Donsons. It was obvious that these three had deep respect for each other, a warmth that was real. That was a good sign. If she did really connect with James (which now seemed destined, although she

wasn't quite ready to think about that), these people would be part of their lives. At first glance at least, that seemed very nice.

Anthony, an old friend of both James and Phillip, saw the group together, and joked about old times as he sat them at a nice table, and introduced them to their waiter. The table was square, a bit larger than the usual table for four, with a rich green tablecloth.

James ordered a few appetizers, while Phillip looked at the wine menu. Frances was interested to watch as the two men divide the tasks between them without ever speaking a word. They played off of each other in complete comfort. She asked Julia where she got her lovely dress, and Julia admired Frances' shoes. Phillip and James discussed the wine for just a moment, and ordered. Pleasant small talk continued for a few moments, until the wine came.

Glasses were filled, and Phillip raised his, as if for a toast.

"All right team, I have a proposal. First, let's close out our weeks. Jim, are you happy with what you did at work this week? Can you leave it off with a feeling of satisfaction?"

"Yes, I'm very happy with what I did." Phillip paused. "And yes, Phillip, I'm done with work for now." Phillip smiled.

"Frances?" Yes.

"Julia?" Yes.

"All right, I am too. It was a very busy week for me, I got a lot done, and I'm happy with it." He now raised his glass again, which he had put back on the table while talking. The others raised theirs as well. "All right then, here's to an evening of enjoying ourselves, of slowing down and contentedly enjoying the good and important things of life." Strangely, all of them said "Amen," Frances included. A strange thing to say in response to a toast, but it seemed perfectly appropriate.

After two slow, appreciative sips of wine, Julia started the conversation. "So, Frances, I know that you write terrific articles and that you have really good taste in clothing, but tell me something more about yourself… have you always lived in Chicago?"

Frances spoke for a few minutes about her childhood in Delaware, her parents, brothers and friends, and her journey through college and business school.

"Jim also told us the story about your grandmother." Julia looked at Frances with a very slight smirk, as if to say, "He talks about you, Frances. You are important to him."

"He did?" She looked at James, who had the beginnings of that same little boy look, again.

"Well, yeah, I thought it was a fascinating story."

“Well, I guess it really is. You know, my Mom told me more about my grandmother just a couple of days ago.” They all listened a bit more intently now. “Well, my mom read an article I wrote the other day. It was about women and relationships.”

Julia jumped in again, “Yeah, nice article! You know, these guys have harangued me forever about business and economics, but your explanations were a lot easier to understand.” She flashed a look to James and Phillip that was both exasperated and warm at the same time.

“Oh, thank you… Well, my mom was crying when she called. At first I thought that something must be wrong, but she ended up telling me that my article was a subject that she and Grandma had discussed at length before Grandma died. I never would have guessed. Anyway, I’m flying down to see her next week. I’m not sure what to expect.”

Phillip finished his wine, and was pouring more for them all. “Now that should be interesting. If it’s not private stuff, Frances, I’d love to know what your mom and grandma thought on the subject.”

“Sure. I’ll be glad to let you know.” There was something fresh, almost childlike in Phillip’s voice. He was like a young boy, overflowingly eager to hear about some really cool new thing.

The appetizers were now being set down, and they decided that they had better listen to the waiter tell about the specials, and to order their dinners.

“All right,” Frances said as the waiter walked away, “What about you guys? Where are you from and how did you meet?”

Julia looked at Phillip with a look that she couldn’t quite place. “Well, let start this way Frances: Phillip is from Brooklyn, and I’m originally from Manhattan. We actually met at the house of mutual friends while we were in college…” She trailed off, seeming to be gathering her thoughts for what was to come next.

“From there it gets kind of involved. How many lives would you say you’ve had Phillip? Three? Four?” Phillip shrugged, as if to say “Gee, I’m not really sure.” He also had a look of trepidation.

“This man may look fairly normal to you Frances, but let me assure you, he’s not.”

Frances smiled, “I kind of gathered that from talking to James.”

“Well, suffice it to say that it’ll take a while for you to get the whole picture.”

Frances’ mind shifted again for just a split-second. “Take a while… that means that she expects me to be a permanent part of this group. Good.”

As dinner was served, Julia began to explain – slowly, while enjoying the food – about her early life as the daughter of a doctor and a musician in New York, and

about how she and Phillip met, fell in love with each other and each other's ideas, and married – all in the space of a few months.

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After checking with some friends in law enforcement, McCoy found that no charges of any kind had been filed against George Dimitrios. This made George much more comfortable living in Manhattan, where McCoy had an apartment. They found a suitable building for their lab in Queens, just across the river from Manhattan, and leased it for two years. McCoy handled all the paperwork, calling himself Herman Warren, and running all the business through a British corporation he had apparently set up several years prior. Thus, Warren Chemicals went into business. All of the materials from the Breakers lab were delivered a few days afterward, and George took a week setting up the lab. They were happy days. Talk radio and music alternating during the day, and his very own lab to build from scratch.

McCoy set up several phone lines, one of which was routed in such a complex way as to be untraceable. George spent several hours calling family members, telling them about his vacation (he said he had been in Cancun), and about his personal lab in Brooklyn (not Queens), where he'd be doing some new research. The next week, he flew briefly to Miami for a surprise visit to his parents. The time was well spent; they were enjoying their retirement.

They had also set up a second identity for George – Nicholas Kostanous. But he decided not to use it right away; to save it until there was a need.

Since George spoke reasonably good Spanish, he hired a newly-arrived Nicaraguan immigrant, and used him as an all-purpose assistant. Emilio was intelligent, reliable, and had no background in chemistry, which made him perfect for the job. He didn't really know what they were doing, but he was pleased to be earning a good income from relatively easy work. Emilio was in his fifties, and in no mind to do the manual labor that seemed the only other choice for a newly arrived immigrant who spoke almost no English.

* * * * * * *

"All right Phillip, so what was life number one?" Frances was both joking and demanding at the same time.

"Easy. A Jewish kid in Brooklyn."

"Julia looked at him. "C'mon, Phillip, some details for the young lady?"

“All right… Actually a fairly nice childhood… stable family, good parents, friends with stable families… a culture that valued learning and innovation; that expected all of us kids to turn out very well. But I had the usual child terrors also.”

“And what do you mean by that?”

“The childhood terrors? Well, the usual fears that kids have… knowing that they are small and unable to meet the threats that a confusing world throws at them… not having any idea when the threats will show up, or how… knowing that they don’t match up to fairy tale expectations, and wondering if anyone will ever value them. We end up feeling so grossly inadequate that we try simply to close our minds to it, and lock it out.”

“Whoa… I hadn’t thought about that in forever, but I do remember feeling that way…” Frances’ consciousness had gone back to her own ‘childhood terrors’ as Phillip spoke, and she was suddenly feeling bad.

Julia noticed immediately, reached over, and squeezed Frances’ hand. Phillip, lost in the contemplation of ideas, was a pace behind.

“Oh, I’m sorry Frances, I reminded you of something unpleasant.” Julia got ready to speak, but Frances began just a split second before she did.

“No. That’s all right. You didn’t make the problem, only reminded me of it. What about this? Explain to me what you mean by fairy tale expectations.” Farber, who had decided to simply observe this conversation, noted that Frances acted the same way she did when she requested this dinner: If she thought something important was nearby, she was furious in her attempts to get it.

“Well, as strange as it may sound, that’s actually a fairly big deal. People read fairy tales to their kids all the time, not thinking that it creates in their kids a terrible conflict.

“There’s this picture of the world that is fed to kids. It shows up in fairy tales where there is one girl who is ‘fairest in the land,’ or a young man who is the ‘handsome Prince.’ She the absolute best; he the absolute best. These are set up as ideals, and young children believe them. Only the most beautiful and the very special people matter – all others are unworthy of mention. The same thing happens in schools with things like the Homecoming Queen or the Captain of the football team.

“This puts the child into an impossible situation. He or she now believes that greatness belongs to the hero, who is taller, faster, stronger and richer than everyone else. But the child is small and weak. And there are many people who are not only richer or smarter or sexier than him, but richer and smarter and sexier than his parents. How can this poor child protect his or her own mind from this? Can they really consign themselves to being nobodies, the children of nobodies, at age four? And what kind of mental damage would that do? What most kids do is to turn off their consciousness at those moments. Better this than to face the life of the unnamed peasant.

“Some people end up accepting inferiority, and go about simply to get what they can out of life, knowing that they can never reach the heights. Others create a self-delusion in order to save their hopes of greatness. Both of these things cause problems, but they are the best that children can do. The acceptance of inferiority obviously creates a negative mind-set. And self-delusion creates a precedent for further delusions in the future. Have you ever noticed kids who would rather fail by not trying, than to risk really trying?”

“Yeah… I have.”

“Well, there’s a reason: To really try, and then to fail, is to show that for sure you’re not the handsome Prince – that you’re a peasant. But if you don’t try, you can still keep open a possibility of someday achieving greatness. Eventually, the individual is forced by circumstances to either risk really trying or become a confirmed non-participant. Now, most of us eventually build up enough self-esteem to move forward slowly, but it’s a damn painful process.”

“Frances, I have to go to the ladies room. Would you like to accompany me?”

“Sure.”

Julia gave Phillip a stern look as she left the table. Then Phillip remembered a conversation they had earlier in the day, where he had promised to keep things light and pleasant. Actually, her words were “Don’t be so damned intense.” He had forgotten once the conversation got going.

“James, I’m sorry. I promised Julia that I’d keep the evening light. I think I blew it.”

“Don’t worry about it, Phillip, she would have kept asking.”

“Maybe so, but help me keep it light from now on, all right?”

“Count on it.” They both smiled, but Phillip’s smile was pained.

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With the small stack of signed Search Warrants in his right-hand drawer, Morales started going through his list of likely conspirators. He ended up with nine really good prospects and four likelies. Then, he went through all of the agency records, and found everything he could on these guys. This took the better part of the day. Nickelson wandered over several times during the day, and they discussed what would come next, once they decided on who to hack.

“John, find me two really good ones. I’ll get ‘em tomorrow. I’ve been analyzing these people for so long that I think I’m going nuts. Give me a project I can do something with.”

“All right, I’ll have them for you tomorrow morning at the latest. But I think I should try to find local people. We’re probably going to have to raid these people like we did that first facility.”

“God, I’d love that. I want to do something fun, rather than trade messages that lead me nowhere all day.”

At 6:00 p.m., Morales handed three sets of names, addresses, and IP addresses to Timothy Nickelson – all in the greater LA area. Then he arranged to take the next day off, closed-up shop for the night, and walked over to Maxie’s.

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Julia was crying, and running water to wash her face. “I’m sorry Frances, Phillip gets off on his ideas, and he doesn’t see anything else. I wanted to make this a fun evening. I didn’t want to get mired down in heavy issues.”

Julia, now wiping her face, looked up at Frances. “This woman is really my friend,” Frances thought to herself, “she’s not trying to get anything from me, she just wants to like me.” She felt good.

“Oh Julia, I’m so sorry. It’s my fault. I guess I just wanted to know what he had to say.”

“Yes, I know, he gets so into the subjects that you want to follow. He makes you want to know.”

“Yeah, he does.”

“Frances, I’ve known this man for a long time. Believe me, he really does know what he’s talking about. But don’t try to take in too much at once; it’s not especially good for you.”

“What do you mean Julia?”

“It’s very hard to assimilate too much of it at once. And believe me, it can be very hard to live with. This guy is full of great things, but I’m worn-out with the never-ending intensity. I just want to stay away from it most of the time.”

“And he can’t or won’t?”

“I learned a long time ago that Phillip is a very unusual man. In most ways he is the best man I’ve ever met. And I should know. I’ve been with him in almost every situation imaginable. He is good, but he got that way in spite of the rest of the world.”

Julia’s face now showed sadness and weariness. “It’s not so hard for you, James, and other people he talks to. You get to hear all the discoveries and conclusions. But I had to be there night and day, through all of the experiments, the searchings, and

the struggles. Always fighting violently to break through some barricade, to find some hidden thing, or to find some forgotten fact. Always so intense, fighting a pitched, life or death battle against evil. It was very, very hard… just too much for me to take." Julia was crying again. Frances stopped what she was doing, and hugged her. Now she was crying also. This was the first time in her life that Frances had ever felt like another woman was truly a sister. She was getting a deep look into Julia's life and mind. They were being completely honest with each other, and not little girl honesty; this was mature honesty between women of understanding. Frances wasn't sure she had ever seen this before; maybe between her mother and her grandmother.

After a few moments, Julia separated, washed her face again, and put on a bit of makeup. "So, anyway, he promised me that tonight wouldn't be intense. Will you help me keep it that way?"

"You can count on it, Julia." Never before had Frances felt in herself the protective, mothering nature that she did just then.

When the two ladies made their way back to the table, Julia paused, standing above Phillip and James. "You remember, gentlemen, that we said we'd have fun tonight?" They nodded. "Well, we're not going to have fun if we're digging into the depths of the collective human psyche, are we?" The men said nothing, and Julia sat down.

"All right, back to the festivities?"

"Yes, ma'am" came equally from the lips of both James and Phillip.

Now, James decided to jump in and guide the evening a bit. "Hey guys," he was obviously referring to Phillip and to Julia, "we should tell Frances about Tino's!"

"You mean your private boy's club?" Julia was becoming happier now, smiling and poking fun at James and Phillip.

"Right, and you don't like it?" James was pouring wine for everyone at the table, and motioned to the waitress for a new bottle.

"Oh, of course I love it. Who wouldn't?" She turned directly to Frances, and continued speaking with a light, happy sincerity. "Oh Frances, this place really is wonderful. It's right on the ocean in the Bahamas, and stunningly beautiful. You wake up in the morning, walk out on your porch, and look down at a crystal clear ocean, and a few native fishermen off in the distance."

"This is some kind of resort?"

"No, not really. One of these guys' friends owns the place. And believe me, they have some really interesting friends. It's his private place, but it has a six or seven little cottages. Thatched roofs and the whole thing. He rents them out to people he likes. He stays busy enough to keep several good employees, but not too busy. The place is a close to heaven on earth as anything I've ever seen."

Frances turned to James now, while the busboy was removing the dinner plates. “So, start fessing up, pal, who’s the crazy friend? And how often do you go play in the clubhouse?”

“Well, the friend is an old wine dealer from New York. And he’s not crazy!” He shot a look to Julia.

“All right, so then how did a wine dealer end up with a resort in the Bahamas?”

“Well…” she could see James bracing himself for what he was to say next. “He was frequently in Europe to check out new wines, and he eventually got together with a dealer from Taiwan, and they got a side-business going.”

“All right, I’m with you so far. Keep going.”

Frances and Julia were having fun, making the boys tell their club secrets.

“Well, they would buy wine there, then ship it to Asia. He made a bunch of money doing this, but never bothered reporting it to the IRS, which meant that he couldn’t bring the money back to the US. So, he stashed the money in Europe, traveled around a lot, and eventually found the place in the Bahamas. It was perfect for him. He could buy the place, and have a great retirement business, and never have to bring the money back into the US.”

Julia jumped in, enjoying the game. “And tell the lady, James, how often do you boys fly down to the clubhouse in your cool, cool, jet?”

“You have a jet?” Frances turned to James, incredulous.

“Not exactly… I lease jets sometimes.”

Julia gave him another of her surprisingly good “don’t BS me” looks. “Yeah, like almost all of the time. Right Jim?”

“Not really, only some of the time. Anyway, we go down maybe five or six times per year.”

“Yeah, and they meet their other friends there, and plot world domination.”

That statement pushed Phillip over the edge, which is exactly what Julia intended.

“That’s not true! You know…” Then he realized that Julia was just playing with him.

Julia laughed, and Phillip half scowled, half smiled. “We talk, we plan, we coordinate, but we don’t want to dominate anyone. We are specifically opposed to any form of domination.”

“Relax Phillip, Frances doesn’t think you’re a closet dictator.” James was laughing and slapping Phillip on the back. “Anyway, Frances, you’ll absolutely love this place.”

* * * * * * *

Max Kaminski looked surprised but pleased when John Morales walked back into the bar. “Nice to see you, kid, I wasn’t too sure you’d be back.”

“But I told you I’d be back. I could really use your help.”

Max laughed the sad, knowing laugh of someone who has seen the true state of men, and doesn’t want to crush a young man who isn’t quite ready to know just how sick most men’s souls are. “Well kid, there are plenty of people who say things and never do them, and plenty of people who need things, and they don’t get up to get them.” He paused, hoping that the words would sink into Morales’ mind. He knew that he wouldn’t understand right away, but maybe someday in the future they would take root, and the kid would put some pieces together. Or maybe not.

“Sit down here at the bar kid. I’ll get you some food.”

As usual, the crowd in the back room was made up entirely of bureau people, most of whom stopped in nightly for a drink and a bit of conversation before they headed home. Morales watched the crowd and ordered a drink. After a few minutes, Max showed up with a plate of food – meatloaf, potatoes, and mixed vegetables.

“All right John, what do you see in these guys?”

“Well, first of all, I’m realizing that there is a lot of information being passed around in here… that if you really want to know what’s going on in the FBI, you’ll find out a lot more here than you will in the office.”

“Yeah, well that’s for sure, kid. Does that mean that you’re going to start spending more money with me?”

Morales smiled. “Yeah, Max, I think so. But you had better be willing to serve me some non-alcoholic drinks, I don’t want to have booze every day.” They both laughed.

“All right kid, you’ve got it, but what else do you see here? How are these people different from other people? Aside from the things they’re discussing.”

Morales paused and looked at the crowd for a long time. He kept looking for whatever it was Maxie was referring to, but he really didn’t see anything.

“You’re trying too hard, John.”

“Well… I don’t see any difference.”

“That’s right! These guys are regular chumps just like everybody else. They just have unusual jobs. Never forget that kid. Maybe you think that movie stars are somehow special, or that politicians are special, or that athletes are special. They’re not! They’re chumps like everyone else, only with different things to do. None of the people you think are special really are. I’ve known ‘em all, son. They don’t know

any secrets, they're not happier than anyone else, and they sure as hell aren't any less screwed-up." Max laughed quietly at his own thoughts. "And don't think rich people are much different either. Money eliminates a bunch of survival problems, but it does nothing to fix the problems in their heads – not a damn thing."

Morales sat quietly while Max walked back into the kitchen to take care of something. He thought to himself how lucky he was to have someone like Max to talk to. Not that he was sure that Max was really correct in everything he said. Actually, Morales was fairly sure that Max's long years as an agent had jaded him, so that he expected everything to be bad or corrupt. But he also knew that Max had lived through a lot of things, and had ideas that would take him many years to stumble across.

After about five minutes, Max came back behind the bar. "All right Morales, what's on your mind in particular?"

"Well…"

"Don't be bashful kid, if you bring up something you shouldn't, I'll tell you. All right?"

"All right. Thanks." Still he hesitated, afraid to say what he wanted to, but not sure why he was afraid. He reasoned, "If I say something wrong, Max says he'll tell me. Is he believable?"

The words nearly burst out of him: "All right, I'm worried about Jones. I don't like what he's doing. I don't think it's right!"

Max became very serious and quiet. "All right John, you've got something important to talk about. I understand what you mean about Jonesy; he's been too focused on his position for a long time. You know, I've known him since he was as young as you." Max stopped, and looked sad. "Actually, you remind me a lot of Jonesy when he was young. Anyway, I'm too busy tonight to really get into this. Come back tomorrow after eight o'clock, when it gets slow. We'll talk then."

"All right Max, thank you."

"You're welcome, John." Instead of walking away, Max paused for a moment, and Morales waited to see what he would say. "You're a good man, John." Then Max turned and walked back into the kitchen.

* * * * * * *

The foursome at Anthony's finished their dinner, and waited a while before they ordered desserts, busying themselves with tales of travels, of adventures, and of humorous events. All of them had stories to tell. Frances and James had more business stories to tell, and Julia and Phillip had a great number of stories about their

children. At first Frances was concerned about the kid stories, since everyone at the table but her knew these children, but everyone took such pains to make her understand that it was actually a great pleasure to get to know these children and their stories.

Frances was just finishing up a story about a trip she took to Hong Kong, explaining not only her adventures along the way, but how Hong Kong was the great free-market story of the 20th Century. It was a small, isolated place, but once productive people heard about the rule of common law, guaranteed low, comprehensible taxes and almost no restrictions, the place exploded into an orgy of wealth creation.

Julia smiled in a deep, thoughtful way. “I like it when you tell the financial stories, Frances, you do it well.” James was slightly insulted, having tried unsuccessfully for years to explain economic theory to Julia. Then he shook it off, reasoning that if Julia understood when Frances explained, so be it. Maybe it was a girl thing anyway. Phillip also had tried to explain some of these things to Julia, but he eventually stopped when he understood that Julia was simply overwhelmed with his endless ideas.

* * * * * * *

“Emilio, donde esta la…”

George’s Spanish, although it was reasonably good, fell flat in regard to technical terminology. He waived Emilio off, motioning that he should just return to what he had been doing. Setting up the lab was certainly progressing, though not as quickly as he had first imagined. “The next person I hire will have to be multilingual,” George thought to himself, but immediately the image of McCoy flashed into his consciousness, explaining why it would be much better to have all Spanish-speaking people working for them.

McCoy was to arrive in a few hours, and they would be discussing what chemicals, supplies, and equipment he would need. He wondered how a man like McCoy came to be. He obviously must have had a military background, but what else? Actually, George wasn’t entirely sure what it was that McCoy really did. Perhaps he would ask him later.

“Production and protocols. McCoy wants my requirements for producing this stuff, and for teaching people how to administer it.” The plan was to produce enough of the chemicals to run several studies, while at the same time submitting proposals to every conceivable organization outside of the United States.

George was mumbling to himself, trying to put together his lists. He leaned across his desk to turn off his radio; he liked it on when he was doing light work, but it got

in his way when he needed to think deeply. Emilio was assembling the last of four lab tables, and had already put all of the cabinets in place. The electricians had already added the several large circuits and the lighting that was needed, and the plumbers had finished with the drain pipe and holding basin. The heating system seemed sufficient, and the existing ceiling fans seemed more than enough to make the lab comfortable in the summer.

There would be some safety equipment that they needed. Not that the processes were especially dangerous, but when working with chemicals, it pays to be overly careful. George had once known a researcher who died on the job, and he didn't want any such thing to happen in this lab.

"George! How are you?" It was McCoy's voice, as he entered the front door.

"Pretty well, Bill. You?"

"Terrific. I brought you and Emilio some food. Like to talk over lunch?"

Actually, McCoy had brought in a lot more food than was necessary for the three men. He and George took their food into the private office, and McCoy told Emilio that he accidentally purchased too much, and that he should take the rest home with him.

They closed the office door, sat down at the desk, and unwrapped their sandwiches.

"You're taking good care of Emilio on purpose?"

"Yes, and you should too. The Hispanics here aren't mindlessly devoted to the government, and they'll be glad to protect you if they like you. Beside, Emilio seems like a pretty good guy."

"Yeah, I thought about that too."

"All right. So, how are we doing?"

"Well, I've just produced my first batch of UBV-1; that's the basic substance we use to deliver the breaker drugs. It's necessary for everything we'll do."

McCoy was typing notes into the laptop computer he brought with him. "Great. Now, how long will it take you to get that process going on its own?"

"If I can get Esteban's cousin in here, I'll have it going in a couple of weeks."

"And you'll have quality assurance measures?"

"Certainly. No problem at all. This stuff is easy."

"All right, how many treatments worth can you turn out in a week?"

George took a bite of his sandwich, and began to scribble on some paper. "I'd say at least enough for forty treatments. And I could double that if I hire another good guy."

“Excellent. Shelf life?”

“Two years minimum. Five years if it’s refrigerated.”

“Brilliant.”

Over the rest of the lunch, they decided that George would hire Emilio’s cousin (a college-educated man, newly arrived with a young family), and get him started producing the UBV-1 delivery substrate. That done, George could move on to producing some of the specific breaker compounds. That also was fairly straightforward. But George’s real concern was in continuing his research. That was not so easy. It required a number of highly-trained researchers and expensive equipment. Production was elementary by comparison.

“George, I don’t want to get your hopes up too much, but I think I got four members of your old research team willing to join you.”

“What? How?”

“I contacted them privately, and made them some nice offers. They’re interested.”

“Oh my God… Do they understand that they could become scientific outcasts because of this?”

“Yes, they do. But listen, I think you should talk to them yourself. I’ve set up anonymous email accounts for all of you. Here are the addresses and instructions. Talk to them, and see if you can bring them onboard. If they’re willing to join us, we’ll build you a research lab, and I’ll get someone else to manage production.”

Dr. Dimitrios should have been happy with this news, but he was not. Something about the long-term aspects of it bothered him, but he wasn’t sure why.

* * * * * * *

After several days of thinking about the computer shack raids, Michael and his associates, and the fact that these customers were honest, interesting, and paid in advance, Anthony Bari decided to do a bit of information gathering for them, and to see where it led. The first thing he did was to pay a visit to his old friend Maxie Kaminski.

“Max, you old crook, what the hell’s going on?”

“Oh yeah! A lawyer calling me a crook. That’s a good one!” The two hugged each other, and walked into the back room. It was lunch time, and Maxie’s was empty, except for the clean-up crews and various deliveries.

“So, what’s on your mind Anthony, you don’t come here unless something’s up.”

“Max, I’m handling a really interesting case, and I want to get as much information on it as I can. Listen, you’re my friend, and I don’t want to ask you to do anything

you're uncomfortable with, but we both know that some of your agency guys are as bad as any white-collar crook, sometimes as bad as a violent crook."

"So, is this a white-collar crime you're handling?"

"To be honest Max, I'm not sure it's a crime at all."

Bari began to explain to Max the story of the computer shack, the emails and the anonymous clients, and the dropped charges of treason.

"Wait a minute, does this involve some type of secret Internet commerce?"

"Yeah Max, it does."

"All right, listen, Anthony, I do know something about this case. And furthermore, there's a young agent on the case who comes to me for advice; a good, decent kid, the kind I don't usually see in the Bureau."

Bari at first looked shocked, and within a second or two the expressions of recognition, disappointment, and concern passed over his face. He spoke urgently, "Listen to me Max, I am not asking you to divulge confidences. If you're that close to it, forget about it, I don't want to spoil your relationship with that kid."

Max was deep in thought before Bari had finished speaking. He raised his left forefinger in the air, as if to say, "Wait a minute." He paced the room. From his facial gestures, it seemed as if he were saying to himself "well, on one hand… but on the other…" Max did this for several minutes. Bari poured himself a drink, and sat at the bar, sipping the drink and doing his own thinking. Max was his friend, and he didn't want to abuse that relationship, interesting client or not.

The two men had met under adversarial circumstances some thirty years prior. Both of them were young and new in their jobs. They were working on a fraud case, Max pursuing Anthony Bari's client. They sparred with each other on and off over a period of weeks, until they mutually realized that the other was an exception to the rule. Bari had thought Max to be a usual FBI agent, alternating between playing cowboy and enjoying his power trip. Max thought Bari a typical lawyer, always looking for an FBI guy to screw up on some minute detail, hoping for any excuse to keep a guilty client on the streets. Both were surprised and impressed to find that the other was truly interested in justice.

Max and Bari remained friendly all the years since, and quietly traded information with each other when they could. Both men deeply respected the other, and relied on his judgment. They knew that they were among the few in their professions who really cared about justice above technicalities.

"All right Anthony, I think I can help you."

"Max, are you sure this isn't going to hurt this kid?"

"Yeah, I am pretty sure. Actually, I think it might help him. Listen Tony…" Max only called Bari "Tony" when they were speaking as brothers, talking about

important things that were completely private. He spoke quietly, “I don’t want to go too far right now, but there are some pretty fishy things going on with this case. I’ll talk more to the kid, and see what’s appropriate to pass along. But if things are as I think, we may need to work together a bit.”

Only twice before did the two men ever really work together. In both cases, it had been necessary to serve justice. And in both cases, it had been technically illegal.

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“All right Phillip, I want to hear more. If you get all intense on us, Julia and I will have to beat you, but I want some kind of overview here. I know Jim, I’m getting to know Julia, but you’re a mystery. You’ve obviously got a lot of interesting things to say, but what about you? There has to be a lot more than just being a Jewish kid from Brooklyn. Give!”

Phillip looked over to Julia. “Is this all right with you?”

“Of course it is, I just don’t want the universal psyche opened up, dissected and analyzed.” She smiled, honestly, not teasing him now.

“All right Frances, I’ll try to make some sense out of this for you. I’m not exactly an average guy.” Farber and Julia burst into laughter. “No kidding!” Frances laughed more mildly. She obviously didn’t have the wealth of detail that Jim and Julia had, but aside from simple appearance, Phillip Donson seemed far from ordinary.

“All right, all right, may I now go on?” They calmed themselves, and told him to go ahead. “Okay, I’ve done a lot of things. The details are that I was among the very first free love people in college, an itinerant minister for a number of years, and a philosopher, teacher, and writer since. A construction manager too, when I’ve needed the work. I’ve spent time with the Hippies and with Jesus Freaks; in some fairly significant business deals, and occasionally with fighters and soldiers.” Phillip looked at Jim and Julia. “How’s that?”

Julia shook her head, with a reserved look on her face. “Well, that’s certainly a start, Phillip, but that’s pretty shallow.” She turned to Frances. “Phillip didn’t just hang out with all those different people, Frances, he was a star among them.”

“I don’t think I’d say I was a star, Julia.”

“Oh no? How many of those other Jesus guys prayed for crippled people who got up and walked?”

Phillip sat silently, but Frances’ interest level had gone sky high. “Wait a minute, are you telling me that you actually healed someone for real?” She looked incredulous, and more than a little suspicious.

Phillip looked at Frances in an almost resigned way. He knew this would happen, that it would keep happening for the rest of his life whenever he got to know someone well. How do you explain this to someone with no experience in such things except for seeing charlatans take money from grandmothers? He took a deep breath, and spoke slowly.

"Yes, Frances, I have healed people, though there was only one crippled guy. I know that people make an insanity out of this, but occasionally, such things do really happen." Frances, had alternating looks on her face of suspicion and of deep thought, as if she were remembering something from long ago and far away.

"To be honest, Frances, that story is something of a problem to me. In many ways it would be easier for me if it had never happened, at least as far as getting along with other scientifically-minded people is concerned. I am devoted to the scientific method, and I tend to associate with like-minded people. But stories like this one pull most of them way out of their comfort zone." He paused, and addressed her a bit more specifically. "You understand that their minds can be conditioned just as other people's can."

"Yes," she said, and Phillip continued.

"You say 'healing,' and their minds freeze-up. All they can think of is religious imprisonment, witch-burnings, and the flat earth.

"My problem is that this event did occur. I don't have a scientific explanation of how it occurred, and I can't reach any conclusions at all. It could have been a God, it could have been some type of mental ability triggered by the power of suggestion, hell, it could have been space aliens for that matter. I simply have no basis for reaching a conclusion. But I do know what I did. And I know that this man was crippled by degenerative arthritis and hadn't walked on his own since he was sixteen years old, and that he had been hospitalized for years. And I know that after I laid my hands on him for only seconds, he immediately stood up and walked, and that he was still walking – walking better – three weeks later. I have no firm explanation of what the cause was, but I do know that it happened. And other events like this one, though quite less dramatic, happened as well. I have no conclusions, but they did occur. A lot of scientific people may not like that because it punches holes in their ideologies, but this did happen. I just don't tell a lot of people because of their reverse superstitions."

Phillip gave Frances time to take in what he had just explained. When it appeared that she understood, he went on. "Anyway, Julia's basically correct, I have done a lot of things pretty well. But the important thing is that I really did them. If I thought something was worth doing, I took its full measure."

Frances' expression said that she wanted Phillip to continue. He looked at Julia. She seemed agreeable, so he went on.

“I guess most of it is that I lived aggressively. I did what I thought was right, regardless of what other people said. What people thought didn’t much influence me, only right or wrong, good or evil, benefit or harm. This put me in the position of learning my lessons first-hand, up-close and personal.” Phillip laughed to himself sadly, and shook his head. “Not that I was always correct. I started this when I was far younger and less experienced than I am now. I followed ideas that at the time seemed correct, but I wasn’t always right, and I did a number of things that I wouldn’t do now. But by really doing those things, I took the full measure of my opinions, and saw the true measure of my reasons, and of myself. I eliminated all doubt as to whether things would work out if only I did them completely.

“Overall, I’m happy even with most of the wrong things I did. At the time, my actions were based on the best information I had, and I had the guts to follow it boldly. While other people followed the supposedly safe and accepted paths, I used my own mind, my own judgment, my own insight. I lived while they sacrificed their lives to the teachings of the elders.”

The expression on Frances’ face changed; she looked as though she had reached a conclusion of some sort. Phillip stopped and looked at her quizzically.

“They’re right about you, Phillip.” He looked at Julia and Jim, wondering what they had told her. “I can see now how you have assimilated so much insight in half a lifetime, you’ve probably experienced more than most people would in a couple of lifetimes.”

Phillip smiled, and thought of one more thing he wanted to add. “If you think that I have more insight than others, I can assure you that this is where it came from. In this world, the cost of being yourself is a willingness to accept disapproval. The price of true greatness is the willingness to endure disdain, rejection, and hatred. If you want to be great, you must be willing to be called evil. At present, and for the near future, that is the price.”

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“Sit down kid.” Max slowed as he passed by. He leaned up against Morales’s back, and whispered in his ear. “I want to hear what Jonesy is up to.”

Morales ordered a pasta dish and a Diet Coke. He thought more about talking to Max. He had actually delved into the FBI database the day before, just to convince himself that Max could be trusted. Maxwell Kaminski had been involved in almost every sort of case, from kidnapping to financial fraud. He had been offered executive positions several times, and had turned them down. The records were not clear as to why.

Eventually, he came over to the bar, and sat down. Max joked with him about not drinking any booze. “That’s what I make money on, you know!” In fact, Max was pleased to see a young man with enough internal strength to turn down a drink with the boys without thinking twice about it.

“You know, John, I really do want to talk about Jones; I’m concerned about the things I hear from him. He could get into trouble, but more than likely, you’ll be the one who gets into trouble.”

“What do you mean? How? It’s all his orders!”

“Yes John, but there are more back-door political deals in the agency than you know. Jones is in a big position; if he gets in trouble, it could make the news. You’re low level; they could put the blame on you with no PR damage.”

Morales was stunned. Up till that time, he had thought of the Bureau as a sort of good-guy’s organization. They were the cowboys getting rid of the villains. He knew that it was infinitely more complicated and messy than that, but that was his fundamental view. The thought that his own bosses could be less than honorable – purposefully – upset him.

“Listen to me John. I had a talk with an old friend the other day. We used to share notes with each other from time to time, so he is a very good friend. It turns out that he wanted to compare notes again, but he was so careful not to push me into anything I wasn’t comfortable with, that it was touching. And I don’t get touched too easily.” Morales believed him.

“Anyway, I don’t want you to tell me anything that you’re not comfortable with. You have my word that I won’t abuse your confidence, but if you ever get uncomfortable, I want you to shut up. I promise you won’t hurt my feelings. All right?” Morales slipped momentarily and said “Yes, sir.” Max let this violation of his rule pass.

Slowly, Morales went through the things that bothered him about Jones: The improper warrants, his disregard for people’s rights, and his pressure to find something on someone. Max thought about it for a moment, then asked the bartender to hand him the phone. “Listen John, unless you object, I’m going to ask my friend for some advice on this one. He’s an old attorney, and he’ll know what to do.”

Max called Bari, and talked for some time about Morales’ situation. Then he looked directly at the young man. “Is this the case that Coopersmith handled? The computer shack with some type of encrypted transactions?” Morales was shocked. No one was supposed to know anything about the case, and he had given none of those details to Max. He froze. “Is it?” Johnny nodded yes, and Max told his friend that it was. He talked for a moment more, wrote something on the back of a business card, and hung up. Morales was still shocked, and now scared. “What am I getting into?” he thought to himself.

“All right, listen to me carefully.” Max was talking quietly because there were now other people nearby. “You look scared, kid. Don’t worry; it’s okay. My friend knew about the case because he represented the foreign guys running the equipment.” John was considerably relieved. “And he won’t say anything to anyone because he’s my friend.” The way Max said “friend” made him feel better; Max used the word “friend” as if it were sacred.

“My friend can’t help you himself because it would be a conflict of interest. But if you call the name on this card, he has someone who’ll take good care of you. You have to pay the guy a hundred bucks, so he’ll legally be your attorney, and then you can tell him whatever you need to. He’ll take care of your interests, and the hundred bucks will be all you have to give him, unless you need something special.” John put the card in his pocket, but was still a bit uneasy about the whole situation. Max got up to get back to business, but stopped when he saw the look on Morales’ face. “Listen kid, your boss has put you in a bad situation. He’s a jerk for doing that. But now you’re safe. Just go see the guy on the card with a hundred bucks in your hand, and everything will be as good as it can be.” Max walked off to make the rounds and to greet all his regulars.

* * * * * * *

Anthony Bari walked into his office just as the rest of the people were leaving. He ordered some Thai food, turned on the radio, and pulled up his encryption program.

Michael,

I’ve obtained some information on your case. But before I begin, these are the rules:

1. Nothing I tell you is ever to be used in any way, without my prior consent.

2. No one sees these emails but you.

3. You talk about these emails only with top people at your outfit, and they must assure secrecy.

4. You must destroy these emails within a day of receiving them. Make notes if you like, but both of us must destroy every email we send or receive.

I wouldn't even think of doing this, Michael, unless I thought you were a responsible and decent guy. I got into law because I believed in justice, and I believe in it still.

All right, your info: I don't want to go over all the details yet, but the senior FBI people are playing this fast and loose. This is both good and bad for you: Good, because they're making mistakes that we can use to get cases thrown out. Bad, because these guys are very serious about getting you. They're really opening up their bag of tricks.

Bari

Michael, who happened to be at his desk, read Bari's email just seconds later. His response was also immediate.

Bari,

Your conditions make perfect sense, I agree without reservation. I still have copies of our earlier notes, but I will erase them momentarily. Glad to hear your news. Please send whatever you can, whenever you can. I very much appreciate your estimation of us. I don't think we'll disappoint you.

Michael

PS: We have a friend who runs some encrypted chat rooms. If you ever want to meet there, let me know. Also, I'd be glad to meet in person if there is any benefit in it.

Michael got up from his desk, poured a cup of coffee, and walked outside. Michael lived on an old ranch in southern Utah. His back yard was an open field, with the Rocky Mountains all around. He walked to a bench about 50 yards from the house, and sat down to watch the sunset.

These were the quiet moments when Michael could take his time, and really think about what they were doing, and what it might lead to. Some of the other members of the group were scared of getting in trouble; they tried not to show it too much, but he knew they were. And they were certainly correct; all of them could end up in jail if this went drastically wrong. Though he, Farber, Phillip, and McCoy had made sure there were plenty of back-up plans for all of them, some risk always remained. There

were doing nothing to hurt anyone, but that doesn't matter if you deviate too far from the average, or if you threaten someone's power. Hell, Jesus and didn't do anything wrong, neither did Socrates, yet they were killed in countries that said they were ruled by law. And the same thing happened to a thousand others without well-known names.

No, Michael decided that aside from an occasional anxious moment, he really wasn't scared of what might happen to him or his friends. What worried him was what might happen to the rest of the world if they succeeded. "What happens," he thought to himself, "if a thousand free marketplaces spring up all over the world? Governments will lose their revenues. How far will they go to protect their positions of power? Will they declare martial law, and start searching every home and every computer they can? Will they use terror and intimidation to keep people out of free markets? What happens when their power slips away… how many types of crises can they arrange, so that people will not complain about having the last of their privacy taken away? And how many people are left who can muster half a care?"

But now his thoughts were getting too dark, and that was not the only direction in which events could play themselves out. He ran the opposite scenario through his mind. "And what about the productivity of humanity's best and brightest, fully unchained for the first time? What will they come up with? And what will middle-of-the-road people think, when they see people who are living free of domination, with real self-originated goodness in them?

"Yes", he thought, "it's worth it. It's a good thing – the right thing – to do. Phillip is right, the world is far too huge, and far too screwed-up to try to right its course; we have to separate, and live free apart from them."

With the sunset ended, Michael walked back inside, turned on his lights, threw a log on the fire, turned on some music, and sat back down at his desk.

Group:

Some news on the FBI: Not to worry you, but they are very serious about getting us. So, we have to get Gamma Central done right away. Those of you who need help, let me know. I want this up and running within two weeks. Can we do this?

Remember, getting Gamma up and running IS our safety. Once it is finished, we always have the option of posting it to the net, and letting a hundred Gamma Markets spring up all over the world. Once that happens, we at least have the safety of being one target among hundreds; right now we're the only one.

On another, more pleasant front, the FBI is playing fast and loose with their investigation. That means that we'll almost certainly be able to beat the first

sets of charges they throw at us. (Assuming, of course, that they ever do.) So, we have an added bit of safety from this as well.

All right, I want you all to follow this carefully: We get Gamma done in two weeks. Then we test it for two weeks more. Then, we have two more weeks to get all the fixes and retests done. Once that is done, we have our 'ace in the hole'. Once Gamma is up, we can bail out whenever we want. If we can hold on for a while and cash-in, great. But if not, we start a hundred hungry guys in the business, and walk away.

SO, TO SUMMARIZE: LET'S GET THIS DONE NOW! THEN WE CAN RELAX.

Love to you all,

Mike

* * * * * *

"All right, Phillip, that's fine so far, but no more preaching." Julia was actually fine for the moment, but worried about what might come next. She had seen this point in a conversation so many times. Phillip had just made a statement that would really make someone think in new directions, and it was certain that there would be questions to follow, and more unusual answers. "Frances is a big girl," she thought, "she can ask him later if she wants. That is, if she doesn't figure it out herself first."

Anthony came by the table, and announced that after-dinner drinks were on him. He talked with James for just a moment, and then walked across the restaurant to greet other diners.

Phillip saw his moment to end the evening well. "Hey Jim, tell Frances about how you met Anthony."

Frances saw the sparkle in Phillip's eye, and the smirk on his lips. "Yeah, Jim, tell me!"

As it ended up, there were three rounds of after-dinner drinks, not one. Jim told Anthony's story: A crazy, twisted coffee futures deal when both men were young trainees at Chicago's Board of Trade. They both thought they would lose everything they owned – or ever would own – and through a stroke of luck somehow survived, and got quickly off the trading floor. By the time Jim finished with the story, they were all laughing out loud, as were three other people at nearby tables. Then followed a torrent of hilarious stories from all of them. Stories of drunken tradesmen,

of outrageous business stunts, of intrigues in the newspaper business, of bizarre stunts pulled by teenagers, and on, and on.

Whenever one of them finished a story, two more were ready to jump in. And so it went for an hour or more.

"This is what I wanted," thought Frances, "here I am with these people, enjoying the trials and triumphs of our lives together." These were people who had earned a reason to celebrate. No efforts to impress each other, no posturing or scheming, just a group of open, honest, successful people, sharing the stories of their lives, enjoying each other. Frances had long ago thought that this would be how adult life should be, but she had never found enough of it till this evening.

The goodbyes were warm and sincere. Frances promised Julia that she would call as soon as she got back from visiting her mother.

* * * * * * *

"So, what do you think of my friends?"

James and Frances were in the back of a cab, headed to Frances' apartment.

"Oh. God, I love them, Jim! When I was a girl, I used to lie in bed and think about what life might be like when I was grown up. And these are the kinds of people I wanted to be friends with. Over the years, I thought back on that, and compared it with my real adult life. I had friends that were kind of like my childhood ideas, but only for moments and in part. But this was it! I didn't really think I'd ever find it. Oh my God, Jim, I think I really love these people."

In her exuberance, she rose from her seat, leaning over to kiss him. At first, she thought of it as only a congratulatory type of kiss. But the closer she got, the more she felt an energy building between her and James. They kissed; gently at first, then with a full, overflowing passion. They remained locked in each other's embrace for almost the rest of the trip, speaking little, or not at all – there was no reason to speak. As they neared the apartment, Frances pulled herself away, but lay her head on his chest.

"Jim, are you feeling as serious about this as I am?"

"Yes… I think I am." He kissed her head and squeezed her just a bit.

She picked her head up, and looked him directly in the eye. She spoke with a voice that seemed to be equally that of a girl and that of a woman: "I'd invite you up, but this isn't a good time."

He took her head in his hands and kissed her again, then separated just a few inches, still looking directly into her eyes. "That's all right, but I'll be looking forward to it."

* * * * * * *

The FSU campus in spring and early summer is a beautiful place. Huge old trees, flowering bushes, wonderful weather.

Phillip Donson walked into the Free Soul house with a deep satisfaction on his face. He was pleased to have made something this good, and gratified that there were new people – people that he didn't have to teach himself – who responded to the Free Soul ideas. He was early, arriving in the afternoon instead of at night. It was still normal working and school hours, so there were only a few people in the house. He introduced himself, dropped his luggage in his room, and wandered around the house. He grabbed a soft drink from the kitchen and admired the old murals in the living room that still looked good. He grabbed a nearby guitar, plopped down on the couch, and began to play some of the old songs.

He thought about all the battles they had fought to get this place and to get it off the ground on good footing. He had almost forgotten them. The triumph still felt sweet, even twenty-some years later. He sang the songs of victory that they had sung back then. They still felt good.

After a short while, the various residents came wandering into the house. Some stopped to talk, and others were busy on some mission or another; they said hello, then excused themselves. One of the young men pulled up a chair and another guitar, and asked Phillip to teach him the song he was playing. One by one, voices and instruments began to fill the living room. Someone ordered several pizzas, another some Chinese food. One of the girls ran to the store for a variety of drinks. They sang, and ate, and told stories for several hours.

At about nine o'clock, Phillip resigned from the music, handed the guitar off to one of the boys, and went for the kitchen telephone to call Don.

"You can still do it, can't you, Phillip?"

"Don!" From his seat at the table, Don stood to his feet, and the two men embraced. "Don, why didn't you tell me you were here?"

"What, and break up the fun? No, I just made my way quietly into the kitchen and listened. You can still do it."

"Well, perhaps, but I'm certainly out of practice. My voice is entirely sung-out, and I think my fingers are ready to bleed." They laughed. "Say, you don't think they have any Port to drink around here, do you?"

"No, I doubt it. Why Port?"

"It works better on an over-used throat than anything I've ever found."

“Okay, fair enough, but I’m sure they haven’t got any here. This is mostly a beer and Coke crowd… Hey! How about if I call Amy, and we catch a nice dinner? I know she can get a babysitter. We’ll wait for her at the restaurant bar, and you can have your Port!”

The Port made Phillip’s throat feel considerably better, and dinner was a superb pleasure. Don was as good a man as ever, and Amy as sincere as ever. They were doing very well, and Phillip was very pleased with the group of people at the Free Soul house. He insisted on stopping off at Don and Amy’s home and meeting their children, before going back to the Free Soul house to sleep.

Don drove Phillip back to the house through a warm, foggy evening.

“Your children are beautiful, Don.”

“Thank you.”

“You know, I really miss having children in the house.”

“Really? Still?”

“Sometimes. You know, there’s something special about raising children. It gives a sanctity to your life and to your home that you really don’t get anywhere else. Now, I’m very happy with the way we raised our kids, and I certainly don’t want to do it all over again, but I miss the sanctity.” Don had seen Phillip sad before, but this time was different. He wasn’t sad exactly, more like remembering a lost love. “Don, when you really think about it, making and raising a family is the most god-like thing you’ll ever do.”

Don said nothing, waiting for Phillip to go on. He had learned long ago that if you give Phillip room to talk and just a little bit of encouragement, you hear a lot of interesting things.

“When you have children, you are creating human beings. Now I know that people don’t think of it that way, but it is true. It usually happens to us so automatically and easily, that it’s easy not to appreciate, but you and Amy made two human beings! By any definition, you guy created two beautiful human beings who would never have been otherwise. If that’s not godlike and sacred, what is? Sermons, gifts to charity, and all the other good deeds religious people talk about are nothing in comparison. Creating people is the real thing.

“And raising them well is just as important. These beings you have created have unmeasured potential. But humans can be either beneficial or harmful. It is up to their creators to make them a force for life on the earth, rather than a force of destruction and hurt. They can be either one. So once you create this awesome potential, you then have to show it the superiority of the good, the beautiful, and the beneficial. You are gods, Don, creating and training younger gods. And don’t think it’s sacrilegious for me to call you gods; the Psalms calls you gods; Jesus called

people gods. It's true. How different might things be, if people could only see themselves that way."

Walking back into the house, Phillip found a group of five or ten of the kids still singing in the living room. They asked him to join them. He smiled, and said, "No, thanks, that's for you young guys. I'm going to bed. But don't forget, we've got a meeting tomorrow at noon!"

* * * * * * *

"All right Morales, what do you have?"

"Well, sir, I've got 'em, at least partially."

Jones was ecstatic. "You've got 'em?! Who are they? Tell me where they are! How many are there?"

"I'm not that far along yet, sir. But I am getting into their data, and I can now decode at least part of it."

"All right. Good." Jones was trying to regain his composure, and Morales was again remembering the Big Bad Wolf leering at Little Red Riding Hood.

"Listen son, I want you to tell me exactly what you've found. What is there?"

"Well, I've been going through the hard drives of four different people. Two of those have the same series of encrypted data files, plus a similar set of encrypted interconnecting files. One of the computers had some of the interconnecting files password-protected, but not encrypted."

"So, can you read them?"

"Sure. Passwords aren't too much of a problem… not with the equipment we have here."

"Great. Now what did they say?"

"Well, they looked like some type of score-keeping sheet for a computer game. But that didn't really make sense, because they were not integrated with the game files I found on this woman's computer."

"So?"

"So, I looked at these files for a while, then compared some of the scores with some of her accounting records. A bunch of the numbers matched-up. These guys are doing business by trading game pieces! Pretty ingenious, really."

"All right. What's the name of this game?"

"Tango."

“Okay, and what about this woman? Who is she? What does she do?”

“She’s a graphics designer. It looks like she runs one set of books for part of her business, and a separate set of books for her game-piece business. It’s done very well. No one without a search warrant and really good hacking programs would ever be able to tell. Anyway, she does business with a lot of people, and I should be able to trace a lot of her clients, although telling which ones she traded game pieces with might be difficult.”

“What about the extra money? Where does she put it?”

“I’m not sure yet, but they seem to have sort of a bank for these things. I don’t know how that works.”

“Where does this woman live?”

“Right down the road in Santa Barbara.”

“Okay, you keep digging, and I want a report every day on what you’ve come up with. Now I’m going to get your friend involved.”

“Tim? What’s he going to be doing?”

“He’s going to make friends with the nice lady.”

* * * * * * *

James,

I just got home. If you check your email before going to bed tonight, send me an instant message.

F

Farber entered his apartment, hung his coat, and put a cup of tea into the microwave. He walked over to his windows and looked over the city while the tea was heating. After steeping his tea and throwing away the bag, he walked over to his computer to check his mail… and found Frances’ note.

JF: Hi, I’m here. What’s up?

FM: Hi James, how about meeting me back here in five minutes (I have to pee)

JF: Sold. See you in five

Jim flipped on the TV for a couple of minutes, scanning the channels. Then he came back to the computer screen.

JF: Tell me when you get here

He had to wait only a few more minutes till she showed up. He left a sports channel playing in the background.

FM: Here I am

JF: So, what's up?

FM: Oh, I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful evening I had, and to talk some more if you're not too tired

JF: Not too tired at all. And thank YOU

FM: Uh huh, and why the thank YOU?

JF: Emphasis for the cab ride

FM: So, do you always make out in the back of cabs?

JF: I will with you

FM: All right young man, no more of that (for now). I really like these people! Where on earth did you find them?

JF: Wow, long story! Let's see… … Phillip, during his Jesus Freak days, somehow met my mother. Now, you've never met my Mom, but she is full blood Korean, and attended a small Korean Church from time to time with her friends. Well, guess who they invited to speak one of those days? Phillip Donson. Anyway, my Mom really liked Phillip, and invited him over to our house for dinner. I think the fact that he was Jewish intrigued her. This was long before anyone really heard of Messianic Jews. I think she thought it would be interesting for my father as well. Phillip and I hit it off, and have been friends ever since; although I really only saw him once in a while for a long time. I think it was just over a year later that he and Julia got married.

That's the short version, of course.

FM: Whoa! So many questions… … I'll start at the top: You're half Korean? I can see some of it in you, but I wouldn't have really guessed.

JF: Yeah, I probably resemble my Dad more than my Mom. I look ethnic enough that people know I'm SOMETHING, though they're usually not sure what. I get asked if I'm Greek or Israeli a lot.

FM: Did your parents have trouble when they got married, with the cross-cultural thing?

JF: Horrible, on both sides. Eventually they all got over it, but for the first few years my parents were almost completely isolated. I remember very little difficulty from when I was a kid. They seemed to have more or less worked things out once the grandchildren came along. What about your parents? You said that your mom's family is Jewish, but your Dad isn't, is he?

FM: No, he was a Methodist from England. Although, believe it or not, he and my mom go to synagogue fairly regularly! We very seldom went to either synagogue or church as a child. They didn't have too much trouble. Most of my mom's family were murdered in the war, and a lot of Dad's relatives died too. They got married right after the war. So, two nice, living kids getting together didn't bother them too much. Grandma was always concerned that we'd have a Jewish education, but that's all.

Frances remembered that James was married at one time. She had thought about it before, but for some reason sensed that it was an uncomfortable subject for him. "Well," she thought, "this is about as good a time as I'm going to find. We're talking about our families… and we were getting pretty personal in the back of that cab."

FM: Jim, I hope I'm not bringing up an unpleasant subject, but while we're talking about families, weren't you married?

JF: Yes, I was.

FM: Tell me about it

JF: All right, but don't be mad at me if I get kind of depressed over it. All right?

FM: Okay

JF: My wife's name was Maggie… Margaret, actually. We met in our first semester of college. Fell madly in love, and got married at age 19. Our parents thought we were nuts. But we knew what we wanted, and did it without delay. Really, we grew up together. Anyway, Maggie was killed in a car wreck almost eight years later. Very sudden, and very difficult for me to take. The shock of my life.

FM: Oh my God, that must have been devastating!

JF: Yeah. I was pretty messed-up. You know what I did? I moved in with Phillip and Julia. They sort of nursed me back to health… it took months. Then, I pretty much buried myself in work for the next decade.

FM: Ouch. You seem to be doing well now.

JF: I still get sad from time to time, but not too much. Actually, remember the night you came over to the apartment to interview me? You said I looked sad. I had been sitting and thinking about some of those things. Thanks, by the way, you really helped me feel better that night.

FM: I'm glad. What was it that I did?

JF: You were happy and funny. And you liked to talk about ideas… not that many people do, you know. They talk about people or things, but not about ideas. Anyway, you just lifted me. It was nice. And you looked good too.

MF: Uh huh. Didn't I say 'enough of that for now'?

JF: Like you don't enjoy hearing it?

FM: Well, I suppose… Hey Jim, I just got an email from my old boss at the New York Times! This has to be something big. Hang on a couple of minutes, OK?

JF: Just when it was getting good :(Sure, I'll watch TV for a few minutes.

FM: You still there?????

She had to wait for just a minute for James to glance back at the monitor.

JF: Here I am.

FM: Jim, this is really odd. My old boss wants me to take a special project for him. Says he can't do it in-house for political reasons. Sound interesting?

JF: Sounds fascinating. Any other clues?

FM: Only that he says they got a tip on it, and that they found some economic stats from the Treasury that didn't add up correctly.

JF: Wow, this sounds REALLY interesting. So what's next?

FM: I'll call him tomorrow, and if he's willing to PAY me (emphasis intentional, signifying the amount I will want to collect), I'll stop in Manhattan on the way back from Delaware.

JF: Didn't you have some kind of blow-out with that guy? No details ever came out, but you were one of his regulars, then there were rumors of a fight, and then you were free-lance. (Am I asking sensitive questions now?)

FM: Not exactly. The newspapers got it wrong, as usual. I did walk out, and there were some angry words. It wasn't really his fault. More like the executive management's fault.

JF: So… ?

FM: Well, I thought I was doing really good work, and I wanted a raise. Rodney (my boss) said that he was having a hard time getting it for me; but I knew there was something else he wasn't telling me. Well, as it turned out, the big bosses didn't want to pay me more because they only had me budgeted in for a fixed amount. And HERE is the thing that made me furious: On their budget, I was listed as "Woman Financial Reporter." They had allocated money for a woman reporter. What kind of work she did was secondary! These upstairs-office jerks just wanted a female financial reporter so they would look good to their politically correct friends. My God, I was mad. So, I told them to take a flying leap, and walked out. Rodney is actually a pretty good guy. He felt bad about the whole thing.

JF: Well, I can't say I blame you. Does Rodney call you often?

FM: Occasionally. I get emails from him from time to time, and he asks me to edit things for him three or four times a year. Once in a while to check something out here in Chicago. Never asked for something like this before.

JF: Well, this sounds interesting. Are you going to tell me about it?

FM: We'll see. All right, I'm getting tired now. Off to bed. What are you doing tomorrow?

JF: To the gym in the morning, a quick swing by the office, then working at home in the afternoon. Nothing in the evening. You're working, right?

FM: Yeah, in the morning, and maybe in the afternoon.

JF: Hey. I'll be home by 2:00, why don't you just come by my apartment when you're done? We'll find something to do: Movie, theater, concert, or something. It'll be fun.

FM: OK, you're on. I'll swing by late afternoon. See ya!

JM: Great! Bye.

* * * * * * *

At noon the next day, fifteen of the Free Souls assembled in the living room of their house. Don went through the house to see if there were any stragglers, and Phillip began.

“All right gang, let me get started here. This won’t take very long, but it is very important, so please give me your full attention. My presentation will only take about ten minutes, and you can ask questions afterward if you like.

“Some of my friends and I have a situation that we need help with, and I think this is something that you guys will be interested in, and something that may well be profitable for you.

“There is a brilliant researcher – also a long-time friend of mine – who has developed methods of eliminating some of the effects of emotional damage in humans. It works by breaking down the residues and blockages caused by strong emotions, especially negative emotions.

“When you have strong emotions, molecules called neuropeptides pour into your bloodstream. These molecules actually carry your emotions through your bloodstream, and through your entire body. When a lot of these neuropeptides are repetitively produced, especially those associated with fear, anger, guilt, shock, or sorrow, they are can stick in your cells. And this is important: These neuropeptides either contribute to or cause psychiatric ailments. The treatment my friend has developed can actually break up these deposits and clear these blocked receptors. The experiments they have done show significant improvements in people with psychiatric ailments.

“What I would like for a couple of you guys to do, is to help us get it accepted for research projects. What this will require is for you to locate, contact, and inform every responsible party you can find, world-wide, and find some organization that will sanction and oversee the research and development of this treatment.

“Questions so far?”

A young woman in the front raised her hand and spoke. “Exactly how sure are you of all of this?”

“We are 100 percent certain that neuropeptides are produced by strong emotion, and transfer those chemical messages throughout the body. We are 100 percent certain that neuropeptides frequently remain stuck in cellular receptors. We are 100 percent sure that residual neuropeptides are associated with psychiatric ailments. We are 100 percent sure that we can break most of them down, and get rid of them harmlessly. We are at least 98 percent sure that doing so improves the psychiatric health of seriously afflicted people. We are 90 percent sure that we can develop protocols for every or nearly every significant form of troublesome neuropeptides deposit. And, just as a sidelight, I should add that we are 60 to 80 percent sure that the neurochemistry we’re talking about here plays an important part in the construction of the human subconscious mind.”

A question came from the side of the room. “Yes. Why are you coming to us? This seems like an ideal project for the University.”

“Good question. The answer is that we just left a University. My friend had a private lab at Northwestern for eight years, and pursued this research under a series of grants. You can actually find some of his earlier papers in the scientific journals. At first, people got excited about his work, and were glad to support it. Then, organizations that might be hurt by his work began to attack it, and his funding began to dry up. A few months ago, the University shut him down all together, and ordered him not to pursue his work any further. So, the US educational establishment is essentially our enemy right now.

“So, my friends, I have come to you because of the sign over your front door: ‘There are no rules here. That which causes benefit is welcomed.’ This discovery is a huge benefit to mankind, and though certain rulers and authorities do not wish it to continue, I think that you are capable of judging it for its merits. If some of you think that this technology will do what I say it will, I’d like you to consider helping us promote it. We will, of course, give you strong financial incentives to do so; including the possibility of an equity position.

“If some of you want to take on this project, you’ll risk the wrath of the American educational elite, but you will also bring important cures to people who are suffering. I hope that it will be exciting and profitable for you.

“Presuming that I am correct in everything I’ve said today, are any of you interested in this?” Several hands went up into the air. “Excellent, then I’ll have to prove to you that my characterization of the project is correct. Don tells me that one of you is a very good medical student.” Several members of the group pointed out Mordecai, who briefly introduced himself to Phillip.

“All right, Mordecai, I noticed that you indicated your interest. If you are willing, we’ll fly you to New York to meet with my friend for several days. You can work with him, and ask him any questions you like. He’ll show you the whole process. If you’re not sold on the idea, just walk away. Fair enough?”

“You mean I get to hang out in the inventor’s lab and work with him?”

“Absolutely.”

“Yeah! I’m in!” Mordecai was as capable as most of the scientists and researchers at FSU, and far more motivated than most of them. He had been perpetually frustrated that he was continually passed over for the best projects, simply because he was young. His abilities didn’t matter in that arena, only his lack of seniority. Now he was presented with the opportunity to live and work with a researcher of the first rank. These guys didn’t care if he was young, they only cared about what he could do. “Hell yeah!” he thought, “I’d walk to New York for a chance to work with the best.”

“All right, is it agreeable to everyone that we make Mordecai point man on this?” They agreed. “Okay Doc, when can you be ready to go?”

“How about tonight!” He enthusiasm had the whole room laughing.

“Right on, Doc, but let’s make it tomorrow morning; I’ve got some old friends to visit tonight.” Mordecai nodded agreement.

“Listen, while I’m here, are there any questions on any other subjects? After all, I was in this house at the very beginning, and if you want to know anything about the beginnings of the Free Souls, I’m one of the few guys who has the answers.” Phillip sat down and sipped a glass of water that had been sitting on a coffee table.

Both Phillip and Don were surprised that the energy level in the room, which had been fairly high already, jumped. One of the boys raised his hand and said, “Yeah, I’ve got a bunch of questions.”

“Great!” said Phillip, “fire away.”

“Well, first tell me, who actually owns this house?”

“Actually, it is held by a land trust. At first, we rented this place from an old man named Mr. Parish. After two years, we put together a financing package, and bought the place. There are ten of us who own a piece of the house, and we have a management company handle all the finances, as you must know. We more or less break even on it, except for the equity that builds from year to year.” Phillip then wondered whether the boy who asked was thinking about the future of the house. “We intend to use the house as it is now for as long as you guys, and those that follow you, wish to do so. Years from now if we are feeling old and want our equity, we’ll sell the house to a group of you guys, and pass it on.”

The next question came without a second’s wait. “Who were the people who started this? You and who else?”

“Let’s see… me, Patrick McGowan, Jimmy Galen, Cindy Levine, Bob Gordon, Jon Scott, Marilyn Johnson, Kathy Pendarvis, Paul Michaelson, and five or six others who were not quite so involved. Don and a bunch of others followed in the next few years.

“These were essentially very honest, sincere people who were disappointed with either what you would call Jesus Freak or Hippie groups… people who had done something that very few people ever do; they had changed their mode of living. We used to refer to this as changing paradigms. The word paradigm refers to a pattern – a structure of ideas through which we view the world. Once you have shifted out of the paradigm you were raised with, you realize that there is more than one way of viewing the world. I have often thought that the real essence of religious conversion was not so much divine contact, but leaving the paradigm you were born into, and thus opening your consciousness to other possibilities… dumping your first paradigm, and moving into another. When you do this, you begin to understand that the real you is a separate thing from the rules and ideas you absorbed in childhood and youth. It’s an important distinction to make.

“The people who started this place were people who had shifted paradigms once, and had then had left their second paradigms as well. That is how we ended up with

the sign that used to be over the back door 'Mind Without Paradigm.' Is it still there?"

"Yeah, we fixed it up about a year ago, but we weren't exactly sure what you guys meant by it."

"Well, we decided that we had all switched paradigms twice, and that paradigms themselves were probably a mistake in the first place. We began to look into how a mind might function with no paradigm at all. A mind that didn't automatically categorize everything that passed through it, but simply knew things for what they were, and evaluated them based upon the benefit or harm that they caused. The classic argument against this is that there is too much information to handle, and that the mind needs shortcuts, so, it categorizes things as good or bad, with only cursory analysis, having neither the speed nor the endurance to do otherwise. We wondered whether this was also wrong, and that if we could think without paradigm, the mind would open up and function in a more expanded manner.

"Now, I have no empirical evidence, but it seemed to us that this latter idea was the more correct one. Some of us Jesus guys found a verse in Ephesians that seemed to refer to this. It says, literally, that when men left their paradise, 'the channels of their intellects became petrified.' We reasoned that by thinking without paradigm, the mind might expand, and we might be able to bring some of those channels of intellect back into use. And I think we were right; though, as I say, I can't prove it.

"All right, one last question, then I have to go meet someone."

"How did this house develop into such a place of business?"

"Because we came face to face with the realities of survival on planet earth, and learned that production was necessary. As I said earlier, we were primarily ex-Hippies and Jesus people. We were people who saw something beyond a status quo material existence, and wanted the higher and better things in life. We either wanted the truth of God, or peace and love among men." Phillip paused, and a look of pain came over his face. "I have to cringe now to say 'peace and love' because it has become a cliché of Hippie speech. I can assure you that it wasn't just a cliché at the beginning. Peace and love really meant something at first. These people really believed in it. The flower-in-the-hair crowd began as people who looked for chances to help little old ladies with their groceries, who ran errands for people they barely knew, who did good deeds to people who distrusted them. And they did this not occasionally, but as a matter of practice. You guys know what the Hippies became, but not what they were at the beginning.

"But that is another story… What happened is that people like us, who wanted to live for the highest and greatest, eventually found out that living for the higher things didn't keep you fed. I'm sorry to tell you that a great many Hippies resorted to ripping off grocery stores, and finding all sorts of scams and drug deals, to support their supposedly higher lifestyle. The Jesus folks had their own vices.

“We decided that there were only two ways of surviving on planet earth: production or theft. Either you produce what you need, or you take it from someone else. Aside from a few minor gray areas, no other choice really exists. You can, of course, get a government to take it from someone else and give it to you, but that is still theft, the only difference being that you get someone else to do the dirty work for you.

“We also concluded that if we wanted to have time to do great things, we would have to make an abundance of money, so that we could work little and live much. That meant that we had to be entrepreneurial, to own our own businesses. Employees almost never get the combination of excess money and free time that we needed. So, that’s how the business aspect started.

“Listen, I really have to go now, but if you want to know something more, email me. I’m sometimes too busy to answer quickly, but I would greatly enjoy discussing questions like these.”

Phillip and Don hustled out the door to a late lunch with some of their Jesus friends from the old days.

The next day, Phillip and Mordecai got on Farber’s rented jet and flew to New York, and then drove to George’s lab in Queens.

* * * * * * *

“Hello.”

“Hi Jim. Are we still on for this afternoon?”

“You bet.”

“Great. Listen, I’m just finishing up here, then I’ve got to run drop something off at the FedEx box. Would you like me to bring some food?”

“Yeah… Listen, I’ve got a great idea… you run by a grocery store and pick up some ingredients for me, and I’ll make a nice dinner for you.”

“Yeah? Sounds nice. What do you want?”

“Let’s see… ground beef, Italian sausage, ricotta, and the makings for a salad.”

“Okay, I’ll get it. Hey, do you mind if I bring my laptop over with me? I’ve got some stuff I’d like to go over with you.”

“Sure, bring it.”

“Okay, see you in an hour or two.”

* * * * * * *

To: Assistant Director Jones

From: Agent John Morales

Following is an update on my most recent findings:

I have used certain clues I gleaned from the game records of the Santa Barbara computer to isolate similar files in four other computers. Agent Garosian as helped me find information on these people, and we now have a group of five to analyze. This is not enough to develop an accurate picture of the whole group, but it is a large enough random sample to give us an initial idea of who these people are, and what they are doing. Here are the facts:

User #1: Jody J. Narents, graphics designer, Santa Barbara, CA. 25 years old, single, no children. Most recent declared annual income: $41,000. Undeclared annual income: approx. 18,000 game pieces. (Pieces seem to trade on par with the US dollar.) Her off-book income has probably been spent on vacations and offshore investments. Aside from doing business off-the-books, she shows no sign of criminal activity, and has no criminal history. She had a number of speeding tickets between the ages of 17 and 22, but nothing significant aside from that.

User #2: Matthew A. Harrison, long-haul truck driver, St Joseph, Missouri. 36 years old, divorced, two children. Most recent declared annual income: $38,000. Undeclared income: approx. 21,000 pieces (dollars). Mr. Harrison appears to spend his extra money on offshore investments and for gifts to his ex-wife and children. One minor drug offense (marijuana) in 1989.

User #3: Stephan S. Neuman, computer consultant, Federal Way, Washington. 27 years old, single, no children. Most recent declared annual income: $15,000. Undeclared income: approx. 30,000 pieces (dollars). Mr. Neuman appears to be building a retirement account for himself with his off-books income. He also sends money to his mother. (Father is deceased.)

User #4: Dr. Kevin Hayes, dentist, Toronto, Canada, 38 years old, married, two children. Most recent declared annual income: $108,000 (Canadian). Undeclared income: approx. 50,000 pieces (US Dollars). Dr. Hayes seems to have used his extra money to purchase equipment for his practice. I am not yet sure how the money changed hands, but Dr. Hayes started his own practice recently, and had to purchase a lot of new equipment; he seems to have used his off-book money.

User #5: Roger Swenson, business consultant, Gibralter, age unknown, marital status and children unknown. Declared income, unknown, undeclared income 24,000 pieces (USD). No further information.

Quality of information: Age, income, family status, residence, and occupational information has been verified by IRS contacts, and by Canadian Revenue in the case of Dr. Hayes. We have had extreme difficulty obtaining information on Mr. Swenson. He apparently has been very careful to make himself invisible. His computer files are in English, heavy with both British and American idioms. How he obtained Gibralter residency, we do not know. The records themselves have implied how these people sent their money, although not clearly enough to be certain.

Further investigation: One of the first things we want to do is to track these people's travels through the Internet. This has become very difficult, because they all, thus far, have used anonymizing services or anonymous proxies. In order to decrypt their files, we will need physical access to their computers and their passphrases. We have identified fourteen other computers with the central group of encrypted files on them, but their ancillary files are encrypted as well, and we cannot read them. We have been able to access the computers of the people mentioned above only because they failed to use all the security at their disposal.

End of Report

* * * * * * *

Michael,

We just got a distress call from one of our customers, a dentist in Toronto: Our security routine traced someone hacking into his system. We traced the signal, and it appears to be from the FBI! They used an anonymous proxy, but it just so happens that a friend of a friend runs the service (we do get lucky once in a while, don't we?), and he made an 'educated guess' that it was a law enforcement agency from the LA area.

It is now after-hours on the west coast, and we can deal with this several different ways. What do you advise?

Jimmy

Michael had been working late, as usual, and saw the message almost the instant it arrived. He immediately wrote back to Jimmy, telling him to assure the dentist that they would have an answer for him in two to four hours, and to reassure the man that they'd come up with a solution for him. Then, he immediately grabbed a secure telephone to search for Phillip or Farber. He was lucky; within a minute or two, he had both of them on the line.

The first voice was that of Farber. “All right Mike, call your legal people right away, including Bari, and see how we can safeguard this man. That has to be job number one.”

“Agreed,” said Phillip, “can you get this done in a few hours?”

“Well, I’m not sure about finding Bari in time, but I should be able to give you a partial answer in a few hours.”

“Great. Please do that, and email the answer to us; we’ll both stay close to our computers. Sound good to you James?”

“Yeah, Phillip, that’ll work… Mike, write back to the dentist right away, and tell him to relax, that we’ll be taking good care of him. Don’t make any specific promises till we talk again, but let him know that we will spend money to protect him if necessary.”

“Jim?”

“Yeah Phillip?”

“Instant message me in a couple of minutes, all right?”

“Will do.”

“All right Mike, we’ll expect to hear from you in a couple of hours.”

“Absolutely.”

JF: You there?

PD: Yep.

JF: You’re thinking of something devious, aren’t you?

PD: How could you tell?

JF: The tone of your voice on the phone, and ‘yep’. What is it?

PD: Do you remember a book I lent you years ago on intelligence and spycraft, by a guy named Epstein?

JF: Yeah, actually I do; it was a good book. I used some of the ideas in gathering financial information. That book and Sun Tzu.

PD: So, if we can do it without hurting the dentist, how about giving the FBI some disinformation?

JF: Sounds interesting. Let me think about it for a minute.

Phillip waited, thinking gently of the primary factors involved, and letting a slow stream of ideas filter up to his analytical process.

JF: All right, here's how I see it: If we keep the FBI off our track, we'll buy time, which is the thing we really need. There's no way they'll stop us before Gamma Central is done, but I'd really like to have enough time to develop it before we turn it loose. On the other hand, once the FBI figures out that we've played them, they'll want to strike back all the harder, and really go after whoever they can.

PD: I agree. But the FBI will go after them tooth and nail anyway; will the fact that we played them make that much of a difference?

JF: No, perhaps not; if they started by going after technicians for treason, I guess there's not much worse they can do. ALSO: Bari has indicated that we can probably get the first batch of cases thrown out of court. And since the dentist is in Canada, that might be all the better.

PD: True. This is sounding pretty good, but what if you were the dentist, what would make you feel better about it all?

JF: The fact that we would pay for all the legal fees, and that we were willing to throw money at the problem.

PD: All right, then I think we have our answer: We tell the dentist that we'll pay all legal fees, and will provide supplemental assistance if required. We should put some money in escrow, and have Bari take care of the situation.

JF: Great, but Bari shouldn't be told of the disinformation, it might force him into a position where he has to choose between us and his professional oaths.

PD: Good point, I hadn't thought of that. OK, we'll ask the dentist if he'll go along with us on this, and we also make the pledge to cover his risks. Agreed so far?

JF: Yes.

PD: Now, as to our disinformation, I think we have two objectives:

1. Eliminate or reduce any evidence against the dentist.

2. Lead the FBI on a long, involved chase.

JF: Sold, but how do we do this?

PD: Well, we have to have someone give this lots of thought. One person should be assigned to this task, and hand off his or her existing chores to someone else. Do we have someone who would do a good job of this?

JF: Yeah, I'm sure that Mike can put one of his people on it, but we had better give them some guidance.

PD: All right… Bari and/or the legal people should find ways of taking what the FBI has looked at, and making it less useful for proving that the dentist did anything wrong. Then, we need to lead the FBI down an errant path. To do this best, we must (and I quote Vladimir Lenin) 'give them what they want.' Dangle something in front of them that they'll be happy (but not too happy) to find. Plant disinformation for them to uncover later. For example, have our programmers change some of the file info in the doc's computer, so that it leads the FBI in the wrong (but not too wrong) direction. Then, when they're ready, give the FBI some way of finding the doc's PGP passphrase, so they can decrypt all his files. Have him do his real business on-line from an Internet café, and give him slightly misleading information to run through his home computer. We can do this until the FBI realizes that they are being misled. So, we have to give them some fully verifiable (but only minorly damaging) information from time to time.

Whoever does this should read the books we talked about before (and others), and should spend full-time on this from tomorrow onward. We need one smart and devious guy who obsesses on this. If we obsess, and if they don't, we win. Make sense?

JF: Yes. I'll copy this and send it to Mike. I'll send you an update later on. Go to bed, you need your sleep.

PD: Why James, you do care.

JF: Yeah, yeah, go to bed.

There was a voice message waiting for Phillip in the morning. "All right Phillip, here's the deal: The dentist has agreed to help us, so long as we cover legal expenses. He's not worried about the escrow account, but we're setting it up anyway; he'll probably worry later. Mike is putting Bari on the case immediately, and we're being careful with the FBI; they need to be oblivious that we're on to them hacking the doc. Mike is also putting one of his guys – Richard, one of your Free Souls – on the disinformation campaign full-time. The guy is handing-off his existing work today, and will be full-time on espionage tomorrow. Sounds like he thinks it to be great fun.

"Let's see if there is anything else… Oh yeah, we're setting up a legal defense plan – like the old Home School Legal Defense Fund. Everyone who wants to be included pays a small fee, and if they ever get in trouble, the fund covers their legal expenses. Also, we're sending notes around to all our other customers on how to avoid these problems. Our tech guys figured out how the FBI got in, and it turns out to be poor security practices. So, we'll let everyone know. That's it. Call me later if you have any other ideas. I'll be in the office from about ten o'clock till noon. Bye."

* * * * * * *

Farber got home from the office, and did some quick clean up to make sure the place was presentable. He double-checked his birth control stash, just in case things went really well.

Frances walked through the door at 2:30 p.m., with several bags of groceries and a laptop. James grabbed the bags from her, and made her sit down in the kitchen while he cooked for her. She thought it was sweet – she always liked a man who would cook for her. She felt relaxed and comfortable, and sipped tea while James cooked. They talked about Phillip and Julia, old friends, their families, and half a dozen other subjects.

Frances was becoming very comfortable with Jim. She was so pleased to have a bright, knowledgeable, good man to talk to. She realized that this was a man who she could really let herself love.

James noticed that he was alternating between admiring Frances' thoughts and… the rest of her.

They ate at Farber's kitchen island. Afterward, Frances washed the dishes, while James sat next to her on the kitchen counter, discussing past, present, and future. The future parts were a bit charged. Both were thinking about their future with the other, but stepped around it for the moment. They each knew exactly what the other was thinking, and how they were dancing around the subject; yet each had the grace to let the dance continue for a while.

Then they moved into the living room, sat on the couch next to each other, and watched the world go by, through James' floor-to-ceiling windows above the city. The cuddled, checked the news, kissed, and relaxed. James got an afghan from the hall closet to keep them warm. They kicked-off their shoes and Frances made herself comfortable, laying against James' chest. She fell asleep.

At first, James was felt very happy; satisfied actually. He was relaxed, with a woman he really loved relaxing with him. Then, he remembered. The feeling of a woman you really care about in your arms… comfortable with you, trusting you, loving you. He couldn't help thinking of Maggie. Frances was taking Maggie's place. That bothered him. Of course there was nothing to be done about Maggie being gone, and he knew that she would want him to find another good woman. He began to cry gently. There was no noise, but slow, steady tears. Frances slept contentedly.

Thus far, James was all right. "This is good," he thought, "probably cathartic… I need to work through this. I've got an hour or two before Frances wakes up, I can think through all of it." He knew that he wanted to spend his life with Frances, just as he once wanted to spend it with Maggie. He didn't feel like he was cheating on Maggie, but that he was cheating her of his love… love that she had earned. "Yes,"

he almost spoke aloud, it was the accident that cheated them both, but he still felt that he was giving away Maggie's property.

It was his libido that broke him. Laying on the couch, feeling Frances' body next to his, of course he was aroused. But it was the quality of it that was too much for him. James had dated and slept with a number of women since Maggie died, and they most certainly excited him sexually. This was different. This was a woman that he really loved and wanted to share his life with; not just a short time, not just a few good times. The excitement he felt was something deeper, rising in him, not by outer stimulation of beautiful sights and touches, but inner springs that those sights and touches opened up. This was not drawn out of him, it was let out, the opening of a fountain. He had not experienced this for so long that he had simply stopped thinking about it. It was a feeling that he had many times, many years ago. With Maggie… who was no longer the only woman he ever really loved.

It all fell on him now: Losing Maggie, how terribly, terribly she was treated by life… Frances Marsden, a woman he knew he could love, and the fear that she might love him. Having to confront the crime of giving his love to another woman than Maggie. Maggie, who made him what he was, who was cruelly removed from the best of their lives, and now replaced by another. He was thinking in concepts, pictures rather than words, which made it all the more clear. "What if I love Frances more than Maggie? What more could be done to her? And at my hand. Not only is she dead, but then I love another woman more than her!" He was weeping now; and Frances was beginning to awaken.

He tried to remember everything that Phillip and Julia had told him after the accident, but only recalled pieces. He kept weeping. Now Frances was opening her eyes… in just seconds she would look at him and realize what was happening. What would he say? "Oh God," escaped his mouth. He was desperate, and could remember only the voice of his Father: "There's no use pretending that it isn't so."

* * * * * * *

"So, how's it going John?"

"I don't know Max, this whole situation rubs me the wrong way, though I'm not sure why."

"All right, I'll be back in a few minutes, and we can talk about this. But first, did you go see that lawyer, and give him the hundred bucks?"

"Yeah, today. That's what prompted me to come in."

"Okay kid, I'll be back in a few minutes."

Max went to make his rounds of the establishment, to make sure that everything was running well, and that he could spend some time with Morales. "This is not an

easy one," he thought, "a test of principles." Then he thought back to his first experience with law and justice:

He was a boy in Baltimore, being chased around the neighborhood by bigger, older, and far meaner kids. On a lucky day they would only steal his lunch money. His parents barely spoke English, and were working non-stop to get ahead. They never really knew.

One day the usual bullies found him on his way home from school. Max did the only thing he could do – run. The bullies were older and faster than him, but sometimes he was far enough ahead to make the chase too much effort for the few coins he had in his pockets. The bullies caught Max just as he reached a busy commercial street, and as they began to pull him back to the alley, a huge Swedish policeman stepped out of a barber shop near the corner, and followed them.

The bullies were slapping Max, angry that he made them run so far. And just then, the policeman came around the corner, pulled his night stick, and hit one of the bullies in the back of the leg, with tremendous force. The boy screamed and fell to the ground, unable to get up. "All right you menaces, back up against the wall." There was a high fence on one side, and the policeman forced them back to the corner, where they were held by the wall and the fence. None dare test the reach of the tall policeman's baton.

Max was getting up, and the policeman said, "You stay right there lad. We'll see what we can do about this situation." The policeman was very stern, even frightening, but not malicious. He was judge and jury combined, in his own mind, and to everyone in that alley. "They stealing money from you child?" Max paused, and looked at his oppressors. "You look at me son! How long have they been taking your money?"

"Along time, sir… one or two years."

"Well then.." He glared at the bullies. "Empty your pockets. Put it all down on the ground in front of you." They complied. "Now, turn around, all of you, and kneel down." The three bullies against the wall now looked terrified. "You do as I say or I'll cripple you all!" The obeyed. The boy on the ground was beginning to crawl away, slowly.

The policeman walked over to the largest bully, stepped on one of his ankles, grabbed his hair, and pulled his head backward. "Son, you come over here." Max came. The policeman extended his baton, offering it to Max. "Now son, you take my stick, and you hit this menace in the head with it." Max took the baton, but didn't move toward the bully. He froze. "You listen to me son, if you don't pay him back, he'll keep doing this, and you'll always be his victim. Justice must be done!" Max still didn't move. "He held you down and beat you son, again and again. Swing the stick, or I'll hit you myself!"

Max swung. As he did, he was at first horrified and afraid, and then, he began to feel his anger and humiliation surfacing. The pain, the fear, and the weakness that he had not let himself feel when the bullies abused him… it all began to rise back up inside of him. The policeman watched Max's face. "Give it all back to him son!" He swung again, this time with vengeance, tears of release pouring from his face. "Again." The third time harder still. The bully was now bleeding and stunned; the third blow was a good one.

The policeman threw the bully backwards and stepped between the last two: One foot on each of their legs, and both heads pulled back. "Now this one son! Give the injury back to him!" Max struck twice, very hard. The policeman threw the second one backwards. "Finish up now, son. Give it all back to them!" Max swung again, another two brutal shots to the head. The policeman threw the last one down, and took the baton back from Max.

"What is your name son?"

"Maxwell Kaminski." Max was crying copiously, shaking, and feeling a tremendous sense of both anxiety and relief.

"You go to school around the corner?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right then son, I'll check on you from time to time." Then the man looked directly into Max's eyes. "Remember this son. You deserve justice. When animals like them hurt you, you hurt them back. Do justice, son. It's not for someone else to do, it is for you to do. Don't let them destroy the world."

He paused. "Now, take your money and go home."

Over the next few months, Max learned that after he had left, the Swedish cop had threatened to cripple any of the bullies if he ever heard from Max again. As it was, the boy who was hit in the back of the leg limped for at least a year.

It wasn't being saved by the policeman that drew Max into the justice business, it was because the policeman made sure that the victim was made whole. Not only that the money was restored, but the victim's sense of honor and worth. The man believed in justice all the way, and was not afraid to see that it was done all the way.

That standard of justice is what Max had always been after. He hated to hear his business called 'law enforcement.' "Law enforcement," he used to say, "is a cheap substitute for justice. Half-justice at best, and frequently much less." The further he rose in the ranks of the FBI, the more he was forced to do 'law enforcement,' and the less real justice he could pursue. So he stayed as a field agent and learned to invest his money rather than taking the raises that came with promotions.

Max got up from the chair where he had inadvertently set down, finished his rounds, and went back to find Morales.

While waiting for Max, Morales had thought again of what kind of trouble he could get into for talking about a case. “But I may get in a pile of trouble anyway,” he thought. In any event, he trusted Max, and didn’t trust anyone else he worked with. Not even Timothy any more.

Tim Nickelson was growing to love special treatment. He liked nice offices and free food. It wasn’t so much the quality of the food that he liked, but the fact that it was being provided to him for free. He was impressed by the way people deferred to Jones… by the way people feared him. Morales didn’t like the way Tim was changing, although he was having a hard time saying exactly why.

“All right son, what’s going on?”

“Lots of things, Max. There are two real problems. The first is the issue of the warrants, like we talked about before. The other is that I don’t like what we’re doing. We’re hacking into normal people’s computers, and digging through their financial data. Now I don’t mind doing that for a thief or a drug dealer, but these are truck drivers and dentists; normal working people with families and respectable jobs. These are not criminals in any normal sense of the word.”

“Then why is Jonesy after them?”

Morales looked up at Max with like a confused child looking to a parent for an answer. “I’m not really sure… At first they told us that these people were trying to bankrupt the government of the United States. But that is ridiculous; at worst, they are evading some of their income tax. Maybe they’re violating the tax code, but they’re not really criminals.”

“And what did he tell you next?”

“Jones has me looking for what these people call ‘cracks in the matrix’ – any angle people can find to avoid government regulation. Jones wants me to catalog every way of avoiding regulation that currently exists in the United States.”

“That’s pretty scary, John.”

“Yeah, I think so, too. I don’t like it Max.”

“No, I don’t blame you kid. Listen, you stay here. I’ll be back in a little while. And for God’s sake, buy a drink once in a while!”

Max went into the back office, and called Bari. “Tony? Listen, why don’t you come by here in two or three hours. I’ve got a lot more things to talk to you about… Good… Ciao.” This time there was no friendly banter between the two. Max was deadly serious, and Bari recognized it immediately.

Max made his way back to Morales via the kitchen. He checked on his operations, and thought of where this was leading. “Where is the justice in this?” he said to himself. “Where is the damage, and how can it be corrected?”

Max decided that, first of all, damage was being done to Morales. This was a decent kid who was being thrown into the middle of something that was simply beyond him. If anything went wrong, he would be made into the patsy, and would take the fall for the bureau. Jones was playing fast and loose with the rules, and it was becoming increasingly likely that things would eventually blow up.

Then there was the question of the people who were avoiding taxation. “Where is the harm?” Max asked himself. “They don’t hurt anyone, but they aren’t putting the required money into the government’s hands… maybe a little harm… they want to keep their money in their own hands… Hell, I’ve done the same thing… just not as well.” The reasoning began to get difficult and slow now. On one hand, Max understood wanting to avoid taxation… who didn’t? On the other… the rules were that everybody had to pay… not paying was supposed to be the same as stealing from others. But why? How? There seemed nowhere to go with the thought; paying was your duty, your obligation, service to the country that supported and saved you. Just then the phrase “there are things that you do not question” jumped into his mind. And immediately after, he remembered something Bari had told him years ago: “When someone would rather that you didn’t think too deeply, beware. There’s something wrong somewhere.” Max took a note pad from his pocket, and wrote on it “Why is non-payment of taxes evil?” It would be too difficult for him to figure out now; he’d have to wait for a quiet time. But he did want to analyze it slowly. He headed back to Morales, but on the way he wanted to complete his thinking of the subject of Jones, the investigation, and where this would lead.

“Okay, assuming that tax evasion is bad, is Jones’ response to this appropriate? No, it’s way over the edge. An appropriate response would be to correct the damage, and to make sure that it doesn’t happen again. Jones is going for blood; that’s wrong. Then, he’s trying to find any way of avoiding regulation. That is wrong… that’s not just eliminating harm… that’s pushing everyone into a big box, and sealing the lid.”

Max was still unsure of where Jones’ investigation was leading, but he was sure that he didn’t like it. He walked up to the bar, and sat next to Morales. “Listen John, I don’t know where Jones is going with all of this, but it’s starting to smell pretty bad to me. What else can you tell me?”

“Well, I found other people who have been communicating through this secret system. I can’t quite prove that all of them are, but it’s all but certain. Anyway, most of them have good enough computer security that I can’t read their stuff, but a few of them were negligent, and I got into their records.”

“These are the people you used the warrants for, and hacked your way in. Right?”

“Yes. And I could tell that they were running their businesses half on the books, and half off.”

“All right, anything else they did wrong?”

“No. Aside from that, they’re mostly straight arrows.”

“And Jones is putting several agents on this case full-time?”

“Yeah.”

“Jesus! My father did half his business off the books! So do half the restaurants in LA! Why does Jones want these guys so bad?”

“It’s the big bosses in Washington, Max. Jones wants to impress them.”

“John, let me ask you a question. The first charge they brought against those European guys was treason; whose idea was that?”

“I’m pretty sure it was the guys from Washington.”

Max sat still for what seemed like minutes. He thought, “Regular people cheating on their taxes. Why is the bureau so hot on this? Why isn’t the IRS handling this?”

“John, how many people are doing this secret business thing?”

Morales paused, wondering how Max had come to that particular question. He froze for too long. Max knew something was stirring in him. “Listen kid, if this is too sensitive, remember that I don’t want to hear it. Now I won’t tell you that again, but it will still stand.”

“Uh, no, don’t worry about it. It’s just that I was going through some of that today.”

“And you found what?”

“I can’t be entirely sure yet, but I think there are thousands of them.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, I think so… All right, I haven’t mentioned this before, but I want you to know… The NSA thinks that this is widespread, and they’re actually finding account imbalances.”

“Whoa! That’s a big deal.”

“Yeah.”

“So the National Security Agency is pushing Jones.”

“Yes, but he likes it too. He’s enjoying being an important man.”

“Yes, I understand Jones. What else did the NSA say?”

“Well, aside from warning me that I’d go to jail if I said anything, the guy just said that they’ve been worried about the Internet since it became popular, and that now people were beginning to do business privately over the Net… that they weren’t able to track them well, and that they wanted to find some of the people doing it, and to make examples of them.”

“I see… they want to catch these regular people, so they can string them up and disembowel them in public.”

“Yes.”

“And that’s what really bothers you; that these people will be punished far beyond their guilt? And that you will be responsible for fingering them?”

“Yes.”

“You know what John? I like you.”

“Thanks.” Morales looked a bit sad and concerned.

“Well, I’ll tell you something kid: The more we talk, the less likely those people are to be publicly crucified.”

* * * * * * *

Bari made his way into Max’s at about midnight.

“Hey, I thought you weren’t going to come.”

“Well, I got stuck talking to an old client after the opera. Sorry.”

“Ah, don’t worry about it. Why don’t you go back to my office and pour yourself a glass of Cognac. I’ll be back in a minute. Pour one for me too.”

Max finished his work errands, and came back to the office. He picked up his Cognac, took a sip, and leaned back in his chair.

“Tony, we’ve got a real problem here. This thing is bigger than I thought it was… and this kid could get in some serious trouble if you do your job well.”

“You mean that if I tear into the FBI’s case, they’ll pin it all on this kid?”

“Yeah. At least that’s what I’m worried about.”

“Jesus, Max, there’s getting to be a list of innocents who stand to get hurt here!”

“Tony, I don’t know how we’re going to deal with this correctly. Why don’t you start by telling me about your clients.” Bari stopped and thought for a minute… to talk too much about them would violate his professional oaths. He had done that once or twice, but he didn’t want to rush into it.

“All right Max, I’ll tell you this: I like these guys. They tell me the truth, they ask intelligent questions and give intelligent answers… and when their employees were in trouble, they stayed on the case until I got them out of it… then they thanked me and paid me. And these were not executives in trouble, they were low-level employees, the ones a lot of organizations consider expendable. These guys have honor.”

Max, who had been leaning forward and listening intently, again leaned back and sipped his Cognac. “Yeah, that’s what I thought. All right, let me tell you what I know. But first, you do agree to help my friend if he gets in trouble?”

“The young agent? Certainly!”

“Okay… first of all it is the NSA that is driving this. They’ve apparently been worried about the Internet since it began, and have been looking for financial imbalances caused by Internet commerce. Apparently they have found some, and they’re tracing it to your clients. Now, they want to find a few normal people to make examples of, and scare everyone else away from your clients’ services.”

“So, they’re going Stalin on us?”

“I’m afraid so.”

Both men sat in their chairs and sipped their drinks for a few minutes.

“By the way Tony, how exactly are your guys doing this?”

“I’m not sure of the technicalities, but they told me that they ran a private marketplace.”

“All right, how about explaining a ‘private market’ to a guy like me with no college?”

Bari laughed, “Ah Max, stupid you are not. Anyway, a private market is a place where people do business with no one else knowing. The way things have always been for us, is that one or more governments are always looking into every business transaction. They make everyone give reports, they can look into any bank records at any time, and they reserve the right to change any transaction they want to. We’re used to this, and we accept it as normal, but a hundred and fifty years ago, people would have gone crazy over such an intrusion. Anyway, these guys have made a marketplace where only the people involved know the details. Private commerce – no one snooping on your business.”

“And is that illegal?”

“That’s a good question. It’s certainly no violation of the basic laws. But beyond that, it gets murky. For instance, if you classify these guys as a financial institution, then they are in violation of many financial regulations. But are they a bank? Not exactly. So, no, this is probably not directly against the law, but it would be a cinch to make them sound like criminals.”

“And what about the people using them? Doing business privately, is that illegal?”

Bari laughed. “Same thing! No, it’s not technically illegal, but if you don’t tell the government about what you do in a private market, *that* would be illegal. And the fact that the government can’t verify how much business you did means that they’d never believe you. They’d always be coming after you for taxes that you might have cheated on.”

“And what about taxes?”

“I asked them about that. They told me that some of their customers were avoiding taxes, but that they didn’t consider it their business. Essentially, they said that taxes were an issue between their customers and their governments – that they weren’t going to get in the middle. But they also said that most of their customers aren’t using the private market only to avoid taxes. In particular they mentioned doctors who retire on paper, but continue to do business with patients through the private marketplace.”

Max looked shocked, as if something frightening had just occurred to him. “Shit! I think my brother in law does that!” Bari sat still and waited for Max to continue. “I mean, I’m not sure about the private market part of it, but this guy retired at sixty-five, even though he loved practicing medicine and was really good at it. We asked him why, and he said that all of the paperwork made his life miserable, and that all of the regulations made it difficult to treat his patients properly. Also, that the malpractice insurance was insane. So he quit. But several times I’ve seen patients going in or out of his house. Jesus, if he’s not in that private market, he should be for his own safety!”

“Well, that’s what my clients tell me.”

Max sat still for a moment more, thinking about his brother-in-law, and the injustice of what could happen to him for treating patients – for healing people – outside of the system. Then a look of resolution passed over his face, and then the look of an impartial inquisitor.

Max thought slowly and meticulously. He had developed this method of analysis over years of solving criminal cases… get to the fundamental, primary facts or forces involved, go through them one by one, slowly, and make notes. Chart the facts, draw lines connecting ideas or events, and very slowly, very carefully, build the entire situation. He started writing on a pad of paper: boxes, lines, notes, and lists on second and third sheets.

“Okay, resolved that this type of thing is not inherently unjust. But what about the problem of taxes? Obviously taxes are reduced by using the private market. How much harm does that cause? Some good comes from using the private market, in cases like my brother in law’s. How much harm is done when a lot of people don’t pay the IRS? Does the harm offset the good?” He looked up at Bari for an answer.

“Max, I don’t know.”

“Well, we have to find that out. As far as I am concerned, that is the pivotal factor. If the benefit is greater, then your boys are heroes. If not, they need to shut down.”

“All right then, Max, let me present it to them, and see what they have to say.”

“Done deal. Let me know as soon as you have an answer.”

* * * * * * *

"Oh my God, James, what's wrong?"

Farber involuntarily hugged Frances, and sobbed. "This has to be about Maggie," she thought. Frances had, since their conversation after the dinner with Phillip and Julia, been trying to understand how the loss of Maggie affected James. "Of course, it had to have been horrible," she had reasoned, "but he's an awfully strong man, and this has affected him for a long time. If I don't get a handle on this right away, it might doom our relationship."

"All right," she thought, "this is the time when I have to solve this. This is where and when my future with this man turns."

"James, this is about Maggie, isn't it?" He nodded, and felt a bit better. "Jim, listen to me. We have to solve this now. Tell me what's bothering you. Farber felt embarrassed to tell her. Here he was, a well-known tough-guy businessman, crying in a woman's arms. Phillip had told him a hundred times that such ideas were harmful, but he felt it anyway. But he didn't feel it strongly enough to ruin his life for it. Again, he remembered his dad, "There's no use pretending it isn't so." He started to breathe deeply and slowly, and to calm down.

"All right Frances, here's the full truth…" He breathed deeply once more, and resigned himself to telling all, and damn the consequences. "I hadn't been hurt by thinking of Maggie for a long time, until I became interested in you. Why do you think I gave you that interview? Sure, you're a good reporter, but interviews are not good for me personally, or my business. I agreed to the interview because I wanted to meet you."

"Yeah, I wondered why at first. I thought maybe you were thinking about using me in some type of strategy. But the meeting at your office convinced me that you were not being nefarious, and the second interview here in your apartment convinced me that the interview was a way to get to me. I was flattered, actually."

"Well, do you know why I cut the first interview short? It was because I decided I was right about you, and for the first time in years, I cried again." Frances' first emotion was relief. If the sadness had stopped for several years, that was good news. It meant that Jim didn't have a chronic problem, just a situational one.

"Jim, that means that this is all related to me. But me doing what? Being what?"

"I was pretty sure that you were the girl I was looking for, but when I became sure of it…" His voice trailed off. Frances again got her determined look.

"When you became sure of it, you thought about me… replacing Maggie?" He nodded and cried. Now she knew what she had to do, at least in general terms.

"James, you listen to me, and listen very carefully. I don't want to replace Maggie. I *can't* replace Maggie. She was one part of your life, and I'm another." As soon as

the words had left her mouth, she thought to herself, "Well, I guess I really am that far committed."

"I know," James replied. "But…" She waited. "… It's…" He breathed deeply again, and spoke with great pain in his voice, "It's that I am afraid that I'll love you more than I loved her. What worse could happen to her?"

Where her next statement came from Frances didn't know. It was certainly nothing she had ever thought of previously. It seemed to fall out of the ether and pass swiftly through her mind, on its way to her tongue.

"Jim, you'll love me in *addition* to Maggie. I don't have to take anything away from her. My brother has three children, and his wife told me how afraid she was when they were having their second. She said that she loved her daughter so much that she didn't think she'd have any love left to give to the second child. And then, when the second child was born, she loved that one just as much, with her love for the first remaining unchanged. It'll be that way for you, Jim. I wouldn't want you to stop loving Maggie; I just want you to love me also." He hugged her tightly.

"And as far as you loving me more – that is certainly possible. After all, you are a much more mature man than you were at age nineteen when you fell in love with Maggie. I expect that your capacity for love has increased since then."

Farber was stunned. He stopped crying. "You're right," was all he said, and looked thoughtfully into the distance. "Now," thought Frances, after deciding not to wonder about where her ideas had come from until she had extra time, "I need to understand him and Maggie." She sat with him for a few more minutes, then got up from the sofa, turned on the lights, got him a wet rag from the bathroom, and sat down across from him. Farber was almost back to normal, save that he was emotionally spent.

"Jim, I want you to do something for me."

"What?"

"I want to get to know Maggie. You've got photo albums, letters, and things like that, don't you?"

"Yes."

"All right. I want you to get them out for me, and I want you to go see a movie, or a concert, or something. Give me a few hours alone to do this."

James agreed, and began, slowly, putting photo albums and papers on the dining room table. Then he stopped, and stood still. "What is it, Jim?"

"Well, I might as well give it all to you." She gave him a confused look, as if to say, "I have no idea what you are talking about." He walked back into the bedroom, and emerged with a file folder. "These," he said, "are the really important ones. When Maggie first died, and I was so broken up, Julia suggested that I write her a goodbye letter. It seemed like a good idea, and it made me feel better. So, I wrote more. I haven't written one in a while, but if you want to understand this whole

thing, you should read them." Frances looked worried. She had been looking for glimpses into their lives together, but this was really personal, and she thought this might be going too far.

"No, really, it's okay. If there were anything in here that Maggie would be embarrassed about, I wouldn't show it to you. It's okay." She looked relieved.

"Listen, I'm going to go now. I'll probably go eat somewhere, then maybe to a movie. I'll call you before I come back." She kissed him and saw him out the door. Then she poured herself a glass of wine, walked over to the floor-to-ceiling windows, and looked down on the city for a few minutes. Watching life go on. She went to the table, sat down, and started looking at photos.

The photos showed two happy young people doing all the things that young lovers do: The wedding, the road trip, working at desks piled high with papers, moving into a house, playing tennis, attending events, watching television with friends, and so on. She thought that she would much rather have been in Maggie's place than working her newspaper beat in Wilmington.

Then she found the obituary. A young woman – a fine young woman – cut down at the most vital time of her life. It really was a tragedy. There were only one or two photos from the time of the funeral. James looked hollow, and it was obvious that he was leaning on his father for physical support. The canceled checks and other papers indicated that his parents stepped in and handled almost everything for him for a while. She recognized his father's name; he was well-known in the banking business.

She separated out the notes, including the ones James wrote after her death, which might give her some insight regarding Maggie. After an hour of reading, the picture began to come into focus: Maggie was the free spirit that encouraged James to not be afraid, and to do what he thought was right. James, for all his knowledge and energy, was still a young man, and was reluctant to fly in the face of the rest of the world. He wanted to be a deal-maker like his grandfather, but the world had changed and Grandpa's free-wheeling world had now been regulated. The deal-makers had either been shut-down or brought into the system. It was a time of conformity, and being different was frowned upon in the business world. Maggie gave him the courage to do what he really wanted to do. "So," she thought out loud, "when she died, it was not just a companion and lover, it was his spirit of courage that died."

Frances was satisfied that she had at last understood the unusual part of James' loss. Now, she understood what she was getting into, and she was reasonably sure she could handle it. Just then, the computer screen on the other side of the room

came on; apparently it had been on some sort of sleep-cycle. She walked over to see if it needed any attention, and saw that there was an instant message from Phillip Donson.

JF: Hi Phillip, James isn't here. This is Frances.

PD: Hi Frances! What's news?

JF: Listen, Phillip, this is fortuitous timing. I'd like to talk to you about James. Is that OK?

PD: Sure. But first, am I correct that you guys are getting serious?

JF: Yeah. Really serious. Anyway, here's my concern: I'm trying to understand the loss of Maggie, and why it hurt him so badly. I've decided that Maggie gave him the confidence and encouragement he needed to pursue his dreams. And that when she died, he wondered if he could do it on his own, and it took him a while to recover from it because he lost not only a wife, but a muse and courage. Make sense? Do you agree?

PD: Wow, I'm impressed. Yes, you're mostly correct. Maggie (who I met, but didn't know all that well) was very bright and alive. She didn't have Jim's enormous capacities, but she was exactly what he needed at the time. Maybe more than he needed in some ways.

JF: What do you mean "more than he needed?"

PD: All right, follow me here, and let me know if it makes sense: Maggie sort of super-charged James. Her sense of living was contagious, and James took it in happily. It was easy for him to lean on that. And she was pleased to have him lean on it; it was her natural gift, and it made her feel great to bring Jim's abilities to life. Make sense thus far?

JF: Yes. Continue.

PD: Well, in the rush of action, Jim kept leaning on Maggie. Too much, I think. So, when she was gone, the loss was even greater. Agree?

JF: I think so. Anything else?

PD: Let's see… yes, two things. First is this: It is not grinding difficulties and long endurance that break men. It is the unexpected that breaks men's spirits. Certainly Maggie – so alive – could never have been expected to die in her twenties. An utter shock. The unexpected is always tough, and everyone has a breaking point of one sort or another. (Most of us are lucky enough never to reach it.) Humans are strong, but not infinitely strong. Even if it takes torture, everyone can be somehow broken. If it's not too bad, like in Jim's case, they can recover just fine. (If it is something really horrible, they don't.) Secondly, there is almost always a deep emotional link between a man and the significant woman in his life. Now, I'm not talking about love here. I am talking about a sort of dependence. Still with me?

JF: No, not completely.

PD: OK, are you familiar with childhood trauma, and how it affects people?

JF: Not very well.

PD: There is a peculiar thing that happens to us. When something traumatic affects us emotionally as infants (before we learn to speak well), the effect remains, but we don't put it into words. It more or less remains as a feeling only, not a clear idea. So, when something reminds us of the original trauma later, we get a strong feeling, but don't really understand why. Good so far?

JF: Uh huh.

PD: Well, probably the number one early trauma is fear of mother abandonment. After all, as an infant, your mother is everything, and does everything. She is the source. It is very easy for an infant to feel abandoned, worried that Mom won't come back (they don't know where she goes or what she does), and that they'll die. This conditions males to over-dependence on the most important woman in their life (usually the wife). I noticed this in myself not too long after Julia and I were married. She went out, and didn't come back when she said she would. It really bent me out of shape. Eventually I figured it out, but for years I wondered why it bothered me the way it had. This is the irrational (and frequently the driving) element of male jealousy. Anyway, I don't think Jim ever had the jealousy problem, but this kind of dependence on the significant woman became a harsh problem when Maggie died.

There was not an immediate response. Phillip, who had gone through this type of conversation before, waited.

JF: Phillip, how do you know all this stuff?

PD: I obsess. :)

JF: Seriously. How?

PD: Well, it's just what I do. For whatever reason, I've always been obsessed with finding out what is real and right.

JF: Well, it has been helpful.

PD: Thanks.

JF: Hey before I go, how do you think the fear of losing Mom thing affects women?

PD: You know, I've thought about that, but being male, I don't have any personal experience to go on. (Which is important in some things, this being one of them.) This seems to affect women by making them overly dependent on the most important women in their lives, usually her mother or best friend. It doesn't seem to be as strong in women as in men,

although that may just be my lack of female experience. One more random thought: This effect probably gives a lot of Catholics their strong emotional ties to their religion. Virgin Mary stuff.

JF: Maybe so. I'll let you know if I come up with any grand conclusions on the subject.

PD: (Laughing) Heck, don't worry about grand conclusions, I'll be thrilled with a few good clues.

JF: All right, I'll pass along any clues I stumble upon. See ya.

PD: Thanks. Bye.

Frances got up from the computer, and walked back to the window. She stood for several minutes, thinking of nothing in particular, and let her conversation with Phillip sink into her mind. Then, she began to think about what to do next with James. She understood him now, and knew why Maggie was important to him. She thought that everything would probably be all right now, but she wanted to make it a bit more certain. She looked at the papers on the table and got an idea.

An hour and a half later, James walked in the door. Frances asked him how he felt, and he said that he felt a lot better. "Very well," she said, "now that I've read your letters, I have one for you to read." She handed him a piece of paper, and he sat down to read. The page read as follows:

Hello Maggie,

I think I should introduce myself. My name is Frances Marsden, and I am in love with Jim.

You've been gone ten years now, and I hope you'd be glad to see Jim and I getting together. I want you to know that he still loves you very much, and that I am not threatened by that. Actually, it is something that I like. I always wanted a man capable of that sort of love, and I have found few. This man loves deeply and sincerely. I want that. I'm very sorry that you were cheated out of a long life with Jim, but that having happened, I am very glad that I found him. I hope that you would agree.

From the letters Jim showed me, and I can see how very important you were in his life. I think that in many ways, you made him what he is today. Thank you. I realize that I am gathering fruit from seeds that you planted, and I want you to know that I appreciate it. I hope that I, too, can plant seeds in Jim that will bear fruit.

I have been trying to understand your relationship with Jim, and the parts you played in each others lives. It seems to me that you were

frequently the wind in Jim's sails. Phillip tells me that you were naturally gifted that way. Losing that was very hard on Jim. Since then, he has learned to make his own wind, which is good, because while I can provide some wind for his sails, I don't think I have the natural gift for it that you did.

From what I know of you Maggie, I really like you. And I know how much you loved Jim. I'm pretty sure that Jim and I will be together for a long time, so I want to promise you something very seriously: I will always take good care of him. I'm sure we'll have disagreements, but I will always treat him well. I would do that anyway, but I'll do it for your sake also. I think I owe it to you.

If there is an afterlife, I'll very much look forward to meeting you.

(And I'll presume they'll have the spouse situation worked out there.)

Your friend,

Frances

Farber was crying again, but it was different this time. Since returning, he had much of his usual strength back. This time, the tears were of appreciation and love, not of being worried or torn. He looked up at Frances and said, "This is beautiful. It's one of the greatest things I've ever read. I love you very much."

Jim rose up from the couch, took Frances' hand and led her into the bedroom. "I want to love you, to show you my love." He turned and kissed her deeply and passionately as they stopped next to the bed. He slowly began removing her clothes, and she his. "This is special," he said, "not only for pleasure, but for love."

She felt like her insides had turned to liquid. She nearly went limp as he laid her on his bed. "This," she vaguely thought to herself, "may be the purest, highest moment of love anyone ever has… here I am making love with a good man, a great man… a man whose soul I have just healed."

* * * * * * *

Michael,

I have more information for you, and also need some from you:

First of all, it is not really the FBI that is behind this, it is the NSA. The FBI is only their tool to get to you. Here is what is going on: The FBI has several agents tracking your customers. They've had a hard time getting into most of their computers, but have found a few that didn't see to their

security very well. They verify your statement that these are just normal people, and that they are doing some of their business off of the books in your markets. The NSA is very concerned about people avoiding taxes via the Internet. They want to find a few of your people, and make public examples of them.

I'll be honest with you and tell you that I don't like what the NSA and FBI are doing. I especially don't like the idea of them publicly crucifying some basically honest people, so they can scare other people into staying in line. I have an old, trusted friend who is helping me with this case; both he and I have a concern, which I'd like you to answer. This really means nothing to me as your attorney. But as someone who is gathering information for you, it matters to me that your cause is just. Please indulge me:

Even though it is not the purpose of your service to interfere with taxation, it is used to that end. We are convinced that your service does some good, but we are concerned that the good may be offset by harm from reduced taxes. We'd like to hear your thoughts on the subject.

Bari

Michael read the note, printed a copy to review, and deleted it. He quickly wrote to the other members of the group about what Bari had told him, of the NSA, and people about to be made public examples. Warning notes were sent out. Also, one of the programmers had figured out how the FBI got into the dentist's computer, and was beginning to distribute a program that would warn the users and them of every such hack attempted by the FBI, without letting the hacker know that he was noticed.

Michael re-read Bari's note, and especially the question. "Dear Lord… the same one they always ask," he muttered, and grimaced. "All right, once more, I guess I'll deal with taxes." He sighed, and sat down at his terminal.

Bari,

I'm very pleased that you understood our position on taxes: That they are the concern of our users. We don't have any say in whether they pay or not. That being said, you are correct that a number of our customers avoid taxation through the use of our service. And I can understand your concern that we could be doing more harm than good. That is a fair question.

There are so many answers to your question that I hardly know where to start. Here's one quick thought before I really get into it: Most of the people who use our service to avoid taxation would be doing so with or without us. So, in tallying 'damage,' a significant portion of it has to be written-off right

from the start. (I have no good way of knowing what that percentage might be, but I do suspect that it is quite significant.)

Now, onto the meat of the subject: It is difficult to discuss taxes. The problem is that most people consider them to be a force of nature – a thing whose basic existence is not to be questioned. We can argue in polite company about the details of taxation (what are the right percentages for income tax, and so on), but once you question the morality of taxes themselves, discussion ceases, and you are branded as a radical, an extremist, and a bomb thrower.

The short exposition is this: Do I have the right to come to your house and take your property? You answer, 'No'. How about if I convince ten others that it is a good idea? (You still answer 'No'.) Then why does it become 'moral' when I convince a majority of the people in your town to take your stuff? And if I do not have the moral right to loot you, by what right does a government do so?

My point is this: The collection of taxes is not moral; it involves coercion and intimidation: things that are rightly branded as evil if a person does them to his neighbor. All taxes involve the threat or use of force. At some point in every taxation process, weapons are involved. This fact intimidates people into paying. None of the arguments for the morality of taxation stand up to real scrutiny. Ultimately people give in because the rulers are the ones with all the power, and they would not want to be on the side that opposes them.

I am a psychologist by trade, and I take my discipline seriously. My doctoral thesis was on psychological damage caused by living in servitude. I know how a life of servitude damages the human psyche. Living under a taxing state is servitude, and it is seriously damaging to human health and function. This I can prove empirically. For me personally, that is why I oppose taxation – it is bad for people.

I have a friend who is an economist, and he opposes taxation because it is incredibly inefficient, taking money out of the most productive hands, and placing it in the hands of people who produce nothing. He argues that humanity would do far better without it.

My friend the philosopher says that anything involuntary is contrary to the best interests of mankind, and that taxation slows the true engine of progress, individual human energy.

There are a great many reasons to oppose taxation. But the crucial first issue is the ability to honestly consider the subject. We have all been so conditioned to accept the status quo, that thinking outside those limits automatically seems bad.

If all taxes were ended, people would still find ways to purchase the things that mattered to them, including firemen, roads, and police protection. But as soon as people think about eliminating taxation, these three things scare the hell out of them, and they refuse to think about it any further. (Which is one of the effects of living in servitude that I analyzed in my thesis.)

Now, as right as we may be about this, the world is arranged around taxation, and pulling a lot of money out of the system could cause problems. We are aware of this, and wish to avoid it. So, in the next version of our software, we'll have a place for our customers to make donations to various causes. We will then direct the funds to the appropriate places.

Please let me know if you have any further questions. And thank you for the new information; we'll do our best to see that innocent people are not hurt.

Michael

Bari found Michael's note waiting for him when he turned on his computer the next morning. He read the note, smiled, shook his head, and said quietly but intensely, "Damn these guys are good. Not sure whether I completely agree, but they've got their act together." He printed out the text and faxed it to Max.

* * * * * * *

For Mordecai, the young near-doctor, the four days he spent in the New York lab were wonderful. He followed George around like a puppy dog, observing everything he did and continually asking "why?" By the end of the four days, he not only understood the Breakers technology, but, more importantly, he understood why it worked, and why it was important.

McCoy showed up on the fourth day, a few hours before Mordecai was scheduled to leave for the airport, on a commercial flight this time. Dr. Dimitrios introduced Mordecai and McCoy to each other, describing Mordecai as his "prospective associate," and McCoy as his "business partner." The three men walked through the lab, and discussed every piece of equipment in detail. Work at the lab was progressing very well; Emilio's cousin Julio was now working there daily, and they were producing over a hundred treatments worth of UBV-1 substrate per week.

They went out for a late lunch and dropped Mordecai at LaGuardia. It was now rush hour, and traffic was difficult. They decided simply to head back to the apartment in Manhattan. They had gotten a bag of extra food for Emilio and Julio, which they decided to put in the refrigerator, and give to them the next day.

"Well, I think you have a bright young assistant, George."

“You know, I think so. I really like this kid, Bill. He’s eager, honest, and curious. That’s a tough combination to beat.”

“Yes it is. But will working for you jeopardize his medical degree?”

“I’m not sure. We didn’t discuss that.”

“Well, that’s understandable, George, but let’s make sure we factor that into the equation. He’s really excited to work with an experienced man like you, but let’s not let him forget about his degree. And he would, you know.”

“I’ll make sure that he gets the degree, Bill.”

“Thank you.”

Dr. Dimitrios was now beginning to get comfortable with McCoy. He decided that McCoy was bright and well-read, though not quite as polished as Phillip and Farber. He liked his sense of humor, and respected his kindness to his employees.

“By the way, I’ve been looking out for Emilio and Julio.” McCoy smiled, and tilted his head, as if to request details. “I try to over-buy things, and give them the extra. It’s like a little legal fiction, I get them things, and we pretend that it was accidental so it doesn’t smell of charity.”

“That’s great, George. I think these guys will respond very well to kindness. Eventually, they’ll probably start asking you for advice on their personal lives.”

“You think so?”

“Oh, absolutely; in their eyes, you’ve made it, and they’re just new arrivals. Be careful when it comes to family issues, such as husband and wife arguing over which house would be a better buy. Stay away from those. Help them with business, with finances, whatever. But stay away from family and love. Those things are far too complex to analyze well, and they always come back to haunt you.”

“All right, I’ll remember that. Listen, Bill, if it’s not too personal, I’ve got a question to ask you.”

“McCoy pulled his head back just a bit, and bore an expression that said “What is this going to be?”

“All right, George, ask on.”

“Okay. I understand Farber pretty well, he’s a financier. Phillip is a really unusual bird, but I’ve known him for decades, and mostly understand him too. But I don’t understand you. You seem to be a very decent man, very well informed, but the only descriptions I’ve ever heard of you was ‘an old pirate.’ What is that you do?”

McCoy laughed heartily and noticed that they were pulling up to the apartment’s parking garage. “George, do you ever smoke a cigar?”

Dimitrios was momentarily shocked. McCoy’s question seemed to have no relation to his. “Yeah, once in a while I like a good cigar.”

“All right then, drop me off right here, and I’ll run into the tobacco shop and get us a couple of good ones, and we can take a nice walk around midtown, and I’ll explain myself to you.”

George agreed, parked the car, took the food up to the apartment, washed up quickly, and met McCoy back in front of the building.

“Here you go my friend, genuine fake Cubans.” George laughed, understanding that the “Cuban” cigars sold in New York, were not. They were reasonably good, but not real Cubans. They lit them up anyway, and headed up 54th Street.

“All right then, let me tell you about myself. I was raised on the outskirts of Birmingham, which is a large, industrial city. The second largest in England, just after London. Good parents, decent childhood. When I was done with school, I went into the Royal Air Force and spent a few years there, before I was given the chance to join the SAS, the British Special Forces.”

“Whoa, so you saw real action?” George was impressed in the way that a lot of intellectuals are: they know that the world is a frequently violent place, and that they have trained themselves for pursuits of the mind only, and have little or no skills for dealing with force.

“No, not too much. A couple of minor scrapes in Northern Ireland, but not like some of the lads. The officers liked some of my inventive ideas, and grouped me with some of the men from MI5, the covert service.” George was getting more impressed all the time; this was sounding like James Bond. McCoy guessed what he was thinking and continued, “Your friend Phillip used to joke around and call me Mr. Bond, but the reality of what I did was quite different.”

“In what way different?”

“There wasn’t really much cloak-and-dagger stuff. I was essentially a logistics expert. I kept track of shipments, I tried to track down the bank accounts of gun smugglers for the IRA, and worked a bit of drug interdiction. It was quite interesting work, but not the stuff of spy novels. I did learn a hell of a lot about smuggling and international finance, however.”

“So, how did a British military man ever meet up with Phillip and Farber?”

“Well, after I left the SAS, I was offered a position with the British Home Office, tracking down smugglers. To shorten a long story, two things happened to me. First I ran into Tino, and secondly, I actually met some of the smugglers I was tracking.”

“How did you meet Tino?”

“We met in a bar in Amsterdam and hit it off. He had lived in London for a year or two, so we had a lot to talk about. He was a bit of a smuggler himself, but not any of my concern, so we talked a lot about smuggling. Eventually, I told him my secrets, and he told me his. We just agreed to stay off of each other’s territory.”

“A real odd couple.”

McCoy laughed. “Yes, that would be certain. But getting to the second point, when I finally tracked down some of these smugglers, I found that they were really just trying to make a living. Now, I’m not talking about drug smugglers; that was not my job. I’m talking about people who smuggled liquor, cigarettes, and gasoline. I never could bring myself to arrest them. They were mostly people who had been a bit battered by life, and were trying anything they could to rise above a meaningless existence. Regardless of the rules, I didn’t find them to be worthy of prison. So, I left them alone. Eventually, I got sick of it and prepared to quit. I didn’t really have anything else in mind, but I wanted to get out of there.”

“So, what did you do after you left the Home Office?”

McCoy slowed his pace, and stood a bit more erect. George looked at him inquiringly, and McCoy flashed him the mischievous grin of a man who’s really good at it. “I went into smuggling.”

“What!? You? A smuggler?”

“Well, a smuggling consultant actually; and I really would appreciate it if you didn’t broadcast it all over the borough of Manhattan.” He gave George a wry smile.

“Sorry.”

“Don’t worry over it.”

“Anyway, my first job was for Tino, even before I left the home office. He offered me 10% of his contract if I would tell him how to get a shipment through customs. Hell, it was knowledge that I had at the ready, and what damage was he doing, shipping some fancy wine to people in Asia? Beside, I was getting ready to quit, and I needed the money. After a career like mine, I wasn’t really prepared for much else.”

George spoke very quietly this time, “So, is that what you still do now?”

“No. I still do a little bit of that, but I’ve found much more rewarding variations.”

Dr. Dimitrios immediately thought of drugs. After all, that would certainly be rewarding. McCoy observed his distraction, and having been through this conversation more than once prior, had a fairly good idea of what was going on in George’s thoughts.

“By rewarding, I mean personally rewarding more than financially… although I do make some fairly decent money at my trade.” George was relieved, and then embarrassed at his thoughts accusing Bill of dealing drugs.

“Then tell me Bill, what are you doing, and how is it rewarding?”

“I help people find freedom.” George looked lost. “I’ll bet that doesn’t paint a very good picture for you, does it?”

“No. Not at all.”

“All right, I’ll go through this slowly, and you tell me if I lose you.” George nodded his consent.

“Do you remember a few minutes ago I said that the smugglers I knew were mostly people who had been ‘a bit battered by life’?” He indicated that he did. “Well, James Farber used to write essays for a financial newsletter I subscribed to. In one of those essays, he outlined how human effort is thwarted by taxation, regulation, and intimidation. He went through the subject with statistics, and with profuse documentation. Then he said something that jumped out at me: ‘Politicians love to talk about how many policemen or school lunches they are paying for, but they never tell you that they first took that money from the nice man who owns the hardware store on the corner. And that now he won’t be able to take his kids to see their aged relatives in India.’ I read that, and it touched something in me, though I wasn’t sure what. A couple of days later I realized what it was.

“My grandfather was the number one assistant to a long-time MP for the labor party in England. Growing up, he used to tell me that ‘government must be made to help the people, not to hurt them.’ I can’t tell you how many times I heard words to that effect. Well, I needed some bolts a few days later and walked into the local hardware store. As it turned out, the man who owned the store was behind the cash register. As you might imagine, I was thinking about Farber’s essay. I asked the man about his business, and he said that things were going well, except that Inland Revenue were hurting him. That brought Grandfather’s words to mind, and I began to observe the myriad ways that governments hinder human progress.

“It’s strange, actually. I look back now, and wonder why I never looked at the government objectively, like I did everything else. I guess it’s the same as the blokes in the middle ages who could never admit to themselves that the Church was abusing them. I just gave them the benefit of the doubt at every turn. Anyway, I began to see people everywhere who were living half-lives because of restrictions on their time and their finances. If you actually look for it, it’s everywhere.

“So, I decided that I would follow my grandfather’s dictum that we should make sure people were not hurt by the government.” He paused for just a moment, a look of determination and outrage blossoming on his face. “And I consider being made to live half a life to be a grievous harm.”

Something about Bill’s explanation made George uncomfortable, though he didn’t understand why.

“But Bill, don’t most people more or less like the government? Or at least accept it?”

“Yes, they do. And most of them have been trained to follow the leader and shut-up as well. I can’t much help that. And, as you imply rightly, their lives are their own and it is not for me to save them from what they choose. But there are other people who want freedom, George, people who feel their oppression, and who want to live complete lives. Those are my customers.

“Let me tell you something that most people never realize: In every industrial country, there is a glass ceiling over the middle class.” He stopped speaking for a few seconds to let the statement sink in.

“People with a lot of money find ways to mitigate taxation. They are able to pay a hundred thousand dollars to a top tax attorney or to a politician. It’s only a small percentage of their income, and it eliminates tens of millions in taxation for them. But the middle class people can’t afford, that – they can’t make it over that hurdle. To pay the politician is beyond their means, so they remain beneath the glass ceiling, and pay half of their money to the government every year, with no way out. Understand, the governments have to keep the middle class tied down this way. There is no other good source of revenue. There simply aren’t that many rich people. Even if governments completely looted all the rich folk, the money would last only a year or two. The middle class is the only good source of revenue. But not my clients.

“The really pitiful thing is that the earth contains far more than enough raw materials for every person on it to have a mansion, fine cars, plenty of food, and fine clothing. It is just a question of intelligence, coordination, and, especially, freedom. But the poor saps in the middle class will never have the beach house, the condo on the slopes, or the international lifestyle, no matter how hard they work. Not with half of everything they ever earn taken away from them before they even get to hold it in their hands. The glass ceiling is simply too thick, and moves to break through it are dealt with too harshly.”

McCoy’s combination of confidence, of daring, of outrage, and of compassion was intoxicating. Phillip was obviously brilliant, and Farber also, but this moral smuggler’s spirit was the compliment to George’s, and he had been seeking it for a long time. He had known for several years that something was missing from his life, but he wasn’t sure just what. He knew that it was something primal and essential, but he had never been able to find it. Now, here it was, standing before him. He began to understand: intellect was absolutely necessary, but it was meant to interact with the rest of the world – to mold reality to better uses – not to reside alone in a whitewashed colony of thinkers. McCoy knew how to do, not just how to interpret.

“Bill, I know this may sound strange to you, but I am interested in your business. Really interested.”

McCoy looked at him quizzically. “Well, it’s always the ones I don’t expect.”

“What do you mean?”

“Oh, I’ve trained four or five people in my business, and it never ceases to amaze me that they are the studious, intellectual types.”

“Maybe it’s because their lives are too intellectual, and they what they need is a direct contest with the world.”

“And is that what you think you need?”

“It’s what I’ve needed for a long time. And yes, I am sure of that.”

“All right, I’ll be glad to teach you what I do, but I am not willing to let it interfere with your medical work. Your work is important, George.”

“Yes, you’re right, Bill, and I don’t want to interfere with that either, but I’ll tell you something: I’ve been getting burnt out for a long time now. When the University canned me, I was shocked and angered, but there was another part of me that was happy and relieved. I love my work, and I’m out of this world happy with my discoveries, but I need something more, something different. I was willing to take risks to save my work from the University because it was too important to let die, but if you guys hadn’t been interested, I would have pursued it only part-time. I’ve been doing this for too long; I need something new and different. I don’t think it’s good for you to sit in the same situation for so long.”

“Oh, I’m minded to agree with you, George, but you simply can’t jump into my consulting business full-time, we need you far too much in the lab, and you’ve made commitments.”

“Nah, don’t worry about that. This will be my hobby until the Breakers system is up and running. Then I’ll decide what to do next. But I need something like this. I don’t think I’ll be much good without it. Certainly not long-term.”

They were now finishing their cigars, and returning to the apartment. McCoy retrieved his computer and gym bag from the car, and the pair headed up to the apartment. Each took care of his daily mail, phone calls, and so on. George finished his things first, and walked over to McCoy, who was working on his computer. “Care to start my first lesson?”

McCoy smiled. Dr. Dimitrios had that strange kind of enthusiasm that seems to exist primarily in ten-year-old boys and in a very few older geniuses. “All right, exactly where shall we start?”

“Tell me how we break through the glass ceiling.”

“Very well, a good place to start.

“But first, remember that all of the important things we do will be contrary to the wishes of the world’s rulers. Not a much of it is illegal, and I don’t consider any of it immoral, but that won’t matter if the rulers find out – they’ll always find some way to penalize people who step too far out of line. So, never compromise your privacy or that of your clients. We keep everything private, and do all of our communications by encrypted email. We use anonymous proxies when doing business over the Internet. We do business only with people we know well, or who are trusted friends of trusted friends. No one, except people we deeply trust, can be permitted to know where we live, our real names, or exactly what we do. Period. And this is even more important for dealing with payments. Never do business in your own name or in any way that can be traced back to you.

“See this email I’m sending? It’s not my real name is it? This isn’t only for my protection, it’s for my client’s as well. I tell all my clients that if they ever get in trouble with some government, they can feel free to tell everything they know; I only request that they try to warn me also. Can you see how important this is to all of us? If you don’t give them a way to find you, they’ll have a really hard time doing it. And there’s one more twist: The rulers and their systems are slow and rigidly methodical. Powerful, yes, but slow and awkward. So, you change banks, names, and everything else every year or two. They simply can’t adapt that quickly.”

“Now, bearing in mind that privacy is always paramount, we break through the glass ceiling by getting the client’s money out of his home jurisdiction, before the tax man takes half, and into another jurisdiction. The new location for the money must be absolutely safe, which means it must be in a place with good banking laws, or just in another name.”

“Can you get away with that?”

“Absolutely. There are dozens of ways. I have lists of them. Farber taught me a lot of them. He learned them from old Chicago hustlers and some really smart rich guys. I’ll give you one of the secrets now: Smart guys learn how to turn expenses into assets. And if you can turn them into assets that can’t be traced, all the better.”

“But Bill, if these guys skip out on all their taxes, isn’t that a bit wrong? After all, they’re using the roads.”

“Well, I understand the point. The reality, however, is not that way. Wherever my clients live, they’re paying a lot of money in VATs, sales taxes, gasoline taxes, and a hundred others. I don’t deal with people who want to live at the expense of others. So, no, that is seldom a real problem, only a paper problem.

“But I really shouldn’t give you the idea that this is all about money. Money is important because that is how we trade for the materials of our survival…” George liked the sound of ‘survival,’ it implied a direct action with nature, something he had been missing for most of his life. “Most of my clients are more concerned with freedom. They simply don’t want to be some ruler’s serf. My clients want to be left alone as free agents. They don’t want to be anyone’s property – which is what citizenship really is.”

“But how can they get away from that? I don’t know a person in the world who isn’t a citizen of some country.”

McCoy’s gray-blue eyes almost sparkled as he laughed. “Yes, you’re right, George, their little nations’ club does own everybody on the planet, but remember, they are slow and rigid. So, we simply work around them. Let’s say I have a client who wants freedom. Well, I obtain citizenship for him in Japan. Then I get him residency in Thailand. Mind you, he seldom ever goes to these places. He actually lives and works in the UK, and does his banking in Canada. So, his official citizenship, his legal residence, his work, and his money are all in different places.

Essentially, he is nothing more than a tourist anywhere in the world, save Japan and Thailand, places he never goes. There are innumerable ways to do this. It takes a lot of specialized knowledge to set it up, but after that, it's easy. And my client becomes a free man anywhere on earth, save Japan and Thailand."

"That's it? It can't be that easy."

"Well, keeping residency and visas can be a bit tricky sometimes, but that's how I get continuing business!" He smiled broadly. "But like I say, these are many variations on this theme, and it does take time and thought to arrange, but I've never found a case I couldn't handle. Beside, if you really get stuck, documents can always be had for a price." George looked shocked, and unsure whether he believed McCoy.

"George, do you really think an immigration clerk in Bangkok will turn down a thousand US dollars to make a passport after hours? When he normally makes the equivalent of fifty dollars per week and has three children needing an education? Not likely. You just have to find the right guys, and ask discretely. I don't do that myself – I buy from the guys who do – but there are people all over the world doing this all the time."

"I thought that was mostly for drug dealers and mobsters."

"No, most of the people who need papers are just trying to keep their heads above water. A lot of this goes on, and relatively little of it has anything to do with drugs." McCoy stopped to think for a moment. "I think I've had… three… yes, three clients over the years who were involved with drugs or prostitution. I got rid of them right away. And I was very glad that they didn't know my real name or whereabouts. Clients like that I don't need."

George sat still for a moment, and ran the situation through his mind. "But doesn't this rub people the wrong way? I don't like giving people I care about incorrect information."

"Yes, that is the biggest problem. Not that it can't be solved, but it does become an issue. I've got lots of ways around that one, too, but if you live in the US, it's a problem. Most other places it's easy."

"Why is it hard in the US?"

McCoy smiled, then grimaced. "George, you Americans grow up on stories of great men like Adams, Jefferson, and Washington. But the truth is that there is no government in the world that keeps a leash on its citizens like the United States. They consider you their property. No matter where you go in the world, the money you make must be reported to them, and they have a stake in it. No other country is nearly as bad. I'm sorry, but that's the truth. The hardest clients are Americans.

"You know, George, the people of Europe didn't stop calling themselves the Roman Empire until the end of the 17th Century."

"Really?"

“Yes. If you read their treaties and legal documents, they say ‘Roman Empire.’ The same sort of thing affects your countrymen; they simply can’t get it into their heads that the US government is little more than a group of actors wearing Jefferson’s clothing. Facts are irrelevant; they simply will not be convinced that their Constitution has been three-fourths contravened.”

Chapter Three

Mordecai returned to the Free Soul house with a glowing report of Dr. Demitrios' technology, and two of the Free Souls had committed to working full-time on the project – their study time excepted. Emails flew back and forth regarding formal agreements, planning, and deciding how to best accomplish their tasks.

There was little question of Breakers being effective and little difficulty in producing it, but administering it was still difficult. Two of George's grad students agreed to move to New York, and their first duty would be adapting Breakers to dermal patch administration – to deliver it to the bloodstream in the same way that patches are used to deliver testosterone or nicotine. While Mordecai was in New York, he and George had done a few trials on themselves, and found that the patches did almost as well as IV delivery. Now they would have to verify the results and find the best ways of producing pre-loaded patches.

Overhearing some discussion on the patches and trials, several of the Free Souls volunteered to be test subjects for the formal patch tests. With no other real choice, George consented, and would fly to Florida a week later to administer a couple of dozen treatments and to verify the results. He got Emilio busy preparing the patches and storing them properly.

With two people working almost full-time on approvals, it seemed at least likely that they would find a place to pursue their work. The big question was, where? None of them were much interested in working in the third-world. They were hoping for either Europe or Japan.

That same week, Phillip set up clinical trials of Breakers at a nursing home which was being run by an old schoolmate, whom George had also known. The name of the facility would have to be concealed, but their old friend was willing to try the treatment. These patients were all considered permanently psychotic, and their old friend – the legal guardian of these people – was willing to try anything that might help them, approved or not. Everything would have to remain anonymous, but real clinical trials were about to be done. George was a bit worried, but enthusiastic nonetheless.

* * * * * * *

James and Frances slept late, and made love again in the morning. Then, they rolled out of bed. She showered while he started breakfast, and she finished while he

showered and dressed. They told each other how wonderful they thought the other was as they ate their meal.

Farber knew that this was the time when he had to explain his life to her. There seemed no way she could know in advance what she was really getting into with him. “Frances, I really need to tell you more about my life and my businesses. It’s a bit more complicated and unusual than you might suspect.” Farber paused, and for the first time Frances had ever seen, he looked afraid.

“Jim, you look scared. What is it?”

He looked up at her very seriously. “I’m afraid what I do might be too wild for you.”

“Well, if it is, we’ll just have to come to some sort of a compromise, won’t we?”

He smiled and relaxed. “Yeah, I guess we will.”

“All right mystery man, pour yourself a cup of tea and start explaining your crazy life to me.” She smiled.

“Hey, it’s warm today, let’s take our coffee and tea with us, and go sit on the roof! There are a few chairs up there, and it’ll be nice.”

She agreed.

The view from the roof was unique. They were on the roof of a 70-story building, with a light haze partially obscuring the city below. On three sides were other huge buildings, several of them taller, surrounding them in the distance. The effect was that of living on Olympus, among the Titans, and looking down on the normal world which was separated by a haze. They sat down, sipped from their mugs, and took in the setting for some time. They pointed out, through the haze, places where they had lived and worked. The effect of being so far above the city, and looking down on it through a haze, gave them both a feeling that they were reviewing their past lives and laying out their futures. The just sat and looked out over the world for a long time. After they had experienced almost everything that this elevated perspective could offer, they slowly came back to their previous thoughts. Frances finished her now-cold tea, and threw her hair back into the wind. She nearly glowed. She sat forward, and said “All right, Jim, why don’t you start at the top, and tell me what you guys are up to. I’ll try not to pass out from shock.” She gave him her combination sly/sarcastic smile.

“Frances, we’re doing something that hasn’t been done in a long, long time. We’re setting up truly free interactions between human beings. Up till now it was almost impossible to do. But the Internet opened up a virgin territory for us. A territory that is a hell of a lot harder to control than a geographic territory. And because the basic structure of cyberspace is distributed, not centralized, we have a built-in advantage. What we are doing is a natural progression of the digital revolution. What the

governments are trying to do is to reroute the digital revolution, against its nature, to serve their desire for centralized dominion.

"The Internet must be protected. We can't let it become a tool of the old territorial rulers. So, we are building a center of private interactions, where rulers cannot intrude. It was a strange moment when several of us looked around and said to each other, 'Oh my God, we can't let this opportunity pass, and we are the adults. We have to step in and see to this; we're here, we're able, and it has fallen to us.'"

He stopped and looked directly at Frances, wondering what to expect from her. "So, are you surprised?"

She smiled vaguely. "No, I'm really not. I sort of suspected that you and Phillip were up to something, and this fits."

"No way! How could you know?"

She half-laughed and half-spoke, "Oh, I've thought about you quite a bit Mr. Farber, but you gave most of it away with your comments about 'we' redeeming the Shlomos. And, I know your friends. People like you, Phillip, and Julia… you concern yourselves with large issues, not with the details of daily life." She stopped, remembering something she had thought about years earlier. "Jim, I'm going to tell you something, and then you tell me if I'm right about it."

"Okay."

"You more or less consider the time and place of your birth accidental, and you do not want to be a slave to your place and time. Am I right?"

He nodded. "Yes," he said, "you're quite right."

"Well, I feel the same. You weren't sure that I thought about things like this, were you?" He was too embarrassed to answer. She was correct. He hadn't really thought she would understand, but he didn't want to say it.

"Don't worry about it, Jim. I understand the battles you've been through to get where you are, and how no one ever understands you. After a while you don't expect anyone to understand, and it's too painful to have your hopes constantly dashed."

Jim sat silently. After so many years of being the odd one, he had long stopped expecting anyone to understand. Somehow that had extended even to Frances. But she did understand. He almost cried in relief and in appreciation. She looked at him and said, "Now, Jim, how long do you think this will take?"

Farber smiled broadly. "How about next week?"

"What! You mean you've really got this? It really exists? Now?"

"Yes we do. It's in final testing now, and we roll it out in about a week."

"Oh my God, I thought you were talking about doing this in the future. I didn't think it was done." She was apparently agitated.

“Jim, don’t you think the risks are significant here? After all, every government will go nuts once they find out about it. You can be as clean as snow, but once you intrude on their monopolies of control, they’ll convince people you are the scourge of the earth.”

“Yes, they will,” he paused for effect, “until the people have something to buy or sell. Then they’ll sneak their way to our door.”

“All right, I’ve seen enough black markets to know that this is true. But you know they’ll want to shut you down and make examples of you.” Then she stopped dead. A troubled look came over her. She understood Jim’s basic idea; it had long been suggested by sci-fi and freedom writers. But something about actually doing it troubled her deeply.

“Jim, why does this bother me? I’ve read all of the books that talk about freedom, and I loved their ideas. Why then does this offend me?”

Jim tilted his head, shook it a little, and said, “I don’t really know, but I can tell you that it is a very common reaction. Whenever we present these ideas to someone, they almost always begin by challenging them. And it’s not that they are curious, it’s more that they’re not comfortable with such a thing existing. The best I’ve been able to do in response, is to tell them to consider only the facts; chart the benefits, chart the harm, compare them logically, then to believe the answer. But a lot of people can’t do that; they aren’t able to override emotion with reason.”

Frances was uncomfortable with herself. She didn’t like having feelings without reasons, and she wanted to understand how in the world freedom could elicit a negative reaction from her. Was slavery to be defended?

“Jim, one of you guys must have spent some time on this. Who knows the answer?”

“Probably Michael. He’s the guy who runs this from day to day, and he’s a psychologist of the first order.”

“Good, can we find him now?”

“Yeah, I think so.”

“Good. Let’s go back to the apartment and find him.”

“Tough broad,” thought Farber, in the language that he frequently used among his friends. “There’s no BS when she knows what she wants.” He liked that about Frances… a lot.

She didn’t speak at all on the way back to the apartment. “All right,” said James as he sat at the computer, “I’m putting out a call for him. We have a system for finding each other at almost any time. All encrypted and private.” He looked around the apartment. “Let’s clean the place up just a bit while we’re waiting.”

Two minutes later the phone rang, and Frances picked it up. “Hello?”

“Hello, Frances?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Hi Frances, this is Michael. I take it that you are a very good friend of James’, and that you have some tough questions for me.”

“Yes, that’s correct. Michael, I need to understand my reactions to your private market plans. I’ve read about things about such ideas for years, and I always loved the ideas. But now that it becomes real, something in me doesn’t want it to be. Why? My God, I should love this idea.”

“All right, Frances, I’ll try to make some sense out of this for you, but you understand that this is not the simplest explanation.”

“No, Michael, I’m sure it’s not.”

“Okay, ideas like this stir up a lot of feelings… more like reactions actually. I have some files on this. Perhaps you’d like to conduct this conversation via computer? Then I could cut and paste from my files, and do this more thoroughly and more quickly… this isn’t the first time I’ve answered these questions.”

“That would be great.”

“All right, I’ll contact you on Jim’s computer in just a minute.”

MA: Frances, are you ready?

JF: Yes, I am.

MA: OK, hang on and I’ll post some reasons why these ideas bother people. Take a look through the list, and see which ones seem to fit you. The first one probably doesn’t fit, but I’m leaving it in because it does fit a lot of people. Remember also that people don’t really think about these things, they just react.

MA:

1. Fear of responsibility. Freedom is threatening because it eliminates the possibility of shifting responsibility for your errors onto others. Freedom puts you right out in the open, with no cloak for your mistakes. It also gives you full credit for your successes, but that is seldom considered, as the fear-based impulses are generally stronger.

2. Fear of separation. For a variety of reasons, most people have an instinctual fear of being separate. The feeling is that separation means death. This may be true in some rare situations, and was certainly true in the distant past, but it is an impulse only, not reason.

3. Rulership as a force of nature. For the last several thousand years, nearly all humans have lived and died under some form of rulership. So many generations have come and gone under this arrangement that it now seems to most people as a force of nature: That which was, is, and shall be. When you mention something different, it causes them mental stress.

4. No mental image. Because none of us have ever lived in any situation except subjection to state power, we have no mental images of anything different. So, when we start talking about a truly free place with no rulers, the listeners have no images to draw upon. It seems like we are proposing a pointless journey into an unknown and dangerous place. Again, this is a feeling, not reasoned thought.

5. Group conditioning. A central fact of modern social behavior is that almost the entire populace has gone through 11-17 years of social conditioning in the school systems. This conditioning shows up in a variety of ways, especially in dealing with authority figures. The conditioned responses are: Obey authority. Don't cause a disruption. Accept the place given to you. Conform. The real effect here is the installing of comfort reactions and discomfort-reactions. Our system flies in the face of almost all of this.

6. Lack of critical thinking skills. For a variety of reasons (which I have not spent the time necessary to properly catalog), the 20th Century saw a mass movement away from reason and toward a devotion to emotion. Have you ever tried to reason with someone who lives by emotion? It is essentially impossible. These people can be influenced by getting them to identify with characters from movies and television, or with celebrities, but seldom by reason. Most people aren't fully that way, but modern critical thinking skills are disastrous, and a great many people distrust reason, with full faith in emotion. Many of them are beyond hope of recovery.

7. Cognitive dissonance. This is what happens to people when they have accepted an idea, or series of complimentary ideas, then, an obviously different idea is presented, and it makes some sort of sense to them. It causes a conflict. This is properly called cognitive dissonance. People don't do well with these conflicts; their general reaction is to eliminate them as quickly as possible. The easiest way to do this is to simply drown them out by reciting their original ideas and trying not to think about the new idea. Yes, this is dishonest, and yes, it requires denial, but most people prefer it

to critical analysis of their existing ideas, and, potentially, changing their minds. Combine this with all the other items shown here, and the conflicts arising from taking on a difficult new idea are too much for many people to bear.

8. Fear of reprisal. This is the simplest one. Think of an IRS audit, an FBI raid, or of Stalin. Obviously the rulers won't like our free markets. It is not unreasonable to expect that they will take reprisals against people who displease them. A very reasonable concern.

9. Fear of the world falling apart. The central myth of the nation-state is that it is necessary to hold civilization together; that without it, we would all degenerate quickly into killers and thieves. This has been repeated so frequently and so consistently that most people accept it as fact, even though if asked to provide evidence, they have none. Actual analysis of this idea leads to a contrary conclusion, but that does not stop the impulse of fear. Very few people have ever questioned the nation-state myth at all.

I suggest that you print this out, take a few minutes, and think about it. I'll be in my office for several hours. Just let me know when you are ready.

Michael went back to his tests on the Gamma Central system. "Just a couple more days," he thought, "and we're all done, but for the reaping."

Frances printed out the list, and said, "Jim, could you leave me alone for a little while? I need to go over this by myself."

"Sure," he said. He hugged her, kissed her, and said, "I'll run out to the store. I'll be back in about an hour." She sat straight and still on one of the dinning room chairs, and thought about the points on Michael's list.

JF: OK Michael, I'm ready.

MA: So, which ones were yours?

JF: Mostly fear of separation. A bit of group conditioning and fear of the world falling apart also. I guess some of the rational fear too, but I'm pretty certain you guys have addressed that.

MA: Yes, we have addressed that. Ask Jim to tell you about it. Does knowing what bothered you help any?

JF: Yeah, actually it does.

MA: Good, it usually does, but not always. Do you have some free time now?

JF: Yes. Why?

MA: I suggest that you think about this very slowly and deeply. Meditatively. Do it in whatever way seems instinctual to you.

JF: You know, that sounds like a good idea. Thank you Michael, James said you were good. He was right.

MA: Thanks! Hey, can I make the positive case for you before I sign-off?

JF: Please.

MA: People under the rule of any state are born into a life of "Do what we say or be hurt." They learn this lesson as small children, and live under its authority till they die. Depending upon the laws and political structure of the time, subjection to the rules may be a relatively light burden or a brutally heavy burden, but it always entails subservience to a group of rulers. I can demonstrate that a lifetime of subservience is not good for human growth, regardless of how used to it we may be. We should take seriously the possibility that something else might be better. That is what we are trying to do with our private markets. We are forcing no one to live our way, and we are not trying to take away the governments they rely upon. We don't wish to live at the expense of others. All we want is to try a new way of living, and to see if it is better. This can be a threat to rulers only if they fear that they are losing their property and their legitimacy. We only wish to opt out of their system, and to see if freedom works. Questions?

JF: No, that's very clear.

MA: Great. Can I look forward to meeting you some time?

JF: Certainly, although I'm not sure of when.

MA: Wonderful, I'll look forward to it.

Frances knew what she would do; the same thing she always did when she worked with a big idea: She lay on the bed, arms spread open, looking up at the ceiling. She alternated between thinking only and speaking quietly to herself. After what seemed a long time, she sat up, with resolve. "It's worth it," she said out loud. "Anyone who opposes such an experiment is an oppressor. Period. If they cared about people, they would be pleased to see an experiment that might lead to an improved human condition. If they object, they're frauds."

She got up, walked into the kitchen, poured a glass of water, and paced the house. "Nonetheless… I don't think this is my project… I have other things to do. I'll

certainly support James in it, but it's his, not mine." After a few minutes, Jim walked in through the door. "Hi," she said.

"Hi." He looked at her, trying to ascertain the meaning of her expression and the way she was standing, but he simply wasn't sure. "Everything went well with Michael I hope?"

She smiled, which let him relax a bit. "Yes, it went very well. You've got some good associates Jim."

"Oh Frances, they're more than good, they're great."

"Yeah, I think they must be."

"So, tell me what you think."

"I think Michael has sold me on your project." Farber looked very happy, but remained silent, letting her talk. "So, now I want to know, just what are you building. Explain it to me."

Farber put down the groceries he had purchased and sat down on a kitchen chair. He pulled a pen from his pocket, and a pad of paper from a drawer. He started sketching. They began to go through details of identities, communication, currencies, reputation, and others. Frances was impressed. Jim and his associates had covered almost everything, and covered it well. At the end of three hours, she was convinced that the system would work. It was outside forces that worried her. "You know, Jim, I think this could work," she said, "but tell me how you plan to stay safe from governments. They'll automatically hate you."

"Oh, we've got all sorts of tricks. First is encryption that they cannot break. Second is steganography; hiding encrypted messages in larger files, like MP3s. Thirdly, we use slight variations on standard Internet protocols which are almost impossible to trace. We have multiple servers.

"But the really big thing is this: Once they get close to us, we'll simply give everything away. It is all open-source stuff, and we can simply give away 'Markets on a Disc.' Pop it in a server, and you instantly run a completely private marketplace, all the bells and whistles included. A thousand markets will spring up, in a thousand different flavors. They may eventually find one group of us, but they'll have a hell of a time getting thousands. Running a private market will be lucrative, and lots of people will want to get into the business."

Her eyes were opened wide. "So once it's up and running, you can walk away whenever you want?"

"Yeah, pretty much. We'd like to be the only market for a while, just so we can recoup our expenses, but aside from that, the plan was to create it, recoup our investments, then split up and go back to other pursuits. We were never really doing this for money anyway. We just want to be able to live as free men… that and create the coolest new thing in centuries!"

She ran to him and hugged him. “Oh Jim, you don’t know how much better that makes me feel. I know you guys are doing a good thing, but that won’t stop a bunch of bastards from trying to hurt you. But if you can just walk away…”

She turned and faced him fully. “Jim. This is really great, and I want you to do it, but it isn’t what I want to do.”

He looked a bit confused. “Well, I wasn’t really asking you to be involved, although I did want you to like it.”

She walked to where he sat, and sat down next to him. “Oh Jim, I do like it, I love it. But this is not my life’s project. I’ll support you in it, even help you, work for you. But it’s yours, not mine. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I think I do. You’ve got something else to do.”

“Yes, but I’m not sure yet as to what it is. Does that sound crazy?”

He smiled, hoping to comfort her. “No, that doesn’t sound crazy at all; I’ve felt that way more than once. It’s very perceptive of you to realize it. Don’t worry. It will become clear to you in time.” He noticed that she still looked concerned; that she didn’t want to disappoint him. “It’s okay Frances. You should do the project that is yours… although I will definitely take you up on your offer to work for me.” They both smiled.

She slid down from her chair, and knelt between his legs. “Jim, I want you to know something.” She looked him dead in the eye, tears rising up in hers. “I know how hard it is to swim against the stream, and I can understand how important this might be to humanity.” She paused, trying to let all her inner feelings – her spirit – pour out of her. “And I want you to know that I think you are a great man. I am proud to be your lover.”

Farber’s eyes began to tear, and he breathed deeply; otherwise he sat still, nearly stiff. It took him a few seconds to recognize what he was feeling. He felt loved and appreciated in a way that he hadn’t in a long time. The sort of appreciation that men always secretly need from their women, and that most men never get. Beauty draws men, sexual desire motivates them; but for a woman who makes them feel loved and appreciated, men will leave their families, and will happily risk death. He cried gently, kissed Frances’ hands, looked into her eyes, and could say only, “Thank you.”

She stayed there for a long time, laying her head in his lap, and hugging him. Jim leaned forward and hugged her as best he could without making her uncomfortable. Finally, she sat back up and looked at him warmly but seriously.

“Jim, I want more than anything else in my life to be together with you. And I think you want that too, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do.”

“But Jim, I also have some other concerns that have to be addressed.” He waited for her to continue. She waited as well, looking to see if he was still too emotional to follow her carefully.

“I want a family. I want children.”

“I do too.” His eagerness was touching, but she didn’t want him to be eager right now, she wanted him to be coldly serious. She gripped his wrists firmly, and stiffened her forearms. “Listen to me, Jim. I don’t want you to be agreeable right now. I want you to pay stern attention. What I’m telling you is something that really, really, matters to me.” She was trying to think of a way to get it across to him. He was in love, and just a bit too dreamy. “Jim, when you were young, you head the stories of standing before God’s throne, with the huge voice booming out, and commanding the fullest attention of all the heavens, didn’t you?”

“Uh, yes… I did. Why?”

“Good, I want you to imagine I’m speaking to you in that voice right now. If I could turn that voice on only once in my life, I think I’d do it right now.” A look of surprise and recognition passed over his face, and he stood up.

“You have my attention.”

She spoke very clearly. “Jim, if I am going to have children with you, I have to be very sure of one thing: The day I get pregnant – which we will jointly agree upon – we have to make sure that we have a safe, stable atmosphere in which to raise the children. Everything else has to be secondary. Everything; including even Phillip and Julia; as much as I do love them. Can you do that? I have to know this now.”

“All right…” Farber spoke softly but with deadly seriousness. He began to pace the room slowly. She turned, watching and waiting. She barely breathed. “When we’re ready to have children…”

“Which can’t terribly long, I might add.” Jim understood, Frances was past thirty years old, and really shouldn’t wait too much longer to begin having children.

“Yes, fairly soon is fine. Say no more than three to five years?”

“Probably no more than three.”

“Fine. When that day comes, security and stability take primacy. If I have to shut down other things, then so be it. Is that a fair statement of your wishes, Frances?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Then consider it done. I agree in full.” She jumped up and hugged him. Now she felt free to be happy… to exult. She had found a mate; a man she could raise a family with. A truly good man. She was ready to run for a phone and call her mother, but stopped in her place. She looked a bit confused with herself.

“Jim, what do you think about getting married?”

“That is a tough question. I’ve actually discussed it with Phillip and Julia before, and we came up with mixed reasons for and against.” He paused, recalling the conversations – which had been several years prior – and the reasons they had itemized. “Okay, hold on… we said that in the current world situation, it was good to be married for the sake of the children… but not good to invite the state to be a partner in your life. And! We decided that a religious wedding would work, so long as it wasn’t recorded with the rulers! Does that make sense to you?”

“Yes, it makes perfect sense. Our kids get the idea of… the safety… that we are a stable family. But the government still doesn’t get their fingers into our lives! It’s perfect!” She paused and thought again. “But can we find someone to do it for us? Neither of us are very religious in the usual sense.”

Farber smirked, smiled, wagged his head, made her wait for in incredibly long three or four seconds, until she was almost jumping up and down, knowing that he was about to say something good.

“You bet we can! Phillip worked the same thing out for his daughter. Not a problem.” Frances now seemed about twelve years old. She jumped up and down, and hugged him tightly. “So, can I call my Mom, and tell her I’m getting married?”

“Absolutely. Go for it!”

Something that sounded like “yippee” flew out of her as she turned around and raced for the telephone in the bedroom. She dove onto the bed, and dialed.

“Not twelve,” thought Farber… “It’s more like she’s ten… maybe eight.” His face grew into a very satisfied smile. She was so happy… and he was getting a very special woman. “Not bad,” he thought to himself as he walked over to the window, “a slam-dunk, lifetime victory. Not bad at all.”

Frances talked to her mother for an hour. Then she called Julia, and talked to her for an hour more. Jim was pleased to see her so happy, and made use of the time by installing communications programs on her laptop. Then he wrote her a document, explaining how everything worked and outlining security procedures: No talking about the system over common phone lines, no communication via unencrypted Internet traffic, and so on.

Finally she finished on the telephone. He had ordered Chinese food, and they ate it together, and talked into the evening. Then, they made love till they both fell asleep.

In the morning, James drove her to the airport for her flight to her mother’s house, and to New York for the meeting with her old editor. She promised that she would read the document he left her and would communicate safely. They kissed four or five times more, until finally she took her leave and caught her plane.

* * * * * * *

“Hey Johnny! I’m In!” John Morales didn’t understand. Tim Nickelson, his partner, said he was “in.” In what?

“What are you talking about Tim? Into what?”

“Into the Game.” Morales still looked blank. “Tango? The Internet scheme we’ve been trying to break?” Recognition spread across Morales’ face. “I got in! Remember the graphics designer in Santa Barbara? She got me in!”

A response was required at this point, but Morales was so conflicted that he felt blank. “Wow, I’m surprised… I didn’t think you were spending a lot of time on that.”

“Well, not that you’ve seen much of what I’ve been doing for a long time, but I’ve got a lot going on.”

“Yeah, I guess so! Like what else?” As Morales asked, he faintly realized that he was planning to pass-along the information he got from Tim. It wasn’t that he had made a decision to do so, but that was simply the way he was now. His nature was to protect people from injustice, and that was what he would do. And this also meant that his friend Tim had become the agent of injustice. He recognized these thoughts, but let them pass through without spending time with them.

“You haven’t been spending your time very well, John. You’re always going home at the end of the day. I’ve been working late, and going out to dinner with Assistant Director Jones.”

“Really?”

“Yes, really. We even went golfing with some other senior people last weekend. You’ve been missing out, my friend.”

“Well, I guess I don’t really like Jones that well, Tim.”

“Well you should, Johnny. He’s an Assistant Director, and he could do a lot for you. You know, it’s not just a salary increase that he could get for you. These top guys live really well.” Tim was becoming animated but his voice was becoming quieter, not wanting to be overheard. “These guys eat at great restaurants, drive free cars, get free airplane trips, and get all sorts of favors. They live like Kings. You’ve got to get moving. Listen, Jones doesn’t like you that well either, but he does respect your ability. If you’d try to win him over, you could do it easily.”

“I’ll think about it, Tim.” Morales knew that he wouldn’t – that he didn’t want to be Jones’ friend, and to ‘live like a King’ by those means. But he was afraid to say so. There could be big consequences if he did, and he wasn’t sure he was strong enough to stand against them. Perhaps someday he would be.

“Think about it hard, John. Remember how we used to talk about hot cars, hot chicks, and money in the bank? Well, here it is.”

“I’ll think about it, Tim, but tell me, what about the designer in Santa Barabra? How did you get in? What did you find?”

“Oh, that’s why I came to see you. I got in by becoming her neighbor. I have the apartment next door to her now – at Bureau expense! I sub-leased my place, and I live next door to her for free! Food, furniture, electricity, the whole thing!”

“Whoa!”

“Yeah. So, anyway, I made friends with her, and I started talking to her about Internet stuff. You know: cracks in the Matrix, complaining about the IRS, encryption, Laissez-Faire… all that stuff. I had all the right books on my shelves, talked about the right movies, and so on. So, she started to educate me.”

“And she brought you into the Game?”

“Uh huh.”

“So, what is it?”

“Well, it’s actually called Tango2… Pretty cool, really… You buy pieces from other players. So if no one trusts you, you can’t get in. And you have to share their software as well. I guess some of the people who have been in for a while are allowed to buy pieces and get the software directly, but I don’t know any of them yet.

“Anyway, I got the software! Here it is.” He handed a disk to Morales. “Jones wants you to go over it, and learn everything possible about it: Who made it, how the messages are encoded, how can we trace them, everything.”

“Wow, I guess I have a lot to do!”

“Yeah. But listen John, make Jones happy on this one. I’ll get him to like you.”

“Thanks.”

* * * * * * *

“Max, I want to get out of this.”

“What exactly do you mean, kid? Out of the Bureau, or off of the case?”

“I’m not sure, Max. Both, I think.”

“Well, that can certainly be done, but why all of a sudden?”

“It’s just too much Max, I don’t want to be in the middle of a situation that could ruin me.” Max understood. Here was a nice twenty-something kid, thrown into the middle of a situation that was far too big for him. He wants to do the right thing, but the other players are giants. Standing up to them, he stands to get crushed.

“All right. We can do that. I can get you out, and get you out safely. Have you got some way of making a living outside the Bureau?”

Morales hadn’t thought of that yet, so much was he focused on getting away from trouble. “Uh… yeah, sure! I could do all sorts of computer work. Especially as a network security expert.” He hadn’t thought of it before, but he could probably make a very good living that way.

“John, wait here for a minute, will you?”

Max went to his office, and called Bari. They agreed to meet in Max’s office at closing time. Max told Morales to go home, take a nap, and be back at 1:00 a.m. “My friend will be here,” he said, “and we’ll figure out how to do this for you.”

As Morales walked out, Max thought to himself, “No, it’s not for the young guys to take on this kind of job. It’s for the experienced guys like me and Bari.”

* * * * * * *

“John, this is my old friend Anthony Bari. Anthony, this is John Morales.”

As he had expected, Bari found Morales to be young, honest, and scared.

They made small talk for a few moments, and then Bari handed Morales a glass of Cognac, picked up his own, and sat on Max’s desk. Morales was sitting on Max’s deep red velvet couch; the kind they used to use in Hollywood in the old days as a casting couch.

“All right John, Max tells me that you want to get out.”

“Yes,” answered Morales.

“Well, I think that’s a wise move John. You’ve just started and these guys threw you right into the deep water, which was a really shitty thing for them to do. But, regardless, we need to get you out of there in such a way that it keeps you safe. I’ve already talked to my associate Martin. He told me that you paid him the hundred bucks, and that he can take care of the situation.” Morales looked much relieved. “That makes you feel better?”

“Much better. Being stuck in the middle of this thing is terrible. They’re using my work to hurt a bunch of decent people, and doing it illegally. And they could blame me for their violations! I want to get away from it. Now.”

“I don’t blame you John. Consider yourself on the way out. I’ll meet with Martin tomorrow, and we’ll have you out within a week. But listen to me… this is important. They’ll want you to sign all sorts of papers. Don’t do it! Be polite, but simply look at them, and say, ‘please send them to my attorney; he’s handling it for me.’ Play stupid if you have to, but don’t sign anything. If they somehow force you

to sign something, you must make a note that says ‘against my consent, pending my attorney’s review.’ Have you got that?”

“Yes, I do.”

“All right, so long as you don’t sign anything, you’re safe. We have enough of their dirty laundry to save you.”

Max leaned back in his large leather desk chair, which looked to be the same age, and from the same place as the couch. Actually the whole office looked like it was straight out of a 1940s movie. “John, can you get a new job quickly?”

Morales smiled. “Called a friend from engineering school and got a tentative offer already!”

Max smiled. “Yeah kid, you’ll be all right.”

Bari spoke up again. “Yeah, you’ll be all right… probably. I want you to remember something, John, you’ve spoken to Max about an NSA briefing. That could land you in prison. Now, I’m not saying this to scare you, but you have to understand this clearly. Max would never rat you out. Believe me, I know this from experience.” He glanced at Max, silently reminding him of some past incident. “And I would certainly never rat you out. The only person who would do it is you.” Bari said this in a purposely accusatory tone.

Morales was insulted. “I’m not stupid.”

“No John, you’re not stupid, but you’re not experienced with these things either. The truth is that people love to tell secrets. Sooner or later, you’re going to really want to tell someone your big secret. That’s simply human nature; we all feel that way sometimes. I won’t sink you, and Max won’t, but you had damn well better worry about yourself.

“Let me ask you a question, have you ever had an overwhelming curiosity to look into your sister’s diary, or something like that?”

“Yeah, I have.”

“And did you do it?”

“Yes, I did.”

“All right, until you can completely control that kind of impulse, you are a threat to yourself. Believe me, there’ll come a time when you’ll want desperately to tell a girlfriend, one of your buddies, or maybe your boss. That will be the moment when you are teetering on the brink of danger, and it won’t feel like it to you! Do you understand me?” Bari was being purposefully loud and demanding.

Morales’ voice was firm. “Yes, I understand.”

“All right John,” Bari was calming down, “I am being intense because this is very important for your safety… and for our safety as well. If they find out what you told Max, both he and I become targets.”

“Mr. Bari, I understand. I will not rat you out, and I will control my impulses. I can do that.”

Bari smiled, slid down from the desk, and put his hand on the young man’s shoulder. He spoke to him like a father would to his son. “You’re a good man, Morales. I believe you.” Then he sat down on a chair, next to the couch and perpendicular to it.

Max leaned forward in his chair. “All right, with all of that out of the way, what are we going to do about the people who stand to get hurt by Jones and his rampant career goals?”

“No, Max, we can’t do that here!”

“What do you mean?”

“Listen, it would be nice, but it’s a legal risk. We have to keep things compartmentalized. It’s our job to prevent the innocents from being hurt. John should have no part of that. He can pass information along to us if he wants to, but he shouldn’t know anything more. Everything has to remain compartmentalized. It makes it much better if any of us has to cut a deal with a prosecutor. Let’s say John gets nailed… he can cut a deal to tell everything he knows. But if he knows nothing beyond the information hand-off, we can’t get hurt. And if you or I get nailed for something, they can’t get John for conspiracy. You follow? It makes everybody safer.”

“All right, so be it.” Max had resigned himself to these situations. He considered them impediments to justice, but he was content to fight one battle at a time.

“Now, John, if you want to prevent people from getting hurt, you pass whatever information you have along to us. You do this verbally, in a secure location. Never by telephone or in writing. You tell us, and we’ll do our best to get the results you want. Now, as for Max and I, we don’t care if you ever tell us anything again. You pass along information that you want to. Nothing more. Is this all clear?”

“Absolutely.”

“Good. Now do nothing and say nothing at work; let us arrange it. If people at the office ask why you’re leaving, just say it was a personal decision. Apologize to them for being vague if you must, but don’t say anything.

“Anything else on your mind, John?”

“No, just that when I get done with this, I’ve got more things to tell you.”

“All right, but that brings up a couple of final points. John, once we talk to your bosses, you’ll be watched. There’s no way you’ll be able to see me. Actually, it was a

little bit risky to meet you here tonight. So, here's the way information transfer has to go: You tell Max, not me. And once your bosses know you want out, you should stay away from both of us for a while. If you want to pass anything along, do it tonight, or quietly to Max at the bar. You never talk to my associate Martin about anything illegal. You can't tell him about giving us information. He's a good man, and he'd protect you if I asked him to, but it's just a bad idea. Martin hears only of legal things from you. The three of us keep our mouths shut about everything else."

Bari paused for a moment, and thought through the various angles that might be played out. He finished with the one that appealed to him the most, and which he had put out of his mind till all the other things were covered completely.

"One last thing, John. If there is anything you want to remove from your office, make sure you do it tomorrow. After that, they'll watch your every move. Tomorrow is your last trusted moment there."

Morales nodded, acknowledging that he understood.

"Okay, I'm getting out of here. If you guys want to talk, fine. Max, you know where to find me if you need me."

Once Bari had gone, Max and Morales discussed the inner operations of the Bureau, drank Max's best Cognac, and told each other the stories of their lives. Before they were done, Morales told Max everything he knew about the case. He gave him the address of the woman who got his partner into Tango, the name of the NSA agent, Tim's alias, and the name of his front company.

The next morning, before work usually started, Morales scanned every document pertaining to the case that he could find. He encrypted them, then placed the encrypted files into several classic rock MP3 files, and emailed them to his kid brother. After work, he went to his family's house and copied the files onto a disc. He took them home, decrypted them, printed them, and sent them all over to Max via courier.

* * * * * * *

Two days later, Michael sent out the following email:

Jim, Phillip:

GAMMA CENTRAL IS DONE!

The tests were extensive, and identified only six small faults, which were easily fixed. (I told you we had the best programmers on the planet!)

I gave everyone a couple of days off, with the exception of Richard who is our guy obsessing on spycraft. (More on this in a moment.)

I can't tell you how happy I am to have this done. We've done a great thing gentlemen, and it has been an honor to work with you. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

I just finished delivering 300 copies of Gamma (both the 'server' and the 'user' versions of the program, in pre-addressed envelopes) to my friend the survivalist. He is under orders to mail them, should anything happen to me. The man was a US Marine for twenty years; so he knows the meaning of honor. Also, I helped his daughter out of a serious addiction, so he loves me.

Next week, we'll begin distributing the user version of the program to our most trusted clients. We will be charging a 1/4 of one percent fee for all transactions we handle. At that rate, we should recover our expenses in several months. In our favored scenario, we'll get all of our users into Gamma within two months, and then expand our client base by 30-50 percent over another few months. Our main concern, however, is the quality of our clients, not quantity. It is critically important that Gamma develop a culture of decency and honor. If we can accomplish that, things look very bright. The goal is to get a group of responsible market operators up and running; then we can walk away.

Now, onto additional exiting news:

Earlier I said that Richard and I are still working. Here's why: We just got some terrific intelligence from our source in LA. We have the name and address of an FBI Agent who is trying to pull off a sting against us. This is GREAT news. We're preparing a counter-sting. Now that we know where he is, we'll spy on him, and feed him the information we want him to have. As a second-level diversion, we're going to bug his apartment with British devices that McCoy is procuring from some old MI5 friends. (This is FUN!) So, whenever it is that these guys find the bugs (probably a long time), they'll think the Brits are involved. ("Divide and conquer!")

Yes, I know that this is really serious stuff, but how often does a psychologist get to play spy? Don't worry, I'm alternating my giddiness with more sober thoughts.

All right, enough for now,

Mike

* * * * * * *

Mike,

You're doing a hell of a job. BUT, you need some time off too. Meet me at Tino's next Thursday. I've made all the arrangements, and the tickets will be delivered to your place in two days. (Would have been there tomorrow if you didn't live in such a God-forsaken place!)

Anyway, get your stuff in order, and get ready for a few days off!

Phillip

* * * * * * *

Frances spent two days at her mother's like a little girl. They reveled in a flurry of shopping, visits to relatives, phone calls, and the sharing of secrets. They did not talk about Frances' original reason for visiting, the article that made her mother cry. She and James talked every night on the phone. James avoided any discussion of Tango or Gamma, and Frances followed his lead. They both wanted to let this be a purely carefree time for both Frances and her Mom. At first, they didn't really decide to do so, but the idea of bringing up anything except the happiness of the moment just seemed to go against nature.

It was now the evening of the second day, and Frances was to fly to New York early the next morning. When she got off the phone with James, she found her mom in the living room, looking through old picture albums.

"Mom, with all the excitement, we haven't talked about my article yet."

"Yes, I know, Frances. Actually, I thought about that a bit earlier today." She put down the photo album. She leaned back into the couch, took a deep breath, then sat up and leaned forward toward Frances. Sit down, dear, I've got a lot to tell you." Frances sat, moving her mind from happy thoughts of weddings and children to the critical analysis of human relationships. She wondered if her happiness with James would affect her reasoning.

"Go ahead, Mom."

"I think you know that your grandmother was a very thoughtful person, Frances."

"Yes, Mom, I do. We talked about things sometimes, though I was still pretty young when she died."

"Yes, but she didn't talk to you about the one subject that she cared most about… sexuality." Frances raised her eyebrows, and said, "Please, continue."

"Very well. Grandmother was convinced that traditional thinking on sexuality and marriage was wrong and caused continual damage. She began thinking about it as a young woman, but didn't know where to take it at that time. So, she married, had

children, and didn't think much more about it till after the war. After all, she was busy with children during those years, with the trauma of the Nazis added to it. But having gone through the horrors of the war, she decided that something was clearly and fundamentally wrong in the world, and that she would no longer take anything as a moral given. So, she picked up her previous field of study on sexuality and relationships. She was widely read on the subject, you know."

"No, I never would have guessed. She made a couple of comments to me on those lines… like I told you the other night… but they were brief, and she never followed them with anything more."

"No, we decided that we shouldn't talk to you about it until you were mature." She stopped, and looked a bit guilty. "I think I waited longer than we had decided." She was now obviously holding herself guilty. "I just didn't want you to get into this until you were older, Frances. I was sure… am sure… that you'll want to pursue this subject. And I guess I wanted to save you from putting yourself up for public ridicule." She began to cry.

Frances moved next to her and hugged her. "It's okay Momma. If I do this, I'll be content to speak unpopular opinions. Jim has done that a hundred times, so it won't bother him either. It's okay."

Marjorie looked at her daughter clearly and lovingly. "I believe you, Frances. I believe that you mean what you say, and that you aren't worried about people disagreeing with you or even hating you. But don't ever think that you have no limits. Everyone does, even you, and even Jim."

Frances understood her mother, but there was something else in her mind. Why was she saying this?

Marjorie was wiping her tears off of her cheeks. "Mom wanted me to do this, Frances. But I couldn't. After the war I had all the trauma I ever wanted. Mom did, too. You've had a reasonably good young life, Frances. Mine was traumatic. I never wanted to tell you about it when you were young, but I had to nurse dying soldiers every day for two and a half years. It was horrifying. Boys missing arms, with holes in their stomachs, missing eyes. It was too much. That's why your father and I always lived a quiet life. We had enough difficult situations for a lifetime. That's why we came to America. You can't imagine how wonderful it was for us throughout the 1950s and the first part of the 60s; a quiet, pleasant, safe, and decent world. The Korean war was a bit scary, but aside from that, it was idyllic for us.

"Mom felt more or less the same. It wasn't quite as bad for her; she was older when she had to go through it. But, still, she wasn't ready to take on the world.

"The point is this, Frances; you're a strong young woman, but I want you to remember that you are not beyond being worn out and damaged by difficulties. Too much hatred and fighting will hurt you, darling, and I don't want you to be hurt." She began crying again, and Frances hugged her lovingly.

“Mother, listen to me. I understand you, and I believe that I am not limitless. I promise you now, that I will be careful, very careful. Do you believe me Mom?”

“Yes, Frances, I do.” She now took a deep breath, and prepared to say something important. “I think that mother was right, and that there is something seriously wrong with the way humanity has handled sex. For God’s sake, it’s the most fundamental aspect of life, and people still can’t talk about it without making it dirty and cheap, or making it taboo. Something is very, very wrong. But if you talk about this, people get crazed. I’ve brought it up in conversations a number of times, and almost always I was met with shock and distrust. They’ll do the same thing to you, Frances. For some reason, they just can’t handle reasonable talk about it.”

“Momma, I can handle this. It’ll be all right.”

“And what about your children, Frances?”

Frances sat completely still for a moment. “Truthfully, Mom, I hadn’t thought of that yet. That’s an important question.” She seemed to be searching her own mind for a moment, then acquired a look of resolve. “Mom, I don’t know exactly what I’ll do, but I promise you that I won’t make my children suffer for my sake. They will come first, and will be protected.”

Marjorie had been looking Frances directly in the eye when she spoke. She believed her daughter, and was satisfied that her grandchildren would be protected. She got up from the couch and walked into her bedroom. A minute later, she emerged, carrying a large file folder. It was nearly filled with papers, some of them fairly old.

“Frances, these are Grandmother’s notes, my remembrances of our conversations, and notes of my own. Now, these are personal notes, so you can’t publish them with our names attached. But aside from that, you can use them any way you want. When you’re ready, call me about the papers, and I’ll help you understand our thoughts. But darling…” She sat next to Frances, and held her in her arms, “please, let’s be done with this subject now. It makes me think about why I didn’t want to pursue it.”

Frances understood. She put the papers away and took her Mom on a late night walk through their neighborhood. As they walked through the empty streets, Frances pointed out fun places from her childhood. It made her Mom happy.

* * * * * * *

FM: Jim, are you there?

JF: HI! I see that my instructions were decipherable.

FM: Yeah, they were fine.

JF: So, I take it you are in Manhattan?

FM: Yes I am. The meetings were a shocker. Jim, you won't believe this.

JF: Good? Bad?

FM: Good, I think. The story my editor wants me to cover? Your private markets! Remember the other night when you told me that your partial system had been running for a year, and had lots of users? Well, they're not sure what it is, but my editor has been getting rumors about an unusual amount of commerce being done off the books, and balance sheets showing up out of whack. Is this good, or is it bad?

JF: Well, like I said, we know the US gov. is aware, but we didn't think a newspaper would find out. I guess having you as the investigator gives us opportunities, or at least early information.

FM: Oh my God Jim, I nearly passed out when Rodney told me. I faked a sneeze so he wouldn't notice.

JF: Wow. How are you going to handle it?

FM: I'm not sure. Right now, I'm in a state of shock.

JF: Yeah, I can imagine.

FM: I'll have to figure this out over the next few days. But I did agree to cover the story for Rodney, so I'll start going through his leads. That means that I'm going to stay here one more day.

JF: I'll be waiting for you.

FM: Yeah. Me too.

JF: Yeah, we'll have a bunch of things to talk about.

Both of them understood that they were talking about living together, but thought that such subjects should be discussed in person, so they left it unsaid.

FM: So, how did your day go?

JF: Great! Gamma is done.

FM: Gamma? You mean the new market program?

JF: Yes.

FM: Fantastic! Why do you call it Gamma?

JF: The name comes from an old behavioral experiment Michael told us about. There were scientists experimenting with rats, to verify their behavioral models. They expected the usual 'alpha' and 'beta' groupings – the beta rats being basically followers, taking the leftovers from the alpha

rats. The alphas establishing territories, taking the choicest mates, and generally lording it over the betas. But then they found something else: There were rats that established territories and picked the best mates, but did not attempt to dominate the betas. They called them gammas. So, that's why we call our system Gamma Central; it's an interaction center for Gamma humans. Gammas are not content to be followers and work to get the best out of life. But they have no desire to rule others. Like it?

FM: Yeah, I think it's great. Make sure everyone knows the story.

JF: So, I never got the end of your story. Did you talk to your mom about why your article made her cry?

FM: Boy, did I! To make a long story very short, it turns out that both Mom and Grandma were some very free thinkers about sexuality and relationships, even though they both led completely traditional lives. Mom gave me their notes. I haven't gone through them yet, but they look VERY interesting. Have you or Phillip (or any of your other crazy friends) done much thinking along those lines?

JF: Phillip has.

FM: Gee, what a surprise! Do you think he'll have time to discuss the subject with me?

JF: I'm sure of it.

FM: OK, back to my article: I've got a lot of research to do tomorrow, and I've got to start early. Any suggestions before I go to bed?

JF: Sleep well and dream of me.

FM: Okay lover man, I will. Anything else?

JF: No, just keep your eyes and ears open if you talk to any government people. With the information you have, you may or may not know more than they do. So, try to hear not only what they say, but what they avoid saying.

MF: All right Jim, I will. Good night. I love you.

JF: Love you too doll, come home soon.

* * * * * * *

Phillip and Farber were working for a few days at Farber's Chicago office. After a late afternoon run to the local coffee shop, they walked back into the office to find an Express package from the Free Soul House. Mordecai and his partners had responded

to Phillip and James within days. They agreed to all the provisions of the contract, had assembled their team, and were setting up their corporate structure.

Unbeknownst to Phillip, Mordecai and his group had consulted with Don McConnell, the Free Soul House overseer, and had put one unusual demand into the contract. It said only, “P. Donson shall provide additional services to the Free Souls, as agreed upon by both parties.” When James showed Phillip the note, he frowned, tilted his head in thought, and then said with a half-laugh, “Well, they’ve got some sort of surprise waiting for me.” They reached Mordecai via encrypted chat.

PD: All right, Mordecai, you’re up to something. What is it?

MZ: Oh, you mean the note we added to the contract?

PD: Yes, I do. What’s the deal?

MZ: All right, here you go: When you were down here, you talked about some interesting subjects: paradigms, the necessity of production, the early Hippies, and so on. And Don says you have volumes more to say. We want to hear it.

PD: Well, I’m flattered, but how does this relate to the Breakers agreement?

MZ: It is the pivotal part. No discourses from you, and we don’t play.

PD: What? Why are you doing this?

MZ: Because Don said you wouldn’t do it unless we forced you. We want to read your thoughts and we have a web page where we want to display them to the world.

PD: Mordecai, I don’t think I can do what you are asking.

MZ: Why not?

PD: It’s not as simple as you think.

MZ: In what way?

PD: In many ways.

MZ: You’re being vague.

Farber was watching the conversation unfold on his computer screen. “I think you’re being unreasonable, Phillip.”

“Jim, there is a lot more at stake here than Breakers. I don’t think I want to publish my thoughts.”

“So when will you? Never?”

“No, I will some time.”

“Why is now a bad time?”

“I’m just not sure Jim, there could be a lot at stake.”

“All right Phillip, listen to me: You can’t run away from publishing forever. Tell Mordecai that you’ll need some time to consider this, and you’ll get back to him in a day or two. Then, you and I have to talk.”

PD: Mordecai, are you still there?

MA: Yes. Waiting for you.

PD: All right, I’ll think about it. I’ll get back to you in a day or two.

Mordecai was relieved the conversation was over. He felt very uncomfortable speaking to Phillip in the way he had. Phillip Donson was a man who deserved respect, and Mordecai’s words were almost coarse. He believed Don that this was necessary, but he didn’t like doing it. Don looked over Mordecai’s shoulder said “Good. Very good. This time we may get him.”

“What do you mean, ‘this time’?”

“We’ve tried before. He would never agree. He’s afraid something bad might come of his ideas if he throws them into the public square.”

“And you think you can get him to do it this time?”

“You know, if we stick to our demand, I think we will.”

* * * * * * *

An hour later, Phillip and James ended up in a relatively private booth at Miller & McNulty’s Steak House. They settled in for a long dinner.

“Phillip, I want you to tell me why you’ve been avoiding publishing for so long. But let’s start with this: When’s the last time you published anything?”

“Six years ago. I wrote an article on Aristotle versus Plato.”

“And I take it you’ve had a lot more ideas in the past six years?”

“Yes.”

“Come on, Phillip, what’s going on? You have a hundred unique things to say, and yet you sit mute. Tell me why.”

Phillip sat still, head lowered, looking downward, as though he were thinking both embarrassing and frightening thoughts. Finally, he raised his head and took a deep breath. “There are actually several reasons, Jim. And, truth be told, I’m probably being paranoid. But the risks are real.

“First of all is the problem that I could be wrong on some things. Now Jim, I know what you’re going to say… ‘So what if you’re wrong! Do your best, and that’s all you can do!’ Am I right?”

“Yes, you are right. And I’ll hold to that.”

“Yes, but Jim, when I was a minister, I gave people advice that I thought was right at the time, and it was wrong. And you know what? Those people are following my wrong advice to this day!”

“And you think it’s your fault?”

“Isn’t it?”

“No Phillip, it’s not. They asked you for your advice, and you helped them as best you could. What if you weren’t there? They might have gotten worse advice. You’re not God, and you can only give out the best you have. Listen to me; you can’t hold yourself to the standard of being all-knowing.”

“Okay, you have a point. Nonetheless, my advice has negatively affected people.”

Farber started laughing. “Oh my God, why didn’t I get it earlier? Phillip, you’re giving me bullshit. How old were you when you gave your Jesus friends bad advice?”

“Twenty-something.”

“Farber began laughing loudly and heartily. “Phillip, move on! You gave some bad advice when you were twenty-some years old, and you’re worried about it still? Join the ‘I screwed up’ club, baby. Get over it!” He laughed more, then became serious. “Okay, Phillip, has your advice done more benefit or harm?”

“Benefit.”

“Then what more do you want? Listen, you’ve told me yourself, many times, that the world is massively screwed up. It’s going to be messy no matter what you do. The people receiving even your best advice are going to take it wrongly in some cases.”

James had been convincing Phillip very well up to this point, but now Phillip’s expression said that he had somehow lost him. “Phillip, you’ve got to tell me what you’re afraid of. Come on!”

“I’m afraid of being another Karl Marx, responsible for the murder of a hundred million people.” Phillip was dead serious. “Listen, Jim, Marx was something of a crank, but he wasn’t a mass-murderer. But do you know how many people were killed in the name of his doctrine? A hundred million! These were real people who

died, not statistics. Mothers, Fathers, children, real people! One hundred million of them! Sadistic murder on a suffocating scale. Slow, painful deaths. No, Marx didn't tell these guys to do that, but he gave them a tool to use. And that's all they needed to get themselves into power, and to kill."

"And you're afraid that your ideas could be used that way? I don't think so."

"I don't either, Jim. But then again, neither did Marx."

"Whose ideas are better, yours or Marx's? No BS. Tell me."

"Mine."

"Why are they better?"

"Because they are based upon reality. Marx's weren't."

"Good. Now, what was the real reason the peasants accepted communism in Russia and China?"

"Well… first of all, false promises of heaven on earth."

"Would we do better to call that 'irrational hopes,' Phillip?"

"Yes, definitely."

"And what else?"

"Envy. They wanted to get a share of the rich guys' stuff. Communism gave them a justification for their envy and for robbery."

"Right. And do you advocate these things, or anything like them?"

"No."

"So, you're being frozen in fear by nothing more than an oversized apparition. Phillip, do you value my judgment?"

"You know I do."

"All right then, play along with me. Relax, take a drink, and start telling me how and why Marx blew it, how you wouldn't, and why your ideas are right. I promise I won't tell anyone you're a braggart."

Phillip looked at Jim with a half-smile, half-frown. "Okay." He took a drink, leaned back, and looked off into the distance. He knew that Jim was right, yet somehow he wasn't quite convinced.

"All right, let me start with one last cautionary idea: My ideas are big ideas. If I'm right, I'm right big. That's good. But if I'm wrong… well, I don't want to be wrong big."

"You're bullshitting again, Phillip. None of us knows what might happen in the future. There's never any assurance that a stray comment won't lead to something bad in the future. Uncertainty is part of the game."

Again James was right, and again Phillip knew it. And again, Phillip wasn't yet settled with the idea, so he did as James asked, and began talking – almost rambling – out loud.

"All right, am I being the same as Marx? His error was to assume that individuality and self-interest were not part of the human, but were in fact conditioned behaviors. I say that individuality is built in, but that a tribal consciousness is learned. Am I right? I'm certainly right about self interest. It is a biological imperative. There's no question about that.

"I'm also comforted by the fact that I completely disavow aggression. In my scheme of ideas, everyone is free to follow my ideas, or not to. The next issue is evidence. Is there evidence to support my ideas? Yes, there is. Tons of it.

"And the final question: Say we really do unleash real freedom on earth, what happens when rulers start to lose their power? How vicious will they get? This I have no good answer for." Phillip paused, decided to say everything he was thinking, and went on.

"Hundreds of people have attempted to make some sort of 'superior man.' Neitze talked about the 'ubermensche,' Paul wrote about people who were a new species, and not 'mere men.' But the people who tried to make this happen always wanted to associate it with some sort of hierarchical group: A state, a religion, a tribal or social grouping. They were wrong. The superior man is made by breaking away from those things; by throwing off all submission to authority and membership in group identities. The superior man grows by learning his own abilities; by trusting and developing his own nature, by reveling in self-originated goodness and love. I maintain that subservience to a group or to an authority is damaging to man's true nature. The reason that there are so few uber-men is because group-identity has been bred into humanity, and has become a great wall keeping us from further progress. They are trying to bind the vast human spirit to a social structure suited to insects."

James sat in silence when Phillip had finished speaking. His face was motionless and his entire being seemed exceptionally powerful and serious. "Phillip, you need to tell this. You have to put this into the world. I am your friend, and I am telling you in sincerity and in conviction; you need to tell this."

* * * * * * *

Mordecai,

I agree to your demands. I will begin sending you material within two weeks.

Requirement #1: All of this material is to be published anonymously. If you like, you can give me a pen name, so long as it gives no indication of my

identity. (Big new ideas can create big controversies, and I don't want to become a public commodity.)

Requirement #2: You will form no clubs, associations, or any other sort of group, based upon these ideas. These ideas are to be left alone, and not associated with any group at all. Obviously, you are responsible only for your own firms and personnel. Anyone seeking to create such a group will be immediately removed from association with the Breakers company or the Free Soul web pages. Should my ideas become popular, there will be great pressure put upon you to form a group of some sort. I hereby, specifically and adamantly, forbid it. Such a group would not help my ideas, but would slowly destroy them.

Requirement #3: My material is not to be edited.

Requirement #4: You will allow my material to be used by any reasonable publisher who requests it, subject to the other requirements stated herein.

Phillip

PS: Tell Don that he was right, and that I thank him for it.

* * * * * * *

The celebration crowd at Tino's included Phillip, Michael, McCoy, Suzy Q, Richard the intelligence expert, four additional members of the Group, and, of course, Tino. They had all arrived at various times from Thursday morning till late in the day. Now, at Friday night dinner, they were all rested and assembled.

They all raised their glasses in a toast, as Phillip stood and spoke, "To Gamma, to all the people who built it, to the thousands of independent minds over a hundred generations who laid the groundwork for it, and to the better future it may bring."

As always at Tino's, dinner was magnificent but not heavy, with frozen Margaritas in abundance. The crowd became more relaxed, louder, and happier as the night progressed.

"Ladies and lads!" McCoy was speaking in a firm, projected, military voice. "None of us knows exactly where Gamma will lead, or what types of changes will spring from it. But I want all of you to know that I think you are the finest group of people I have ever worked with, and that we have created a thing of beauty. Gamma is a place where people can rise from poverty to wealth unimpeded, where no King, or Senator, or Bureaucrat can swoop in and take half of what they earn. This is a place where coercion has no mechanism; where there is no central power point to be grabbed.

Regardless of what happens from here forward, we have created the most moral commercial structure ever seen on this planet. God bless you all."

All at the table were moved.

After conversation began again, Michael hollered across the table, "Hey Tino, how often do you get a group of people here who really have something to celebrate?"

"Not often enough Michael… Hey Mike, do you ever get any kind of group together at your place? Or do you just throw dinner parties for the few lost Elk who wander by?" They laughed boisterously. The truth was that everyone loved Michael's ranch, but it was very, very, remote, and made for an easy joke. Most of them were city people, so the ranch was a novelty, albeit a pleasant one.

At this point, the conversations at the table went completely free-form, with comments pouring in from every quarter.

"Yo, Phillip! Where's Farber? He should be here."

"Yeah, well… he had something else to do."

"Oh yeah, what's her name?" They all laughed.

"Yeah, well, you're right. Do any of you recognize the name Frances Marsden?"

"The financial writer?" McCoy asked.

"One and the same."

McCoy laughed. "That son of a bitch, I should have guessed it. Are they serious?"

"Really serious."

McCoy stood up and filled everyone's glasses. "All right then, to our fearless leader, James Farber, and to the lovely and talented Ms. Marsden!"

The conversations went on till early morning. It was a long, full evening, full of joy over legitimate accomplishments. The last of them went off to bed just before sunrise.

Everyone slept late, laid in the sun, and took naps. For two days, they all slept far more than they were awake. They were making up for all the times they had pushed their limits. Sunday was to be their last day there, and they were all feeling rested and ready to go back home.

At nine o'clock Sunday morning, Michael's cell phone rang. It was Farber. They conversed heatedly for several minutes. Michael made two pages of notes. When the conversation was over, he ran to Suzy Q's cottage, which was next to his. "Suzy! We've got another big situation staring us in the face. Go get everyone together, and have them meet up at the dining area." Suzy rushed to get everyone there.

Within five minutes, all were present. "All right, everybody listen carefully." Michael was sitting at the end of the large wood table, alternately looking at his friends and at his notes. "I just got off the phone with Farber. He was checking my

email for me, and we just got big news. Apparently our best source of information is drying up, but he finished by getting us one very large piece of information: The FBI, accompanied by the NSA, will be raiding the Seattle computer center within the next two weeks." The table almost buzzed with energy, though no one had said a word.

"Listen up, everyone, we have only a few days to get the most important things in place, then maybe a week more before they come charging in. I want all of you to take a few minutes to think about this, and come up with plans. Our first priority is to keep our system up and running. So think about that first. Then, we want to keep the FBI off our ass. Richard, give everyone a one-minute explanation of what we'll want to do."

Richard stood up. As he began to speak, Michael got Tino off to the side, and discussed food and travel with him. Richard was being very careful to speak very clearly, enunciating each word. "So, our goal is to give these agencies misinformation. We want to give them information that looks legitimate, and that they can almost verify. But we want this information to point them just a few degrees off-course. Now, when I actually do this, it gets very complicated. We are using several layers of deception, and are playing all sorts of tricks on them. What I need from you are any ideas for leading the FBI just slightly astray, while making them think they are making slow progress in the right direction."

Richard sat down, and Michael stood back up. "All right, everybody listen carefully. Forget about your travel plans. Farber will have a jet waiting for us mid-morning tomorrow. I want all of you to take an hour to think this over. You heard what Richard needs, and you know that we have to protect our system. Tino will have all sorts of food sitting on the table here all day long. So, go back to your cottages and think about this, and get back up here in one hour. We'll make our plans then. We have the rest of the day to get this right."

Phillip and Michael remained at the table, as everyone else left. Michael turned and spoke. "Farber was asleep at the switch, Phillip. That email came in a day and a half ago."

"I don't doubt it Michael. I think he's been spending a lot of time in bed with Frances."

"Seriously?"

"Yeah! Typical newlyweds, don't you think?"

"Newlyweds! They're married?"

"Technically, no. But in substance, absolutely."

"Well then, I guess we have to cut the young stud some slack." They both laughed.

"Yeah," said Phillip, "first things first."

An hour later, the team assembled. Tino had set up a computer at the table and Richard manned the keyboard, recording the various ideas. People paced, hollered

out ideas, ate a few bites of food, and mumbled to themselves. Some of them scribbled on legal pads, others used PDAs. This continued throughout the afternoon and into the evening. The plans they developed entailed routing their traffic around the Seattle facility, replacing it with dummy traffic (since the FBI would be monitoring all the traffic in and out, and a cessation of traffic would indicate that their plans were known), rigging one of the computers to have a faulty auto-erase routine, and to fill that computer with misleading data of all sorts. In order to do this successfully, none of the technicians at the data center could know about their tampering. Furthermore, it was nearly certain that the facility was being watched. They resolved this problem as follows:

There was one particular technician who worked night shifts alone three days per week. On the next available night, he would be told that a special technician would be visiting him, and McCoy would disguise himself as a Russian technician and make the appropriate changes. Then he would leave before the others arrived. Immediately afterward, the night shift technician would be removed from that project, and reassigned elsewhere. That way, the existing technicians would know nothing of the setup.

"We do, however, have an ongoing problem," said Michael to the group. "They are able to locate our facilities. When we get back… and once this operation is complete… we'll have to get everyone moving on distributed computing, not just the guys at the Free Soul house. Think about it, and I'll be writing to you about it shortly. All right, we leave for the airport at eight o'clock tomorrow morning. There will be breakfast waiting for us at seven. Everyone go and get some rest."

Later that evening, Michael stopped at Suzy Q's cottage. "Got a minute to talk?"

"Sure Mike, come on in. What's on your mind?"

"Suzy, I'd like you to take charge of the distributed computing effort."

Suzy was flattered and surprised. "Why? You've overseen everything thus far."

"Yes, and I've enjoyed it too. But I don't want to do this forever, and once we have our first and second stage of Gamma Markets running, I want to go back to psychology full time. I've got some important research I need to pursue. The truth is, Suzy, that the distributed computing effort will go on longer than the rest of the project, and I don't want to take it on."

"How much longer than the rest, Mike?"

"I'm not entirely sure. I don't think terribly long. Here's what we've planned: We will find some people who want to take on the job as a full-time business. They sign-up people to keep their computers available to us. Then, their companies will sell that access to Gamma. Essentially, these guys will pay people to make their computers available for our use, and charge us a fee."

Suzy interjected, “And once we have all this distributed computing in place, we won’t need the data centers any more?”

“Exactly.”

“So, there will be no data centers for the FBI to grab? Only a few thousand scattered computers, each doing a small portion of the processing?”

“Right.” Michael laughed to himself. “Imagine some of the Europeans; they’ll have twenty computers in their apartment, running day and night, and living off of it.” She laughed at the mental picture Michael drew, having known many young European guys who would fight each other for such an opportunity.

“All right, Michael, I’ll take it on, but only if you help me.”

“It’s a deal, Suzy, I’ll give you as much help as you need.”

“Great! I’ll start next week. I’ll post a note to our first-tier Gammas.”

* * * * * * *

Farber’s jet made several stops, dropping people along the way. It ended up in Chicago. Phillip stayed the night at the condo he kept there, and both Phillip and Farber flew to Florida the next morning.

The Free Soul house was buzzing with activity. Breakers was the big new project and the Free Soul web site their new joint hobby. Dr. Demitrios had spent a full week at the house, administering Breakers with Mordecai, checking blood samples, and chronicling their results, which were excellent. But, during this week, an unexpected thing happened – every person who participated in the trial said that they felt great afterward. “I felt like I washed away several pounds of mental grime that had accumulated in me,” was a standard comment. Or, “I didn’t realize how much useless crap I had in my head.”

Breakers was originally designed for fairly disturbed people, not healthy people. Since it was unquestionably safe, George didn’t worry about administering it to the Free Souls, but he was surprised at the results. When he had administer the treatment to himself, he noticed benefits, but he dismissed them out of hand, in proper scientific style. He had not expected an overwhelming response from healthy young people. And those with the most troubling pasts seemed to experience the most dramatic benefits. It was at this time that the Breakers regimen was first called “The Brain Flush.” Dr. Dimitrios did not like that name at all, since it was not an accurate description. Nevertheless, it stuck. And, more significantly, people began bringing in their friends and relatives for the Brain Flush, and offering money.

All of this led to long discussions between Phillip, George, James, Mordecai, and Don. They wanted to make Breakers available to anyone who might benefit by it,

whether seriously ill or just in need of a quick mental cleaning. But doing this might give the US medical establishment another reason to oppose them. Worse, it might give that same establishment a tool to prosecute them criminally. In the United States, medical treatments that are not specifically sanctioned are banned. Distributing them – even recommending them – can be a jailable offense.

After much discussion, all partners in the ventures decided to create a separate distribution company that would be in charge of all shipments… including many that would get 'lost' between labs and warehouses. Their purpose was to help people – regulations and rulers be damned. The distribution structure would give them enough plausible deniability to slow any possible attack.

* * * * * * *

"Hi Jim, when are you going to come home from that office and see me?" Frances' voice was a combination of seductive and teasing. She was just about to walk out the door as she called, but she wanted Jim to be thinking about her.

"Will you be home in an hour?"

"No. Sorry boy, I'm going over to see Julia."

"What time will you be home?"

"Good," she thought, "he's thinking about it already."

"Oh probably not till midnight. Should I be careful not to wake you up?"

"Ha, ha… you'd better be sure *to* wake me up."

Frances and Julia had spoken by phone several times since Frances got back from New York, but hadn't yet visited in person. James was working late at his office, going over the opening and spreading of Gamma Central. The first users had moved over from Tango, were transacting a lot of commerce, and were bringing their customers into Gamma with them. James had two primary concerns: The distributed computing system and money transfers through government-controlled banks. All of these banks operated at the state's pleasure; they could be shut down immediately if they displeased the ruling groups, and all transactions they conducted were open to state surveillance.

Farber had set up multiple accounts in several locations, but these would only last until the various governments found them and shut them down. Not even the places with traditional banking privacy would be able to withstand pressure from the US and the UK, if it came to that. He needed a more permanent solution. His mind went back to the one solution that had never let him down: "Give people a chance to cash-in by solving your problem," he was fond of saying, "and they'll run through walls finding ways to do it."

Farber wrote a proposal, stating his problem, identifying the risks, offering significant rewards, and sent it to all the current users of Gamma Central. He was completely confident that he'd have plenty of responses within a week. After all, there were hundreds of partial end-runs around banking systems. These guys would make money by finding them, keeping them open, and finding new ones. "A thousand hungry entrepreneurs are awfully hard to stop," he thought.

Farber walked home, as he often did, and let his mind wander as he went. Halfway home, he decided that he should check in with Phillip. They hadn't seen each other in a while.

JF: Phillip, let me know when you're there.

Farber posted the note to Phillip's computer as soon as he walked into the apartment, then washed up a bit, and made a cup of herb tea. He looked through the day's mail, and watched a news program for a few minutes. There was no response from Phillip yet, so he decided to take a shower. If nothing else, he wanted to be clean and fresh when Frances got home.

PD: I'm here amigo.

The note was waiting for James when he got back from the shower.

JF: Hey, got a couple of minutes?

PD: Sure. What's going on?

JF: Getting Gamma up, working on the banking issue, a few other things. All going well, really.

PD: Good. I saw the Gamma stats earlier. They're looking good. A few more months, and we can think about getting out all together.

JF: Yeah, but I think it'll be more like eight or nine months. We want it to develop its own culture.

PD: I understand, but I'm not so sure they'll need us to do that. Let them do it on their own.

JF: So, you think the impulse to 'lead and guide' is a mistake?

PD: Almost always. Let them be creators, not followers. Followers have a certain mentality, and independent creators a quite different mentality. We want creators - people who find solutions by themselves, who have their

own conceptions of the right and good, and who are capable of independent, righteous action. Followers don't do that. To get the creator mindset, you have to get out of the way and let them rise to the occasion. Make sense?

JF: Yes it does. OK, a few months. I'll copy Michael on this discussion.

PD: Thanks.

JF: So, what are you up to?

PD: Writing essays, visiting kids and grandkids, and planning my retirement.

JF: Sounds good to me.

PD: Yeah, it's been good.

JF: All right, I'm done for the evening. I'm going to relax for a bit, and wait for Frances to get home – she's at Julia's.

PD: Great. I know they're getting along well. Cheers!

It was after midnight when Frances walked in. James was asleep, hoping that she would wake him up. She did, but not for the reason he had hoped.

"Jim, can you talk for a minute?" The look on her face said that she didn't have pleasure in mind.

"All right. What's up?"

"Did you know that Phillip and Julia are not really married?"

"Well, I kind of guessed."

"You didn't know for sure?"

"No, I don't think they ever spelled it out for me, but it wasn't too hard to tell." She was relieved that James hadn't known; she had been feeling betrayed. "You do understand that they still care about each other."

"Yes, I do. Julia explained it all to me. She's worn out, and just wants a quiet life; she's had enough drama. Phillip is just too much for her on a daily basis."

"But it just seems strange… right?"

"Yeah. It doesn't fit the pictures I have in my head. They act married when they're together; but they're not together that much of the time."

"Yeah, I know. Anything else on your mind, babe? I was sound asleep."

"No, nothing urgent tonight, but will you need to hurry out in the morning?"

"No. I don't have meetings tomorrow. I've got a lot to do, but I can start whenever I want."

“Great. I’ve got some notes to show you in the morning. Go to sleep now, lover.”

* * * * * * *

Jim woke up to sunlight streaming into half a dozen huge windows, making the apartment look like it was sparkling. The smell of coffee, eggs and toast rolled into the bedroom. Though she wasn’t quite sure why, Frances wanted to enjoy a traditional morning of ‘wife makes grand breakfast for loving husband.’

James walked into the kitchen, and wrapped his arms around Frances from behind as she finished her cooking. “You know, this is really nice… what a wonderful way to start my day. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, I thought you’d like it.” She kissed him. “Go on, sit and get started.”

She finished serving the food as James poured the coffee and juice. Over breakfast, they discussed the beautiful view, their plans for the day, and their schedules over the following days. After eating, they cleaned up, and Frances asked James to sit back down while she got the notes she had mentioned the night before.

“Oh, yes, the notes. I forgot about that,” said James.

“Well, you were about half asleep.”

“Yeah. So, what is it?” She was reaching into her desk drawer in the living room, pulling out an envelope.

“The notes from my grandmother that I told you about. You know, I put them aside for a while; I just wasn’t ready to jump into them. But talking to Julia about her non-traditional life with Phillip, it brought it back to mind. Here they are James, read them. These are transcripts my mom made of her conversations with Grandma. ‘Margie’ is my mom. Margarite, really.”

The pages were typed, with hand-written additions and notations. They read as follows:

“Margie, you may think this is crazy, but I am sorry that I demanded fidelity of your father. I was always told that if he were unfaithful, it would mean he had lost – or would lose - his affection for me. But that was not the truth. He was a good man, and always loved me. He was also a very active man - sexually. Does it bother you that I should talk about that?”

“Not really, Mom, it’s just very strange.”

“Yes, I can understand. But if we will discuss this subject, it is necessary. Do not worry, I will never talk about any details. It was hard for him to

want sex so much, and not be able to get it. After all, how much energy can a mother of five children really have?

"But it affected him. He would get grumpy when it had been too long, and I really believe that it damaged his health over time. And I am very certain that if he had had more sex, he would have been more energetic in his work.

"But here is my question Margie: Would it really have been so bad if he had had a few outside relations? I'm not sure, but I no longer believe that, in his case, it would have been an evil."

"Mother, you say that now, far removed from the events. Would you really have said that when you were thirty or forty years old? I don't think so."

"For me at that time, no, I could not have said it. I was too frightened. But I did think about it, even then. What I am saying, Margarite, is that I should have been able to say that. That I was afraid of something that was not true, at least in your father's case. That I was trained to act as I did. And that such training does not serve us well.

"The way people have handled sex is wrong - it does not suit what we are. I'm too old, and I've spent too long thinking the old way to see my way out, but perhaps some of you younger people could figure out some way to deal intelligently with sex, marriage, and family. It really needs to be done."

"So, Mama, do you think that you and Papa had a bad marriage?"

"No, darling, we had a good marriage, but I know that tying down his sexual desire hurt your father. I certainly didn't hurt him purposefully, but I did hurt him. I'll tell you Margie, figure everything out for yourself. Don't ever follow the crowd - whether they're right or wrong, following them turns your mind off."

"Wow!" was all Farber had to say.

"Yeah, I thought so too. Jim, do you think my grandmother was right?"

"In what way do you mean?"

"Well, what if we have a bunch of kids, and I don't want to have sex as much? Would you still need it? Would it be bad for you if you didn't get it?"

Jim froze. He couldn't see any good way out of this question without either lying or hurting Frances' feelings, or maybe angering her.

"That's not a very easy question, you know." She lowered her head and was sad, knowing that the answer he didn't want to give was the true one.

“Jim, I want to hear the truth. If Grandma is right, then some of my dreams are mistaken, and that hurts. But I want to know.”

Farber felt in a hopeless situation. He didn’t want to hurt Frances, and he didn’t want to disappoint her. Lying might get him out of it, but she’d eventually find out the truth anyway, and it would be worse then. He was angry at her for forcing him into such a situation.

“Frances, why are you doing this? There’s no good way for me to answer this question.”

“James, you told me that you loved the way I went after the truth; remember?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Well then, appreciate it now. I know you’re afraid you will hurt me. I appreciate that. But I’ve got to hear the truth.”

He was obviously uncomfortable, and still angry, but he rehearsed his words in his mind only once, then spoke. “All right Frances, I think your grandmother is right. I definitely function better when I’m having good sex… enough good sex. But Frances, I would never want to hurt you. I haven’t even thought about being with another woman since I’ve met you.”

She knew what he was doing. He was a good man, he was in love, and he was being unrealistic, the way that such men usually are. They feel sublime at the moment, and see the future as always being that way. And should the future not live up to their dreams, honor would demand that they suffer through it in silence. That would have been what happened to Grandfather.

She kissed his forehead, with tears beginning to stream down her face. “You’re a good man, James. Now, please, leave me alone for a while I let my dreams die with some dignity.”

He felt very bad, and worried about Frances. He began to get up, but slowly.

“Frances, are you okay?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Are you sure?”

“James, go to work. Come home for dinner, and I’ll be fine. Please, do what I ask.”

He left without hesitation, but not without concern. It was nearly noon before he got any work done.

* * * * * * *

The FBI raid on Gamma's Seattle facility did not occur for nearly three weeks after Morales was told of it during his last week at the FBI. The facility was not a house this time, but an old, dilapidated manufacturing building near the baseball stadium. It was due south of the main telephone switching center for all Seattle, and a number of fiber optic Internet links passed within a few meters of the building. Late one night, a group of technicians working for Michael had painted their van to match the local telephone trucks and set up as if they were doing emergency work. They tapped a couple of fibers and brought them into the building through an old underground conduit. This had been two years prior, and no one had yet suspected anything.

As before, the agents had watched the building for days, and made the raid mid-morning on a week day. They details were almost all the same: A number of careful and nervous agents; a group of Russian, Yugoslavian, and Polish immigrants; a flash raid; a kill switch; and people shouting "We are not armed! Do not shoot!" in broken English. The technicians were promptly arrested, and requested their attorney, Mr. Anthony Bari. The computer equipment was flown to the FBI lab in L.A. for analysis.

Richard's counter-espionage plan worked as planned, even better than planned. One of the technicians noticed that the one computer didn't shut down like the others. Realizing that he had a few seconds, and wanting to do his job to the fullest, he threw it against a brick wall as the agents were breaking down the door. The case was broken, but the hard drive was intact. The other hard drives were repetitively erased beyond recovery. The attempt to destroy the computer that didn't shut down convinced the FBI to trust all the (false) data it contained. A perfect touch. Michael was so pleased that he decided he'd give a nice bonus to the technician, once the man made it back home.

Bari was on the next flight to Seattle, and met with his clients that same evening. As usual, he told them to sit quietly and to say nothing that he had not approved. His meeting with the prosecutor, a Mr. Ballard, was the next morning at nine o'clock sharp. Ballard was a much more reasonable man than Coopersmith. He was new on the job and had been a practicing attorney for most of his career, not a bureaucrat like Coopersmith. Bari enquired of the charges and was informed that they were to be wire fraud.

"Now, Mr. Ballard, you seem like an intelligent man; you know I'll beat that charge with no trouble."

"I'm certain you will, Mr. Bari."

Bari looked hard at Ballard; he looked to be a fairly open, honest sort. Why would he file charges that Bari would be certain to beat?

"All right, let me try to understand this Mr. Ballard… wire fraud charges will lose in court, but…" He began to understand. "You don't want to cut a deal, do you?"

Ballard smiled, and shot Bari a look of respect. “You’re good, my friend. Listen, I’ll talk to you just a bit off the record. This is my case in name, but not in fact.” Then he waited. Bari understood perfectly; it was the Feds who were dictating events, not Ballard’s office. He nodded, “Yes, I understand. Thank you. Then we will proceed through trial. What sort of bond might we expect?”

“I’m afraid that will be up to the judge, counselor. I’ll see you at the hearing this afternoon.”

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Michael,

I’m sure you know about the raid in Seattle. Your people are fine, and I should have no problem beating the charges filed against them. But we do have a problem: The FBI is making sure that the case goes through the whole trial process. Someone in their office is smart. They want to see what we have, and for us to waste our ammo on an unimportant case. Then, when they get something bigger, we’ll have no surprises left. I’ll see that your men are treated fairly well, I’ll beat the charges, and I’ll try to give away as little as possible.

I hope things are going well on your end.

Bari

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Anthony,

Thank you once again. Yes, please get the technicians out of trouble, and give away as little as possible also. If you need to spend any money taking care of our employees, please do so and bill us for it.

Things are going very well, which brings up another confidential matter:

We will soon be moving to a distributed computing system, and disbanding our computer facilities (we have two more like the ones in LA and Seattle). The new system will involve many hundreds of operators, and dozens of organizers. All of these will be independent entrepreneurs, not employees. We want to put a Legal Defense Fund together for them. They pay a certain amount (Annually? One time?), and if they get in trouble, the fund covers their legal expenses.

Please look into this for us.

* * * * * * *

"Frances? I'm home." He had been worried all morning, finally got busy and forgot about it in the afternoon, and worried all the way home. Logically, he was fairly confident things would be all right, but emotionally, it tore him to think that he had hurt Frances.

"Hi Jim. I'm washing up, I'll be out in a minute." Her voice sounded almost cheery. He was much relieved. He looked through the kitchen, and didn't find anything cooking, so he began looking for ingredients for making something. He thought that he would make dinner for her.

"Hi Jim!" She kissed him. "What are you doing?"

"Well, I didn't see any cooking going on, so I thought that I might cook for you."

She smiled, knowing that he was worried about hurting her. "Well, that would be nice, but you don't have to. I'm okay Jim. I cried for a while, then called my mom and talked for an hour. I think I'm mostly over it; although I do think I'll take a break from the subject. But I do have other important things to do. Listen, you make us some dinner and I'm going to pull all of my notes together on the articles for Rodney. We really need to decide what we're going to do."

Frances had been working on the material for more than a week; she was almost ready to put all the pieces together and make a series of articles of it. Rodney had agreed to at least four articles, and probably a continuing series, until the mystery was solved. The interviews in New York were brief, but informative. She wasn't sure exactly how the information she had gathered would develop into articles, but she knew that it was important.

Jim finished cooking, and they sat down to eat. "So, tell me about the articles."

"Well, I've got a fair amount of material together, and I'm trying to arrange it as sort of logical presentation. I need to make sense of it all."

"You need perspective?"

"Sort of. I need to understand all of what is going on, and to see where it is going."

"I think I can help you, if you'd like."

"Yes, Jim, I would like. But first, what are we going to do about your Gamma Markets. I'm convinced that they are not the whole story here, but they are part of it. I'm not going to endanger you. So, how do I handle this?"

"How about this: You use your private knowledge to generate your perspective, but don't reveal it in the articles."

“That’s reasonable, but what if I get to a point where I need to talk about Gamma?”

“Then you’ll either write it, or tell Rodney that you can’t.”

Frances didn’t like that idea very well. She thought about it, looking for alternatives and questioning the assumptions she had made. Her lips moved just a little as she mused, “So, I’m presuming what? That the articles would expose Jim, and hurt him? But would they have to?”

“Jim!”

“What?”

“I’m going to write all about Gamma!”

He was a bit confused, and very curious. “Go on.”

“Not right away, but when the time is right, I’ll tell my readers what an innovative and interesting idea it is. I’ll explain the benefits, detail the arguments against it, and do stories on the people who are using it. I’ll leave some of the details out, obviously, but I’ll let people know that it exists. It’ll help you, not hurt you.”

Farber smiled, and kissed her. “Smart broad,” he said. She smiled back, still not quite sure what to make of Jim’s ‘boy’s club’ comments like “smart broad.” At least he meant them well.

“All right then Frances, here’s some perspective: There is a never-ending battle between economics and politics, between creation and control. The market and the state fight a never-ending territorial battle. The freer and broader the market, the less the state has to do; and the more intrusive and controlling the state, the less the market can operate. Commerce is choked by multiplying regulations. The crush of legislation and regulation clogs the marketplace till it slows down, and forces some of the economic traffic to find ways around the regulatory system. The players who avoid the obstacles become more productive those who work within the system. This is why black markets always flourish in oppressed economies.

“Now, if you could track the growth of regulations, specifically in the US, you’d be horrified. Did you know that there are something like ten thousand regulations impinging on the sale of hamburgers? I suggest that you do some research on that for the articles, and show *why* people are going around the system.”

He waited while she wrote on a pad of paper, until she said, “Good, please continue.”

“Okay. Gamma is only one of the ways around the system. There are many others. A lot of people do business under fictitious names, or do business offshore. And there are a lot of people who simply drop out of the system for a year or two, and then pop back in.”

Frances sat up straight. “Jim, I once had a neighbor who did that. He was a computer consultant, back when DOS was the big thing. He quit his job and worked

as an independent for about a year. All of his business was done off the books – in cash if at all possible, cashing his checks at the client's bank so they wouldn't appear on his bank statements, getting money orders with the cash to keep his purchases off the books, that sort of thing. Anyway, he saved enough money to buy a Jeep with cash, and for a down payment on his condo. He made about a hundred grand that year, and paid no income or social security taxes. He used the tax money to set himself up. After a year, he took a salaried position, and went back into the tax-pool before he got noticed."

"Right. That's exactly what I'm talking about. And there are others as well. The Europeans have been doing it forever. They open up bank accounts in a country with banking privacy and have their investment money held there. The ones who do business abroad have their payments sent to a foreign bank as well. If they ever need the money back at home, they just take a holiday to the banking country and bring it back home in cash. The financial police don't search tourists riding the trains.

"The final point is this: Doing business internationally used to be something only for the very biggest companies. The governments could watch them easily. Now, lots of small companies and individuals are doing business internationally… and the governments are having a hard time keeping an eye on them. Bypassing regulation and taxation simply lets people live better lives. So, they do it."

"Okay, I'm beginning to see the picture here. How many ways around taxation and regulation are there?"

"Many. I don't have any real number, but for the person who is swift and flexible, there are always ways around them. The only real way to stop such people is to impose a terrorist police state, but doing that on a large scale would be disastrous… a new dark age. They've been trying to tie all of the government tax and financial reporting systems together, but that's hard to do, and so far they haven't succeeded."

Frances was making notes on a sheet of paper and Farber was thinking about the whole situation. He remembered one more thing. "Now, Frances, there is one more factor I want to throw in here. The thing that really scares the hell out of the rulers is that the middle class might figure out how to get around their taxes and regulations… and might actually consider it."

Frances was in full business mode, furiously writing down the information she was getting from Jim. She spoke to him in a commanding tone of voice: "Explain."

He liked her intensity. "All right, everything industrial states do is centered around the middle class. They make grand speeches on the virtues of the working class, praise middle class values, and all sorts of things. But they also arrange their tax systems entirely around them. Almost everything having to do with taxation is done to reap money from the middle class – from working people. If these become uncomfortable and angry, they reduce the tax rates. Or, they may keep them relatively happy by raising taxes on the rich, to make them feel like they're getting a better deal. If things are going well for the middle class, they find reasons to raise

taxes. 'Save the children,' and so on. They make very sure that the middle class feels no pain in paying their taxes – hence withholding from every workingman's paycheck. And on and on. Everything revolves around maximizing the take from the workers. You know why, don't you?"

"Sure, they're were the money comes from. The numbers of middle class people are huge. If you want a continuing money source, there really isn't anywhere else to go."

"Right. Everything they do is to keep them stable, productive, and either too busy or too sedate to consider alternatives. They use patriotism, they use fear, they use envy, they use entertainment, they'll use anything they can. They know that if they ever lose the compliance of the average guy, their game is over."

Jim got up and cleared the table while Frances went on scribbling. He walked into the living room, and turned on her computer for her. Then he walked back into the kitchen, took her gently by the hand and pulled her up. "Come on, I've got you set up at your desk here." She walked with him, looking at her notes. He took the file she had sitting on the table, and her pen. "Would you like a cup of coffee, babe?"

"Uh, yes." She realized what he was doing, stopped walking, and kissed him. "Thank you." Then she sat down, her mind completely back in her work as she hit the chair.

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At noon on August 24th, the new Free Soul web site went up. The pages were colorful and inviting. The logo was a version of the biggest mural in the Free Soul house: 'Welcome To Freedonia,' with Groucho Marx as the master of mischief. There were brief explanations of what the Free Souls cared about, many links, and the new centerpiece: Essays by Prester John. Later in the day, when Phillip would see the pen name they assigned him, he would laugh for a long time.

No one was quite sure how "PJ's Essays," as they became called, got around the world so quickly and were talked about so much. It probably had to do with the quality of the people who first read them. Gerry had created a list of a few hundred of the most important thinkers in the world, and he made sure that each of them got a copy of each essay. Some of these people loved the essays, and some didn't, with little middle ground, but they were passed around in many circles.

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The analysis of the data from Seattle was difficult. Morales had left records of what he had done, but his replacement was not very good at the job. The man was able to extract email and IP addresses, but little data. Jones was upset and angry, but the man simply didn't know how to do the job. After several weeks with no results, Jones was desperate. The NSA was asking for progress reports, and he had nothing to give them. They were making implied threats to remove the FBI from the case, and take it over themselves.

Jones walked to Van Zant's office, asking again if he had found anyone who could do the work. Van Zant shook his head. "No, I don't have anyone. This was special stuff, and Morales was pretty much the only guy we had. His partner Nickelson can do it fairly well I think."

"No, he can't. Nickelson is good at what he does, but cracking the files was Morales' thing."

"Do you think you could get him back?"

Jones was angry at Van Zant for even asking. Not only did he consider Morales disloyal, but the fact that he had quit over the misuse of warrants had created a stir in the Bureau. The separation agreements made it certain that Morales wouldn't make it a public story, but it also left him with a big story he could tell – and back up – against the agency. Jones knew all this, knew that he needed Morales, and knew that Morales was separated from the Bureau for good. "No, the legal stuff is just too thick. He'll never be an agent again."

Van Zant thought for a moment then said, "So, bring him back as a consultant."

"What?"

"You remember that Chinese guy who was an expert on stab wounds? We used him on that kidnapping case?"

"Yes."

"He wasn't an agent, he was a consultant. Is there any reason that you couldn't do that with Morales?"

"You mean aside from the fact that I hate him? No, I don't think so." Jones pulled out his cell phone, and began to dial a number. "You know what Van Zant?"

"What's that boss?"

"Every now and then, you have your moments."

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The phone rang as all hands at Max's Tavern were preparing for the evening rush – about 4:00 p.m. "Max, you got a minute?" It was Bari.

“Yeah, I guess so.” Max hollered an order to one of his workers, and said, “Go on.”

“You’ll love this, Max. The Bureau just called Morales’ lawyer, my associate Martin. They want him to come back to the Bureau as a consultant.”

“No shit?”

“No shit. They must need him bad.”

“Yeah, but Tony, can the kid do it without getting back in over his head?”

“He can if I write the contract!”

“Hot damn. All right, then… does he want to do it?”

“Well, he has mixed feelings, but they’re offering him good money.”

“Well, you tell him that I said he should do it, provided you sign off on it.”

“Will do. Okay, I’ve got to go, I just wanted to give you a heads up. Ciao.”

* * * * * * *

MA: Phillip, you there?

PD: Yeah Michael, what’s up?

MA: Oh, I’m planning my career.

PD: Ahhh! Yeah, I knew you’d get back to psychology as soon as you could. Are things going that smoothly for us now?

MA: Well, how about twelve thousand users on Gamma? We’re closing down Tango soon.

PD: Michael, that’s absolutely magnificent. I can’t tell you how proud I am to have been associated with this.

MA: Yeah, I know how you feel.

PD: How are we doing for money?

MA: At the current levels: Two more months, and we break even.

PD: Fantastic. All right, how about the distributed computing business?

MA: I’ve got Suzy working on it. McCoy gave her a bunch of leads, and she’s got a couple of dozen guys falling all over themselves to get into the business. You realize that an ambitious person could easily make a hundred grand a year at this, while traveling the world.

PD: Well, we should have no shortage of takers!

MA: Not at all. The software is in beta, and should be ready for distribution in a week or so. After that, we don't have a hell of a lot to do.

PD: So, what are the guys planning to do with the rest of their lives?

MA: Well, the Free Soul guys are going to take a few extra classes and finish up their degrees. The rest of them are thinking of going back to what they did before, except part-time. I think they've all had a good taste of living large; and while they like their careers, they also want to do something daring and exciting.

PD: That's very interesting… Can you hold on for five minutes while I make a phone call?

MA: Sure, I've got a little bit of cleaning to do. I'll check back in a few minutes.

Phillip picked up his secure cell phone and called Farber. They spoke for several minutes, making notes and calculations.

PD: Mike, you there?

Two minutes later, Michael responded.

MA: Yeah Phillip, what's up?

PD: Talked with Farber. We've got an idea you might be interested in.

MA: Well, you can go ahead, but I'm pretty well set with going back into psychology.

PD: No, you misunderstand. I mean 'you, plural' – all of you guys.

MA: Ah, then do tell.

PD: All right, here it is:

1. Farber sets up investment accounts for all of us. (And yes, he has agreed to manage them.)

2. Once we've all broken even, we begin to put our additional money into those accounts. (Over time, we should build up a lot of money.)

3. We'll set up one other account: A fund for financing the next great idea. Gamma's done, but there will certainly be another exiting idea coming down the road soon. This fund will get us ready for it, and also makes sure that we'll all have the opportunity to be involved.

Talk to the guys about this, Mike. I'll bet they like it.

MA: I KNOW they'll like it. But contribution to the special fund will have to be voluntary.

PD: Certainly.

MA: OK, but this assumes keeping Gamma as a monopoly for a longer time, doesn't it?

PD: No, I don't think so. Even when we have competition, we'll still be the most established market, and probably the best.

MA: All right, I'll work on that. But now, back to the first subject – my career: I want you to set up a meeting for me with Dr. Demitrios. I want to go over his research, and I have some interesting ideas for him. Any time after next week will be fine.

PD: All right, I can do that. Hang on a moment while I check my calendar… OK, you show up in Chicago two weeks from tomorrow, and I'll get us to New York the next day. Deal?

MA: Deal. Listen, the night we're in Chicago, how about a dinner? You, me, Julia, Frances and Farber. Can you do it?

PD: I'll set it up. See ya.

* * * * * * *

Activity at the Free Soul house was high. A few batches of Breakers patches had been diverted to the house, and were sold to friends. More people were asking. In addition, the web site was beginning to get significant traffic. The first Prester John essay had evidently been passed around in a couple of seminaries, and they had received a number of questions from theology students. Gerry prepared a Questions and Answers section for the site.

But more traffic was not all that was resulting from the essays on www.FreeSoul.biz. They were getting essays regularly from Phillip and were passing them out around the house before posting them to the web. Gerry's habit was to leave a stack of them on the dining room and kitchen tables so the Free Souls would pick them up upon returning from their classes or errands. Most nights found several of them discussing the ideas PJ had raised. They examined the ideas and argued for and against them passionately.

All of these things led to a much increased energy level in the house. Some of them brought friends to take part in the discussions. A number of theology students came, business students came, musicians and artists came. Some were drawn by the ideas,

some by the energy and aliveness of the house; a few came to find a cute guy or girl. Some nights at the house were quiet and uneventful. More nights were electric.

* * * * * * *

Michael Anderson arrived at O'Hare Airport in Chicago a few minutes past noon. A well-dressed chauffer carrying a sign with his name on it met him as he stepped off the jet way.

"I'm Michael Anderson."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Donson sent me. May I take your bag?"

Michael had lived in Chicago for several years during college and intended on using the afternoon to visit his old hangouts. After checking into his hotel, had the driver take him to the old neighborhood in Hyde Park where he lived during grad school. He walked the streets, ate at his favorite hotdog stand, and wandered the University of Chicago campus. Most of the old places were essentially the same, though a few had changed. He even stopped by the office of Professor Milton, his favorite. The Professor was not in, so he scribbled a short note, and slid it through the brass mail slot of the heavy old wooden door with pebbled glass. The note said that Michael hoped the Professor was feeling well, and that he would be calling soon to discuss new ideas.

At about 5:00 p.m., Michael hailed a cab and headed back to the hotel. He even didn't mind the traffic; it slowed the trip enough that he was able to get a good look at the city as they made their way back to Chicago's downtown – the Loop. Back at the hotel, a message was waiting: Dinner at Red Sea Restaurant. Eight o'clock. Michael checked his email and ran down to the health club for a fast workout. Then he showered, dressed, and relaxed until it was time to head to the restaurant.

Red Sea was run by a single Ethiopian family. The decor was the best they could afford, and a cousin provided live music on the weekends. The food was authentic and very good. It was served traditional style – no utensils, with large, thin pieces of bread used to pick up the food. Phillip ordered a few appetizers and two bottles of the traditional honey wine; then he introduced Michael to Frances, who had been in the Ladies Room with Julia.

"Michael, I'm very pleased to meet you."

"Likewise."

Michael Anderson was the child of pioneering Americans. His great-grandparents had gone west from Iowa in a covered wagon, survived a small Indian attack, and settled in an empty area of Colorado. They carved out a ranch and raised a family. The next two generations expanded the family holdings and improved the business,

so that Michael was born into a wealthy family, with the Colorado ranches run by his wing of the clan, and the Nebraska farms run by a different branch.

He had always felt like he had been born into the aristocracy of the west, which, in many ways, he had. As a boy, he learned to appreciate the advantages that were afforded him by his family's work, but he was unhappy sitting still. He remembered looking at a picture of his great-grandparents and their ramshackle first house in Colorado. The old wagon could be seen at the edge of the photo. Somehow – and he was still not sure how – he got the impression that it was time for an Anderson to get back into pioneering – to get back onto the trail and to venture further. The intervening generations had done well by creating a good and comfortable existence for their families. But it was now time to go pioneering again, and it was he, Michael Anderson, that should be first on the road.

Physically, Michael was a classic child of the west: A bit over six feet tall, a mix of Nordic and Germanic features, and hair that alternated between dark blond and light brown, depending on the amount of sunlight it had seen. He was in his mid-thirties, never married, and thinking about a family quite a bit of late.

Late marriages had always been common among the Andersons, certainly among the men. Great-grandfather was thirty-six when he married, Great-grandmother had been twenty-four. His grandparents and parents married almost as late. This seemed to be his time.

As he had begun to mature, Michael faced a dilemma that took him years to transcend. He felt born to be a pioneer, yet there was nowhere left to go. By the time of his birth, the only uninhabited lands on earth were in places like Antarctica and portions of Siberia; certainly not places where one would want to carve out a new life. Every piece of ground on the planet was owned and controlled by some country. If a place was not wild and new, it didn't qualify for pioneering. This bothered Michael. The possibility of space exploration – private space pioneering really – excited him significantly, but it didn't seem that it would be possible any time soon. He wanted to go, not at some far-off time, but now.

Psychology became his love during high school. He discovered the murky science in a very basic class that he took instead of history, in his Junior year. His teacher was a retired clinical psychologist, and constantly illustrated the ideas presented in the course book with stories of real patients. What impressed him was that when intelligently applied, the theories correctly predicted human behavior. The human psyche had been a mystery to Michael. He began wondering about it as a child, when he saw people doing things that seemed to make no sense. As he looked at them objectively, the actions were counter-productive. But something made the person do it anyway, something unseen and inside of that person. In retrospect, it seemed obvious that psychology gave Michael a way to explore some undiscovered country, but at the time he remained in mourning over having no new lands to conquer.

Tango and Gamma began as pure excitement for Michael, and he reveled in the pioneering aspects of the project. But now, as it neared completion, he really wanted to get back into psychology, and to explore new ideas.

Frances sipped the honey wine, something she had never had before. “Hey, this is good!”

Jim smiled. “What, you thought we’d take you out for *bad* food and wine?”

“Yeah, yeah.” Now she turned away from Jim, and toward Michael and Phillip, who were to her left. “So, Michael, Jim gave me a little bit of background on you, but I never heard, how did you meet these guys?”

“Oh, you didn’t know? Phillip and I took a couple of classes together at the University of Chicago.”

“Really? Psychology classes?”

“Yeah, there were some tremendous teachers at UC then. Some of them are still there. Anyway, we were in the same class, and studied together sometimes. To a farm boy from Colorado, Phillip was pretty interesting.”

“And,” said Phillip with a wry smile, “Michael helped me with my homework.”

Frances looked at him suspiciously. “I know how you study, Phillip; I’d be surprised if you needed too much help.”

“Oh, no, I really did. Remember, this was years ago, and my kids were young. I barely had time to sleep, so my studying at that time had to fit into any available time slot.”

“And there weren’t many of them,” added Julia. “He had two jobs and college, all going at the same time, plus the kids. It was pretty crazy. I still wonder how we did it.”

Michael picked back up. “So, anyway, we used to study together, and Julia would make us cookies and coffee… Do you still make those funny oatmeal cookies I liked, Julia?”

She laughed. “No Michael, I don’t think I’ve made them in ten years. But I’ll tell you what… I’ll make some for you soon, and mail them to you.”

He blew her a kiss. “Madame, you are wonderful.” Julia giggled.

The appetizers came, and it was time to order. Everyone at the table gave Michael advice on what to get. After trying most of the appetizers, Frances turned to Michael, “So Michael, why are you going to New York?”

“Oh, I want to talk to Dr. Demitrios, and to see his lab. This is a really interesting development, you know.”

“Actually, Michael, I don’t know. Jim has told me some of the basics – removing the chemical residues from intense emotions – but I’m not exactly sure why it’s a big deal.”

“Well, I’d be glad to explain it to you, but I’m not sure I want to monopolize the conversation.”

Phillip, James, and Julia looked at each other as if to say, “okay with you?” They all nodded to each other, and Julia said, “If you don’t mind, Mike, I think we’d like to hear it. Myself, I’ve been trying to stay out of Phillip’s projects, but this one interests me.”

James jumped into the discussion. “Hey Phillip, tell them what the college kids are calling it!”

Phillip laughed. “They call it the Brain Flush.”

Everyone at the table either smiled or laughed. Michael chuckled, and then said, “Well, that’s cute, but not accurate… although I’m sure that’s how it feels. Anyway, the reason it’s so important is that clears out a lot of the things that clog up human thinking and repressed emotions. It’s not a miraculous thing that way, but it is very helpful… and anything that can help minimize fear is hugely important.”

“Minimize fear?” asked Frances.

“Well, ‘the effects of fear’ might be more correct, but essentially, yes. Fear is a much bigger subject than most people realize. Fear is frequently the primary cause of human action. Really, it is the underpinning of a great deal of human behavior and consciousness.

“We learn to repress our consciousness of fear, so that we can reason. Fear is involuntary, and causes involuntary reactions. In order to respond rationally, we must learn to stop the fear response.

“What Breakers seems to do is to eliminate the residual fear.”

Frances wasn’t sure she agreed. “Michael, are you sure that is right? That there is residual fear? After I’m done being scared, it seems like it goes away completely. Isn’t that true?”

“No, Frances, it isn’t completely true. Let’s see… how can I explain this well… you’ve had a cup of coffee that had grounds left over in the bottom of the cup when you were done, right?”

“Sure.”

“All right, say that you refilled the cup, and had more grounds when you finished drinking that one. After three or four cups, you’d have lots of grounds.”

“Of course.”

“Okay, that’s almost exactly how it is with fear. The coffee is the fear, and the cup is you. The liquid coffee is removed but the grounds remain; that’s the residual. Now, here’s the important part: So long as you have those grounds in the cup, anything else you put in it will pick up the coffee taste. That’s how it is with the fear residual… it gives a bit of flavor to everything else you take into yourself. And that’s why the people who try Breakers call it the Brain Flush. Scientifically that is not correct, but experientially, it is.”

“So, are you going to try it Mike?” Phillip was smiling at him.

“Yeah, I am.”

“Good, let me know what you think, and if you like it, I’ll do it too.”

“Great.”

The food arrived, and they moved on to discussions of families, children, and travel. Julia asked Michael when he was going to get married, and what kind of girl he was looking for. He answered her honestly, but didn’t give any more information than what was specifically requested. There was no embarrassment involved, just that Michael was raised with the idea that private things should stay private; and while he didn’t hold rigidly to that idea, he was nonetheless more comfortable keeping personal things private.

Halfway through the main course, Julia looked at Phillip. Her face, and especially her eyes, told him that she was stepping out of her comfort zone to ask him something – that it was important, and that he should not get overly intense when he answered. “What do you think about fear, Phillip?” James was surprised to hear Julia ask.

Frances watched also. She wanted to understand Julia and her discomfort with Phillip. Phillip was definitely not an unkind or domineering man, yet Julia sometimes seemed to feel that he was imposing his will upon her. She wondered if it might have been the result of Phillip’s natural enthusiasm, and Julia feeling like she got run over by it.

“Well…” Phillip was speaking slowly, and with minimal emotion. “I agree with Michael. Fear is a major factor in human thinking. In many ways, it is the great enemy of mankind. And Mike is also right that reasoned thinking requires the suppression of fear. Actually, there is something of an inverse relationship between fear and reason. But I also think that there is more to it than that alone.

“Suppressing fear has long been necessary, but it is something of a brute force method. There are better – more elegant – ways to transcend fear, although they are difficult in the present world culture.”

He stopped, and waited for someone to ask him to go on. He was not trying to tease them, although that was the result. He wanted them to request the information. It bothered Julia if he just went on and on.

He didn't have to wait long. "So," said Frances, "What's the more elegant way?"

Phillip looked around the table, and saw that the others were eager for him to speak as well.

"The more elegant way to reverse the fear. Bear with me while I try to explain this. John's first epistle says that love casts out fear. The kind of love John mentions is called 'agape,' the outward type of love."

"Wait a minute," said Frances, "you're losing me… I have two problems here. First of all, you're quoting the Bible, but I know you don't hold it as true. And secondly, I don't know what 'uh-GAH-pay' is, and the 'outward' type of love."

"Fair enough. Do you guys mind if I explain some more?"

"Not at all," said Michael, "I'd like to hear it."

Julia looked at him and said, "Go ahead Phillip, ramble on. It's painful to see you stop and ask permission all the time."

He winced, took a breath, and started back up. "All right. First of all, you are right, Frances. I do not take the Bible as automatically true. These are, however, the writings of good men and they contain some really interesting ideas. This is why I often refer to it.

"Now, as to agape, and kinds of love: One of the more interesting things I found in the Bible was that the Greek text uses several different words that are translated into English as 'love.' English, which is usually a very descriptive language with many words, falls short here. As I see it, there are really only two primary types of love. In the Greek, one is called 'agape,' the other 'phileo.' Some people include 'eros' as well, but I think eros is better understood as sexual desire… libido.

"Phileo is when you say, 'I love that car.' It is a statement that expresses a desired direction of movement – inward. If you love – if you phileo – the car, you'd really like to bring it to yourself. Even if you never intend on getting the car, you think it would be fun if you did. The motion is inward – reaching out and getting.

"Agape is the primal desire to bless – to pour something out of yourself, creating benefit. To birth some sort of benefit into the universe out of your own substance. In my experience, the more of this kind of love you can experience, the healthier a person you become. In any event, this is the kind of love that John says 'casts out fear.' Notice the movement here, outward. Have you ever noticed the movement fear causes? Withdrawal inward. People call this 'shrinking with fear,' and that's a reasonably good explanation. Note the difference: agape is outward, fear is inward. Agape is an outflow of the inner self; fear a contraction."

"But what about phileo?" asked Michael, "that's inward."

Phillip thought for a moment then said, "You're right, Michael, I did say inward. Perhaps 'inward gathering' might be a better thing to say. Yes, it moves inward, but it is not a shrinking of the inner self… let's just call the inner self 'the spirit' for

convenience… Phileo reaches out for something to draw to itself. The spirit neither pours out nor contracts, though it does wish for something to be brought to it. Fear is a shrinking of the spirit. Does that make sense?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Okay, back to love casting out fear: If your spirit is flowing outward – with agape – the inward shrinking does not occur. So, fear and agape are opposites. It is during the outward movements that real human magic occurs. Fear is what restrains it. Fear is the enemy of the high and the beautiful. It does not allow the human spirit to flow outward – to contact, taste and know the goodness in others, or to use the goodness in itself."

Chapter Four

Bill,

I've got some free time, and I'd like to pursue my new hobby. How about sending me some ideas? A list of books to read? Something? I've got the time now, and I want to make use of it.

Thanks,

George

* * * * * *

Hi George,

OK, here are some random thoughts for you to follow up as you see fit. See what suits you, and pursue it.

1. Study the lives of people who lived aggressively. Most people have been conditioned not to 'color outside the lines,' and almost all of us have picked up on the 'be quiet and obey' mentality to one extent or another. Study the rebels and the nonconformists. Now, there is a problem with many of these people: Breaking away from the crowd is difficult, and the people who have done it usually went overboard in one way or another. (Or, perhaps it was only the 'overboard' who were able to break out?) Remember this, so that you don't make the same mistakes, but don't let it stop you from learning from them. Eat the fish, spit out the bones. That being said, here is an example:

There was, in London, before the First World War, a gathering of young freethinking artists called the Bloomsbury Group. There was nothing too exceptional about them at the beginning, but most of them became very creative, and went on to great success. One of them (J.M. Keynes) made the following statement:

"We entirely repudiated a personal liability on us to obey general rules. We claimed the right to judge every individual case on its merits, and the wisdom, experience, and self-control to do so successfully. This was a very important part of our faith, violently and aggressively held, and for the outer world it was our most obvious and dangerous characteristic. We repudiated entirely customary morals, conventions, and traditional wisdom. We were,

that is to say, in the strict sense of the term, immoralists… we recognized no moral obligation, no inner sanction, to conform or obey. Before heaven we claimed to be our own judge in our own case."

This was not a terribly uncommon attitude before the war of 1914, and I am convinced that it is the primary source of this group's outstanding accomplishments. The only problem with ideas such as this is when they are taken further than the statement above. Keynes says that they repudiated all custom and tradition. So far, so good. We should not accept any tradition as automatically valid. But on the other hand, never think that an idea associated with a tradition is automatically false. That was the great mistake of the 1960s. Few traditions are void of good ideas. You should judge everything on its own merits, and not to follow any idea – or reject any idea – because of tradition.

Study people who had courage enough to be different and integrity enough to be good.

2. Learn about international business. You Americans call it "Offshore Finance." Find out about banking rules, residency and domicile rules, and the like. There is a lot of information available on the Internet. Remember, however, that some of it is good, some bad, and some of it is posted by government agents looking for tax evaders. Remember what I taught you about surfing the web anonymously.

3. Get international in your mind. America can be grand, but it is not the only place with value. The rest of the world offers innumerable opportunities, but you do have to focus your eyes beyond the US border to see them.

4. Fall in love with the free market. Read everything you can about laissez-faire, classical liberalism, Austrian and Chicago economics, and entrepreneurship. Study the great deal-makers and business creators. Commerce is what makes the world livable. Read about it and see if you don't agree.

5. Travel. Don't just see new places, but live there, conduct business there, and make business contacts.

Bill

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Michael and Phillip rolled into the lab early the next afternoon. After making introductions, Michael and George disappeared into the back of the lab, and became deeply engrossed in scientific discussions. Phillip left them a note that said he'd be at the apartment later, and to get dinner without him. Then he drove his rented car to his mother's house in Brooklyn.

Phillip's mother Erika lived only a few blocks from the house he was raised in. After his father had passed away, she became very uncomfortable being in their house every day; it kept all their memories in front of her; it kept her sad. So, she sold that house and bought a smaller one nearby. She was able to buy it in cash and was left with an extra hundred thousand dollars beside. Erika was old now, and her health was failing. Phillip's cousin Emily lived only two blocks away, and took care of her. There was also a private nurse that came three days per week. Phillip paid for the nurse and took care of Emily's expenses.

It had been two months since Phillip had seen his Mom, and he felt bad that it had been so long. She wouldn't be around for too much longer, and he wanted to make good use of the time he had left with her. It had been on his mind that morning, and he had sent the following email to his four children, Anna, Rachel, Joel, and Sarah, from the airport:

Hi guys,

Listen, I'm going to visit Grandma today, and I wanted to remind you guys to do this too. (Yes, I realize that you guys have careers and children to attend to.)

Not to break morbid on you, but I think that time is starting to take its toll on my mom. The nurse says that she's getting weaker and is starting to talk more about dying.

Anyway, I'd like you guys to look at your schedules, and see if there is some way for you to come to Brooklyn soon. I'll help with expenses.

That's all that's on my mind right now. I love you all dearly. Hug the kids for me.

Dad

Phillip enjoyed going back to his old neighborhood. He almost always drove up and down the side streets and often took late-night walks through his old territory.

His mom was together mentally, but she looked far more tired than she had two months prior. Phillip hugged and kissed her, then made her sit at the kitchen table

while he made her dinner. They discussed recent events. Phillip was Erika's only child, although several of Phillip's cousins lived with them for long periods of time while he was growing up. His cousin Emily lived with them for seven years, after her mother (the sister of Jacob, Phillip's father) passed away as a fairly young woman. Phillip was a small boy when this happened, and didn't recall the events. She was always an older sister to him. Emily's dad died during the war, and her mother had not remarried.

And while in almost every way Jacob Donson was exemplary as Phillip's father, biologically he was not. Phillip's biological father had died during the war. Erika came to the States immediately after the war (she had a great-aunt in New Jersey), and married Jacob Donson when Phillip was one year old. Jacob was the only father he had ever known, and Phillip had loved and respected him deeply. But their relationship was not always smooth. Both father and son were powerful personalities, and they clashed powerfully during Phillip's late teenage years. They patched things up during his twenties.

Mom got tired at eight o'clock, and said that she'd have to go to bed. Phillip got things ready, and tucked her in at about eight thirty. He turned on her favorite television shows and kissed her goodnight. But as he left her room, she spoke to him in a voice of resolve.

"Phillip."

"Yes, Mom?"

"Phillip, I want you to do something for me before you go." From the tone of her voice, it was obvious that whatever this was, it was important and unusual. She spoke slowly and firmly so that he would not misunderstand.

"Phillip, open the top drawer of my dresser." He did. "On the left-hand side is an envelope with your name on it."

"I see it Mom."

"I want you to take that envelope with you Phillip, but you must not open it here. Take it with you, and do not open it here."

"All right Mom, I understand. May I ask why?"

"No, Phillip, you may not. The letter in the envelope will explain everything. And once you read it, I hope you'll understand why I will not talk about it any further. The letter was all I have to say on that subject."

Were it not for his mother's solemnity, he would have been interested in opening the envelope. But she was so serious that her orders took on the air of a sacred trust, and he felt no inclination to open the envelope until he got back to the apartment.

He looked at her with great respect, and said, "All right Mother, I'll do as you request." Again he kissed her goodnight, and left the room. He picked-up around the

house for a few minutes, left her a note on the kitchen table – telling her how much he loved her and missed her – and drove back to Manhattan.

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Back at the apartment, Phillip greeted George and Michael, grabbed some juice from the refrigerator, and sat down on the couch to read his Mom's note. Michael and George were at the dinning room table, finishing their late dinner. Phillip began to read the letter, and went pale. He finished it, then reread it. He re-read it again. Then he sat, stunned, on the couch. It didn't take long for Michael to pick up on his silence and lack of movement; these are things that good psychologists look for in their patients, and something that Michael noticed almost automatically.

"Phillip, are you all right?" Phillip didn't seem to hear him. Michael got up and walked over to him. George followed only a couple of steps behind. Michael put his hand firmly on Phillip's shoulder. "Phillip, what is it?"

Phillip looked up with an expression of complete shock on his face. "You read this." His meaning was for "you" to be plural, referring to both Michael and George. "My mom gave this to me tonight."

Michael took the note from Phillip, but didn't read it right away. "Phillip, look at me… I want you to sit back and relax for a few minutes, okay?" Phillip nodded his consent, and leaned back into the overstuffed couch. Michael and George sat to Phillip's left on the couch. The paper read as follows:

To my beloved Phillip,

I will soon die, and there is one truth I need to tell you before I do. I am writing this now to be sure that I get this done. I just called Julia, and she tells me you are out of the country right now. If I am to die before you get back, this will be lost. No one knows the truth. I didn't even tell your father Jacob.

You are a very smart man, and a good man Phillip. I am very proud of you. I am sure you will understand this, and I hope you are not angry at me for not telling you before.

Phillip, the story I told you about your father was a lie. I did not marry your father during the war, and he did not die fighting with the Partisans. Please try to understand the things I lived through as I tell you this story.

I was younger than I told everyone by four years. I was not yet twelve years old when Germany invaded Poland in late 1939. Almost seventeen when I met your father. Till the war, my life had been farm chores, attending school, and playing with Marya, my friend who lived not far down the road. It was mostly

pleasant, and I was not as quick as some to wake up to the larger world. I was happy in my small life.

When the Germans came, I remember my parents being afraid, but not terrified. They had heard that the Germans did not want to kill all of us, just to take over. The tanks rolled through our village at night, and I slept through it.

The beginning of the war was mostly a blur to me. Lots of whispering, adults on edge, German soldiers trying to feel my backside when I went to town. About half-way through I started to awaken. By that I mean to awaken as a human being, and after, to awaken as a woman. Soon, the front began to approach. By now, I was aware of the death camp at Oswiecim, about ten kilometers away. You call it Auschwitz. The wives in the markets talked about it. Their husbands drove delivery carts to the place. The stories were as horrifying as you may imagine. My mother's grandfather may have been Jewish, and perhaps one of my father's relatives as well, but that was not something we talked about. I couldn't get it out of my head that they were killing Jews by the thousands. We didn't know how many, but we knew that it was very many Jews. Some nights I cried myself to sleep. Other nights, I felt nothing at all. My father disappeared at that time. We never found out what happened to him. Then Mother got sick and died. There was no medicine. I think it was only an infection that killed her.

The sound of heavy fighting got closer, and the Germans got more desperate looking. My brother Jersey and I tried to stay hidden. We knew that the Russians were coming toward us, and were not shooting civilians, so we were not afraid of them coming. We were afraid of the Germans who were leaving. Then, all the Germans were gone, and there was quiet. Only a few shots being fired. Then the tanks came through, with the Soviet soldiers. We went outside very slowly and waved at them.

There was not much of a harvest for us that year. Most of what was grown was taken by the Germans, and they burned whatever remained before they left. We had very little food. We went into town the next day. You can't imagine what a hub of activity it was. It sprung up overnight, and it was full of buying and selling, and looking for information. Wild, insane rumors were everywhere, but we did learn that the Russians had food, and that they were looking for people to help them. Jersey and I went to the camp. They took Jersey along with them to be a cook. They put me with a group of older women to help with sick people. I had no idea that we were going to a care unit at Buna, next to the Auschwitz camp.

I couldn't tell you this when you were small, Phillip. It was too horrible. And I didn't want to think about it either. I wouldn't remember it now if it wasn't important for you.

Jersey died a month later. He got hit with shrapnel, and died a few days later in an American hospital unit. But I did not know this till much later. How he moved from the Russians to the Americans, I never found out.

To understand what comes next Phillip, you would have to live through this. I describe this calmly, but to live with bombing every day and night, with shooting, with dead people everywhere. People you know. Watching parents dying. Knowing that you could die at any moment, and it is only chance that you are the one who is still living. You can't understand this unless you live through it. You have nothing left but a desperate desire to live. That's what I had, Phillip, a need for life to go on. Not only my own life, but for human life to continue. You have no way of knowing this. Only those of us who wish we could forget.

Your father was one of the sick people they carried out of Auschwitz. He was young and not yet desperately thin, so he must have been a Hungarian Jew, one of the later ones to get there. There was death everywhere Phillip. We carried out dozens of dead people every day. Nothing mattered but life going on. Your father was very sick with a fever, and I came to nurse him. To wash him, really. He was weak, and he didn't speak any Polish. Not much German either. But he knew he was dying, and I knew too. We were both so desperate for life. Phillip, there was a fire in his eyes that I never saw before or since. I don't think I would want to. A violent demand to keep the world alive. We made love in an empty room. He died the next day, holding my hand as he left. I'm so sorry, Phillip, I don't even know his name.

That is the truth Phillip. I made up the story you know.

* * * * * * *

Both men were aghast. Phillip remained stationary. Michael looked off into the distance, took a deep breath, and turned toward Phillip.

"You know, chief, one of the interesting things about my business is that there are always new things that jump up at you. Yours is a winner. I'm not quite sure what to make of, save that it is one hell of a story, and one hell of a shock. Do you have any doubts as to the truth of this letter?"

Phillip looked blankly at Michael. "None," was all he said, the tone of his voice indicating that he wasn't sure if that was a good thing or bad.

Michael spoke to him firmly, almost in a voice of command. "Phillip, you sit here and try to relax for a while. You've just had quite a shock. George and I will be in the kitchen or dinning room, so if you need anything, you just ask. Do you understand?"

Phillip's eyes seemed to come into focus for a moment. "Thank you," he said. Then his eye returned to their far-off stare. Michael and George walked into the kitchen.

"George, you knew Phillip's mom, didn't you?"

"Sure, I knew her fairly well. My aunt was friends with her. Plus, she lived on the next street, so I saw her a fair amount. As best I could tell, she was entirely normal. Same sorts of concerns and problems as everyone else."

"Is she believable?"

"Michael, do you think this could be a lie?"

"No, I really don't, but old memories, especially traumatic ones, can be problematic. Over time, you can modify a memory, or even create one. It's not hard to do unless you're scrupulously honest with yourself."

"Well, I'll say this, Mrs. Donson always did look young for her age. I also know a lot about the Shoah, and her facts hold up."

"The Shoah?"

"That's the Jewish word for the holocaust."

Michael looked at George with a look of confusion. "George, you couldn't be more Greek! How would you know Jewish words and Jewish history?"

George laughed. "Michael, the neighborhood we grew up in was eighty or ninety percent Jewish. I was almost the only Greek kid. I can't tell you how many Sabbath dinners and Bar Mitzvahs I've been to. I can still say some of the prayers!"

Now Michael was laughing too. "Okay, but what about the story about Phillip's father fighting with the Partisans?"

"Exactly the same story I heard from Phillip when we were young."

"Wow."

"Yeah, wow… Michael, is he going to be all right?"

Michael leaned out of the kitchen doorway and looked at Phillip; he was leaning back, half-way lying down, looking at the ceiling, and his body tension indicating that he was slowly coming back to a normal consciousness.

"Yeah, I think so. He looks a little bit better. And he's a pretty tough guy, you know."

"Yeah, that I do know."

"Say, George, tell me something about Phillip when he was a kid."

George smiled. "You know, Michael, I was thinking about that the other day. It's funny… as exceptional as this guy is now, you would have expected that he was an exceptional child. Funny thing is… he wasn't."

Michael looked at George intently. “Not at all?”

“Well, I wouldn’t say ‘not at all,’ but it wasn’t like he was always the best athlete or the smartest guy in school. He wasn’t. He ll, he wasn’t even very popular. He always got high scores on the aptitude tests, though not the very best. He wasn’t that great of a student either. He was a pretty decent athlete, but, again, not the best. Whatever he is now, he *became*. He wasn’t really born to it… not as best I can tell.”

After an hour, Phillip was up, and pacing the apartment slowly. He wasn’t back to normal, but he was halfway there.

“Would you like to talk about this, Phillip?”

Phillip stopped for a moment, and said “Maybe in the morning. I think I’ll go to sleep in a few minutes.” Michael nodded agreement.

Phillip slept until noon the next day. George had gone to the lab at his usual time, and Michael stayed behind.

“Good morning, Phillip, how are you feeling?”

“Fairly well, Michael, but I’m still wrung-out. Have we got anything to eat around here?” He was responding almost normally now, which Michael took for a very good sign.

“Yeah, plenty of stuff in the fridge. Cereal in the cabinets, too. Take your pick.”

Phillip poured himself a bowl of cereal – the pre-sweetened children’s kind – and sat down at the table. “Hell of a night, huh Michael?”

“Yeah, I’ll say. You never saw that one coming, did you?”

“No,” said Phillip, “not a clue.”

“Yeah, those are the hard ones.”

“I’ll tell you, Mike, it’s very strange to get a whole new perspective on your beginnings at this season of life. I’ve actually been awake for a while, but stayed in bed rethinking things in the light of this new information.”

“And does it change anything?”

“No, not really… nothing big. But it does explain a few things.”

“What about the ‘not big’ things that it changes? What are those?”

“Oh, some of the ways I dealt with other people who weren’t as motivated as I was. Sometimes I was dismissive of them. I shouldn’t have been. My motivation seems to be unique.” He paused for a few seconds. ”Michael, what do you think of hereditary memory?”

“I’m not sure I understand the term, Phillip.”

“Yeah, I made that one up myself. Sorry. I’m referring to memories, impressions, or leanings coming down through generations. This is usually passed-off as genetics,

but the things I'm talking about are short-term; there's no way it could have been incorporated into the genetic code via natural selection."

"Such as your father's 'violent demand for life'?"

"Yes, exactly. His passion for life was unique to him… and to his situation. Normal genetic processes could not have engaged so quickly. If it affected me, it had to be something else. Why am I the guy who is crazy about living and finding the truth? Why am I the one who's compelled to storm the borders of the accepted? Did I get it from my father, or do you have another explanation?"

"Well, I understand your argument, Phillip, but we can't just accept it without critique."

Phillip slowed down and continued. "All right, it would have been possible for my mother to transfer these ideas to me, and in which case, the hereditary aspect would not be valid."

"Right. So, what about it? Did your mother raise you with that level of passion?"

"Michael, she didn't… I'm not trying to color this. She never had a hell of a lot of passion for ideas, or for breaking new ground. She was the definition of normal, and shied away from conflict most of the time. She had experienced enough trauma, and wanted to get away from it. Really."

"Oh, I believe you Phillip. I asked George about your mom, and he told me the same thing. And the truth is that I've observed a number of things in my patients that you would call hereditary memory, and I do think there is something to it, though I have no data to prove a word of it. Some day I'd like to do some experiments."

"Good, I'd hate to think I was just plain crazy." Phillip wasn't joking. No one, except perhaps a spouse, could really understand what it was like for someone like Phillip Donson: To live with a burning passion for truth, in the midst of people who hold their minds together by *not* thinking about certain things. Phillip was one of very few men who were strong enough to tear their own psyche apart and reorganize it, without falling apart in the process. And he was perhaps the only one of these men who was filled with a crazed demand for the truth. Everywhere the man went he brought contradictions to people; or would, if he spoke his mind. It had taken him many years to learn how to handle himself reasonably well around 'normal' people, and in more than one weak moment, he wondered if he were the crazy one. There were so many of the others, and they seemed to know, automatically, that he was wrong.

Eventually, he found a few like-minded people (the most radical of the Jesus people), but even most of them didn't really get it right. He had many episodes of self-doubt. "How could I be the only one? Am I deceiving myself?" Phillip had tested as a borderline genius in high school, and he couldn't help wondering if there was truth in the 'genius gone mad' ideas. Maybe that's what he was?

Twice, Phillip had emotional crises over these matters. The first time was in his early twenties. The contrast just got too much for him, and he descended into a sort of self-condemning depression. For three days he suffered serious emotional pain. He was able to do his job, but only by coasting mindlessly through it. He stayed home as much as possible, pacing through the rooms, moaning, and praying. He picked up his Bible, and began to read important passages. He was checking himself, verifying his thoughts, analyzing why he believed what he did. By the fourth day, he began to feel better. He kept going back to the Bible, comparing his thoughts to what was written. When he woke up the fifth morning, he felt almost normal.

The second crisis occurred about a year after he and Julia were married. This one was different. The year was an amazingly full one. He and Julia met, fell in love, and married – all within a few months. All four of their parents opposed the marriage. "Too young, too fast," were the usual rants. Only Phillip's mother showed up at the wedding. This took a toll on them both, but especially on Julia.

Julia got pregnant right away and mid-way through the pregnancy Phillip's father Jacob was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Jacob was a good man. He had run a commercial construction company with a combination of intelligence, daring, and sheer strength of will. He had his coarse and bullheaded moments, but Phillip never doubted that if things got tough his father would take a bullet for him.

Now, he was dying. And, a child was being born. And Julia, being pregnant and tired, lost her libido. Julia's parents still weren't speaking to them. This whole situation, combined with the previous problem of being one man against the world, proved too much for Phillip. He had reached the limit of his strength and had fallen over the other side.

Phillip felt almost as bad as he had the other time, but this time, it didn't go away. He had little time to rest and regroup. Anna was being born, Julia needed help, they were completely on their own. Phillip alternately felt like a zombie or a complete failure. Sometimes he cried. He felt unfit to face his life. Outwardly, he did everything necessary, including work and taking care of the baby. But afterward, he would lay on the bed and cry. Julia was at a loss, and wondered if it was her fault. There seemed to be an element of jealousy involved. She hadn't done anything wrong, but maybe he thought she did.

This continued for several weeks. Phillip didn't know what to do and simply endured the pain – something for which he seemed to have an endless capacity. Eventually Phillip began to recover, but it was several more months before he was back to normal. In retrospect, it was fairly obvious to Phillip that the stresses of that year were simply overpowering, especially for a young man with an ongoing problem of being the one person who is different from all the rest. Over the ensuing years Phillip made peace with that as well. This was the true measure of his maturity.

This was probably the real reason that Phillip had fallen in love with Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was a lone radical genius; a man out of his time. A truly just and

good man, an advanced man – a man that no one understood. The people around him might appreciate his healings, but they did not understand the man himself. Phillip did.

Jesus tried, again and again, to make people understand that they were able to do the same things he did, but they could not see it. His words still cry out that they can do as he did, and they still respond with, "Yes, if only we could rise above sin," or "Yes, if only we were not burdened with these sinful bodies," or "Yes, some day in heaven." Phillip read Jesus' words, believed them, and did them. People everywhere hated him for it. That is not an easy thing to face at twenty years of age.

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Back in Seattle, the trial of the European technicians was proceeding slowly. The discovery process was lengthy and detailed; the government was trying to get every possible piece of information out of Bari. After a series of judicial rulings, Bari was forced to reveal to the details of his bank transfers from the Tango group. He wanted to warn Michael, but worried that his Internet traffic was being monitored. (Which, in fact, it was.) So, Bari wrote a letter to Michael, encrypted it, and saved it to disk. He then gave the disk and instructions to his brother, who was on his way to Japan on a business trip. In Nagasaki, Julian Bari sat in an Internet Café, sipped Saki, and sent the encrypted file to Michael. He paid cash, and walked out a few minutes after sending the file. Outside of the café, he broke the disk and tossed it into a public waste can. Back at the hotel, he flushed his brother's hand-written note down the toilet.

* * * * * * *

Michael,

I'm very sorry that it has taken me so long to get back to you. I suspect that my emails are being monitored, and I didn't want to lead them to you. So, my brother is sending this to you from an Internet Café in Japan.

The trial is plodding onward, and within a few days I will be forced to hand over the bank transfer information, as well as all my correspondence with you. (As regards our legal work, not my information gathering.) So, beware. Thus far, I haven't had to put the illegal warrants onto the table, but they're working on it now, and it is simply a matter of time. We'll lose our best ammunition. Sorry to have so much bad news, but it's their legal system, which makes them awfully hard to beat.

Your employees are doing fine, and I've spent a couple of thousand dollars for their needs. Don't worry about repaying me; let's wait till they're not watching my accounts.

Now, as to other subjects: We've got our information source back in position. He's not there full-time, but we are getting new information. In specific, we know that the signal protocols have changed. We also know that the FBI is working their way into something called Gamma. (Is that you?) They're not in yet, but they are working on a number of leads, and will probably be in soon.

I have the Legal Defense Fund nearly finished. I'll have everything ready next week, but I'm not sure how I'll get it to you. I'll wait for you to tell me what to do.

Best wishes, and be careful,

Bari

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At this time, the first responses to requests from the Breakers venture were coming in. Canada rejected the plan. This was to be expected, the Canadian and American psychiatric associations being closely aligned. Likewise, both Mexico and the UK rejected the plan. But France, with anti-American glee, expressed an interest. Further talks would be required, but their interest seemed solid. Japan, as they had hoped, expressed some interest, but not as much as the French associations.

Talks proceeded on both fronts.

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On September 2nd, Frances' first article, *Subversive Private Commerce?* ran in the New York Times. In it, she first explained that unreported government figures showed a huge increase in business being done off the books. She went on to explain that this appeared to be mostly small transactions, indicating that it was individuals trading this way, not large corporations. She made growth projections, and estimated how much business was being done privately.

A sidebar to the article contained information on the entire series of articles Frances had signed-on for. In addition to *Subversive Private Commerce?*, there would be three others: *Who Uses Private Commerce?*, *How Private Commerce Works*, and *Private Commerce: Evolution or Destruction?*

Response to the article came in waves. At first, it was widely read and distributed in the business community. People talked about the article. Rodney was very pleased, and asked Frances to get her the following articles as quickly as possible. She happily agreed.

Who Uses Private Commerce? ran exactly one week after the first article in the series. It so happened that on the same day Rodney received a memo from his boss stating that the series was "not well liked in some quarters." There had been telephone calls from several Senators and ranking officials. They never said directly that they wanted the series stopped, but they made the idea clear nonetheless.

Rodney sent the following memo back:

"Mr. Overhill, I would like to know which parts of the article were disliked. As best I can tell, this was fairly straightforward reporting. What are they trying to tell me? Also, I suspect that you will be hearing more from these people soon, since the second article in the series hit the newsstands this morning. Please let me know how you'd like to proceed.

R.G."

The second wave of reaction to the articles began in earnest that afternoon.

In *Who uses Private Commerce?* Frances told the stories of four representative people. First was the story of her computer consultant neighbor (masking his identity). She then told the story of a retired physician who wished to treat his patients privately, and didn't wish to be prosecuted for doing so. She also told the story of an unpleasant man who had gone through a nasty divorce, and kept his business private so that the state of New York couldn't find much income to seize. She finished with an American businessman who kept his overseas money private and his American salary within the system. She was careful to tell the stories as factually as she could, without setting the people up as either heroes or villains.

Rodney called her at three o'clock that afternoon.

"Frances, we're in some deep shit over here."

"What's wrong Rodney? The article?"

"Yes, the article! I've got a lot of big people pissed at me!"

Frances felt intimidated. What had she done wrong? Had she stepped too far out of line? Were they going to punish her now?

"Rodney, I didn't say anything wrong. I told the truth."

"Maybe so, Frances, but you pissed on the wrong guy's lawn. Every executive in this whole company is angry at me. They're calling you a loose cannon, and telling me that I should have known better than to use you again."

Frances felt small, vulnerable and scared. Her voice was now soft. "Well, Rodney, they don't have to run any more articles if they don't like them. What else can they

do to us?" As the words left her mouth, she remembered the words of her old anthropology professor:

"Historically, women have survived by associating themselves with a strong man, and living under his protection." She had always hated that idea. But here she was, feeling the same thing, and putting herself under Rodney's protection. She began to feel angry. Yes this was a scary situation, but she would not allow herself to regress to a Neanderthal level of female existence. Not in this type of situation. "If they were swinging clubs," she thought, "then I might want a strong man to protect me." But this was not a physical threat, at least not yet, and she was not going to run to a man unless there was a legitimate need.

"Well, Frances, I don't know what they're going to do, but they're not happy with you."

She remembered something that she read long ago in a Chinese Communist text. "Sun Tsu says that the ultimate target is the mind of the opposing general. So, in controlling masses of people, you must control their minds. You must train them to cower when the authority is displeased."

Now she was sure – whether they had done it by calculation or just by trial and error, they were using intimidation to control her and Rodney. Probably to control the paper's management as well. Forget about Rodney's pissed-off politicians; now she was pissed-off.

"No, Rodney! No!"

"No? No, what? What are you talking about?"

"No, we're not going to be intimidated Rodney. At least I'm not. They're trying to scare us. And this! This from the same people who blabber on and on about tolerance and free speech! No! I'm not cowering before them. You tell them to call me if they have any factual arguments with what I said. You tell them that if they can show me where I wrote something inaccurate, I'll withdraw it immediately. But if they don't have anything factual, tell them that I spit at them, and tell them to drop dead!"

Rodney was silent for a long time. Then he said "I'm not sure, Frances. I'll call you later."

James arrived home at seven o'clock. "Well, didn't you stir up a hornet's nest! Nice job!"

"James, don't be so flippant. This was no small thing. These people put me through hell today."

He hugged her. "I'm sorry, Babe. I was just trying to be cute."

"Well, I'd appreciate it if you'd cut back on the gym talk. I don't really like it."

"All right, Babe. You just remind me if I forget, okay?"

"Okay."

James walked her to the kitchen table, sat her in a chair, and kissed her forehead. “What would you like, doll? Coffee, tea, water, a glass of wine?”

“Take me out for coffee.”

“All right, out for coffee it is. Give me ten minutes to check clean up, then we’re off… and wear blue jeans.”

* * * * * * *

Jim took her to a coffee house he knew, not far from their building. It was a counter-culture sort of place, with occasional live Jazz, though not this evening. More importantly, it had a non-traditional atmosphere. A bit flaky, perhaps, but the right thing for this night. Frances needed a bit of mental space; to spend some time among people who did not share the establishment mind that was gathering against her. They ordered some strange new sort of coffee, and drank it slowly, enjoying being among people who didn’t know or care who she was.

“Jim, you already knew something when you came home. How did you find out?”

“My dad called me.”

“Your dad? Why?”

“Because you’re going to be his daughter-in-law. For as long as he lives, he’ll be looking out for you.”

“Really?”

“Of course! And you know he has a lot of well-connected friends.”

“Well, it seemed that way, but we’ve really only been to your parents’ house twice, you know. I don’t know them terribly well.”

“Yes, I know. Anyway, he called to say that you’ve got a lot of government people talking. He told me that you should be careful. And beside hearing from my dad, I saw a number of comments about your article on the Internet.”

“What kind of comments?”

“Oh, the same as for the past week, only much louder today. The liberty people saying that the articles told the truth, and that they were shocked the New York Times would print them. Then, establishment people just plain hating the article.”

“And their reason was…?”

He chuckled. “Which would you like, their stated reason, or their real reason?”

“Their stated reason first, then what you think the real reason is.”

"All right. Their stated reason was that you were glorifying people who don't pay their fare share, and that you were an irresponsible journalist. They implied that you favored privacy for terrorists. The real reason is that you broke the intellectual's code. You're smart, educated, and an establishment intellectual, writing for the New York Times. You are supposed to put a bad light on things that undermine state power."

"Jim, I won't deny that I've always felt pressure to be politically correct that way, but you say it like it's written into some sort of journalist's rule book. That's not right."

"No, it certainly isn't written down that way. But you're smart. You're supposed to pick up on it and follow the pattern. You didn't, and they're…" He was about to say "pissed-off," but he remembered that she didn't want gym talk. "They feel like you broke the deal."

Frances' face went blank. She knew that Jim was essentially correct; they did think she broke some unwritten rules. But these "rules" were never explained anywhere… and it seemed that there was a further rule – that no one should express the rules clearly.

"Jim, what lays behind this?"

"It a *structural* thing, Frances, and as old as governance itself. People don't naturally take to being ruled. You can simply bully everyone into doing things your way, but that's really expensive. Governance is far more efficient if people are convinced that submitting is the right thing to do, that it is their duty."

"All right. So…"

"So… that's why priesthoods were developed, and that's why kings were given a divine right. It was arranged so that a peasant making rulership expensive was an insult the great God. And now that religion is not so much in vogue, we have the intelligentsia. The intellectuals are the ones who tell people that supporting their rulers is the right thing to do. All governments work this way… they'd be fools not to."

"Maybe so, but they expect me to just know that?"

"No, but they do expect you to follow along. You know how reporters make a name, by getting inside information from someone in government. Journalism is mostly a game of trading favors, and they expect you to play it."

"Well, I guess I always knew what was expected of me that way, I just ignored it… but I really do like some of those people."

"And I'm sure some of them are nice, interesting, intelligent people. They're just playing in a rigged game."

She thought for few seconds, then decided to switch subjects: "You're probably right about this, James. But what about us? What about this situation?"

“Oh, I don’t suppose that they’ll do much to you. Maybe an IRS audit, but nothing terrible. I would, however, make a big bet that your series will never be completed...”

“An IRS audit!?”

“Well, that’s just a guess, but they do it all the time. Franklin Roosevelt did it, Kennedy did it, Nixon did it, Clinton did it. One quick phone call, and poof, you’re preoccupied with tax men for the next few years.

“Well they had better not!” James did not respond at all. He sat still.

“What?” she asked.

“Nothing important, Babe. But I think you should decide what you want to do with this series of articles. Do you really want to complete it?”

“Yes, Jim, I really do. This is a legitimate and important story, and I want to cover it.”

“All right then, we can find people to carry it for you… I know that a bunch of Internet sites would love it. But you should think about this carefully first. If you continue the series, you’ll be making yourself an opponent of both the government and the intelligentsia that is allied with them. Whether or not they audit you, they’ll make you seem like a nut. You should think about that first.”

“And my choice would be what? To apologize, take my punishment, and try to ingratiate myself with them again?”

“I’m not saying that you should do that, Frances.”

“Well, what other choice do I have? I can apologize for something that wasn’t wrong, or I can spit in the giant’s eye!”

“Or, you could stop writing about private commerce, and let things slowly return to normal.”

“Jim, whose side are you on? Are you trying to stop me from writing about Gamma?”

He sighed. “No, Doll, I’m trying to present all sides. Actually, for Gamma’s sake it would probably be very helpful to have you publish the whole series.”

“Then why are you talking only about options of surrender.”

“Because I don’t want to convince you to defy them. If you flip them off, I want it to be because you want to, not because I convinced you.”

Frances wondered why he was being so careful not to influence her. It seemed like he was concerned that he’d get blamed later for ‘making her’ do something. Then she realized that he was reacting to Maggie, not to her.

“James, listen, this is me, Frances, that you are talking to… have I ever blamed you for making me do something?”

He paused for a moment. “No… Never.”

“All right, then. Tell me what you really think.”

“Okay. A few minutes ago, you said ‘they’d better not.’ Well, they’d better not, or else what? What are you going to do? Complain to the newspapers? They’re not going to help you. Would you want to sue them? I would cost you a huge amount of money, and there’s no guarantee you’d win. A lot of the Internet people will be on your side, and they’ll be able to shame the government if they go after you too badly, but they have no direct power.”

“So what’s the answer?”

“There is no good answer. You can either stay and deal with the consequences, or you can go somewhere else and write from there.”

“All right, Jim, I now have more than enough to think about. Let’s go home.”

* * * * * * *

Michael Anderson arrived in New York on a Tuesday afternoon, and took the “Brain Flush” that evening. The treatment consisted of two sets of dermal patches, one worn for six hours, then removed and replaced with another set of patches worn overnight. Michael slept for twelve hours, and woke up the next morning, feeling young. The feeling was a surprise, as he had never really felt old. He had long been in good health, with better strength and endurance than he had while in high school. Yet in some strange but significant way, he felt young. The college kids were right, he did feel as if there had been some sort of sludge removed from his brain. He had never noticed it accumulating and never realized it was there, but its removal was wonderfully refreshing.

* * * * * * *

Phillip,

I had the Breakers treatment yesterday. Do it!

I am currently gathering data on “The Flush,” and will be putting together a scientific paper. George shared his research with me, and I am going to publish the results wherever I can. (Don’t worry, I’ll coordinate this with you when it is ready.) I’m also helping George compile the results from his nursing home study. So far they look very good. This is a major event for psychology, Phillip. It is now almost beyond question that the subconscious mind is substantially chemical in its composition. Think about

that for a while – it's of tremendous importance. If the subconscious is chemical, we can clean it up. Can you imagine how much emotional anguish we'll be able to save people from? What a development!

OK, on to another issue: You have a lot of people going in and out of the Free Soul house, and they are taking the patches all over the US (and probably elsewhere). It's only a matter of time before someone accuses Breakers of being the new LSD and comes charging in to arrest everyone. One coincidental car wreck and they'll crucify you. Do something now. Split it up, move the lab, and get out of the way.

All right, enough preaching. I'm feeling pretty good; I think I'll see if I can find a tennis partner.

Ciao,

Michael

* * * * * * *

Michael,

I'm thrilled you liked the treatment. I'll go do it myself soon.

As for the house, laboratory, etc.: You are entirely correct. I'll get on it right away.

Love ya,

Phillip

* * * * * * *

"Hi George, it's Phillip, how's it going?"

"Hi Phillip. Pretty well, really. I think we have a deal with a French group to conduct some serious research."

"Excellent! Are you going to run it, or just send your grad students?"

"Well, I think I'll go get it started, then let my guys run it from there. But it's going to be a long study – a few years – so I'll be back and forth a lot."

"Good… glad to hear it."

Phillip was pausing, and sounding tentative, almost uncertain. That wasn't like him. It reminded George of a few incidents from when they were kids. He hadn't seen Phillip uncertain and confused in a long, long time.

“What’s going on, Phillip? Something’s bothering you.”

“Yeah, you’re right George. Well… you need to get busy setting up a new production lab, and you’ll have to close the one you have now.”

“What? Why?”

“Because, George, what you are doing is not approved by the government, and with all the people who have been using Breakers informally, someone is bound to come after you. It’s almost a cult phenomena among college kids. Do you have any idea of how many sets of patches you’ve sold?”

“Not really, but I know I’ve made a lot of money.”

“Well, it’s in the thousands of treatments. That’s too many to stay hidden. And listen to me – the guys who will eventually come after you are good at what they do! It’s only a matter of time before they find your lab, and you do not want to be there when they find it!”

George had forgotten the legal aspects. Farber’s lawyers had made restitution with the University for the equipment he took, and he was quite aware that Breakers wasn’t an approved treatment, but he considered the new drugs so harmless that it seemed crazy for anyone to come after him. To think that armed agents could be beating down his laboratory door was frightening. At home, he was learning McCoy’s business, but in the lab, his mind didn’t function that way. He quickly realized his error. “Yes… I can understand that. All right Phillip, I’ll talk to Bill about it, and we’ll do it. Crap! Okay, anything else?”

“Yeah, I think you’d better move out of the US. Bill can do all sorts of camouflaging, but you really should be off the territory they control. May I suggest Eastern Canada? That’s not too far. Your real name isn’t on any documents, is it?”

“Uh, no. Bill made sure it wasn’t. But my assistants call me by my real name.”

“Are you reporting their income or names to the government?”

“No. We do everything cash here. No paper trails.”

“Good. Listen, Bill knows how to handle all of this. Make sure your guys like you, and make sure you send them a nice Christmas present every year. And for goodness sake, stop letting them call you by your real name. Start altering its pronunciation, or just change it all together. After a while, they’ll probably forget what it had been originally. Anyway, you work with Bill on this.”

“I will. He’ll be here tomorrow, and that will be first item on the list.”

“Thank you George. I’ll call Mordecai, and work things out with him, too.”

“Bye.”

Phillip called for Mordecai, but he was not at the house. He sent him an email instead:

Mordecai,

Your success in this project has apparently been overwhelming. But this is creating problems also: Any sort of non-approved treatment scares the hell out of most people. And with as many treatments as you've distributed, someone will talk to another someone, and pretty soon, there will be FDA or DEA Agents breaking down your doors. Don't forget that these guys are good at what they do. You may be morally right, but they have much better weapons.

The time has come to get out of their way. I think we'll have to sell the Free Soul house also, as painful as that might be. So, talk to the gang, and especially to Don.

That's all for now.

Phillip

An hour later, Mordecai called, and wanted to go over Phillip's comments. Phillip sighed when he put down the phone. Mordecai sounded scared. He began to feel bad about hurting the young man.

"No!" he thought. "I had to learn how to face difficult things, and so will he. I'm doing him no favor by insulating him from reality. Let him do it on his own; he's capable."

Insulating people he cared about had been one of Phillip Donson's faults. He felt that he was strong enough to bear a great many things, and that other people were not. He had gone through many difficult situations alone and had learned how to cope with them. But when he saw other people ready to go through similar things, he wanted to step in and protect them. In some ways, that is a noble thing, but it does not permit the other man to rise to the occasion. And it taxed Phillip far more than he realized at first.

It had taken Phillip many years to realize that error. When he wrote his magazine article, *The Magic of The Founder*, it became clear to him. If the real intention of Jesus was to make every man a founder, then every man would have to master reality by his own virtues. Helping them is to slow them down. "If you want people who can act righteously on their own," he wrote, "then you have to stop leading them, and let them learn to do it by themselves." At least twice, Jesus sent his disciples out to preach and heal on their own. This was almost certainly the reason why. If every man is to be a founder, he would have to learn the lesson of the founders; that is, how to be righteous and creative on your own. "To insulate people from reality," he wrote, "is to stunt their growth. Obviously you might protect someone you value from overpowering forces, but you should do so very sparingly."

* * * * * * *

The Free Soul house had changed. They had been reading Phillip's essays and discussing them at length. For some of them it became their primary focus. One night, two of them noticed this and began to worry. After all, they had been told all of their lives that they should not take things "too far." They sent Phillip a private email, asking whether they were obsessing, and whether it was unhealthy.

Phillip's response came very quickly:

"Obsessing if fine. Just don't think that you have to do it forever, and don't think that it's the only thing you should do. Go ahead and learn fast and hard; put everything you believe into action (if you won't act on it, you don't really believe it); but don't let your obsessing develop its own inertia, and don't ever think that other people have to do what you are doing. It may be good for you but not for them. People are very, very complex; don't presume that you know which lesson your friend needs to learn next. You don't."

The two of them were so impressed with the message that they printed it in very large type and fashioned it into a banner that they hung in a hallway. The timing couldn't have been better. With all of the discussions of philosophy, some of them were beginning to wonder about others who weren't as interested. Trouble would have been coming down the road. Sandy, an artist, took an afternoon and painted a shortened version of the message on the kitchen wall.

The amount of music written at the house increased dramatically. Almost every night saw new songs being sung and mini-concerts being held; one or two new songs, sung several times, with everyone in the living room providing another harmony, or at least an instrumental part. Between songs, people discussed their new ideas on how life should be, how people could live if they could free themselves from traditions and group identities, and how the mentality of most people was not that far removed from the Middle Ages. As time went on, their ideas became clearer and their insights deeper.

One autumn evening, the sun setting early and the lights not yet on, Sandy, the painter, sat with great earnestness and depth of feeling, and asked the people in the living room to stop and listen to her for a moment. She was not one of the more vocal members of the group, although she was usually at the house and engaged in the goings-on.

Sandy (Sandra) Osterman was one of the older people at the Free Soul house – 29 years old. She had spent many years attending colleges and art schools, finishing with a PhD at FSU, and then moving into teaching. She was of medium height and build, with light brown hair, and prominent green eyes. The talk of 'how people should live' appealed to her in a very basic way; she had never been happy with the

ways people lived, although she usually went along with the status quo, having no other choice available. She married in her Junior year of college, but called it off a year later. It just didn't fit her.

This evening, Sandy had a look in her eye that was both serious and distant. "I had a dream this afternoon when I took a nap… more than a dream… it was very powerful… I'm not sure I was really asleep. I was with a group of women in a field. We all joined together to form a large circle in the middle of this meadow. I had the idea that some sort of ritual should begin. I could feel drums throbbing in my body. But I looked off to the side, and I could see that the circle remained open in one place, which really upset me. I thought, 'Don't these people know that this hole disrupts everything?'

"Then, I found myself in a bar, talking angrily about how these people have no sense for ecstasy. I talked myself into a rage and gulped down a glass of wine. I was so upset; I was practically going out of my mind. I started to speak to a foreign-looking man with long, curly hair and brilliant eyes. I started dancing with him. I looked to the side and saw another man that looked a little like pictures of the devil. Then I felt an incredible surge of power. The man who looked like the devil said 'Now I can close the circle. The opening in the circle was for me and my ship.'

"And then I woke up feeling incredibly stimulated and alive. My God, I feel like breaking out of everything that has held me back until now. Why I am always so careful and dependent on what other people think of me? I have this incredible desire to turn everything upside down!"

From that moment, Sandy Osterman was different. She was no longer willing to accept the status quo, and no longer willing to follow the standard life paths. She would quit her job at FSU the next day, and would move to the countryside and begin painting in earnest.

"Now, look," she was speaking forcefully, unusual for her, "I don't want any weird Freudian interpretations, but does anyone have any insight on the dream?"

There was silence for a few moments, and then a young girl named Mary spoke up. "Yes, I think I can explain part of it."

"Please, go ahead."

"All right, the devil part of it… I'm pretty sure that the devil represents self-gratification. Did you see the one essay on altruism versus self-interest? It explained why the devil is a negative but attractive figure. It's because he is the champion of self-interest. Our nature is to be self-interested, but we live in the midst of a world that always calls it evil. Still, we are hopelessly self-interested, and that makes the devil sympathetic. He's like us, only not afraid or embarrassed to be alive."

Sandy sat up. "Alive! That's right, he was unashamedly alive!"

Mary continued, “In the dream, you got over your fear of self-gratification, and you became alive. You knew that ecstasy could be had, and that it was a crime that people couldn’t see it. But once you got over your fear of self-interest… self-gratification… you got your ecstasy! The wine was one thing you might allow yourself, dancing another, but the man who looked like the devil represented self-gratification without shame, of pride in self-value. I have no idea about any of the other parts.”

* * * * * * *

“I’m sorry Frances, but we won’t be publishing any more of your articles. Actually, there will be several opposing editorial pieces in the next few days. The paper is going on a campaign against private commerce.”

“I understand, Rodney. I suppose I expected it.”

“I will pay you for your articles, Frances.” She didn’t answer. Instead, she began to think about the copyright to the articles. If Rodney paid her, would the Times own the copyrights? “And you can keep the copyright, Frances, I’ll send you an email to that effect later.”

“Thank you Rodney, I appreciate that.”

“It’s not a problem Frances, you’ve earned it. Listen, they’ll never let you write for me again, but I want you to know that the articles were good, and that I was proud to run them.”

She cried. “Thank you Rodney… you’re a good man.”

“Oh, I hope I am Frances. I don’t particularly feel like one sometimes.”

“No Rodney, you may be in difficult circumstances, but you’re a good man.”

“Thank you Frances… Listen, you have my personal email address, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Well, you keep in touch. And if I can help you with anything, you let me know.”

“I will, Rodney. Thank you.”

“All right honey, I have to go now. You take care of yourself, okay?”

“Yes, I will, Rodney, good bye.”

* * * * * * *

The Farber-Marsden wedding took place in London, on October 16th. All four parents were present, as well and two or three dozen friends and relatives. Phillip and Julia were among them. The wedding was a festive, meaningful, and fun occasion. The party room was rented for three nights. The guests spent their days exploring London and their evenings in the party room. They all slept late. Live music and dancing were part of every evening's events, as were speeches, toasts, jokes, and games. People dressed well, but the atmosphere was informal.

One the way to the wedding, James, Frances, Julia, and Phillip had stopped in New York for two days for the Breakers treatment. They all loved it. Michael was right, it made them all feel young, as if twenty years of emotional scars had been removed overnight. Phillip decided that he would take more treatments when time allowed, to remove every useless weight that he possibly could.

After the wedding party ended, Phillip and Julia traveled to Copenhagen and Helsinki, visiting friends.

Frances and Jim took the train to Paris, spent three days there, then rented a car, and drove for two weeks through Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy. They visited a variety of historical sites and the homes of old friends. Frances had traveled in Europe previously, but most of her time had been there spent in offices or at the usual tourist sites. James took her through small towns in the Netherlands that she fell in love with, and through several hill towns in Italy that seemed idyllic.

* * * * * * *

On October 17th, a bouquet of red roses was delivered to Anthony Bari. He laughed when he saw them, sure that it was some sort of joke. The inscription on the card read as follows:

Bari, I watched the deliveryman walk into your office with the flowers. Thus far, I am sure that this is a secure communication. Please destroy this card, and meet me at the Opera House tonight for the 8:00 show. I'll find you, and we can wander off somewhere to talk. (Please bring any pertinent papers with you.) Think about side or rear exits and I'll check to see if you are being followed.

Michael

PS: Make a nice excuse now, as to who sent you the flowers, and why.

Bari laughed. "I like these guys," he said out loud, "they run a class act!" He picked up his car keys and drove to Max's.

* * * * * * *

The majestic lobby of the Opera house was filled with beautifully-dressed people when Michael walked up to Bari and said "Hello Anthony, it's nice to finally meet you."

Bari knew the proper actions, and looked away from Michael as he said, "The pleasure is mine, Michael. Meet me in the second balcony in about five minutes, last row, stage right. We can talk there and still catch the show."

"Magnificent. I'll see you in a few minutes." Michael walked off to the washroom, and then to the elevator.

Michael reached the furthest possible seats in the building first, and waited a couple of minutes more for Bari, who sat down as the musicians were finishing their tuning. There was no one sitting within several meters, so they could speak quietly without disrupting the music for anyone else.

"Michael, I've got to tell you, I've seen a lot of operations in the last thirty years, but yours may be the best."

"Thank you, that's quite a compliment."

"You got my message from Japan?"

"Yes, no problem whatsoever. So, Anthony, tell me what's happening in the trial."

"Exactly what we expected. We got your guys off the hook, but we had to use the bad warrants to do it. Your guys are safe, but we don't have any more secret weapons."

"Which was the point of the whole exercise, correct?"

"Correct. Now, they can come down hard on you next time."

Michael smiled. Bari noticed, but waited for Michael to speak. "Well, unless they're going to make a raid in the next few days, we won't have to worry about it."

"That's good news, Michael, but you might want to start worrying. They're going to raid the facility in Austin, Texas tomorrow!"

The only shock Michael showed was to open his eyes very wide and to turn his head slightly toward Bari. "Shit… we're not ready for that! Oh my God…"

"I would have told you earlier Michael, but I didn't know how to find you."

"No, don't worry about that Anthony, but this creates a problem. We don't have enough time to respond properly."

Michael pulled a PDA from the vest pocket of his suit coat, and began writing a message.

"Is that thing encrypted?", asked Bari.

"No, it's not. I suppose it could be, but we haven't gotten around to it yet. It should be fine. I'm using some pretty ambiguous wording here. Only the guy I'm sending it to will really understand."

Michael sent his message to Richard, as follows:

R,

Big news! I just found out that office number three will be having a special visitor tomorrow: Frederick Burris, and Irene his wife! Please make sure they are properly welcomed. This is a major event for us, let's get it right!

M.

Michael looked concerned. "Listen, Anthony, do you think there is any way that we can get the raid delayed? Any sort of trick we could pull? Even a delay of half a day would help a lot."

"Well, maybe, Michael. Let me think about it for a few minutes." They watched and listened to the Opera. Michael worked to keep himself from anxiety. "I want to think efficiently," he told himself, "and not get into a panic loop."

Bates spoke up again. "Listen, Michael getting them to call off the raid is pretty improbable; it's taking place tomorrow morning. Unless you can create a major incident in Austin before then, I can't imagine how to stop it."

"All right, so be it. I'll have to get out of here at the intermission." Michael worked momentarily on regrouping his thoughts. "All right, Anthony, let me tell you something. We are changing over to a distributed computing system… no more computer centers. So we'll need that Defense Fund up and running within a few weeks. We'll have hundreds of people working on this, all over the world. And… we want to expand it to accommodate normal users as well."

Michael handed Bari a CD. "This contains almost everything you'd ever want to know about the people we want to protect. Some of these people will not be in the US, so you'll need international experts." Bari smiled, and pulled out his own CD. "Here's my work on the original Fund. It's ready to run now." Bari smiled and Michael looked at him with appreciation and respect.

"Take a look at everything, and see if you need any changes. Oh… there's an invoice in there, too. Though I'm not sure how you'll get the money to me."

"How would you like us to get it to you?"

"I'm not sure. Hell, I don't even know how to get you an invoice after this."

Michael thought for a minute. "All right, I'll tell you what. I'm going to send you a laptop computer – we'll split the cost with you – and this computer will be set up for

private commerce. It will have all of the encrypted communication and banking programs built in. You can use it to communicate with me."

"Michael, while I am not personally opposed to your private commerce thing, I'm not sure I want to do that. Especially since they are probably watching me. It would put me – and your legal defense – at risk."

"All right," said Michael, "I have another idea. I'm going to set up a private newsgroup, devoted to opera, and invite you to join. And don't worry, I'll do it under an untraceable identity. Then, I want you to get a program called Stegano-Suite, from the Open Software Alliance." Bari wrote the name down, and repeated it to Michael to verify it. "Once you get those two pieces in place, we'll start posting MP3 files to the newsgroup, with encrypted messages in the MP3s. Sound good?"

"Sounds great."

"All right Anthony, it's almost time for the intermission. Any other news for me? Maybe something good this time?" They both laughed.

"Yes, there are a couple of files on the disk – mostly that we are getting some information from our source. The FBI is working hard on your Gamma system, and they've already got a man in there buying and selling. But he's not able to go any farther than his own transactions – he can't spy on anyone else. So, I suppose that is moderately good news."

"Is this the same guy whose address you gave us before?"

"Same guy."

"Good, we can deal with him."

The intermission began, and Bari walked with Michael to the lobby. They stopped in the thickest part of the crowd and faced each other. "Michael, it has been a pleasure. I'm not yet completely convinced, but so far, I really like your operation."

"Thank you Anthony, and I appreciate your honesty. If you aren't automatically rejecting us as bad, then I have no doubt we'll win you over as time goes on. I doubt you know it, but we've had some of the world's greatest minds working on parts of this. Anyway, we're almost done with the whole thing now. It's all built; all we need now is for it to spread. And, of course, to keep the many promoters out of trouble." They smiled at each other.

"You know I'll do everything I can."

"Yes, I do, Anthony. Thank you my friend. Good bye." Michael walked out the doors, and directly to a cab. He headed to the airport and called three airlines on the way, hoping for an immediate flight to Austin.

* * * * * *

“Richard, did you get my message?”

“Yeah, I did. Do I understand you correctly that the FBI is going to raid Austin tomorrow?”

“Affirmative.”

“All right, we’re loading up those computers with misinformation right now, and we’ve already stopped routing any real traffic through that facility.”

“All right, but what about getting the technicians out?”

“Well, I’ll cancel the morning crew, and tell them to get out of town immediately.”

“Yes. Absolutely. Waste no time. Listen, have travel money waiting for each of them at a Western Union office in San Antonio, and tell them that $5,000. will be wired to each of their bank accounts once they are outside the United States. That goes for everyone who has been working for us in Austin over the past month. Can you do all of this?”

“Yeah, I’ve got Bobby working with me tonight, and we can do it all. I’m writing it down as we speak.”

“Good. So, how many people do we have in the facility right now?”

“Three. I’m chatting with them.”

“All right, what is their normal time to leave?”

“Six o’clock in the morning.”

“All right, here’s the plan: I’ll be in Austin at just after midnight. I’m going to find three bums, and pay them to be the daily replacements. I’ll fix them up to look fairly presentable, put coffee cups in their hands, and send them into the building. The real technicians should go directly home, grab everything that matters to them, sneak out of their houses, and get to San Antonio. Once the bums are in the facility, I’ll get to San Antonio in a hurry, make sure that they get their money, and get out of there. They won’t know I’m there unless they screw-up or something goes wrong. You tell them to get into Mexico during rush hour. Once they do, the five thousand is theirs, and they’re on their own.

“Now, Richard, this next part is important. Make double and triple sure that they understand this: If they do exactly as we say, we’ll protect them completely. But if they delay or deviate at all from this plan, they’re on their own, and the deal is off. No five thousand dollars, no protection. Make sure they know that I am serious.”

“I will, boss.”

“Excellent. Tell them that the fake technicians will be there at six o’clock. They should wait until they get into the building, and then leave normally.”

“Will do, Michael. And I will call you if there are any problems.”

As he walked off the jet-way at the Austin airport, at 12:21 a.m., a text message came up on Michael's phone: "Everything going according to plan."

"Good," he thought, "now I just need to find some bums." He rented a car and set out to find the people he needed. He bought several bottles of cheap wine and a couple of fifths of whiskey, then cruised the uglier parts of Austin, looking for appropriate winos. At about three o'clock, he found four of them, sitting behind a liquor store; all passable as Europeans. Getting them into his car, however, was quite another matter. Like most street people, they mistrusted everyone, and they were in no mind to get into the car of someone who was entirely out of place in their setting.

Michael gave them a fifth of whiskey and drove away. He drove through a residential neighborhood, found a dark baseball field, and parked on the grass next to it. He spread dirt and mud all over the car. He put his sport coat and tie in the trunk, ripped his shirt, and rolled in the dirt. He poured some whiskey on his clothes and thought to himself, "Dear God, I hope no cops stop me before I finish this." Then he got back into the car, drove away, and called Richard.

"Hey Michael, how's it going on your end?"

"You wouldn't believe it Richard. Anyway, are you still chatting with the techs?"

"Yes."

"All right. Send one of them out, immediately, to a local convenience store. Have him buy a bunch of cheap booze… some sex magazines, too. But listen, he has to carry it back in from the car in a bag, so that no one watching them can tell what it is. We don't want the surveillance guys to know that it is booze. They should think it is groceries. Do you understand?"

"Sure I do. Wait a minute, and I'll tell them." Michael parked the car on a quiet street, turned the lights off, and waited, The wait gave him time to realize how scared he was, and how much trouble he'd be in if he got caught at the wrong time. "Not now," he said to himself, "I'm committed to this… nothing else comes into my mind till I'm done." He refocused on his job. It was just after four o'clock now, a little less than two hours to go.

"Michael, you still there?"

"Hell yeah, I'm still here!" He surprised himself with his agitation.

"Uh… all right, Vladimir just went out for the booze. He'll be about fifteen minutes, the store is only a few blocks away."

"Thank you, Richard." Michael was trying to sound benevolent, to compensate for his angry outburst a moment earlier. "Now tell me, Richard, do they understand what they're supposed to do after the bums get there?"

"Yeah, I made them write it down and repeat it back to me. They understand."

“Good! Now listen, there’s one more detail. When I get the bums delivered, they are to give them the booze and the magazines, and ask the bums to watch the place for them – that they’ll be back in the early afternoon. Have you got that?”

“Yes, sir. Tell the bums to drink, have fun, and watch the place for them. They’ll be back at two or three o’clock in the afternoon.”

“You got it Richard, make sure you write it down, and that they write it down.”

“Doin’ it right now.”

“Great. Wish me luck… Oh Geez, Richard! Are you still there?”

“Yeah Michael, I’m still here.”

“Ask them how the morning crew usually gets there. Do they take the bus, or drive?”

“Hang on… they get a ride, Michael, they car-pool. Got it?”

“Yes, I do Richard. Thank you, you’re the best.”

* * * * * * *

Michael drove through four different neighborhoods, trying to find a group of drunks that would fit his needs. He found none. It was now five o’clock, and time was running very close. In desperation, he went back to the first group – the ones that were too suspicious to go with him a few hours ago. To his great relief, they were still behind the liquor store. Somehow he would have to make it work with them. He was sure offering them money would only scare them more. Even if they took the money, they’d probably run away the minute they were out of his sight.

Michael pulled the car up right next to them, waived at them, and walked into the store. One of the group followed him in, hoping for more booze. “Hey man, that was nice of you to give us that whiskey.”

Michael saw his opportunity. “Thanks. But I thought you guys didn’t like me.”

The bum looked at Michael’s clothes, and was confused. “Hey man, didn’t you have better clothes on before?”

“Yeah, but I fell down and got fucked-up… why?”

“I don’t know, you look different.”

Michael was doing his best to speak in a slurred voice, and to appear drunk. He went down the aisles looking for a black marking pen, and happily found one. It was thinner than what he wanted, but it would work. “What cha doin’, man?”

Michael put on his most suspicious and sneaky expression. He hunched his shoulders, and lowered his voice. “Listen man, I tried to do you guys a favor. I’ve got

a house full of booze, and all kinds of shit. All you want, for free. I'm goin back there in a minute. If you guys want to come, fine, but I ain't askin' again. And you can't never tell anybody about this. This is one time only!"

"Well, hell, man, I'm in!"

"All right, but don't talk so loud. You're friends can come if they want to, but they had better apologize for blowin' me off before. If you want em' to come, go tell em' now. I'm payin' for this, then I'm leaving."

The drunk hurried out the door, and excitedly told his drinking partners. They all assembled around the muddy car. Evidently it didn't look out of place this time. Beside, they were considerably more drunk.

Michael pulled to a stop a mile from the computer house at ten minutes till six. "Oh, shit!" he screamed, doing his best drunk and angry voice.

"What's up, man?"

"Shit, I forgot to fix the tag. Hang on for a minute, we're almost there." He took the keys out of the ignition, and walked to the back of the car with his marking pen in hand. He changed the "P" on the plate to a "B," the "3" to an "8", and a "C" to an "O." He took a handful of mud from near the curb, and quickly wiped it over the plate, then jumped back into the driver's seat. They didn't ask him why he had to fix the plate. He pulled up in front of the house at four minutes till six.

"This is the place, guys. I've got to drive around the block to get my cousin. I'll be right back – you guys can go in. There are a bunch of Russians inside. Just tell em' you're with Rich. They've got a lot of good shit." He tried to sound very casual. He would walk them in if he had to, but he certainly didn't want to be photographed by a surveillance team.

"The white house, man?"

"Yeah. I'll walk you in if you want me to, but I'm kinda drunk. I wanna get my cousin, and then be able to chill out… you want me to walk you in?"

"You sure it's okay?"

"Hell yeah, the Russians are cool. Beside, I'll be back in a few minutes anyway."

"All right, we'll just walk in."

"Okay, I'll be back in a minute."

The drunks walked into the house. The Russians took them in and showed immense hospitality. The men started drinking. Then they put the magazines down on the table in front of them.

"Oh, shit, man, lemme see!"

Vlad, the lead technician, gave the men several minutes, then looked at his watch, and said, “Hey man, we must get our friend from the airport, you can watch the house for us?”

“Huh? I guess so.”

“Good, you can have anything in the house, just don’t touch the machines.”

“You mean we can have the liquor?”

“Shit! We don’t care! Drink it all! Just you don’t touch the machines, right?”

“Right, man, we don’t mess with the machines.”

The technicians left in Vlad’s car, and followed the plan Michael had made for them.

Michael, on the other hand, drove out of the neighborhood, and found the road to San Antonio. He drove for two hours and found a full-service truck stop. He signed-up for a shower and bought new clothes. Within an hour he was clean, shaved, and clothed. He picked up a large cup of coffee and donuts, also some nail-polish remover for cleaning the license plate. He washed the car, filled it with gas, and made it to San Antonio by ten o’clock. He waited in front of the Western Union office, and watched.

At eleven, the technicians drove up, parked, and walked into the office. Ten minutes later, they all walked out and headed out of town. They took the road to Del Rio. Michael followed them at a distance, as far as Spofford. Still, there was no sign of anyone following them, so he turned around, and headed northwest toward New Mexico. He made it as far as Roswell, and stopped for the evening.

“Hello, Richard?”

“Michael! You are the man!”

“I take it things went well?”

“Perfect boss, perfect. Someone began working with the machines at about noon. Who ever it was knew what they were doing; it wasn’t any drunk.”

“Excellent! Anything else?”

“Yeah, we just got an email from one of the techs. They say they’re in Mexico, heading for Monterrey.”

“Magnificent! Oh, I can’t tell you how relieved I am. All right, make sure there are tickets waiting for them at the airport in Monterry, and that they get back to their countries without stopping through the US. Got it?”

“Got it.”

“Hey Richard!”

“Yeah?”

“How does it feel to be an international spy master?”

“You know, Michael. I really liked it; although I wouldn’t want to do it very often, I worried a lot.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean. All right, I’m going to find some cheap motel here in New Mexico, and I’ll get back to Utah in a few days. Don’t call me tomorrow, unless it’s an emergency. I’m tired.”

“No problem, Mr. Bond. See you soon.”

“Uh huh… good bye M.”

Michael stopped at a grocery store, bought a bag of fresh food, and found a clean motel for the next two evenings. He ate, took a shower, and flipped TV channels for a few minutes. With weariness settling in quickly, he turned off the television, turned off the lights, and climbed into bed. “Who would have believed this one?” he thought to himself. “I’m James Fucking Bond. My God. I wouldn’t want to do this often, but I sure as hell did it today.”

Deeply satisfied, having been awake for thirty-six straight hours, and with a newly-full belly, he fell instantly asleep.

* * * * * *

On November first, Gamma began to shift to distributed computing. The first week was problematic and Michael had to call several of the programmers back into action. By November 15th, however, the problems were fixed. Version 2.0 worked very well. On December 1st, all but two of the computer centers were closed. More distributed computing entrepreneurs joined them – and began to make money.

On January 1st, they stopped using the last computer centers. Now they were almost out of danger. But Gamma remained the only private free market, and while the income from running it was good, there was still the risk of getting caught, and of government persecutions. A few of the programmers were asking when they would be spinning-off other markets, and selling Gamma. They wanted to remove themselves from danger. They had taken their risks, proved themselves heroes, and now they wanted to get away from the danger zone. A quite reasonable position to hold.

James, Phillip, and Michael knew they would have to deal with this quickly, before the crew got divided. Farber sent an email to all of them on January 5th:

To all members of the Gamma crew:

Well, we've done it. Gamma is now running on a completely distributed basis, and all of the computer facilities have been closed and sold. We're pretty much done.

By now, all of you should have seen the new balances in your Gamma earnings accounts. (Nice, huh?) In addition to that, we now have nearly a million dollars in our new projects account. We've named it the New Renaissance account.

In the next few weeks, we will be doing two big things:

1. Putting Gamma up for sale.

2. Opening discussions on several new projects.

As part of Gamma's terms of sale, we will distribute the entire Gamma suite to the best Gamma users. We are guessing that new markets will spring up consistently. And since we'll also release the source code, we expect lots of custom modifications.

As for the new projects, that will be exciting. We have a few in mind already. We'll post notes soon, and will create a newsgroup for these ideas. We expect a lot of action. All of you are funding this, and all of you get to be involved if you want to. I'll send you all of the information as it becomes available, but it will be up to you to let us know what you want to do. More high adventure awaits. Or, you can live quietly on your profits. (Nice choice!)

I hope this answers everyone's questions, and that you are all happy with these plans.

You are heroes all.

Best always,

Phillip

* * * * * * *

Erika Donson passed away in early January. Almost the entire family made it to Brooklyn for the funeral. Phillip, Julia, and Emily stayed for the full period of mourning, according to Jewish custom. Then they distributed Erika's possessions and sold the house. It was a bittersweet but cathartic time.

While in New York, Phillip met several times with Dr. Demitrios, although he stayed at his mother's house, not at the apartment in Manhattan. The Queens production lab was still functioning, but Bill McCoy had found a small chemical company in New Brunswick, Canada, which he was buying. There they could

continue the company's legitimate business, while running Breakers production also. The sale was to be completed February 1st, and they would close down the Queens facility shortly thereafter.

George offered Emilio and Julio jobs at the new facility, but they were afraid to try emigrating to Canada, not being legal in the US to begin with. George decided to pay them full salary for a month after they left, half salary for another month, and to send them gifts every year for Easter and Christmas.

Once in Canada, George began using his alternate identity, Dr. Nicholas Kostanous. McCoy even had an artist make a fake diploma for him. The ten employees of Atlantic Chemical – the Canadian company – were introduced to Nicholas as the manager of the facility for an industrial conglomerate. He made a conciliatory, introductory speech, calling himself "a research geek," and assured them that things would continue exactly as they had been. Stability was his goal.

By March first the Queens facility was closed and operations at the Canadian facility were almost up to speed. As soon as the Free Soul house was sold the bullet would have successfully been dodged.

But selling the Free Soul house was not an easy thing for most of the Free Souls past and present. Many important memories were associated with it. On the other hand, if nothing else, the Free Souls had always stood for doing what was highest and best, regardless of opinions and consequences. So, if their principles led them to a place where they had to sell the house, then so be it. It was their commitment to the good that had made the house special, and not the other way around.

* * * * * * *

Frances and Jim had been enjoying their time together. For several weeks following their wedding, they had traveled, relaxed at home, and attended symphonies, operas, and museum events. Jim was spending only two days per week at his office, and Frances wasn't writing at all, except for posting notes to her journals.

As winter wore on, they both decided that it was time to take on new projects. They had decided that they would take one year to explore new areas of work and to buy a new home. After that, they would have children. In preparation, Frances enrolled in two child psychology classes at Roosevelt University in the Loop. She also decided to publish the last two articles on private commerce. A dozen web sites had been asking for them. As it turned out, Frances set up her own web page, and posted all four articles there, in addition to other material, including her mom and grandmother's thoughts on sex and marriage. She removed all the names from the material, but posted it for comment. She asked Phillip to look at it. A few days later, he called.

“Hi Frances, this is Phillip.”

“Hi Phillip, what’s new?”

“Oh, mostly good things. Listen, I saw the material you posted.”

“And?”

“And I liked it. First of all, I asked a couple of other web sites to cross-reference it, and secondly, how about coffee one of these days to talk about it?”

“I’d love to! Any time.”

“Yes, Jim told me that you’ve not been terribly busy lately. Has it been nice getting a break?”

“Yeah, very nice. Though I really am ready to get back to work.”

“Good. Anyway, how about tomorrow in the early afternoon?”

“Sounds lovely. How about Hyde Park Java at two o’clock?”

“Perfect. I’ll see you then.”

* * * * * * *

Hyde Park Java was adjacent to the University of Chicago and all sorts of high-level conversations were underway at almost all times. The lighting was sufficient but low, and the smoking and nonsmoking sections were very effectively separated by a system of air-curtains and fans, designed by a group of students from IIT, a nearby engineering school.

“So, you like the stuff I got from my mom?”

“Absolutely! Frances, that is very important material. Far more important than you may realize.” She wondered what Phillip was talking about. He noticed her curiosity. “Would you like me to explain?”

“Well, yes. I know a number of reasons why this is important, but I’m not sure we are talking about the same ones. Please, go ahead.”

“There is nothing more central to human life than sexual reproduction. Frances, do you think that sexual desire is the enemy of human progress?”

“No, of course not.”

“Well, that’s how it has been treated. Every society has tried to control it, to keep it in chains. Everywhere you look in history, you’ll find a compulsory sexual morality. The rules may differ from one culture to another, but they all have compulsory standards. What are they really afraid of? Napoleon Hill, who did twenty-five years of research on effective humans, says that highly productive people have high sex

drives. My experience says that he is right. Yet all the cultural leaders work to put sex in chains.

"They go on and on that sex can have bad consequences. Of course it can! And of course those consequences are to be avoided. But does that mean that sex must be surrounded in guilt and in shame? That people must be kept in deep fear of actually living in harmony with their natures? I don't think so. When you cloak all sexual desire in fear and shame, you don't just affect harmful acts, you affect the beneficial acts as well."

He paused very briefly to see that she was following him, and that he wasn't rambling too fast or far.

"Listen, Frances, reproduction is a cheap word. When people reproduce, they are creating human beings. They are acting as Gods. Creating life is a sacred service. But when sexuality is treated as something dirty, and something to be repressed, how can it also be sacred? Oh, sure, you can use some tricks of theological engineering to conjure up such a notion, but they are neither convincing nor effective. Now, to say that sexuality is something powerful, potent, and with consequences; that is a fair statement. To call it dirty and shameful is not. But, on the other hand, neither is it a meaningless, cheap thing. That's an opposite error.

"I was a minister for several years, Frances, and I was serious about it. I did it to feed the sheep, not to be fed by them. And while there were some magical moments I experienced preaching, the truth is that I never felt more like a messenger of God than when I conversed with the children of the people I ministered to. I loved the sanctity of the religious home with children. I wasn't so much their ideas, but the seriousness with which they treated their children… at least that's the way I felt it," he smiled sadly, "though sometimes the reality didn't live up to my images.

"But with the children I knew I was effective like I know I can breathe. I ministered life, sanity, and security. I loved them with effectiveness, and with long-term effect."

Frances was, for the first time in years, taken by the beauty of something. The sincerity of Phillip's words, the absolute value he placed on children and child-rearing were profound and beautiful. If this glimpse into his soul was authentic, then he was perhaps the noblest soul she had ever known.

He went on: "Creating is the central magic of life. The pleasure and communion of sex is the prelude to the most essential creation – lives. The magic of conception and pregnancy; the drama of childbirth; people who cannot perceive this as sacred have lost their sense of the great and the beautiful."

"Phillip, are you telling me that treating sex as something dangerous ruins this?"

"That's exactly what I'm telling you, Frances. How can the whole thing be sacred if sexual desire – the starting point for all of this – is corrupt and destructive? It wouldn't make sense."

“Yes, I see the contradiction, but do you think it’s really that large an issue?”

“Yes, I do, and there is more to this, Frances, than just sex. The sex drive is perhaps our greatest energy source for our psyches. It touches everything, and when it is repressed, all sorts of things go wrong. For example: I can’t prove this, but I have good reason to believe that the demonization of sexual desire damages a person’s ability to sense the sacred and the glorious.”

“Wow, that’s really contrary to conventional wisdom.”

“Falsely so called,” Phillip thought very briefly to himself. He reflexively smirked, but the thought was of such short duration that the expression didn’t have time to form fully before it vanished.

“Yes, it is. But remember, people are deeply complex, and there are lots of things that make someone unable to experience the sacred and glorious. Many people have fleeting images of it, but seldom any significant experiences. Mostly, they lack what Jesus calls ‘root in themselves.’

“Nonetheless, my experience is that people who really accept the idea that sexual desire is evil, begin to lose their capacity for the high and the glorious. They become rigid, and quick to condemn others. They lose their empathy. And then, when these people do break down and have sex, their psyches get all twisted. In effect, they condemn themselves as evil. Sex, to them, is not a beautiful thing, but an ugly thing they can’t help.

“Think of the situation: Sexual energy is the real driving force of human passions. To condemn it as evil is to clog it up. So their source is diminished, and ten thousand manipulators are constantly trying to get something out of them by stimulating whatever emotions remain. After a while, there is no internal fire left.”

Phillip’s cell phone rang and he excused himself from the table. Frances was left with a swirl of thoughts. If the repression of sex was wrong, what was right? But her thoughts were going in too many directions at once. She decided to leave the subject alone and let her thoughts sift themselves. She would certainly be making notes once she got home, and she’d be able to take time with the subject then. By the time Phillip was back, she had decided to change the subject and learn more about his past.

He sat back down. “Sorry. Where were we?”

“Actually Phillip, I’d like to ask you a question.”

“Okay, sure. Hit me.”

She smiled. All right, you talk about being a minister, but most of your opinions are completely different than any minister I’ve known. Can you explain that?”

He laughed. “Well, I guess it all depends upon your definition of ‘minister.’ For any sort of organized Christian group, you’re point is solid, but that’s not what I was. In fact, my friends and I thought they were a million miles off the mark.”

"Phillip. I want you to explain that to me. You keep saying you were a Jesus Person, but I'm not sure I understand what you mean by that."

He smiled and laughed gently. "All right, here goes: There are not a lot of people like I am about to describe to you. We spring up from time to time, but seldom for very long. We are not organized. In fact, my friends and I refused even to have a name. We were just a group of followers of Jesus. There was no organization, no building, no name, no statement of faith; nothing except our sincerity and our Bibles. We got together in any place that worked – in a rented room, in someone's living room, in a garage. We didn't feel bad about meeting in a back room, or singing songs on a train platform. And this is fundamental: We really believed what Jesus said. That means that we didn't just talk about the beauty of the words, we *did* what he said. That was our standard – did you *do* what Jesus said? There were no excuses, and no other standards.

"Jesus said to preach the gospel, so we did it. He said 'they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover,' so we did it. He said 'they shall speak in new tongues,' so we did. He said to love one another, so we did. Nothing less was acceptable. We tolerated no lower standard for ourselves. And a funny thing happened – most of us more or less rose to the challenge and found the ability to do it. And guess what? They hated us for it. Religious people! Ministers! Oh, we were much different than them. We lived what they worshiped from afar.

"In many ways this was a wonderful thing, Frances. We were separate from the world. We didn't care about the daily news, what society expected of us, or anything except discovering and doing God's will. In effect, we told the rest of the world to take a hike… we just didn't care. We left fitting-in behind, and pursued goodness with everything we had. Believe me when I tell you that there is amazing liberation in that."

"So what happened? Why aren't you doing it still?"

"Oh, boy, you're full of easy questions, aren't you?"

She laughed. "Come on, do your best. I want to know. You're making it sound magnificent. What happened?"

"Well, part of it was beautiful and rare. But, little by little, religious ideas crept in. At the beginning, I shared all sorts of ideas with these people, and they considered them. But a few years later, they dismissed anything different without analysis. Hierarchies crept in… *permanent* hierarchies. Obligation crept in. They began using guilt to manipulate people. Then they decided that acting more like a regular church would make people accept them in the community. So they built a building and gave themselves a name.

"It's the same story that keeps repeating itself: conformity with the world. 'Let us be like the nations round about.' Doctrines and theologies replace doing Jesus' words. And then they go for money. Very, very sad.

“But that’s not all there was to it, Frances. We followed the Bible, explicitly, but not all of our ‘doing’ worked. It worked a surprising percentage of the time, but not always, and according to the book, it should have. Now, you can certainly blame yourself if it doesn’t work, but after a while that excuse wears thin. What the book said would happen, didn’t. That’s hard to deal with.”

“So, how did you make your way through?”

Now Phillip’s face showed pain. Apparently he was remembering the difficulties of his life through those years. “Well, I bounced around for a few years, found some similar people, and hung out with them for a while. I began to modify my ideas, slowly.” He trailed-off, and perhaps would have let the subject fade.

“And then what?” She demanded in a soft, pleasant voice.

“And then,” he said with a sigh, “I put away my Bible, and I rethought everything I had believed. Scientifically reexamined it all. I had to question everything, and even be willing to accept atheism, if that’s where the truth led.”

“That must have been scary.”

He looked at her seriously. “Well, not quite as bad as you might think, but absolutely necessary. If I hadn’t been willing to go that far, I would not have been able to define the truth.

“But,” he said, smiling, and standing, “we both have other things to do today, and I think I am pretty well talked-out for the afternoon.”

As they paid the bill, Frances started to laugh.

“What?”

“Oh, nothing big, but we just sat here for an hour, and talked about sex and religion. You’re not supposed to do that. At least not be able to do it and still be friends. I guess we proved them all wrong, didn’t we.”

Phillip looked at her with a silly, happy expression. “You radical!”

“Ah, but no one is as big a radical as you, Phillip.”

They laughed and walked to their cars, both parked around the corner. He was still smiling, and said, “I must say, Ms. Marsden-Farber, you are not the tamest conversationalist in town. I’m glad I don’t have to do this every day… wow!”

“Oh yeah… and tell me you don’t love it?”

“Okay, so I do, but you certainly squeeze it all out of me.”

They reached her car first, and stopped as she opened her door. “Thank you, Phillip, you never fail to come up with important ideas.”

“You’re welcome, Frances. It’s a pleasure to talk about them with someone who is willing and able to understand.” He kissed her goodbye, and they both drove back north to their homes.

* * * * * * *

While driving north on Lake Shore Drive, through the center of Chicago, Phillip's cell phone rang. He pulled it out of his coat pocket and answered it.

"Phillip?"

"Yes."

"This is Bill."

"Hey, you old pirate, what's going on?"

"Listen, Phillip, you guys are about a step away from real trouble. And I am stone serious."

"Whoa… all right, you've got my attention, talk to me."

"Listen, P, you were doing fine with the FBI, and with your informants. But you didn't know anything about the NSA. You do realize that uncovering secret information is their purpose in life, don't you?"

"Yeah, but I also know that they stink at it."

"No, Phillip, they stink at breaking codes, but they're good at spying on people, and they're good at stealing things – like computer passwords. And once they have the passwords, they don't need to break the codes.

"They have totally cracked Tango. The bank accounts we used have been located. Sure I closed them all, but they are tracing every cent that went in and out of them. It's only a matter of time before they get something on us. Hell, they may have it already."

"All right, but didn't we use false names and cash?"

"Of course. But somewhere, sometime, someone showed up in person and made transactions with another human being. Eventually, they'll find a clerk somewhere that will remember one of us. These guys are serious, P, and they have unlimited resources. They probably have a hundred people working on this every day. The UK is in on this also. I met an old MI5 friend at a pub yesterday, and he told me that MI5 has been working on this with the NSA ever since Blair became Prime Minister. Evidently the plans were developed at the White House under Clinton. These people are not stupid. Once the Internet came into use, they figured out what kinds of troubles would be coming down the road at them. And they are committed to squashing them with overwhelming force."

"Shit, that is truly bad." Phillip wasn't panicked, but the speed of his thoughts increased significantly. "So, Bill, what do you recommend?"

“Send me the names, photos, statistics on age, race, height, weight, and so on for everyone involved in this. I’ll make sure they are set up with non-US identities, bank accounts, life histories, and the rest. Tell them to get all their assets out of their own names. And tell them that they should start finding other countries to live in.”

“And realistically, how much time do you think we have before they come knocking on someone’s door?”

“God only knows, Phillip. They’ll probably come after only one or two in the beginning, then try to set up a racketeering charge. Once they have that, all the normal legal rules are out the window. They can steal your property, trap you, do almost anything – all legally. You’ll probably know it’s coming, but not necessarily. Get the hell out of the way now.”

“All right Bill, we will… without delay. I’m going to call Farber and Michael right now, and we’ll get the word around to everyone.

* * * * * * *

Frances Farber had been sitting at her computer for an hour, and had typed only a few lines. She attempted another line, then stopped. She sat for several minutes more, apparently in significant discomfort. Then she picked up the telephone and dialed.

“Phillip, this is Frances.”

“Hi, Frances, what’s up?”

“Phillip, I’ve been thinking about the sexual repression issues we discussed yesterday, and I’ve got a real problem here.”

“What is it, Frances?”

“Well, I feel dumb even saying this, but I just can’t accept what you said.

“Please explain, Frances. What can’t you accept?”

“The implications of this. If repression is bad, do we eliminate it all the way?”

Phillip understood. “So, Frances, you’re thinking about things like teenagers having sex?”

“Yes. They have the desires, and if we’re not going to repress, then we should encourage them. Doesn’t that follow?”

“In a way it does, yes.” Frances waited. “The problem here, Frances, is that we’re talking about ‘should be’ and not living in a comparable world.”

“Okay.” She felt a little better, but with a touch of cowardice.

“It is necessary to talk about what should be, Frances. That’s how we define a way forward. But trying to mix that in with the present world is problematic. On one

hand, purity can leave people exposed to damage, on the other, that is often a cheap excuse for a lack of courage."

"So where do you draw the line?"

"There is no certain place, Frances. Yes, we can draw lines this side of catching diseases, and we can say that it is very wrong to traumatize children for touching themselves, but after that it has to do with the outer world; how badly will you be hurt by the present world situation? And everyone is affected differently. But I am sure that we want the line kept as close to the ideal as is possible. Does that make sense, Frances?"

"Phillip, it's not that you are wrong… and I do agree with what you just said… but something about this whole subject is just too much. I keep feeling like I'm a child and some adult is about to hammer me for my stupidity. It all makes a certain amount of sense, but I just can't accept it. What's wrong?"

Finally, he understood. "Frances, there's nothing wrong. It's just that you bit off more than you were prepared to digest These are difficult issues, and they try people's souls. Can I tell you a story that might help?"

"Please."

"Believe it or not, I've gone through almost the same thing you are right now. This was at least twenty-five years ago now. I had been very seriously reading my Bible for a few years – and I mean reading it several hours per day – nearly every day. No TV, no other books, just the Bible. Any way, it is impossible to miss all of the visions, dreams, and assorted revelations that make up the book. I thought about that, and also about all the times it says that we can do everything that happened in the book – today.

"Anyway, I would pray and meditate very frequently on these things, and eventually had occasional dreams or visions. One day I had a vision that was overwhelmingly challenging.

"I was laying in bed, meditating, and then I found myself standing at one end of a bridge. I knew that everything I wanted was on the other side. But I also perceived that in order to cross this bridge, I would have to face all of the suppressed personal traumas that I ever had. Chief among them were sexual issues from adolescence. I could perceive and understand them all at once. And I, who was better than anyone I knew at facing the truth, stood there unable to move. I didn't have the strength, and felt I would die if I were somehow dragged forward. Everything I wanted was on the other side, but I just couldn't face all of those things. I wasn't strong enough."

She was a bit awed. "What did you do?"

"In utter sincerity I said, 'Oh God, I'm sorry, it's too much for me, I can't do it. Give me time. Please give me time, and I'll cross. I will cross.'"

Frances' mind was almost frozen; she waited silently.

“And I’ll tell you the truth, Frances, from that time on, I’ve dealt with those issues, one by one. I’m not sure, but I think I may have covered them all now. But it was damned hard, and took a long time.

“So, don’t worry about this. You don’t have to accept it all at once; I’m not sure that anyone can. Just take what you can, then come back for more later. It’s just as well to let ideas like these sink in and build slowly. When you plant seeds, they shouldn’t spring up immediately… they take root first, and break the surface only when the roots are ready. The same thing applies here. Does that help?”

“Yes, it does. Thank you Phillip.”

“You’re welcome sweetheart. Go eat something and rest, okay?”

“Yes, I will. Thanks.”

She hung up the phone, and walked to the master suite, where James was getting ready for bed.

“Jim, what kind of man is this Phillip Donson?”

He looked at her, as if to say, “In what way do you mean?”

She continued, “I have to tell you, he is beyond anything I ever thought I’d encounter.”

He took her hand, sat on the bed, and drew her to sit next to him. “Listen, Frances, Phillip is a very special guy. Sometimes he’ll answer questions you haven’t yet gotten far enough to *ask*. But he doesn’t have every answer, and occasionally he’s wrong. And do you know what else? He enjoys taking advice. He’s just like you and me, but with a different set of goals. You realize he’s been crazy for the truth for a long time, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do.”

“There’s not a lot that he has done or figured out that other people couldn’t. I think he’s exceptionally well-suited for this, so in that way he’s special, but I think in that way only.”

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Life at the Free Soul house had changed. When Phillip had warned them of the dangers associated with distributing Breakers, they moved their operations to a small office in another town and began covering their tracks. They had expected activities at the house to slow, but the reality was quite otherwise. Breakers distribution had moved away, and a few people with it, but the energy of the Free Souls had proved contagious, and the more serious University students seemed to be drawn there. One person told another and was overheard by a third. New people usually ended up in

the kitchen reading essays, with old-hands in the living room, talking and singing. The offices slowly moved upstairs into the bedrooms.

It was only a matter of time until trouble showed up. One might wonder how trouble would come to a group of young people who were trying very hard to be honest and noble, but that is the one thing that beyond all else leads to trouble. Most older people can accept the young drinking, taking drugs, acting wild, even having sex. But once the children presume to find a better way of thinking and living, their parents and teachers come unglued. They can accept the eighteen year-old doing drugs, but not living in a different way. That would mean that their way was not sacred, and that their ideals might not be passed-on.

It might also mean that living large was not impossible; that following everyone else was a mistake; that not only had they given up too easily on independence, they had given up too easily on themselves.

At first, parents complained to their children that they were spending too much time starting businesses and debating strange new ideas. “Don’t work so much, go have fun!” they would say, preferring drunkenness to commerce for their children.

Soon the children were debating morality with their parents, and the parents were not faring well. Some of the parents were sympathetic with the Free Souls, but they were the minority.

Letters to the editor began appearing in the local papers. University officials were contacted. In early May, a rock was thrown through the front windows. A week later, there were two more.

The Free Souls had some trouble in the early years, but this time it didn’t look like it would blow over. The ten owners of the house agreed unanimously to sell. They also agreed that they would recoup their investments and donate the balance toward a new Free Soul house.

The real estate market was good and the house sold in the first week. That same week, a fire was started underneath the house’s back porch by arsonists who were, fortunately, amateurs. It resulted in only minimal damage. The group that lived at the house were to be out within a month of the sale and there was much discussion as to where they would go. A few remained in town to complete their studies. Most of the others agreed to move on together.

Chapter Five

"Jim, we need to talk right away."

"Okay Phillip, what's up?"

"Well, it looks like we have a serious problem. I don't really want to talk on the phone about this." He paused just slightly, and thought about how best to do this. "Listen, can you meet me at my gym at seven o'clock?"

"If it's important, I'll will."

"Good… and yes, it's very important. Okay, I'm going to call Julia, and you tell Frances. We'll have them meet us for a late dinner at Anthony's at nine o'clock. Okay?"

"Done deal Phillip, I'll be at your gym at seven, and we'll all meet at Anthony's at nine."

"Good, James… thank you."

When Phillip got off the phone with James, it was only four thirty. He drove directly to the Forest Preserves that surround Chicago and took a walk through the woods. He found one of his favorite spots next to one branch of the river. It was completely isolated, looking no different than it had when the Indians lived there.

Phillip didn't really have much self-doubt anymore, but there were times when he needed to get away to the wilderness and let his mind reset. Sitting by the water's edge, he felt serious, sad, and alone. Not that he generally minded being alone, but there were times, such as this one, when he would have given almost anything to talk to someone who had been through his situation before. Even if they didn't know the facts involved, they would at least know how it feels to be completely alone; making decisions that might change the world, or that might mean nothing at all… and with no way to know which one it would be.

He had already committed to this path, and for good reason. Yet there were risks. He was putting important ideas into the world, but they were ideas that develop slowly. The seeds might be well-planted, but it might be months or years before they actually took root and sprung up. Even after that, there was no way of knowing how the ideas would play out in the general populace. Would they create the kind of world he wanted, or modify it in some unexpected way? Instability is a strange thing; you never know which way the old structure will tip.

There was no real answer to his problem, only the knowing inside himself that truth mattered; that whether he could guarantee success or not, he would have to tell the truth, without watering it down… which was frightening. If you speak the truth clearly enough, evading it becomes difficult; and when people lose the ability to

evade reality, they may become violent. Phillip had to push this thought out of his mind. He was taking necessary the precautions and he couldn't let himself worry like that or else he'd be stopped from doing anything; stopped from living his life.

People imagine what true greatness is like, but their imaginings are closer to fairy tales than they are to reality. Greatness is painful, and wearing.

* * * * * * *

At six o'clock Phillip went back to his car and drove to the gym. Farber was waiting for him in the locker room. After changing, they went upstairs to the cardio floor and found two stair-climbing machines in the corner.

"All right Phillip, what is it?"

"Well, Jim, I got a call from McCoy this afternoon, and it looks like they're coming after us big-time. His old British Intelligence buddies are telling him that they've broken Tango, are going through our old bank accounts, and have lots of people assigned to the task." Jim looked a bit worried. "I'm sorry," Phillip said.

"No, it's okay Phillip, I've expected it for a while, but until it really happens, it's kind of like watching a movie. When it finally hits you that it's *your* ass on the line, the perspective is a lot different, and a hell of a lot more frightening."

"Ain't that the truth… anyway, Bill says there's no way of knowing how soon they'll come looking for us, or how they will move, just that we had all better get the hell out of the way now."

They both kept climbing for several minutes more, then Farber stopped.

"Phillip, I'm going to go take a steam and have some time to myself. Why don't you meet me in the lobby at eight thirty? We can compare notes then."

"Sure Jim, eight thirty."

Phillip climbed for a few minutes more, then shaved and took a long shower and worked at relaxing. They met at eight thirty in the lobby.

"Did you drive here, Jim?"

"No, I took a cab."

"Great, then we can drive together in my car."

As they waited for the valet to fetch the car, Phillip noticed that Farber was smiling. "Well, that's nice," he thought, but wondered why. Phillip looked over again, and Farber was not only smiling, but looked happily smug.

"Jim, what are you smiling at? This doesn't seem terribly funny to me."

“Ah, Phillip, sometimes I think you are too serious. Listen amigo, this is kind of fun.” Phillip didn’t look convinced. “Listen P, did you ever get fired from a job?”

“Sure.”

“And did you ever have the experience where you’re angry and scared for a few minutes, then you realize that the whole world is open in front of you? That you’ve just been released from your full-time commitment to one place, and now every possibility is in front of you, and you can pick your new destiny?”

Phillip thought for a minute, and began to smile. “Yeah, I have.”

“Well, then, enjoy it!”

“But there are risks involved here Jim.”

“Uh huh, and we knew about them from the beginning, and there’s nothing we can do about them now. So enjoy it, Phillip! Take time to make sensible plans, then go revel in your new vistas. Beside, you’ll be far more effective if you have fun, instead of glowering.”

Phillip shook his head as the car pulled up and they walked toward it. He put his arm around Jim, and laughed. “You know what Farber? You’re good for me!”

* * * * * * *

Frances and Julia took the news well. Frances had already thought about getting out of the US. For one, she worried about being on the IRS’s hit list for her Private Commerce articles. For another, she had sometimes thought that child-rearing in the US might be especially difficult; not so much in infancy, but during adolescence.

Julia, on the other hand, said she would stay. After all, she was legally divorced from Phillip, and had played no role in either Tango or Gamma. True, they could come after her as a backdoor way of getting to Phillip, but that could be dealt with at the time it occurred. Julia said that in a few years she might join them, but not yet. She was now within three months of completing her medical degree. Once that was done, she could spend some time in residency, and then choose among a number of options.

Julia had always wanted to be a doctor. She used to go on house calls with her father as a girl, and could see nothing more noble in life than to heal sick people. Phillip had never been opposed to this, but with four children and bills to pay, there was never an opportunity. Beside, Phillip always had the biggest, most important ideas to follow, and hers didn’t make the cut. He wasn’t malicious about it, or even completely conscious of it, but Julia simply couldn’t compete with his enthusiasm and eloquence. Eventually she stopped trying. Years later Phillip began to understand this and to correct his errors, but the damage had been done. The Breakers treatments

washed away some of Julia's instinctive anger, but her memories of being run-over by Phillip, time after time, remained.

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Michael,

The defense fund is done, and the paperwork will be to you shortly. I'd be pleased to manage the fund myself, but since the feds know that I'm your attorney, that's probably not a good idea. If you would like, I'll be glad to train one of your people to run it.

Now, I've got to tell you how impressed we are with the job you pulled off for the Austin facility. The FBI got absolutely nothing! And they have no idea what happened to the technicians. They've actually closed most of their files on you guys. Some time I want to hear the whole story. I especially liked the three drunks. You can't imagine what a scene they created when the agents stormed in! One of them wanted to defend the place (and his liquor), another ran, and the third peed his pants. Actually, the guy who peed is suing the Bureau for psychological damages! You did a beautiful, beautiful job.

All right, back to the defense fund: I'll store copies of the original records and will remain available for consultation at any time. At this point, I've got relatively little work to do for you, so why don't I just reduce my retainer in the amount of money you owe me?

Sincerely,

Bari

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Anthony,

Thank you, the Austin job was a lot of fun to do, but really intense. I don't think I was back to normal for a week. Nonetheless, I am now completely convinced that everyone should have a chance to play James Bond at least once in their lifetime. Maybe we can meet one of these days and I'll tell you the whole story.

I'm checking over the defense fund material right now, and it looks great; exactly what we had in mind. The retainer/payment arrangement you mentioned is fine. Send a statement of account when you have the time.

Again, Anthony, thank you for everything.

Michael

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"Hello, Mordecai."

"Dr. Dimitrios?"

"Yes, but call me George, okay?"

"Okay… what can I do for you?"

George was about to present his proposal to Mordecai slowly and incrementally – the usual academic way – but then decided to do it plainly and without embellishment, more like McCoy's way. His brusque reply was "You can run my business for me."

"Your business?"

"Yes, Mordecai, you heard me correctly, I want you to oversee my business. Are you interested?"

"Well, that's a tremendous offer…"

"Listen, Mordecai, just say 'yes,' 'no,' or 'I have to think about it,' okay?"

"All right… yes… but I…"

"Great, I'm glad to hear it. We'll make financial arrangements that you'll like, and I'll remain available to give you any advice you need. Sound reasonable?"

"Yes, it does, but I've never run a company before."

"I know. I'll make sure you get whatever help you need. Beside, both McCoy and Farber will be glad to advise you – and you couldn't do better than that for any money."

"All right, What do I do?"

"Can you get up here next week?"

"Yes."

"Good. Send me your travel plans as soon as you have them, and I'll take care of everything else. You spend a week here, and if you're not happy with the deal I make you, you can just walk away. Fair enough?"

"Fair enough."

"Great. See you soon."

While George sounded absolutely sure of himself in his conversation with Mordecai, reaching this decision had taken him several weeks. He desperately wanted to move on to new things in his life, but Breakers was a very important project. The choice was not simple, but by reorganizing all of their operations, George could separate himself from an active role.

The French trials had begun in earnest, and it was time for them to abandon the old corporations and to set up a separate research company. George was still one of the primary stockholders but his functions were advisory only. Two former grad students ran the daily operations, Mordecai ran the office, and Michael Anderson was now Chairman of the Board. They were selling a limited number of shares to cover their operating costs. More importantly, they were being published again (though not in the United States), and their work seemed secure.

That left only the problem of illegal Breakers distribution. To solve this, they simply gave the formulas and production notes to the Free Souls who were most involved with Breakers. They even brought them to the lab and trained them in proper production safety measures. From that point onward, they were on their own. This moved responsibility away from the main, respectable company, and put all underground distribution into the hands of people who were both honorable and highly-motivated.

With surprising ease, George walked away from it all. He offered advice, edited a few papers, and cashed his dividend checks, but nothing more.

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To all involved with Tango & Gamma:

By now you've heard that the US government is after us, and that it might be a good idea to get out of the way. Let me give you a good explanation of what is happening:

The National Security Agency (NSA) has cracked Tango. I know that we aren't using Tango anymore, but they now have the ability to go through all of their Internet records, match things up, and perhaps figure out who we are. Will they succeed? We don't know. But we should act as if they will. When I say that the NSA has cracked Tango, I mean that they have figured out some of the routing information and some file information. Our encrypted data is still beyond them, else we'd be in jail already.

As you know, we don't have to worry about Gamma. Everything in it is based on the strongest encryption and there's no way they'll be able to break it for quite a while. Nonetheless, they will be working on Tango. Even with all of our bank accounts under false names, there could still be a few

clues available to them. We are told that they're putting a lot of manpower on this.

So, I strongly advise all of you to get out of the US. It is simply not worth the risk to stay, and there are a lot of really nice places to go. You will remember that I gave each of you several books on this subject. You all have my friend McCoy's email address. Please send him all your personal information (name, date of birth, height, weight, languages you speak, education, business, family info, and so on). He'll set you up with new identities, and with information on how to get by under a new name. You won't have to do this right away, but you should have it as back-up. For now, you have to get yourself and anything you really care about out of the US. Anywhere else is fine, so pick your spots. McCoy and his associates will be able to answer any questions you have on travel arrangements, visas, and so on.

If for some reason you choose not to leave, please remember that you will be at risk. If they come after you, we will provide legal assistance. And if you should be forced to talk, I hereby advise you to tell them whatever will prevent you from getting hurt. All I ask is that you attempt to notify us afterward.

So, please take the time we have now to move on and explore the world for a while. (They'll probably forget about this over time.) Don't wait for a brain-locked government agent to come looking for you. Let's go have fun somewhere else.

Phillip

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By March first, Frances and Farber were selling off their US properties and working on the purchase of a mid-sized house in a town called Lisse, about an hour outside of Amsterdam. It was in a small town just off the North Sea. They had spent several days there on their previous trip and loved the people in the town. Almost every person they met had been cultured and respectful. They also spoke English. James had his lawyers working on dual-citizenships, and even though it would still be months till the process was completed, it was now certain that each of them would be able to get at least one additional citizenship, and probably two. They had decided to be extra safe in the purchase of this house, and for their new life in the Netherlands. Frances didn't want to be forced to move with young children. So, they purchased the home through a blind trust, and began calling themselves Mr. and Mrs. Adler, rather than Mr. and Mrs. Farber.

Frances was especially excited about moving. She flew to Paris mid-month then made her way into the Netherlands without having her passport scanned. She left a paper trail into Paris, and no further.

After arriving in Lisse, she began to purchase furniture and to make acquaintances. While she was there, the purchase papers were completed. They would not be able to take possession of the house till April 18th, but it was now theirs and the current occupants were very kind to her, letting her spend time in the house and introducing her to the neighbors.

That night, she lay in bed, thinking about how comfortable she was in this place. It seemed as if a sealed pipe burst open within her. "Now I'm ready," she said out loud, "I want babies." Frances had worked very hard to keep those thoughts out of her mind for a long time. She just wasn't in the right position to have children. First, there was no man she was confident in making a family with, and then, she and James had to wait until their affairs were ready. Through all those years – since she was sixteen, really – she could suppress those thoughts and refuse to act on them, but they never went away. But now, she was ready to do it full-force, and it felt like she had just uncapped a gusher. She cried from relief and giggled from expectation. She wished desperately that Jim were there.

Because of the hurried move out of the US, she had missed a number of her child psyche classes, but she was following her teacher's lesson plan, and emailing her work in. Hopefully she'd be able to find a school nearby, or at least in Amsterdam, where she could continue her studies in English. If not, she could just read all of the books and pose questions to her former teacher from time to time.

All in all, she was very happy with Jim. There were still a few things about him that bothered her – some of his friends from the gym in particular. The health club friends were certainly interesting guys, but a lot of them were divorced. She didn't like that. She thought about it at some length and concluded that her fear was that Jim would be influenced by them, and would dump her. She decided that she was just being insecure. "Beside," she said to herself, "if he ever does start to act that way, I'll notice. There's no reason to torture myself in advance. If a problem ever does develop, I still have my own money and my own life. I'm with Jim because I *want* to be, not because I *need* to be."

She also noticed that she was becoming more distant from most of her friends. That was probably to be expected when getting married and moving away, but Frances had always felt odd about her friends. Most of them were either older than her, younger than her, or male. And not only that, but she had never been as attached to her friends as most of the other girls. When she was young, that bothered her a lot. Why was she the strange one? She never did figure it out. Not that she didn't have friends, share secrets with them, and depend on them… she did. But she never had the intensity – the dependency on friends – that the other girls had. After a while, she just accepted it, and enjoyed the relationships she did have.

When she and Jim decided to marry, she called four friends: Candy Rundquist, her best friend from childhood, now a full-time Mom in Atlanta; Harriet Sumerland, an older woman she worked with at the Times and with whom she shared her adult secrets; Kay Pearson, her neighbor and friend in Chicago; and Rodney, her editor at the Times; sometimes mentor, and sometimes pupil. All of them made it to her wedding and she was very pleased to see that they all liked each other.

Frances wondered how her parents would deal with the move to Europe. Would they be hurt that she was moving so far away? Would they visit? Their early experiences in Europe had been so horrible that they went back only when necessary. Dad had been back to England four or five times in her lifetime, mostly for funerals. Mom had been back only once, to accompany Dad. There was little need for her to go back otherwise; all but three members of her extended family had been murdered during the war. Frances hoped that her parents would have had enough time to recover by now. She and Jim had more than enough money to buy them a small in-law's house if they would come, but she wasn't sure they would do it… could do it.

Jim was worried about his parents, though for different reasons.

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Farber was the product of two most unusual parents. They had met at the end of the Korean war, when Benjamin Faber, James' father, was stationed in Seoul. As a child he had pursued his studies sufficiently, though not with any devotion. But at about 16 years of age, Benjamin's intellectual senses came alive, and he began to devour the varied philosophies of Judaism, and the economic philosophies of the Austrian School. His learning quickly surpassed those around him.

Benjamin Farber remained immersed in these ideas through his later teens. Even when he went into the US Army, he was continually studying and waiting for new shipments of books from home. Without trying, he was making a reputation for himself; his father and grandfather were silently delighted.

But on the night of February 5th, 1952, young Benjamin Farber's life turned in a direction he had never expected. For a number of months, he had been thinking in new directions. First of all, he was thinking more about business, having lately become a bit disillusioned with Jewish tradition. He was also thinking a lot about women, marriage, and sex. At twenty-one years of age, this is to be expected, but Benjamin Farber dove into these ideas with an unusual depth of analysis. On his endless night sentry duties, he would lecture to himself for hours on end. By New Year's Eve 1952, Benjamin Farber had known exactly what kind of young woman he wanted, although he assumed that he would have to wait until he got back to Chicago to find her.

Lois Kim was an exceptional young woman; well-educated and English-speaking, she was intelligent, intuitive, attractive, and full of life. Her parents were devoted evangelical Christians, and had undertaken Lois' upbringing with the utmost seriousness. She was named after the grandmother of Timothy in the New Testament, of whom it was written that "unfeigned faith dwelt in her." That phrase stuck in the minds of her parents, and they went about to raise a child filled with genuine faith. Like Ben Farber, Lois had been overwhelmed of late with thoughts of love, sex, and marriage.

On the February 5th, Lois was passing by Benjamin's sentry post during a very cold and dark night. This was outside a military building in Seoul. Lois was accompanying a friend home after studying, and they were speaking to each other in English. Benjamin overheard them, and decided that they looked friendly. Feeling like he was freezing to death, he called to them and asked them if they would please walk around the corner and buy him a cup of hot tea. Lois decided that Benjamin looked pathetically cute and agreed. Her friend, being late, continued on. The tea procured, Benjamin thanked Lois profusely, and asked her about herself. Somehow (and neither of them was entirely sure how it happened) they ended up talking for an hour in a freezing wind. They agreed to meet at Lois' school the next day and took up their conversation there. The more they talked, the more they needed to talk about. Religious, philosophical, and scientific theories poured out of both of them; agreeing with, conflicting with, and complimenting each other's ideas. Within a week, they both knew what they wanted, and were both terrified to tell their parents.

Lois' parents were almost unavoidable, as she was living at home. Benjamin began to see her regularly, and the parents very quickly figured out what was happening. The standard fear for parents in those days was that the young GI was after their daughter for sex only; that he would promise her everything then leave her cold once his unit pulled out. But Lois' parents didn't feel that way for long. It was obvious that Benjamin Farber was not a sweet-talker. He was a genuine article, though certainly not Korean – which *was* a serious problem. Benjamin was sent back to the US midyear in 1953, and was discharged in August. He immediately began work on getting Lois into the US. Running into dead ends, he turned to his father, and had to explain the situation. Herman was shocked, surprised, and deeply uncomfortable. After several days of half-argument, half-discussion, Herman pulled a few strings, and Lois, with her parents, made their way to the US, arriving in early 1954. There were deep concerns in both families, until Ben and Lois decided to get married whether anyone else liked it or not.

All of the parents attended, though with great misgivings. Eventually they all became friendly, albeit at some distance, since the Kims returned to Korea and visited infrequently.

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Jim's concern was that his parents would think he had being wild and rash, and was now on the run from the law. His father, especially, would understand instantly what was happening. James had never told them about Tango, Gamma, or any of his private commerce ventures. Now, he would have to. The idea that his dad could be disappointed with him was not too much of a problem; James had crossed that bridge a long time ago. His concern was that his parents would be frightened, and would worry.

In the end, James met his father privately, and explained the whole thing to him. Benjamin understood what James and his friends were doing, and even understood the necessity of them doing it. But Benjamin had dealt with governments for many years, and was worried that someone making a name for himself would be put in charge of the case, and would send in a hair-trigger SWAT team. Lois wasn't sure what to think. She worried.

* * * * * * *

Timothy Nickelson was now a major player in the Los Angeles FBI office. His work on Tango and Gamma not only brought him attention in the Bureau, but he was spending more and more time working with the NSA; even flying to Washington once per week for meetings at NSA headquarters. Tim was flying first class most of the time, riding in limos, eating in fine restaurants, and staying in top hotels. He was getting the things he had wanted, especially the one thing he wanted more than anything else – to impress others; even to inspire jealousy. He was getting some of it, liked it, and wanted more.

Richard, Gamma's intelligence expert, had listened to recordings from Nickelson's apartment for several months and had little to show for it, except for an understanding of what Tim Nickelson really wanted. They had also had a keyboard logger program installed, and found that Nickelson did almost no work from home. There were occasional emails, but they had yielded only a little bit of information. They knew Nickelson's schedule, his thoughts toward his relatives, and some of his career plans, but not much more.

So, Richard came up with a plan. Since they needed Nickelson to work at home, they would have to make it impossible for him to work at the FBI offices. Normally, doing something as extreme as shutting down an FBI office would be unrealistic; but Richard had been getting very good at spycraft, and he had a plan that was nearly impregnable.

Richard had Dr. Demitrios mix up a special batch of Butyric acid for him. Butyric acid is one of the worst smelling substances on earth, a supercharged version of vomit, rotting eggs, and decaying flesh. It is also very potent, a few ounces being

sufficient to drive everyone out of a fairly large building. Dr. Demitrios mixed it up with stabilizing agent, leaving the acid with no smell at all. But he also provided Richard with a third chemical that would cause the stabilizer to break down in a few hours time, leaving only the stinking butyric acid. They would wait for a rainy day, then one of them would walk into the FBI Offices asking for information, drip all over the office, then leave. Only a good disguise and a modified umbrella were required. Three or four hours later, no one would be able to stay, and it would probably be a week before anyone would be able to work there again. In the mean while, Nickelson would be working at home, and they would be able to see everything he typed into his computer.

Richard insisted that he wanted to be the one dripping butyric acid in the FBI offices. Michael wasn't very pleased with the idea, but Richard was quick to respond with "You had your chance to play spy. Now I want mine." There wasn't much Michael could say in response. Beside, Richard had absolutely no criminal record and knew more than any of them about disguises and diversion techniques. No one would be better at it.

They watched Nickelson's emails from home, and were able to determine when he was going to be home for an extended time. Richard prepared his disguise and the umbrella… and waited for a rainy afternoon.

* * * * * * *

By mid-June, the Free Soulers were on the road and looking for a new place. They had rented a few offices in town for their businesses and alternated between sleeping in their offices and in local hotel rooms. Three or four at a time went on exploratory missions to find a new house, the others covering for their business operations while they were gone.

Between the surplus money they got from the sale of their previous house and money they had pooled themselves, there had well over a half a million dollars. Affording a decent place would not be a problem. The only question was where.

* * * * * * *

In early July, Phillip and Michael were at Tino's in the Bahamas, going over prospective New Renaissance projects. They wanted to get something going as soon as possible.

"All right Michael, we need criteria for choosing. Assuming that we have a bunch of reasonable projects to choose from, what comes first, second, or third?"

“Well, what do we need most? What are our biggest threats?”

“Right now, our biggest threat would have to be security. We’ve already answered that to a degree, by scattering and covering our tracks, but we really should do a lot more. Really, I think it comes down to avoiding the hunters, hobbling the hunters, and being able to defeat the hunters.”

“Do you think it’ll get that bad, Phillip? ‘Defeat the hunters’ supposes some pretty ugly actions.” Michael stopped in what seemed mid-thought. He was recalling conversations he had with Suzy on what happened at major turning points of civilizations. “Although… God I hate to even think about this, but being ugly won’t stop it from being necessary some day. They’ve done worse.”

Phillip looked unhappy. “Yes, you are right Michael, if it comes down to it, they’ll definitely use violence against us, and we’ll have to be able to answer; but my God, violence is such a costly thing. Let me work with McCoy and some of his friends on that one. Then we’ll come back to you with some ideas.” Phillip made notes on a legal pad:

“The second threat,” said Phillip, “would have to be disease.”

“Yes, so we want medical projects… I’ll tell you what, let’s put this out to everyone on Gamma, and see what kind of ideas they come back with. Let’s open up a conference group. We’ll ask George and Mordecai to look at them and make some recommendations.”

“Done. What else?”

“Food, water, shelter; self-sufficiency, really. If we could find better, cheaper ways for people to meet these needs, they wouldn’t have to spend nine tenths of their lives working for survival.”

Phillip now looked distant… and angry. Michael waited to hear what was on his mind. When he had waited for a long time and Phillip hadn’t spoken, he asked, “What are you thinking about, Phillip?”

Phillip sat up and spoke intensely, “When my kids were small, Michael, we bought them a set of science encyclopedias. The last one or two volumes were biographies of the great inventors. One day I read through them and was absolutely struck by the fact that almost all of them were either independently wealthy, from a noble family, or had a generous sponsor. These were people who weren’t wasting their time trying to scratch out a living. They had time to pursue something beyond survival. Can you imagine how much more would have been discovered if only 10 or 20 percent of the people had been able to live that way?”

“A lot, to be sure.”

“Yeah, a hell of a lot. Even now, with superb technology and communications, what are people doing? Working for survival, or recovering from it. Hell, they work

a solid half of the year just to pay taxes to their rulers. The serfs of the dark ages only paid a third!"

Michael spoke quickly, to get Phillip back on track "Phillip… do you think we could do this? Be able to make survival significantly easier?"

"Hell, yes! There are dozens of ways. Listen, Michael, the governments of the world have taken over science. Look at the grant money – almost all of it comes from one governmental organization or another. If nothing else, it is regulated by them. And we know how slow, plodding, and routine governments are. You can't do science that way… not if you want big results. You have to be aggressive… and no society has done that in almost a hundred years.

"If you want big new ideas, you have to make use of anything that you possibly can, put it all together in some radical new system, and use it in daring new ways. We need bold and unrestrained creators and synthesizers, not tame little grant-writers."

"So, you want a souped-up version of the Skunk Works, right?"

"Yes, Michael, exactly! Not just new projects, but an aggressive new mentality. Scientists and engineers are the creators of advanced existence on this planet. They are the pillars that hold our lives up. They should be championed and encouraged, not demeaned as Geeks."

Michael looked at Phillip and smiled. "Very well then, my friend, we'll build a new Skunk Works and show the world what aggressive science can do."

* * * * * * *

Hello Phillip,

How goes it?

As I think you know, I'm clearing out of the Breakers business. There is a new team, (including Michael and Mordecai), and they are more than capable. The research in France is going very, very well, and several other groups are now expressing interest. Anyway, I'm going into McCoy's line of work, as I think he told you.

We'll probably sell the Canadian chemical company one of these days; but for now it's turning a bit of a profit, which is nice. I'll be traveling a lot and will take over a bit of McCoy's work. I'll stay in touch, and please let me know if you're headed my way.

Phillip, I'm really enjoying this. I am so glad to get out of an academic setting. It was important to do, but now I want to move along. Maybe

someday I'll spend time in a lab again, or even teaching. But now I'll go ride life bareback for a while!

Your friend,

George

Phillip read the note and smiled.

* * * * * * *

August 5th. A rainy day in LA, and Tim Nickelson is scheduled to remain in town for another week:

At 4:15 p.m., the front desk of the FBI office began to be deluged with telephone calls from seven friends of Richard, all pretending to be teenaged pranksters. At 4:16 p.m., Richard walked into the office, dripping wet, with a dripping umbrella. While all of his friends continued to call the FBI office, and while Richard asked for help and was told to wait, he discharged almost half a liter of the butyric acid solution all around the office – especially on the walls, furniture, and on surfaces that couldn't be easily cleaned.

At 4:17 p.m., Richard was finished, shrugged his shoulders, and walked out the door. The hat never left his head, his shoes made him three inches taller than usual, and the makeup he wore made him look at least fifteen years older than he was. He even walked with an old man's gait.

At 4:20 p.m., Richard's friends left their phone booths and went back to their business.

When the cleaning crews arrived at 9:00 p.m., the smell was already bad. They cleaned quickly and superficially, then told their bosses that the office stank. When the office opened the next morning, the smell was unbearable. Notes were posted and the office was closed until the smell could be dealt with. Special cleaning crews were called in, but it was unsure as to when the office would reopen.

Ultimately, Nickelson only worked from home for three days, then went to Washington early. The cleaning crews did a superb job; after only four days no more smell remained.

The time Nickelson spent working at home provided Richard with critical information. The most important was Nickelson's password for getting into his files on the FBI network. Now, by hacking very carefully, they could get into Nickelson's files and see exactly what he was doing. Granted, the password was changed from time to time, but this would give them a lot of information. A major win.

* * * * * * *

“Hello Anthony.”

“Michael, what are you doing here?” Bari was about to run a 5K race for a charity in L.A. He was registered, numbered, and four or five rows back from the front. Moments before the race was to begin, Michael and Suzy Q walked up next to him. Both of them were also registered and numbered for the race.

“Well, I wanted to introduce you to someone, and this seemed like a good time and place. Who would have expected this?”

Bari turned and flashed him a strange look. “Certainly not me, I’ll tell you that much.”

The race began, and they were instantly in a crush of runners.

“Listen, Michael, I’m trying to beat my best time today, we’ll talk afterward, okay?”

“Certainly… go ahead and run.” Then Michael sprinted ahead of Bari and cleared a path for him for until the course cleared a bit. Michael and Suzy then ran a leisurely race while Bari went for a new personal best. They met up at the end.

Bari was still breathing very hard, but smiling broadly. “So,” said Michael, “did you beat your time?” Bari nodded. “Nice job!” They walked together slowly, and spoke intermittently while they all caught their breath.

“Listen, Anthony, I wanted to introduce you to someone.”

“Yeah? Who?”

Suzy stepped up, also breathing fairly hard. “This is Susan Quansantien… we call her Suzy Q.”

“Ha! That’s cute… Suzy Q… pleased to meet you Suzy.”

“Thank you, Mr. Bari, it’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Please, call me Anthony.”

“All right Anthony, thank you.”

Michael stepped up again. “Anthony, Suzy is taking over for me.” Bari looked surprised, almost shocked. “Remember that I told you I was a psychologist?” Bari nodded. “Well, I’ve done my job in building Gamma, and now I want to go back to my real job. And Suzy has agreed to take over for now. She’ll probably hand it off to someone else in a year or two.”

Bari was surprised; he had never thought of Michael’s job as one to be passed along. “Okay,” was his only response.

“Anthony… Suzy will do a fine job, and you can trust her word. I’m not handing this off without careful consideration. She has my confidence, and I’m certain that she’ll earn yours. In addition, I’ll be available for consultation at most any time. I wouldn’t do this if I didn’t think it would work.”

“Oh, no, I believe you Michael… I just hadn’t expected it.”

The three conversed on the way back to the hotel where Michael and Suzy were staying. They all showered and ordered room service. Over dinner, they discussed the defense fund and their Distributed Commandos, who were doing a fine job of getting servers on-line. By the end of dinner, Bari and Suzy were getting comfortable with each other. They were discussing the history of Rome and favorite ski slopes.

After they were through with dinner, Michael drove Bari back to his car, and told him the whole story of the raid on the Austin facility, including his nervousness during, and his elation afterward. Bari loved it, and asked if he could tell his friend Max. Michael agreed.

As they pulled up in front of his car, Bari thought about it one last time, and said “Michael, if I wanted to get onto Gamma and explore a little bit, would you let me?”

Michael turned and smiled. “Anthony,” he said, “I’d be proud to get you into Gamma. Are you ready to do it?”

“Yeah, Michael, I am. Send me the info, okay?”

“You bet Anthony. If you don’t hear from me in the next two days, just send me a note to remind me.”

“Will do, Michael. Thank you.”

* * * * * * *

Gamma was sold to a group of five early Tango users on August 1st, with the group taking control of the market on August 10th. The agreement stated that no additional Gamma software would be distributed for one month afterward, and that every attempt would be made to limit new developers to a small number of responsible people.

On September 12th, four new communities came on-line, and only one of them was a general market. Glenn Browning, a doctor from Atlanta, started a community specifically for medical services. He had three programmers building modules for patient management, a medical database, specialty chat-rooms, and others. The goal was to give physicians everything they would need.

Henry Malloy owned a mid-sized independent trucking company that was in the process of being sold. He had four programmers working to modify Gamma into the ideal commercial center for long-haul truckers. They had already built a large

number of wireless tools and databases, and were signing up truckers all over North America. The truckers loved it, and business looked good.

A similar special build for business travelers was being undertaken by a business consultant from New York named Andrea Spivak.

* * * * * * *

In June, James and Frances moved into their house in Lisse as Mr. and Mrs. Adler. McCoy had obtained passports for them in those names, and provided that they didn't run seriously afoul of the law, it was most unlikely that anyone would ever find their true identities. James would have expected Frances to be uncomfortable with such an arrangement, but she was actually more comfortable with it than he was.

One morning, about a week later, she sat him down next to her on their sofa and said, "Jim, I'm ready for children now. Do you have any objections to getting started?"

He smiled. "Babe, I think this is a wonderful time." He started kissing her neck and caressing her. "Wanna start right now?"

She laughed and pushed him away. "Jim, are you serious? You're really ready to have kids now?"

"Yes, Frances, I'm serious. I'm ready to have children right now." She hugged him and showed considerable emotion, but not like when they decided to marry. She didn't look like a little girl this time. She looked euphoric, but with seriousness mixed in.

"Frances, I think there's only one more safety-related thing we have to do, and it doesn't need to hold anything up."

"What is that Jim?"

"Building up the business that we told everyone about." When they introduced themselves to their neighbors, they said that they were former corporate executives from San Francisco (a city both of them could talk about authoritatively), and had started an Internet-based company; a "boutique" venture finance firm, specializing in post-crash Internet start-ups. Now they would have to build that business. Neighbors would be visiting in their home, and whether by accident or purposefully, they would verify the truth of the Adlers' story. They would have to make it real.

By September, Frances was pregnant, and expecting their first child in May. All the grandparents were thrilled about the forthcoming grandchild but very unhappy that the children – James and Frances – would not tell them where they were living. Jim and Frances tried to explain, but it didn't go over well.

They also got bad news in September. With Nickelson's password still working, Richard was getting volumes of information on the investigation. It turned out that McCoy's sources were almost entirely correct: The boys at the NSA were tracing everything associated with Tango; and although they had come to dead ends almost everywhere, they had found a couple of transactions between one of Farber's companies and the main Tango bank account in Zurich. The transactions had been emergency loans in the early days of Tango, when it needed liquidity. If Farber hadn't pumped the money in, Tango wouldn't have been able to process withdrawals, and it probably would have collapsed. None of them had realized the importance of a financier in getting such a venture started. Farber saved the day, but he did leave a paper trail.

Now, it was only a matter of time before they could prove that Farber was behind the transfers. The real question was what types of charges they could bring against him. Transferring money offshore isn't illegal; if it were, international commerce would collapse in a day. Technically, Farber hadn't broken any laws in transferring the money. Nonetheless, Tango and Gamma presented a real threat the world's tax system, and the rulers simply couldn't let it stand. One way or another, they would find crimes to charge him with.

Farber had long phone conversations with Phillip, McCoy, and Richard. They all decided that in this case, it would be better to take action first – to make his case to public before the US government and their conditioning machine got to them. The only safety he would have for the moment, beyond hiding, would be to make them look bad by coming after him. He decided to place full-page ads in several newspapers, and to sell-off the last remnants of his holdings.

Farber wrote an essay, and on October 2nd it ran full-page in the Wall Street Journal. On October 3rd, the essay ran in Investor's Business Daily, USA Today, and in the Times of London. The New York Times refused to run it, even at above-normal rates. The New York Post was pleased to run the essay, along with a derogatory story about the Times, on October 4th.

The Internet went wild with the essay and stories about it, as did talk-radio. The establishment television stations and newspapers barely mentioned it.

Farber had traveled to New York to place the ads in person, then flew to Buenos Aires, Argentina, where his paper trail ended. McCoy met him there, and took him by car to Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Several days later, Mr. Adler flew to London, and then journeyed to Amsterdam by train.

"From now on," Farber decided, "I stay put here in Europe. I'll stay home and raise a nice family." The situation worried Frances, but to have Jim home, happy to stay there for an extended period of years, made her feel much better.

From the day he got back to the Lisse, Jim worked on his venture capital business, advised and consulted on Gamma, and tended to his family. After decades of hurried and intense business dealings, he was ready for a long sabbatical.

Frances was thrilled to be able to raise her family in such a nice place.

* * * * * * *

Phillip had remained at Tino's for several weeks after his meeting with Michael. Then he flew into Montreal, rented a car, and drove through eastern Canada, making his way to Mordecai's Atlantic Chemical Company in New Brunswick. This would be the supply base for their new Skunk Works. "Skunk 2," as they had been calling it in their emails. Already, there were a significant number of scientists who were eager to be involved. The Skunk team had let it be known that they would sponsor new projects and give the originator significant interest in it if successful.

Mordecai was more than willing to help supply the new facility. Since Atlantic Chemical was doing well, he proposed that Atlantic buy a warehouse in North Sydney, Nova Scotia. There are extensive warehouses and shipping yards there, through which move almost all the supplies and goods between Newfoundland and the mainland. So, on December 1st, Atlantic Chemical took possession of a very typical warehouse near the shipping yards in North Sydney. New equipment arrived almost daily, and a fiber optic network was installed. The facility would be ready for use by January 1st, and Phillip was lining up research projects, production projects, and workers.

The first projects were several out-of-patent drugs. Mordecai identified a large number of valuable drugs that had fallen out of use because their patents had expired, leaving them unable to command high prices. This left the pharmaceutical companies and their regulatory agency partners to find new patentable drugs that do almost the same job, and to reestablish their prices. The new, patentable drugs, however, were frequently more hazardous than the original drugs. Skunk's goal was to provide as the best of the older drugs at competitive prices. They were establishing ties with the medical version of Gamma, and had a dozen orders waiting before their production began.

Once there was sufficient money to finance it, their second step would be to copy the research emerging from state-controlled laboratories and get it to market quickly, without going through the ten-year, billion dollar approval process. They would, of course, reimburse the creators of the drug, and cease manufacture once the drug was offered for sale through traditional channels at reasonable prices. Eventually, they hoped have a first-class genetics program. For the moment, however, that would have to wait.

One small group began work on a cheap home tester for sexually-transmitted diseases. This device would require just a small drop of blood and would verify whether the blood contained any STDs within seconds. The developers worked

primarily in their own laboratories in Japan, the US, and in Argentina. They decided to meet at Skunk 2 when they thought they had all the theoretical pieces in place.

An electronics lab was being built in one corner of the facility, with several ideas being pursued. One of them was a secure video device, which verified with absolute certainty that a video clip was intact and original. Another was a hyper-intelligent smart card, capable of sensing the network to which it was connected and interacting accordingly.

* * * * * * *

James Farber's quiet life in Lisse was rudely interrupted on January 20th. Farber had closed down his trading and finance ventures, but had left his office in Chicago intact. He had done business with his clients for a long time and didn't want to leave them high and dry.

In charge of this office was his long-time secretary, Martha Castro. Martha was now in her sixties, and Farber wanted to keep her employed until she was ready to retire. She had worked for him for many years and their tacit agreement was that he employed her till age sixty five. He intended on keeping the bargain. Martha stayed busy answering a few phone calls, running errands for Jim and his friends, and doing a few bookkeeping projects for an old friend's business.

On January 20th, Federal Agents invaded the office, minutes after it opened. Martha was unable to ascertain exactly which agencies had people there, only that there were at least four agents – guns drawn – and that one was IRS and another was FBI. They demanded all the records. Martha, however, was very protective of Jim, who had always treated her with kindness and respect. She refused, and demanded to see a warrant. They responded by roughing her up and throwing her out the door and onto the street. January 20th in Chicago is no time to be out of doors wearing only a dress. The temperature that day was approximately 10 degrees F. A passing lawyer helped Martha into a coffee shop and called the Chicago Police for her, but they were of little help; the Federal Agents sent them away, and they left. The lawyer lent Martha a sweater, and she waited in the coffee shop for three hours, until her daughter-in-law could come with a coat and to drive her home.

Martha emailed Jim that afternoon with the news. Farber was irate. These men roughed-up a sixty three year-old woman and threw her out into the cold with no coat. These people and their bosses deserved no respect, no kindness, and no deference. They were thugs, plain and simple. Their badges served only to reassure the public.

Jim drove to Amsterdam, called Suzy Q from a pay phone, and had Suzy patch him through to Martha's house – knowing that the call was probably being tapped.

“Martha, are you all right?”

“Yes, Mr. James, I am fine now. But those were bad men, Mr. Farber… very mean.”

“My God, Martha, I’m so sorry. If I had any idea that this would happen, I would have closed down the office and just sent you a check every month.”

“No, Mr. Farber, I want to work for my money.”

“Yes Martha, I know… But getting thrown around by thugs is not what you had in mind either.” Farber paused for a moment, remembering her husband, and having some idea of what he might be thinking. “Martha, is Juan there? May I please speak to him?”

“Sure Mr. James, I will get him.”

“Hello?”

“Juan, this is James Farber.”

“Yes?” Juan sounded displeased with him.

“Juan, I have two things to say to you. The first is that I had absolutely no idea that this would ever happen to Martha in my office. I am horrified and embarrassed. I am very sorry that I let that happen to your fine wife. Secondly, I will do everything in my power to be sure that it doesn’t happen again.”

“And how, Mr. Farber, do you expect to do that? Marta won’t stop going to that office, even if we both tell her. And you cannot control those special policemen. They will do what they want to do.”

Juan was, of course, correct; they had the power, and Farber didn’t.

“I’ll tell you what I am going to do, Juan; I’m going to put my lawyers on this right away, and sue those agents for millions of dollars. I can’t guarantee that they won’t come to the office again, but this will help. I guess that’s the best I can do, Juan, I’m sorry.”

“I know you are sorry, Mr. Farber, you are a good man. But now I expect you to be very careful for Marta. Yes?”

“Yes, Juan, absolutely. Again, I am very sorry.”

“Yes, Mr. Farber, I believe you. Here, I give you back to Marta.”

“Hello, Mr. James?”

“Martha, you will please tell Juan that I am very sorry?”

“Yes, Mr. James, I will.”

“Martha, do you remember Mr. Miller, my attorney?”

“Yes, I do.”

“All right, his office is at 120 North La Salle, on the 13th floor.”

“Yes, I know. I delivered papers there not long ago.”

“Great. Well, you go straight there tomorrow morning. Wait for Mr. Miller, and he’ll take you to over to our office. Go only with him, and make sure you do whatever he says.”

“I will do that, Mr. Farber.”

“Thank you Martha. I’ll send you some emails tomorrow to see if we can find ways to avoid this in the future. Goodbye.”

James was still furious. He became angry from time to time, but not like this. This time he was violently angry. He walked around Amsterdam for an hour and a half before going back to his car and driving back home.

Back at the house, he searched on-line for Phillip but was unable to find him. He sent him a note:

Phillip,

In one of your emails to me, you said that you and McCoy were going to work on “hobbling the hunter” and “defeating the hunter.” Have you figured it out yet?

Phillip, I’m so mad I could shoot someone. Those thugs burst into my office in Chicago today, threw Martha around, and tossed her onto the street in freezing weather with no coat, saying “get the hell out of here before we really hurt you.”

I want to take these guys down. I’m done playing nice. They want to intimidate with no consequences. I won’t grant that to them. And I don’t want to be unarmed while they’re slinging guns worse than hoodlums. I’m done with them!

Write back soon.

Jim

Phillip got the note several hours later – in New York, where he was staying for a few days under a different name.

Jim,

I understand.

I’m sorry to tell you that we haven’t given it much attention yet. We’ve both been busy with other things. I’ll get on it now.

I trust that Martha is all right. If you'd like, I'll ask Julia to check on her.

Jim, I completely understand your feelings. I have shared them at times myself. Tomorrow we can talk about this again, and come up with good plans. I'll send McCoy an email in a few minutes and get things started.

I'm very, very sorry. I'm also glad it wasn't worse.

Phillip

Phillip very well understood Jim's outrage. It was fierce, and it was just. However, taking action while so angry was not a good idea. Jim would have a clearer head tomorrow, and then they'd plan sensibly.

Back home, Frances fixed him a nice dinner and let him rant for a while. After dinner, they walked to a small tavern nearby and played darts. She let him wind down slowly, without telling him that he had to.

* * * * * * *

The Free Soul group finally came to a decision on living arrangements in late August. To the complete surprise of nearly everyone, they chose two places to live – not one. Even more surprising, they chose flats in London and Paris. Don McConnell called Phillip.

"Phillip, you'll never believe where they're moving."

"Where, Don?"

"Well, they're moving to both London and Paris."

"London, England, and Paris, France?"

"Yessir." Phillip erupted in laughter. "Are you surprised?"

Phillip continued laughing. "Yes, completely surprised. London! My God. I thought they'd pick Topeka, or Omaha, or maybe Orlando… Oh well, so much the better… I'd rather spend time visiting them in Paris. Hey, are you considering moving with them?"

"Me? No, not really." Don didn't sound very sure of himself this time.

"Well, Don, at least it's an option you guys have now. You've got a couple dozen people scouting out the territory for you; that's not a bad start."

"Yeah, that's true, but I don't think we could really leave the country altogether."

“I understand, but you might want to consider it at least. London and Paris aren’t bad places. If nothing else, this could make for some nice vacations. You know, it doesn’t cost much to fly to Europe any more.”

“Yeah, that’s a nice idea. Thanks.”

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On January 24th, Tim Nickelson’s password on the FBI network stopped working. Richard and the others couldn’t believe that it had worked for so long, and that their intrusions had never been detected. Sure, they used every precaution, but still, it had been months, and you would think that the FBI would have better security. But the truth is that government organizations alternate between impressive competence and appalling lapses.

On the plus side, it turned out that Farber’s ads really did help. The NSA decided not to go after Farber, at least until the ads were forgotten. Richard informed Farber of this fact, and Farber decided to run a two page ad every year on the anniversary of the first ad’s publication date. One of the pages would be a reprint of the original ad, and the second would be a new essay and an update on private commerce.

* * * * * * *

Michael,

I’ve been thinking about our original plans to sting this FBI agent, Nickelson. I think we were wrong. Why should we shut him down while we’re still getting intelligence from him? Let’s continue this advantage for as long as possible. Make sense?

As a future fall-back position, we can begin to plant incriminating evidence on this guy – offshore bank accounts, porn-bots, payments to prostitutes in the cities he visits, and so on. Then, if we want to discredit him, we’ll have everything in place. But if we don’t have to, we’ll be able to manipulate him for a long time. Remember, this guy is not really in Gamma. He thinks he is seeing the real thing, but we have him in a sort of virtual Gamma. We took a beta test version of the site and hooked it up to change messages, names, address, and so on, while allowing him to browse and conduct business. But it’s just us playing with him.

Let me know, Michael, but I do feel pretty strongly about this – I don’t want to take down an asset just for the sake of vengeance.

Richard

* * * * * * *

Richard,

Your analysis makes perfect sense. Please proceed accordingly.

By the way, I am now formally out of the loop on this – I've gone back to psychology. (Remember I told you about this?) Phillip is overseeing this now, so you should correspond with him from now on. Don't worry about it this time, as I already discussed it with him, and he agrees fully.

Do keep in touch, however, and please feel free to write if I can be of any assistance. I'm just bowing out from a hands-on position.

Michael

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On February first, Suzy flooded Gamma with news of the Defense Fund that she and Bari had set-up. They called it the "State Prosecution Fund." If you joined in this fund, you would be defended or made whole if a government attempted to seize you or your money for any victimless crime. The rates were adjustable, based on conduct. Awards were determined by an arbitrator, based on the claimant's level of 'personal virtue and prudence.' In other words, if you behaved wildly, bragged about not paying taxes, and engaged in risky or harmful businesses, your settlement would be very low or none at all. On the other hand, if you were to behave honorably and nondestructively, your settlement could be complete. A thousand signed up in the first week, and three thousand in the second. After two months, the State Prosecution Fund had twenty six thousand paid-in members. Suzy had more than enough money in the fund to set it off correctly, and eagerly searched for a hard-core Gamma member with high-level insurance experience.

Within three months, she would have a full management team in place (four people), six independent arbitrators engaged, and ten part-time claim investigators ready. Less than a year later, with more than ninety thousand members and two new competitors, they would spin-off the fund as an independent company.

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Phillip's ties with the military and Special Forces communities were limited and unofficial, but strong. He had become acquainted with these men years prior in his

martial arts days, when they took him in as the really intellectual guy who could still bang heads with them. For his part, Phillip wanted to learn their world, their motivations, and to gain the ability to save himself or another person from serious harm.

He had written an article some years before on the need of warriors that was very well received. This was in the long wake of the Vietnam War, when Phillip had objected that people who were willing to risk their lives to save others were treated as evil. One particular passage from the article made him many friends:

"There may come a time in your life when you'd give everything you own for a good soldier to be at your side. You can discount that now only because of its distance. I pray that you never see that time. I pray even more that you may understand the value of a soldier with honor."

Tee shirts bearing the passage had been sold in many places.

He had been thinking about Farber's problems, and his work on 'hobble the hunter, defeat the hunter.' After writing several pages of notes, consolidating them, and analyzing them, he decided that he should start by addressing the long-term, structural problems. And first among those items was the ability of governments to get policemen and soldiers to do whatever they wanted them to do, without knowing the facts involved. Phillip had for a long time been concerned about the moral subversion of soldiers and peace officers. Governments were turning them from protectors of the free to rent-a-thugs. This was not only threatening, it was morally damaging to the men involved. He decided it was time to write an article he had thought about for several years. "A Soldier With Honor." He wrote the piece in two days, while doing his best to avoid any interruptions. The conclusion of the article read as follows:

"We use force against those who would harm others. We protect. We save. We are the hand of justice on earth. We are not thugs for hire. We swear our oaths to principles and to constitutions, not to agencies or to commanders. Commanders who earn our respect we will follow even to a righteous death, but the title 'Commander' means nothing by itself. Nazi soldiers followed orders from their commanders, and did not refuse, even when they knew the evil of their deeds. Fill in the blanks for a hundred other massacres. We must never put ourselves in the same situation of 'following orders.' If force is not used righteously, we are not agents of God, but the agents of slave masters, of tyrants, and of evil.

"If called upon to use force unjustly, you must decline. If ordered, you must refuse. If you cannot do that, go find another line of work, this one isn't for you. The streets are full of angry and violent young men who would gladly get paid to hurt people. We are not that kind of slime. We save, we protect, and we do it with honor.

"When we go to our graves, we will go there contented. And if there is a last judgment, we will stand before it with pride. We will tell the truth – that we saved

God's creation from harm, that we protected them from aggression, and that we did it with honor."

Phillip ran the article in his own name, and it was carried by several military publications and many web sites.

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By early spring, Sandra Osterman had been painting madly for months. Her dream and 'rebirth' at the Free Soul house in Tallahassee had given her the artistic fire she had been waiting for – waiting for many years. Her technical skills had been developed long before, and her aesthetic skills were excellent as well. But the magical spark of artistic creation simply hadn't worked for her. Now, it had burst aflame.

The paintings of her first few months were interesting, but not complete and coherent. She sketched them, painted some of them partially, and set them aside for future reference. By the fourth month, she was turning out paintings that began to resemble the work of the old renaissance masters. The scenes were modern, but their spirit, their power, and their glorification of humanity were of the renaissance.

During the following weeks and months, she began to redo these pieces with a new technique she had worked on previously in bits and pieces –deep, multi-layer backgrounds covered with alternating clear layers, tinted layers, and selected opaque sections. Her progress was slow, and the technique developed incrementally, but after several dozen canvases, she had developed a powerful art form. It communicated with great strength and subtlety.

Her old art professors began to visit her rural studio. They were followed shortly by groups of dealers. She agreed to an autumn show in New York, but demanded to be left alone till then. When dealers kept coming, she moved her studio to a warehouse building on the edge of Tallahassee.

Then came her early masterpiece. It was a large painting, roughly ten feet high by twelve wide. It was a life-size resurrection scene. The subject, who looked more of a modern athletic man than the usual Jesus figure, was rolling the large stone away from the entrance of the cave in which he had been enclosed. The light entering the cave (or tomb, as might be presumed) was striking as it illuminated the scattered objects along the floor and walls of the cave. The layered background and accenting technique made the objects, even the rock surface, look as though they were being struck with light for the first time in eons. The scene seemed to be frozen at just the moment when the light was first striking the objects' outer surfaces, not yet having time to penetrate any further into them.

Indeed, the whole painting seemed to capture a single micro-instant of time. It was the moment just past the point of inevitability. The stone had been moved, with Herculean effort it seemed, just over the high point in its rock-carved track, and the force of gravity had just begun to engage and take over the effort from the brilliant man who had begun to roll it away.

As for the subject himself – he looked to be a very ordinary man, but on the best day of his life. His face – his countenance really – captured the moment when his consciousness shifted from the work of moving the stone to the realization that the stone was beginning to roll on its own. It was the very moment when his vision, having moved from the stone to the outer world, was just coming into focus. His emotion was unmistakable – a conscious mastery of everything that had stood in his way; the very essence of triumph and of freedom.

Technically, the use of light in the painting was the first striking feature, but the second was the same sorts of surprising color and detail effects that Leonardo used in Mona Lisa. Together, they were powerful enough to make people gasp.

The painting was both stunning and moving. Sandy's friends urged her to move it to a safer place. It was obviously a work of immense value, and they didn't want her to leave it in a warehouse. She called in one of her old professors. When he saw the painting, he wept, and sat on the concrete floor in front of it for half an hour. That same day he had it moved to a private and secure room in the University. Art professors from all over the world flew in to see it.

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Andrea Spivak's market for Road Warriors was becoming popular. It wasn't taking many people from the other Gamma groups (although there was cross-market commerce), but from the international business community. As people began finding out about how private commerce functioned, Andrea's RoadWarriorNet became a gathering place for them. Everything from the leasing of apartments and cars to sales of surplus merchandise occurred in this market. In addition, there was endless information on travel prices, passport and visa requirements, border crossings, restaurants, festivals, and ex-pat gatherings. Every winter Sunday found football parties for Americans in a dozen cities, European football (soccer) parties were almost daily in-season in a score of cities, and get-togethers for viewing special television shows and movies were frequent.

RoadWarriorNet was a smash hit, and the medical and trucking communities were doing nearly as well. In addition, several new Gamma markets had come on-line. A few were general markets, with names like "Galt's Gulch," Exodus," and "Nautilus." There were a great many more specialty markets; markets for construction contractors, for retail merchants, for farmers, auto repair businesses, janitorial

services, travel agents, small manufacturers, restaurants and taverns, and others. These companies were doing some of their business through traditional channels, and some through private channels. This allowed them to avoid unreasonable litigation, insurance costs, and accounting that are required in the regulated economy, but not in cyberspace.

A surprise to many of them were the religious groups that joined the private economy. These were not mainstream groups, but some of the Mennonites and Pentecostals, who maintained that subservience to government was contrary to God's will. Most religious groups, eager for acceptance and tax advantages, are happy to cooperate with governments, even using a passage in Paul's letter to the Romans to make it a divine mandate. Nonetheless, there is a large body of scripture that runs contrary to such ideas, and serious Bible-believers can easily reach the conclusion that these groups did – that governments and rulers belong not to God, but to Satan.

At first there were two such private markets; then came one serving poor neighborhood preachers and their small congregations, and then another serving itinerant evangelists and teachers.

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Life had returned to normal for James and Frances. She was now five months into her pregnancy and enjoying it immensely. Frances' mother was presently staying in one of their extra rooms, to be followed by Julia the next month. The nursery was nicely, though not extravagantly, furnished, and all the necessary arrangements had been made. Neighbors would stop by for coffee or tea, to dispense advice on children, families, and life. Some of the advice was rather dated and sometimes silly, but other portions were very good.

Especially interesting were the attitudes toward childhood and adolescence. She had never realized how distinctly American some of her ideas were. She had never thought of them that way, but in the presence of these ideas, there was no escaping that fact. Her neighbors had different ideas about life than she did. In general, they indulged their children far more than she would have been minded to. They didn't spoil them really, but they expected less discipline from the young children than she would have.

Frances wasn't sure she liked these ideas very well, but it did make her more open-minded about what might be best for her children. In the end, she decided that she liked her American aggressiveness, and was determined that her children would share it. "Human growth," she had once written, "may come either from necessity or from aggressiveness. Being productively aggressive is far less painful, more controlled, and produces better results."

But she also decided that she would let her children enjoy themselves more than she had when she was young. Not that they should be misbehaved or irresponsible, but that they should not think that pleasure and progress are opposed one to another, as she and Jim sometimes had.

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By the time the Free Souls had settled into their new homes in London and Paris, they were beginning to move in new directions. Or rather, the "old-timers" were beginning to move away, and toward individual pursuits. New local members were beginning to replace them. The Free Soul house was turning into the Free Soul network.

Four of the best musicians among the group moved to Budapest, where they rented a cheap flat and began to make music with abandon. They invited gypsy musicians to their sessions, the few remaining Klezmer musicians, and eventually opened most of their sessions to any competent musician who wished to attend. A number of musicians and singers from the Budapest Opera would sit in for open sessions. While all sorts of music were played in these sessions, it was choral music that they gravitated to most and modified to their modern tastes.

They loved the sweep and intensity of being in the midst of fifty voices pounding out multi-part harmony. They began to experiment with new arrangements of choral music – adding electric guitars, rock-and-roll chords, and other modern elements to the music. They wrote new pieces, and, in one inspired moment, came up with a new idea for the performance of their music.

One of the singers brought a friend one day – an acoustical engineer. They had the engineer sit in with the singers, between the tenors and the sopranos, and directly across from the altos. There were thirty five singers that day. (By now, they were renting an old, abandoned meeting hall in Pest for their large sessions.) She was surprised by the effect. "This is incomparably better than any stereo system," she said. She looked around the room, walked around as they sang, and listened intently.

"The floor above us," she asked, is it also abandoned?"

They answered that it was, and that they could use it almost for free if they wanted.

"Good," she said, "How would you like to be able to make this more intense than it already is?" She explained her plan to build a more-or-less hemispherical structure for their performances – the "Dome of Sound," as they would later call it. She explained that it could be built cheaply with wallboard and hard plaster, and that the sound within it would be "amazing."

They spent the rest of that day making phone calls, arranging a negligible rent, borrowing money, calling construction contractors they knew, and laying out the Dome on the upper floor. Within three weeks it would be completed.

They all pitched in – dozens of them working with tools and singing at the same time. Musicians from all over Europe, being invited by their fellows, made their way to Budapest when they had some free time – to experiment and to be part of the experience.

The effect of the dome was every bit as good as promised. Friends invited friends, and before long they had offers of money from non-musicians to sit in the dome while the musicians performed. They allowed this to help pay their expenses.

In time, an alternate version of the dome was built in another place. This one was designed with a different curvature, and with small alcoves on two sides. Katya, the engineer, had designed this dome so that the sound waves produced within the it were horizontally polarized. That is, that the sound vibrations in the main dome vibrated in a predominantly horizontal direction. Sounds coming out of the alcoves, however, would be vertically polarized. Since the human ear distinguishes between horizontally and vertically polarized sound, a soloist in the alcove could be distinctly heard, no matter how loud the music in the main dome might be.

The effects were powerful. So powerful, in fact, that recorded music paled in comparison, no matter how well recorded and embellished. Within a short time, people began building domes and hiring musicians to perform there. For the first time in decades, being a good musician paid; now it was not just a lucky or connected few who made millions, while the others took side jobs so as not to starve.

Even with groups breaking off, the Free Soul houses (or flats) stayed as busy as ever. New people were drawn to their energy and honesty. The ‘older’ Free Souls looked after the development of the newer ones – not because anyone told them to, but because they were able, and because the newer members were worthy of assistance. New Free Soul locations opened in Warsaw, Tokyo, and Sydney within three years of the move from the US to Europe.

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“Frances, sit down and let me do the dishes.”

Julia was enjoying her time with Frances. It made her feel young. She so well remembered the years when she and Phillip, along with their friends, were engulfed together in the process of raising families. They were all completely committed to their families, and to raising their families right. Or, rather, Julia and Phillip were, and some of their friends were. Others appeared to be doing the same, but were

actually playing the part around others and falling apart when they were at home with no one looking; as they had unhappily learned later.

Those times were very difficult in many ways. Julia remembered being low on money, having to get up early and stay up late, and not sleeping through the night for seven years running. But she also remembered the brilliant clarity of purpose that her life had then. She had four beautiful children… lives that began and formed inside of her body; lives that she had created; children who would grow into friends for the rest of her life. The work had been overwhelming, but the fruits of her labor sat around her table every day, growing, learning, and developing into people she was proud of.

Now, it was Frances' turn to do all of these things. She was happy for Frances, a bit jealous, and glad that she didn't have to go through it all again herself. "Frances and Jim won't have money problems," she thought to herself, "but they're taking on a lot more work than they think they are. They'll certainly rise to the occasion, but I don't think anyone really understands what they're getting into."

They spent quite a bit of time talking about Frances' pregnancy, and about raising children in general. Frances liked Julia's perspectives. Phillip was always fascinating, but Julia was the one who had actually done everything she was about to do.

But it seemed almost destined for them to talk about the larger issues. Strangely, it was much easier for Julia to talk about these things in Phillip's absence. Frances found it very strange that when she got going, Julia sounded quite a bit like Phillip. For some reason, however, she felt that it would have been a bad idea to say so.

One afternoon, after a cold walk to and from the local butcher shop, Frances began asking specific questions about what had worked best for Julia with her own children.

"I'll tell you one thing that was uncanny, Frances. Whenever we followed advice from other people, it backfired. Now, maybe that was just because we picked bad people to ask, but it was a pattern.

"You had good parents Frances, and so did I, but you can't just follow what your parents did. You have to figure everything out for yourselves. Not only did they make some mistakes of their own, but times change, and what made sense thirty years ago might not make sense now. People have always raised their children mistakenly, and you can't follow them without passing along a lot of wrong ideas to your kids."

Again Frances commented to herself on how much Julia sounded like Phillip. Perhaps it was because they went through so many things together. In any case, it reminded her of an answer she never really got from him.

"Julia, do you remember when Phillip talked that one time about fairy tale expectations?"

“Sure. I remember several times when he talked about that.”

“Well, he never explained how the fairy tale thing applies to women. Can you tell me?”

“Sure. I can tell you at least something about it. The fairy tales teach us to live on hopes and dreams. We start dreaming as little girls, modify the dreams into hopes as we get older, then expect our husbands to make them come true. Frances, how many women do you know that are really satisfied with their lives?”

“Not many.”

“That’s right, and a big part of it is because they have put their expectations above reality. They’re usually disappointed with their husbands, right?”

“Pretty much.”

“Right; they expect their husbands to provide their dreams, just like you wrote in that article of yours.” Frances waited for her to go on.

“And women don’t look *only* to their husbands only to fulfill their expectations, they look for organizations, beliefs, and groups to get them what they want. Sometimes they want these groups to create the lives they want; sometimes they want the group to influence their husbands; but they are consistently used as substitutes for their own direct action. They want a government to make their lives right, or a religion, or maybe a social group. All of this takes us away from actually building what we want, and takes us away from reassessment of our girl-dreams, and choosing dreams that we can really get.”

“Say, Frances, would you like me to get Phillip’s notes on this subject?” Frances was stunned for a moment; she had never thought of that. Someone had told her that Phillip kept voluminous notes, but she had never thought of asking – she was sure they were quite private. “But Julia,” she thought, “she could ask… and probably get them.”

“Yeah, I think I’d love to see them. Do you think he’d give them to us?”

Julia laughed. “I’ll get them from him… if you want me to.”

“Yes, absolutely, get them.”

Julia found Phillip on his cellular phone, and rather boldly told him that she and Frances wanted his ‘children, family and sex’ notes. Phillip was surprised, but not altogether unwilling.

“You realize that these are raw notes… I can’t even vouch for them all being correct.”

“We don’t care Phillip. We just want to use them as clues, as you always say.”

“All right, Julia, I’ll send them to you, but, there is one proviso: No one sees them but you guys, and you use them for clues only, not for publication.”

“Phillip, don’t you think I know that?”

“Yes, I know you do, but I want to be clear.”

“I promise.”

“All right, give me a couple of hours and I’ll email them to you.”

Frances and Julia giggled, and enjoyed their triumph of getting Phillip’s secret notes; like school girls getting the boys to tell their secrets.

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They had great fun going through the notes. The household chores were done for the day, Jim was in London, and they had the old house to themselves. They alternated between serious conversation and simple fun. They had walked to the local bakery in the afternoon, made some coffee, and pulled out Phillip’s notes.

Julia observed that childbearing was changing something in Frances. She wasn’t quite sure what kind of changes, and she wasn’t sure she should mention it, lest she interfere with their natural development. She said nothing but decided to watch carefully.

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At about this time, Gamma markets had begun making inroads into the daily life of so many people that it became common knowledge. Few people would admit to being in a private market, but when no one was looking, they were buying and selling with abandon. Every sort of market and service seemed to be springing up. Matters were getting out of hand for the governments, and they were beginning to get desperate.

Nickelson was shifted from office to office, which reflected his reduced status. He never knew that he was being hacked. The free travel and dinners slowed down, and he was becoming bitter. He slowly learned to compensate by playing office politics, torpedoing some careers and latching onto others. The fringe benefits weren’t as good as before, but they did rise to a level of prestige he could accept. He did lots of favors for Jones, who, in turn, groomed Nickelson to take over his position.

The governments generally took a two-part strategy. First of all, they wanted to shut down the private markets in any way they could. But there were simply too many Gamma markets, and they were all protected by encryption that they couldn’t break. The surveillance agencies made several arrests but were unable to shut down even one market. Prosecutions following the arrests were successful only about one

fourth of the time, and those convictions resulted from frightening the defendant into cutting a deal before trial. The Gamma legal defense fund performed well.

Their second strategy involved moving away from the taxation of income and toward the taxation of things they could control – especially taxes on property. Real property was permanent, stationary, and easily seized for non-payment. Not that income tax laws were eliminated – the taxes remained, and collection was enforced as vigorously as possible. The politicians simply couldn't be brought to abandon it. A variety of use fees, automotive fees, taxes on fuels, and especially property taxes, were steadily increased. This had the effect of leaving the obedient subjects being bled dry, and making the migration to private commerce all the faster. The politicians knew this, but they refused to abandon their best traditional revenue source.

The behavior of the big corporations was interesting; Farber had predicted it, but most of them were surprised nonetheless. At first, the huge corporations backed the governments enthusiastically. As Farber had explained, they had no choice – they were not only too big to hide their activities, but did so much business with governments and government contractors that to anger a big government might ruin their profits for years. So, they cooperated. They demanded certified financial statements from all their vendors and were very public in proclaiming private commerce a serious threat to civilization itself.

But as time went on, the big corporations found themselves being picked apart by smaller, more efficient competitors. These private-market companies produced better services at better prices. The big corporations were filing thousands of government reports every year, employing legions of accountants to produce them, paying huge fees to lawyers to iron out details, engaging dozens of lobbyists to eliminate adverse legislation, and, of course, providing donations to every politician and party who had a chance of winning. The private commerce people had none of these expenses and were steadily chipping away at the big operations.

Some of the big companies moved to low-tax, low-regulation jurisdictions, such as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, and the Channel Islands. Others arranged their multinational operations so that production was done in easier regulatory jurisdictions, profits were taken in low-tax jurisdictions, and expenses were taken in high-tax jurisdictions. They also began, quite secretly, to break off portions of their operations and replant them in cyberspace. There was simply no choice if they didn't want to risk their businesses altogether.

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George Demitrios was very busy. With so many people moving to private markets, they were also interested in protecting their finances from the governments who were having trouble collecting for the first time in centuries. They were squeezing anyone

who looked even a little bit suspicious. After one of these people was hurt, their next step was to look for someone like George, who could help them store their money in a boring, anonymous bank account in another country.

George had more business than he could handle, plenty of money, and was living in fine hotels. But it was neither the money nor the accommodations that he most enjoyed – it was purposeful, vital activity. He wanted to fight for a good cause, and to win. As it turned out, there was an entire network of people like him. As time went on, these 'consultants' began to meet from time to time, drinking, telling stories, and sharing resources. The were a band of noble pirates, always on the edge of the law, and always with the most stimulating lives. They were the merchant adventurers of the 21st Century, and they were loving it. None of them lay in bed at night, wondering what their lives might be like if they were just a bit more courageous.

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The telephone at the Manhattan apartment rang at 2:00 a.m., waking Phillip, who happened to be in New York for the week.

"Hello?"

"Hi! This is George Dimitrios. To whom am I speaking?"

"George, it's me, Phillip. Everything okay?"

"Yeah, great… Did I call too late?"

"Yeah, I'd say so, but don't worry about it, it's nice to hear from you."

"Hey, I'm sorry Phillip, I guess I had the time difference wrong. I was just calling to see if you, McCoy, or anyone was at the apartment."

"Nah, don't worry about it George. Like I say, it's nice to hear from you. What's news?"

George gave him a quick synopsis of the recent activities, but was coming up short when trying to explain the changes related to his inner life. Then, for some reason, he thought back to their childhoods, and remembered something.

"Phillip, do you remember the tree in the O'Grady's yard?"

Phillip paused for a moment, his eyes with a searching look. "Oh my God, yeah! Sure I do."

"Remember climbing it?"

Phillip laughed. "Yeah, you bet! I was scared stiff. I watched the older kids climbing it, and I was afraid to try. I would go out to O'Grady's yard when no one else was there and work up my courage. I'd go a little higher every time, and pretty

soon I got all the way to the top. You remember, don't you? The place right next to the bird's nest?"

George laughed. "You bet I remember. And do you remember the feeling of being up there?"

"Yeah, although I kind of forgot. Thank you, George!"

George said "You're welcome," and waited to let Phillip continue.

"That was a magnificent feeling, high up in the tree, looking over half the neighborhood at once. God I felt great up there."

"I know what you mean Phillip. I guess I never really forgot that feeling, probably because I saw that tree again every time I went to my parent's house. It kept reminding me. Anyway, here's why I brought it up: I love my life now – it makes me feel like I'm still up in the top of that tree."

Phillip was quiet for several seconds and nearly cried. "George, I'm very happy for you. You're really living. Congratulations."

"Thank you Phillip, I really am… it feels nice."

George decided that Phillip sounded tired, and probably needed his sleep, so he closed the conversation. Phillip smiled, went back to sleep, and dreamt of flying.

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Emily Adler was born, at home, on May 13th, with a local doctor in attendance. James actually caught the baby and cut the cord, and both mother and child came through quite well. Frances, however, was very, very tired. Her labor had been longer than she had expected – over twenty hours – and was far more tiring than she had expected. She was healthy enough, but physically and emotionally drained. It was fortunate that she and James had enough money to hire full-time help. Without it, Frances would certainly have been overtaxed.

The baby was jaundiced for three days, but only mildly. In all other ways, it was perfectly healthy, alert, and hungry – very, very hungry. Frances, who had decided to breast-feed, was restrained from sleeping in much more than three-hour spurts, due to Emily's never-ending appetite. "Oh well," James would say, "we know the baby is healthy." Frances was glad for her baby's health, but the continual lack of sleep caught her by surprise, and was more difficult for her than she would have expected. Jim was solicitous and helpful, but he didn't really understand.

They hired a local teenaged girl to help Frances during the days until she adjusted and caught up on her rest.

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By spring, Skunk 2 in Nova Scotia was housing fourteen different projects, most of which were moving forward steadily. Over the research laboratory, in huge letters on painted plywood, was an old quote from Thomas Edison's laboratory, "We don't have any rules here: We're trying to accomplish something!"

The progress was so significant that many of the scientists quit their regular jobs and moved to Sydney. There, they found a work atmosphere that was more like a sports team than a school or a lab. There was adrenaline, there was testosterone, there was determination and aggressiveness. More than this, they were more than just a team, they were a family. The various project groups worked together seamlessly; physicists asked advice of biologists, theorists sought help from experimenters, and so on. The spouses and children spent time together. In a very short time, they constituted a hundred-person family. Favors were done without having been requested, and they overlooked each other's faults most of the time – there were bigger things to be reached, and a stray stupid comment wasn't worth wasted energy.

As Farber had requested, Phillip and McCoy sponsored a weapons project. What they wanted were weapons that would disable other weapons, stop vehicles, disrupt radio communication, and stun people – all without imposing serious bodily damage. They had some excellent ideas in their files for lethal weapons, but Phillip would allow no work on them aside from preliminary evaluations and a few prototype tests.

They sent prototypes of some of the non-lethal devices to Farber. He loved them, especially the briefcase-sized device that would disable a car with the touch of a button. One day in Amsterdam, he noticed a city tow-truck taking away a car parked illegally. He pulled the briefcase out of his car trunk, discretely pointed it at the tow truck, and pressed the button. The truck stopped in its place and would not restart. Farber smiled and giggled all the way back to Lisse and through half of the next day. He kept the briefcase in his car and charged the batteries religiously.

In one corner of the new Skunk Works was a little enclave for hackers. Each of the Gamma communities had donated money to them; their purpose being to hack the surveillance agencies – to mislead them, and where possible, to shut them down. The called themselves *The Hunters*, and their area was emblazoned with photos of every fierce figure they could find, from soldiers, to Arnold Schwartzenegger as Conan the Barbarian to Ted Nugent hunting with bow-and-arrow. The scientists called the area "the silicon-and-testosterone corner." Richard moved to Sydney and joined the Hunters. The rest of his espionage team went back to their previous careers.

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“Phillip, This guy you’ve been doing Q and A with – Seminary Steve…”

“Yes?”

“He would really like to talk to you.”

“Oh…”

“We checked him out, Phillip, and he’s for real. His real name is Steven Caputta, and he’s a graduate student in theology at the University of Washington.” Phillip remained silent. “Everything okay, P?”

“Uh, yeah Don, everything’s okay, it’s just that I’ve been expecting this with mixed feelings.”

Don could guess what was on Phillip’s mind. “Is he going to ask you questions you don’t want to answer?”

“Well, it’s not so much that I don’t want to answer, it’s more like I hope that I can explain myself properly.”

“But you were at least this concerned with the essays, weren’t you? And they turned out well.”

“Yeah, you’re correct. I’m just concerned about where all of this might go.”

“Phillip, would you like my advice?”

“I would.”

“All right, set up a time to visit with Steve, and then spend the intervening time thinking about explaining yourself. Then just go do it.”

“Don, you’re a wise man.”

“Thank you.”

Phillip called Steve from Amsterdam that afternoon.

“Hello?”

“Yes, I’m looking for Steven Caputta please.”

“This is Steven.”

Phillip smiled, knowing what he was about to drop on the young man. “Hi, Steven, my name is Phillip Donson, although you know me much better as Prester John.”

Steven froze momentarily. “Prester John?! From the Free Soul site?”

“That’s right, Steven. They tell me you’d like to sit down and talk.”

“Yeah! Yes, I’d love to… I just didn’t think you’d have the time to do it.”

“I’ll make some time. I take it you live in Seattle?”

“Yes, near the University.”

“Is it difficult for you to get to Vancouver?”

“No, not at all. I can drive up pretty much any time.”

“All right, then Steve, I’ll be pleased to meet you in Vancouver some time soon, and I’ll answer any questions I am able to.”

“Oh, this is great. When can we do this?”

“Well, I’ll have to go over my schedule. I probably won’t be able to do it for at least a few weeks. Do you ever use secure email?”

“I use PGP.”

“Good. Send your key to the Free Souls, and ask them to forward it to me. I’ll go over my schedule, and we’ll plan on meeting in Vancouver soon. Sound good?”

“Oh, it sounds great. I’ll send them the email right away, and I’ll wait to hear from you.”

Phillip knew the sound in his voice – a young man desperately hungry to talk to a top mind in his field. It was nice to be on the other side of the conversation for once. “Great, Steve, I’ll be looking forward to it. Now, don’t be disappointed if it takes me a while to get back to you. I won’t forget.”

“All right, I’ll wait. Thank you.”

“Believe me, Steve, you are more than welcome. Good bye.”

Chapter Six

Phillip showed up in Vancouver only a week after he had talked to Steve Caputta and rested for a day while he arranged for a Town Car to get Steve. They met in the lobby of Phillip's hotel and walked toward the hotel's restaurant for a late lunch.

Steven was older than Phillip had expected; not nearly as old as Phillip, but at least thirty-five. From the name 'Seminary Steve' he had presumed that Steve was in his twenties. He had a mature look; honest, slightly confused, but sincere and mature. He was obviously Italian, with curly black hair and an olive complexion, just about Phillip's height, and solidly built.

"I'm very glad to meet you Steve." Steve returned the greeting. "I take it you are hungry after the long ride?" Phillip turned toward the restaurant, and they began walking slowly in that direction.

"Well, I guess I am, Phillip, thank you."

The hotel was modern, and designed primarily for business travelers. There was a reasonably good restaurant and a large bar. There was also a large open area with clusters of chairs and couches, which many of the guests used for informal meetings. Phillip had chosen this hotel primarily because he enjoyed being around business travelers; they tended to be polite, engaging, and busy enough with their own affairs that they didn't intrude into yours.

The restaurant was nearly empty at the time they entered, which made for a relaxed, slow meal, with plenty of time to talk.

"I've got to tell you Steve, I am pleasantly surprised that you are not a very young man."

Steve smiled. "Yeah, I'm definitely one of the older students." He paused for a moment. "Exactly why are you glad I'm older?"

Phillip had been piecing his thoughts together, more or less automatically, as they made their way to their table, and now he had the pieces together. "Oh, I just find a certain level of maturity is much better for understanding difficult subjects, and I'm sure we'll be discussing some rather important things before we're done."

Steve smiled a slightly conspiratorial smile. "Of that I have no doubt." They both laughed quietly, each beginning to feel comfortable with the other. "And I know what you mean about maturity. About every five years I look backwards, and say to myself 'My God, I am so much farther along now than I was then.'"

Phillip was happy to see that Steve was not only honest, but self-analytical. As they looked at their menus, Phillip realized something else that was making him happy. With Steve he could talk in scriptural terms. James and the others, for all their

brilliance, didn't have the same Biblical vocabulary base that he would have with Steve.

"You're smiling quite a bit there Prester, anything particular?"

"Yeah, there is, but please call me Phillip… I can talk scripture-ese with you, Steve, I have almost no one else that would understand me. You don't mind, do you?" Steve knew what Phillip meant.

"No, I don't mind at all. Go right ahead."

Phillip nearly giggled. "Okay, I was thinking about you saying that you look back and analyze yourself every now and then. Way back in my early days, that was the one lesson I worked hardest on. And I'm convinced that it was the thing that kept me moving forward, while so many others fell by the wayside."

"So, what was it that got through to you? 'Commune with thine own heart?' Or, 'He seeketh truth in the inner parts?'"

"Yes! Both of those! Plus a few others. Boy, it's been a long time, but I can still remember where I was when I made my complete commitment to self-honesty. I can tell you where I was standing in the room, and the time of day."

"And what was it you said?"

Phillip stopped. "How do you know I said anything? Maybe I just decided."

Steve smiled. "'With the mouth, confession is made, unto salvation.' You certainly would have said it, not just thought it."

"Well, you're right. I said 'I will face the truth, and not turn away from it. In my heart, in my mind, I will face the truth, whatever it is.' And I meant it with every ounce of strength I possessed." Phillip stopped, and looked at Steve. "You know what I mean when I say I not only said it, but that I spoke it into being, don't you, Steve?"

"Yes, Phillip, I do."

Phillip looked at Steve sincerely, knowing where their conversations would be leading. "Steve, no matter what we talk about over the next few days, I want you to know that I value spiritual experiences highly, and I do not oppose them."

* * * * * * *

"So, how did you get into the Bible, Steve?"

"Well, I was a kid during the charismatic days, and my older brother used to bring me to the meetings."

"Whoa! In the charismatic days? How old were you?"

“Maybe eight.”

“Oh my God! That was my world. Where was this?”

“Well, we lived in upstate New York, near Ithaca.”

“No… don’t tell me your brother went to The Love Inn?”

Steve’s face lit up. “Yes! You knew The Love Inn?”

Phillip laughed so loudly that the few people in the restaurant turned to see what was so funny. “Yeah, I knew a bunch of people who used to go there. How long did you go?”

“Not long. I mean… I was only about ten when everyone split-up. My brother moved away right at that time also, so I didn’t go to any more meetings for quite some time. Much to my mother’s relief, I might add.”

“Yeah, I know; the whole charismatic thing was very difficult for the parents. They were coming out of an age of conformity, and here were their kids doing things that were different to the point of appearing dangerous. And, to be honest, most of us did a really shitty job of explaining things to the parents. We brought a lot of it on ourselves.”

Phillip had used the word “shitty” purposefully. He wanted to be sure that Steve wasn’t going to get bent out of shape if he spoke freely. Steve never flinched.

“What happened after your brother moved and you stopped going to meetings?”

“Oh, I mostly returned to normal. I got busy with baseball, football, and school. Then girls, of course. Really, I didn’t read the Bible much more till I was about twenty. But I had been rather dramatically healed one night at a meeting, and had felt the power of the spirit very strongly. I guess I never entirely forgot that.

“Anyway, I took the whole summer off of school when I was about twenty, and got an evening job at UPS. It was four hours per night, and paid me enough to live on at the dormitory. I had been wanting to pick up the Bible again and I stayed into it all summer long.”

“And then?”

“Oh, I went back to school; but I studied whenever I could and tried all sorts of meetings. I’ve only been taking classes at UW for a couple of semesters, and part-time at that. My real job is accounting.”

Phillip began to look very sad. “And through all of your searchings, you never found anything that was as pure and shining as what you found in the New Testament, did you?”

Now Steve looked equally as sad. “No, I never did… maybe for a short period of time, but that’s all. Once they had a breakthrough, they seemed doomed to sink down again. It was uncanny. As soon as something good happened, something swept right

in behind it,,and neutralized it." There was real pain in Steve's eyes – the residue of many deep disappointments.

"Yes, I understand, Steve. I know." Then, Phillip brightened halfway, and took on a look of deep determination. He spoke passionately but quietly, "Steve, I know why! I know what's killing the life!"

Steve had given up on figuring it out. He had never expected to hear those words in this life. "You're serious?"

"Yes, I am. But it's a long and difficult explanation, and there's not a simple five-word answer… it's more like assembling piece after piece, and then, suddenly, you can see the big picture. Would you be able to go through a long, hard process?"

Steve looked him dead in the eye. "I think I'd be willing to die for it."

* * * * * * *

By mid-July, economic figures from the second quarter of the year were being assembled in US government offices in Washington and New York. There was now no question about it. The uncontrolled Internet economy was seriously cutting into government revenues. Reports flew from office to office and the NSA was urgently ordered to address the situation.

The NSA report estimated that between two and four million Americans were conducting private commerce through the Gamma systems. Yet after two years, they had been able to trace only ten of them, and even those were only traceable because they had been sloppy. The system was now large and growing steadily. The public prosecutions of a few Gamma people had not had much of an effect; in general, it seemed to have made people more careful, but did not keep them away.

By putting the economic figures together with the NSA report, analysts were led to the conclusion that it was the wealthiest and most productive who were hiding their business from the government. If NSA was correct that only a few million Americans were involved, the revenue losses could only have been caused by medium and large earners removing themselves from the system. The best cash cows were running away, and the NSA didn't know how to stop them.

Some officials wanted to shut down the Internet altogether, but they were ultimately convinced that such an action would not only undermine their public image, but would be akin to financial suicide. The Internet now was so much a part of American economic life that trying to destroy it would cause such an enormous loss of commerce that it would probably throw half of the world into a depression.

Others wanted to hunt down the people involved and throw them into jail, or even execute them for treason. Given the distributed nature of the enterprise, however, this would have almost no overall effect on private commerce. Anyone who wanted to,

could open a cyber market. Trying to hack into all the Gamma networks was another option, but it had already been tried at length with little success.

The final option was posed by a senior analyst at CIA. She proposed a "one country, two systems" compromise with the Gamma markets. In this scheme, normal commerce and income would be subjected to the existing methods of taxation, and people doing business through the Gamma markets would be convinced to pay a flat 10 percent of their income to the US government. Initial memos between the US government and the governments of the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the European Union indicated that all of these governments would also be interested in such a plan. The difficulty, of course, would lie in convincing the Gamma markets to be taxed. They began developing strategies.

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Back in Lisse, Jim and Frances were getting back to a somewhat normal life. They had live-in help – a college girl from Slovenia, working for a year to earn tuition money. Mostly, she did the household chores while Frances took care of the baby, although she did watch Emily if Jim and Frances went out for an evening. It had taken Frances three months to recover from the delivery. She was never really sick, just desperately tired, and surprised by the difficulty of the whole affair. But now she was almost back to normal, and eager to have her friends and relatives visit.

One group at a time, they would meet in Paris or Antwerp, then drive to Lisse. Jim bought a large sport utility vehicle for this purpose. Because of the difficulty of bringing people in (they had to be careful, with Jim obviously on a lot of government lists), these visits tended to be long, rather than frequent. This actually proved to be very rewarding. Jim got to know Frances' friends and family very well, and vice-versa. Instead of a single day, they would actually live together for one or more weeks. In so doing, they really got to know each other: Talks in the kitchen till two in the morning, drives into Amsterdam for special groceries, midnight runs to the nearest copy shop to get some work done. In the course of two weeks, people who had never met before knew each other quite well. Both Frances and Jim decided that this would be their preferred way of getting to know people.

* * * * * * *

"George?"

"Um… who is calling please?"

"George, it's me… Michael… Anderson."

“Michael! How did you know to call me here?”

Michael smiled, understanding that finding George when he didn’t wish to be found was nearly impossible. “Bill McCoy helped me.”

“Ah, I see. Well, what’s up, Michael? This must be important.”

Michael paused just a moment before speaking. “George, I think you might want to come back to the lab for a little while, we’ve got some very interesting things happening.”

“Mike, you know I left the lab on purpose.”

“Yes, I do,” said Michael. But while he was sure that taking a break from the lab was good for George, Michael also suspected that neurochemistry was still deeply important to him. Beside, their new discoveries were important, and they needed George to review them. “Hear me out, George. Something important is happening.”

“All right, Michael, I’ll listen.” George’s curiosity was beginning to show. More importantly, Michael thought he sensed a sort of paternal protection in his voice.

“George, we began looking at natural changes in the human psyche. We wanted to find more information on the body’s change mechanisms.”

“Yes, I remember.”

“Right… well, we took a hard look at pregnancy… perhaps the most potent period of change in any human life.”

Now, George’s mind became very active… imagining where this was going. “And you found something new, didn’t you?”

“Yes, George, we did.” Michael paused just a moment and continued. “We found huge changes in the mother’s neurochemistry… and a new group of neuropeptides.”

George had expected Michael’s words… it was something he had considered years before. But the fact that this was now real – not just speculation – still surprised him. “Continue, Michael.”

“Very well… The first experiments were conducted on a group of French women… all that was required was to collect blood samples. As their pregnancies developed, we began to see a rise in the levels of free neuropeptides in the blood. The first surprise was that there were a lot of them – more than we’d expect. The second surprise was that they were of a different type. So, to clear this up, we took a few small tissue samples from the next group of mothers.” Michael stopped.

“And… Michael? What?”

He took a deep breath. “George, we found that the extra neuropeptides were not being manufactured… they were coming loose from the mothers’ body cells.”

Michael paused, and George’s mind went into a sort of overdrive. “That would mean,” he began thinking and finished by mumbling, “that the mother’s body was

releasing those peptides into her blood stream… Michael! What about the fetus… the baby… did the babies pick up the peptides!?”

Michael spoke in his most serious voice. “Yes, George, they did. That was the final experiment that led me to call you.”

“Holy shit! This is huge!”

“Can you come to Paris, George?”

George didn’t respond right away. He was alternating between the ramifications of what Michael had just said, and what would be required for him to leave Taiwan, where he had been for a few months. “Yes… I can come, Michael. Give me a few days to close up shop here, and I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

* * * * * * *

George Demitrios actually left Taipei the following morning. A local friend saw to the loose ends he left behind. On his three flights to France, George made pages of notes. The questions seemed unending. What was it that would make the mother’s cellular receptors loosen? This was a new mechanism, and probably a lot more elegant than using chemicals to break peptides. Then, could this be why women have an unusual vibrancy during pregnancy? With millions of peptide being released for the first time in years, might this be like taking the Breakers treatment, only more so?

And then… what of the peptides transmitted to the fetus? Is this how some hereditary characteristics are passed along? And if indeed the structure of the subconscious is chemical, is this mother-to-child transmission the first formation of the subconscious mind? How much of this transmission would be harmful? How much necessary?

George slept little on his way to France, which left him seriously jet-lagged by the time he arrived. He slept on-and-off for three days at a hotel close to the lab, spending only a few hours each day observing the work. In his weary moments he wondered if he was getting sucked back into something he had rightly left behind. But when his energy was normal, he knew that this was necessary… and that it would not be permanent.

* * * * * * *

How Frances found out about the new developments in the Breakers lab was at first a mystery to Michael. Eventually he learned that McCoy had been talking to Jim, and that the information was passed along that way. Frances was back to strength now

with Emily almost weaned, and she was her usual demanding self, having come across knowledge that she wanted.

"Michael, I want you to send me your research findings. I promise that I won't let anyone else see them, but I need them."

"Why, Frances? Why do you need them?"

She waited for just a moment, thinking about what exactly she should say. "Because, Michael, I think this is important for my daughter, and… because I'm about to get pregnant again."

Michael smiled, remembering the importance of never coming between a mother and her children. "All right, Frances, I can get the information to you. But I should also tell you that we wouldn't even consider trying Breakers on a pregnant mother… not without a lot more research."

"Okay, Michael, but why?"

"Because the mechanisms are far to complex, Frances. Some of the peptides we break may be important for the baby. We cannot tinker with immensely complicated processes, especially when a baby is involved. We are a long, long way from being able to do that sort of thing. It would be grossly incompetent." He was about to say something about mis-developed babies, but that is not something that should be said to an expectant mother.

"So, are you planning on getting pregnant very soon?"

"Yes, I am, Mike." Her voice sounded cheery now. "But don't tell anyone."

"No, of course not."

"Anyway, Emily is starting to walk, and I'm feeling good. We want one more child, and we really shouldn't wait – I'm thirty-six, you know."

"No, I didn't know. I would have guessed a bit younger."

"You're very kind, Michael. Anyway, we're ready to get started on our second now, and I want every health benefit possible for my child."

"Yes, I understand, Frances, but we simply can't rush into something like that." He stopped, thinking about another angle. "I'll tell you what, though… it might be a great experiment to administer a new version of our protocols to *you*, after childbirth."

"And why is that?"

"Because, with all of your receptors loosened during pregnancy, we could break up a lot of the peptides before they become lodged in your receptors again."

"And this would require one of you coming up for the delivery staying for a week or two?"

“Uh… yeah… but I’m getting ahead of myself, Frances.” Michael realized that he had gone a bit far in his excitement over the new experiment. “I really need to run some animal experiments first, to support the idea that this can be done safely… although it shouldn’t be a problem…”

“Do your experiments, Michael. I’ll send you money if necessary, but I want to do this. And… I want you to look into the administration of Breakers to children. Why should they be saddled with a painful subconscious during childhood if it isn’t necessary? Youth is hard enough anyway.”

Michael agreed, and assigned two researchers to the task. Also to send her details of the experiments as they came available.

“Oh, and Michael…” Now she sounded cheerful again, almost childlike.

“Yes, Frances… what is it that you are about to ask?”

“Well, mister confirmed bachelor, I’ve been hearing stories about you and a certain French lady. How about it, Mike, I’m telling you the intimate details of my reproductive plans, how about you telling me yours? Hmm?” Although she had no way of seeing, Frances knew that Michael was blushing deeply. Also that he was feeling his usual privacy and restraint. “Come on, Michael, tell sister Frances.”

“All right, you win this one. Yes, I am getting pretty serious with one of our researchers here. Her name is Chloe, and I actually took her back to the States to meet my family.”

“Ho! This is serious. So, what now? And when do I get to meet her?”

He laughed. “Okay, I’ll bring her to meet you soon. And, we’ll probably get married in a few months.”

“Congratulations, Michael, she must be special. Are you thinking about kids?”

“Thanks, Frances. And yeah, we’re thinking about kids in a few years.”

“Good. Oh, I need to get back to Emily.”

He laughed again. “Go ahead, Frances, and I will send you that material as soon as possible, and I’ll plan on coming up with Chloe for your after-delivery treatment.”

“Thank you Michael. Bye.”

* * * * * * *

Phillip’s conversation with Steve Caputta lasted nearly three days, during which time they shared meals and took long walks through Vancouver. The discussions were probably more difficult for Phillip than they were for Steve, but they had gone very well. Phillip expressed his opinions without restraint, and Steve understood. It was

certainly far too much for Steven to agree to all at once, but he was able to retain Phillip's ideas, and to consider them at length.

One the morning of their third day together, Steve told Phillip that he needed to get back to Seattle. Phillip thought that was a good idea, as he had already covered everything he needed to. He had gotten to the core of it with Steve, and Steve had grasped it. Certainly it would take him some time to sort through all of the ideas Phillip had thrown upon him, but he was able to understand and retain them.

Phillip waited in the lobby while Steve checked-out and gathered his luggage. He picked up a newspaper and caught up on the events of the past days. He would stay one more night and head east in the morning. As yet, he wasn't sure where he'd go, and he didn't much care, so long as he had a nice place to relax for a few days.

Steve picked up a paper of his own and they sat on the lobby's chairs, reading their papers and relaxing. Steve was in no rush to leave, and sitting for a while seemed nice.

After about ten minutes, Steve lowered his paper. "Phillip, do you know anything about this private commerce stuff?"

Phillip was surprised and slightly concerned. "Why?"

"Well, I was just reading a story about it, and I got the clear impression that you had something to do with it. Does that sound crazy?"

Phillip smiled, and resigned himself to telling Steve that he was right. After all, he couldn't talk about insights for three days, then shut the man down as soon as he had one.

"Yeah, you're right Steve, I do."

"I knew it!"

"Apparently so."

Steve spoke quietly now, knowing that Phillip wouldn't want anyone passing by to hear. "Tell me about it."

"Well, I didn't really create them or anything, but I encouraged and helped the people who did."

"So, are they going to succeed?"

"Yeah, I think so. They're not entirely out of danger yet, but I think they'll make it."

"Geez, this is great. Can you get me in?"

"Sure. I'll send you a link. But remember, you have to follow all of the security protocols we give you. If you don't, you'll put yourself and everyone else at risk."

"I can do that. But tell me, why did you do it in the first place? It was a big risk, wasn't it?"

“Oh, yeah, it was, but ultimately, the risks paled compared to the rewards. A lot of the developers were computer industry people, and for them it was just a natural progression. Me – I reached a conclusion that people will never evolve very far spiritually until they get beyond the agricultural-era version of god and spirituality. So long as the agricultural god is enthroned in peoples’ minds, they are limited. But to make that kind of a break, you have to find a way to get away from agricultural-era rulers and their systems of servitude. That required a way to live separate and apart from them. They’ll never just leave you alone.”

“Wow.” Steve seemed impressed, but then he started laughing to himself.

“What is it?” Phillip was intrigued.

Now Steve laughed out loud. “All right Phillip, talk scripture to me. What was the scripture that you were thinking about during this process? There had to be one.”

Now Phillip was laughing as well. “You’re a smart guy Steve. Jeremiah Nine.”

“‘Oh that my head were waters’?”

“Yep… ‘Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of my people’…” Phillip paused, and Steve finished the quote.

“‘Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them.’”

Steve looked down for a moment, then lifted his head and spoke. “So, your objective was to build a lodging place for the productive and for the noble?”

“Yes, a place where they could develop, a haven.”

Steve paused for a moment then spoke again. “Phillip, I’ve seen you with a worried look on your face more than once. What is it?”

He smiled. “Until now, I worried about destroying the ancient paths…that people couldn’t take the truth without a myth to make it acceptable; to get beyond their guilt and shame.”

“And what made you change your mind?”

“You did, Steve.”

“Me? What did I do?”

“You understood, and you didn’t buckle under the load.”

“Phillip, I don’t want to give you the wrong impression. I’m not sure that you’re right.”

He smiled. “No, I don’t think that you do, Steve. But you could understand me and allow my ideas to exist as possibilities in your mind, and to remain.”

In some ways, Steve was opposed to some of Phillip's ideas and uncertain of many others. But at the same time, he knew – somewhere deep within himself – that he would eventually agree with them. The feeling was tucked away on the edge of his consciousness, but he knew that it was telling him the truth: That there was too much obstruction for Phillip's ideas to move to the center of his consciousness now, but that they would eventually get there. It was as if the idea had caught his attention, winked at their secret, and gone back into its cove. Somehow he knew that the idea itself would slowly clear debris out of its path and take its place in a clearer and better mind.

Phillip looked happy, if a bit subdued as well.

"One final point, Steve."

"Go on."

"The things I believe don't really depend on Jesus or the existence of God. If it turned out that there never was a Jesus, and all of the ideas I impute to him are just my romantic notions, my ideas still stand. Jesus, to me, is a probable point of origin for a great synthesis, but he doesn't make or break anything. Maybe I'm holding to Jesus to get me out of some philosophical door, just like the sola scriptura guys held to the scriptures. It's possible, you know. But I am sure that my ideas hold up, Jesus or no."

"So, Phillip, all that being said, do you or don't you believe in life after death?"

"Personally, I do expect that life continues beyond physical death, but I am basing that on my own subjective experiences more than I am on hard evidence. I've had experiences that lead me to believe that I am considerably more than only my body, and that this 'essence of me' is not subject to death. In addition, there is a little bit of evidence from near-death experiences to support such an idea. This evidence is far from conclusive, but it does exist. So, I'd say yes, I expect to continue living past physical death, but I have quite incomplete evidence."

It was now time for Steve to leave. Phillip walked him out to his car, where they embraced and agreed to stay in touch.

* * * * * * *

"Max, I want to get out of this entirely and get as far away from here as possible."

John Morales, sitting in Max's private office, was stone-faced and harshly serious. Max thought to himself that the young man had matured significantly in the past year and a half.

"All right, John, I'll get Bari on it immediately. But would you please tell me why?"

“Because I’m helping them too much, Max. Jones is getting more power, and my work is helping him. He has already conducted raids on a number of innocent people. Some of them weren’t involved with Gamma at all. And one man is already dead from a raid gone bad.”

“The one in Dallas?”

“Yes.”

“Hang on.” Max picked up his desk telephone and called Anthony Bari.

“Tony… Morales wants out, and now.”

Max listened for a moment, then turned to Morales. “John, Bari says that it’s almost an all or nothing situation for you now. If you want out, you leave the United States. Is that what you want?”

John Morales had known this day would come for some time. That made it easier, but only partially. This was the choice he had wished to avoid. Two years ago he wouldn’t have been able to stand up to it, but now, difficult though it was, he was ready. For one thing, he had seen what following the rules had done to Tim Nickelson, his friend since college.

Nickelson had spent the past two years moving up in the FBI organization. He followed their rules and benefited, moving up quickly, even after failing to get much information on Gamma. He and Jones were now a team, and they were important people to the organization. But Tim no longer thought about the results of what he did. If it was in accordance with the rules, he wanted to hear no more about it, almost as if his mind had been assimilated into the system itself. It seemed to John that a part of Tim’s soul had died… or at least gone into hiding. In one way he was saddened by it. But in another way, he had come too close to being like Tim, he didn’t want to see it anymore.

“And Jones,” he thought, “Jones died years ago.” Max was right; Jones had been a good guy when he was young. It was really institutional life that had killed his soul… his need for respect combined with a system that rewards a person for conformity, and for promotion of the system rather than for goodness and ability.

“I’m ready to do it, Max,” he said. “I can leave.”

Max spoke briefly to Bari and then said goodbye.

“All right, John, we’ll do this now. I presume you have an anonymous email address?”

“Sure, I have a bunch of them.”

“Good.” Max pulled a piece of paper out of his drawer and wrote something on it. “Here’s Bari’s address. Write him tonight, and you do whatever he says. Understand?”

“You bet I do, Max.” John knew that Max was about to give him the ‘young man’ pep talk. He appreciated Max’s paternal care for him, but also felt that he had outgrown it. He pre-empted him. “And don’t tell me about being careful, Max. I appreciate your concern, but this isn’t my first time anymore. I’ll be very careful, and I’ll do what Bari says.” He smiled at Max. “Okay?”

Max understood. “Yeah, kid, that’s okay.” He patted John on the back, and hugged him before he left the office.

* * * * * * *

John,

Here’s the plan:

1. Say nothing to anyone about this.

2. I am setting you up with a new identity (you’ll owe me for this later), including a bank account, ID, and credit card. Drop off some passport photos at my office ASAP.

3. You will buy a cheap car before you leave and register the title in your new name. Then, you will leave on a Friday afternoon and drive to Canada, crossing the border on the road to Vancouver. If asked, you are going to Vancouver to meet friends. From there, you will drive to Montreal, where you will catch a flight to Paris. We have friends there.

4. I will have your new ID and accounts ready in 2-3 weeks and you should leave almost immediately thereafter. Don’t do anything unusual at FBI; do nothing that could trigger any attention.

5. Regarding your future: By now, you must know all about the team of hackers protecting Gamma. These people would love to have you work with them. If you’d like, I can put you in touch with them.

That’s all for now. Get those photos to me right away, and remember to act normally. Don’t start selling-off your stuff. If you need to store anything, ask Martin to handle it. I’ll let him know what you’re up to.

Bari

* * * * * * *

Although it was early summer, the weather in eastern Canada was chilly and windy. Phillip had made his way to Sydney by plane, with a one-night stop-over in Toronto,

where he spent the evening with one of his sons-in-law who was working there for the week.

Phillip checked-in to the Windsor Hotel in Sydney two full days before he was supposed to show up at Skunk 2, and forced himself to rest completely. He stayed in bed half the time, ordered room service for his meals, and even had a masseur come in once a day. Although his health was excellent, Phillip was now well into his fifties. He knew that this was a critical point in his life. If he took good care of himself now, repairing the stress-damage of his earlier years and rebuilding his reserves, he could live a very long, very active life. But he had pushed his limits far too often all the way into his fifties. If he had kept it up only a few more years, the damage would have been irreversible.

The next morning, Phillip awoke very early and pulled-on his gym clothes, planning on spending half an hour on a stair-climber machine. But as he dressed, he opened his window and was surprised by the crisp breeze. Instead of going to the workout room, he pulled on a sweatshirt and took a long walk through Sydney and watched the city come to life. It was just after four thirty a.m. as Phillip hit the street, and there was no action yet to be seen. Then, step-by-step, the city woke up. First were the bakery trucks and newspaper deliveries. Then deliveries of laundry, of groceries, and of half a dozen other goods. Then came the first cars full of people getting to their early jobs. By the time the sun came up, there was a low hum of activity. Then, within another hour, the city was fully-engaged in the thousands of intertwined activities that kept the better part of two provinces moving and growing. What two days of complete rest were to Phillip's body, this was to his soul. He walked for two hours, smiling at the men and women who were the very life of that city, and offering them his own silent worship.

That afternoon Phillip stopped in at the Sydney Skunk Works for the last time. They would be entirely out of the facility in only a few more days. Mordecai had sold the chemical company and most of the team was moving to Tokyo, where a new facility was being prepared. While most of them had already gone, a few were left, along with a variety of movers and construction workers. The entire facility was more a construction site than a laboratory now. Phillip watched as the workers removed the sign saying "We Have No Rules Here: We're Trying To Accomplish Something!" The feeling was bittersweet, knowing on one hand that he would never see this place again, and on the other, that the sign and everything else were being moved to a new place that would be not only as good, but better. In fact, the Tokyo facility was now necessary. In Tokyo, they would have fast, easy access to any type of laboratory and testing facility. They didn't have that in Sydney, and shipping samples back and forth to laboratories was not only time-consuming, but clumsy. Tokyo had everything they wanted, and was large enough that they wouldn't stand out.

And, of course, they needed to leave Sydney. Two years in one place is generally the maximum safe stay for things that are not approved by a government, and they

were approaching that time. There had been no problems, but they had clearly stayed long enough.

These thoughts led Phillip again to thinking about getting his family out of the US. He didn't want them there if things got ugly; he could not rule out the possibility that they'd go after his kids in order to hurt him. Two of his children, Anna and Joel, were already living in Europe, but Rachel and Sarah remained in the US. It was Rachel's husband that Phillip had talked to a few nights before. He seemed interested in getting a job transfer to either Australia or New Zealand. This was a bit far for Phillip's liking, but they were nice places, and it would certainly remove them from the US. Sarah would be happy enough to leave, but she was waiting for a good job offer.

As it later became apparent, Phillip was far from the only parent concerned that his children might face a difficult life in the United States. Few people had expected this, but in retrospect, there was a certain logic to it. With all of the recent problems of terrorism, financial scandals and flamboyant crimes, a host of authoritarian laws and regulations had been implemented. People were regularly being searched, there were increasing road blocks, continual government inspection of bank records, ridiculous tax penalties, and surveillance agencies that were invading every area of life.

In most nations there is a common national group, but not in the US. Almost every person there is the descendant of someone who ran away from some other place. Grandpa fled the old country, and passed along the ideals that led him to it. As much as the rulers had tried long and hard to create an American mythos that would hold people to their territory, none of the ideas had taken hold sufficiently.

At one time, there was the idea that the US was the terminus of the great east-to-west movement of progress. Progress, however, had long gone out of style. Then there was the idea that the US was the land of freedom. This was becoming a hard sell. There was, of course, the great image of the US as the winner of the Second World War, liberating Europe from Hitler. Obviously there was some truth to this, but the story had been overplayed and people were losing interest in it.

Given all of this, it might have been apparent that a considerable number of Americans would be ready to run away again, but no one really saw it coming; especially since it was a reverse situation. Traditionally, it had been the poor who would be most eager to leave; this time it was the most productive. Again, it should have been obvious. In the old days, the poor were the oppressed. Now, it was the productive who were oppressed. Interestingly, many of them went back to the places their families had originally come from.

* * * * * * *

At about the sixth month of Frances' second pregnancy, Anna Donson, Phillip and Julia's oldest, came to visit, bringing her own daughters, Kristin and Michelle.

When Anna was a girl, she knew James Farber as "Uncle Jim." So, she knew James quite well, but had spent only a few hours with Frances at the time of the wedding, which was just after Anna and her family had moved to London. She and her husband, Larry, had met in college and had both worked in the physics department at Arizona State until Kristin was born, now six years ago. Larry and Anna had been given the name 'The His and Hers Physicists' some years earlier. And while the term was a bit insulting to Anna, the fact that she had married a man with such similar interests to her own suited her exceptionally well. In temperament, Anna was more Phillip's child than she was Julia's. She had Phillip's unconscious, powerful focus. Living with a man with different passions and direction than her own would have been the source of endless difficulties and compromises, much like those that her mother was pushed into for so long.

Anna stopped working full-time before Kristin was born, but still did about ten hours per week of freelance work for the University. They moved to London when Larry was offered a teaching position at Imperial College. The money was good, there were future research projects promised, and they loved London. The fact that her father was thrilled with the decision was not much of an issue to Anna. It was nice that he was happy, but that was not at all among their reasons for taking the position. All of the Donson children were fiercely independent; any control that either Phillip or Julia had over them was long gone. The children would listen to their parents' opinions, but made up their own minds, and had for a long time.

The visit began very pleasantly. Anna and Frances, who were less than six years apart in age, became instant friends, and Frances loved having two little girls in her house. Larry had been offered the chance to spend six weeks in Geneva working at the CERN accelerator, so it was a perfect time to go see Frances and Uncle Jim.

By the time the first week was over, Anna and Frances were closer to each other than they were to any other people in the world, save their spouses and their immediate families. James was in-and-out, taking advantage of the visit to make a few business trips.

Anna and her daughters slept in the house's large attic, which was finished well enough for comfortable living. Kristin and Michelle each had their own beds and their own dressers. They thought the whole experience was great fun. Frances and Anna ended up taking turns getting up in the morning to take care of the children, who rose with the first light. There was no plan to this – it was spontaneous. Frances saw that Anna was especially tired one morning and just jumped into action, closing the door to the attic so Anna would not be interrupted, and not allowing the children to go upstairs until Anna was awake. Anna returned the favor the next day, and they simply continued the practice – the less tired mother getting up, and letting the more tired mom sleep in.

Kristin, Anna's six-year-old, busied herself with taking care of the baby, especially feeding her, and helping to change diapers. Michelle was only three, so she was not able to do much, but she was excellent at helping baby Emily with her toys, especially when Emily was in her crib and the toys fell out.

There was a near-panic every time Frances' baby started to kick, with both Kristen and Michelle desperate to feel it, and trying to put Emily's hand on Frances' stomach to feel it as well. Minor disagreements were handled by the closest mother; it was simply more efficient that way, and made life more enjoyable for both women. They spent their days teaching the older children, running out for English newspapers, discussing their lives and their husbands, teaching each other about science and economics, and occasionally hiring babysitters and taking an evening out. When James was in town, he seemed to slide into the existing situation and fill whatever slots the ladies left open for him. Frequently he rose first in the morning and took care of breakfast for the children. When he did, the ladies tried to cook a dinner that he especially liked.

Slowly, they began to realize that there was something about this lifestyle that they liked. Not that they would want to give up their private homes, but that they enjoyed living this way some of the time.

* * * * * * *

"Frances, I think I just made some trouble for you."

Anna had taken her daughters to a local park. Emily had been taking a nap, and her girls were feeling energetic. So, she bundled them up in warm clothes – it was late November – and let them play in the park while she sat on a bench, read a newspaper, and conversed with the local mothers. Now, she was back at the house, talking of trouble.

"What happened, Anna? Is everything all right?"

"Yes, mostly all right, Frances. But I think I just made a few of your neighbors angry at you."

Frances couldn't imagine what Anna could have done to anger people. Anna was always polite and kind. "What is it Anna?"

Anna looked down at the floor and seemed a bit guilty. "Well," she said, then stopped. She froze for a fraction of a second, raised her head, and took on an expression of determination. She spoke firmly. "I have never lied to my children, Frances." Frances nodded and waited for Anna to continue. "And I have never told them the usual fairy tales… including Santa Claus."

Frances was starting to see the picture. Children in the park, Santa Claus… or at least a Dutch variation, Sinterklaas, who somehow sails in from Spain with gifts for the children on 5 December.

"Anyway, Kristin was playing in the park with the other children, several of whom spoke English rather well. And the conversations came around to their version of Santa and Christmas."

"Oh, I understand," said Frances, "Kristin simply told them the truth, which would have seemed completely natural to her."

"Right."

"So, did the other children give her a hard time?"

No, Frances, that's the problem. The other children were confused, and ran to their mothers, asking about it. It was the mothers who gave me a hard time."

"Whoa! How bad was it?"

"Well, I was going to just pass it off, make some conciliatory comments, and leave, but Kristen was next to me, and the other mothers wanted me to chastise her. I had no choice but to defend my daughter… which I did pretty convincingly, I think."

"What did you say?"

"Oh, just what you would expect, that my daughter told the truth, and that I was proud of her for doing it… that I wasn't going to lie to my children just to make their lies successful."

Amidst her feelings of horror for the boorish behavior of her neighbors and her concerns for her future in the community, she couldn't help but laugh. "Yes, this certainly is the child of Phillip and Julia," she thought to herself. She hugged Anna. "Don't worry about it, Anna, if I can't smooth it over with these people, I'll just move somewhere else." Frances kept smiling, but in her mind, she froze. She hadn't even thought about those words before they had come out of her mouth. 'Move somewhere else?' Actually, it sounded like something James would say. It was certainly logical, but she hadn't even thought about moving away from Lisse. She more or less planned to stay there until her children were grown. She went back to her discussions with Anna, but made a mental note to come back to this subject and explore it in more detail.

The final week of Anna's visit was another week of joy, with Larry and James both there for the last several days. They did, however, try to avoid the neighbors, hoping to let the situation blow-over.

* * * * * * *

“Then you’ll call me Frances, as soon as the baby comes?”

“Absolutely, Anna, just give me an hour or two to catch my breath.” They both laughed.

The four of them – Anna, Larry, Frances, and James – were standing in the car port on a cold, overcast morning, coffee or tea in hand, loading Anna and Larry’s minivan with children and luggage. With luck, they could make it home that evening, and if not, the next morning.

As the men finished talking and loading, Frances and Anna took a moment to themselves.

“Frances, I really enjoyed this.”

“Yeah, so did I, Anna.”

They both looked off into the distance for just a second or two, and quickly turned back to each other. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” said Frances.

“Like of maybe doing this again after the baby comes, or traveling together?”

“Yes!” shouted Frances, as they hugged each other, and as the men turned around to see what was happening. “But I hadn’t thought about traveling, Anna. That sounds like a good idea.”

“Yeah, I think so. Listen, Larry has a teaching opportunity in Prague in the spring, do you think you’ll be ready to travel at that point?”

Frances did some quick calculations in her mind. Giving birth in February, and traveling perhaps two months later. “Yeah, Anna, I think we could, maybe by mid-April. And I love the idea of a ‘Prague Spring.’ You convince Larry to take the job, and I’ll convince Jim to go.”

* * * * * * *

Frances spent the remaining weeks of the pregnancy very quietly. Jim worked at home. Frances took care of Emily, made sure everything was ready for the new baby, and prepared herself for the intense effort of childbirth. At least this time she knew what to expect.

Baby Jessica Adler was born on February 27th, a week past the due date but perfectly healthy. Frances’ labor this time was shorter and less difficult. Her preparation had paid-off. As with Emily, her local doctor was in attendance as Jessica was born in Frances’ own bedroom, with James assisting.

As planned, Michael and his fiancé Chloe came to Lisse, and stayed in a guest room during the birth and for almost two weeks afterward. They were quickly

succeeded by Frances' parents, then Jim's parents, each of whom stayed for about ten days.

Eight days after birth, Michael thought it safe to give Frances the new version of the Breakers treatment. He took small blood samples for several days before, and for several days after. He also took small samples of Jessica's blood, and some of the blood and cells from her umbilical cord. Michael shipped the samples back to the new lab in Tokyo. It would be a few weeks before any real results were available, and perhaps a lot longer before they could be correctly interpreted, nonetheless, Frances felt much better after this delivery than she had after the first.

* * * * * * *

"Max, when are you going to get onto the Internet?"

Max Kaminski gripped the telephone tightly and swiveled his chair so he would be facing away from his open office door, and would not easily be overheard. "I don't need it, Anthony! I run my business without it, and I've never needed it before. Why should I bother?"

"Because, Max, that's the only way you're going to be able to communicate with young John Morales." He paused just a moment before adding, "And I know you love that kid."

Max didn't speak right away, and Bari waited. "Yeah, I am fond of the kid, that's true."

"And you really can't have phone conversations with him now, Max. You know that they record every international call. Only secure email is good enough, and sometimes I worry about that."

"All right, Tony, will you set me up?"

"I'll tell you what, I'm going to have my computer guy come over and get you going, then I'll come over with some add-on stuff, okay?"

"Sounds fine, Anthony… thanks."

"No problem, Max, you'll like being connected."

John Morales was now in Paris and had been asking Bari about Max. Johnny's father had died when he was still in college and that void only intensified the natural affection that existed between him and Max. Max told him the truth, without any BS, which was unlike anyone else he had ever known. Sometimes it was difficult to hear, but Max tolerated no lies, large or small, ever. John Morales found that rare and valuable.

Within a week, Bari had Max into Gamma, and communicating privately with John Morales. John was in Paris for the time being, but was seriously considering joining the Skunk hackers in Japan. They were eager for him to come, and were busy telling him how much fun Tokyo could be. Morales mentioned something to Max about meeting him there, but Max was beginning to feel his age, and wasn't interested in much travel. His wife's health was a bit fragile as well. He was minded to stay in L.A., and possibly to sell the Tavern. Perhaps a vacation to Japan, but no more than that.

* * * * * * *

There had been a slow stream of news and opinions against private commerce even before the articles Frances wrote for the New York Times, but by this time, they were considerably more frequent, and they were now becoming coordinated in their themes.

Were the various news organizations interested in tracking such things, they would have found that weekly 'talking points' were being produced in an office in the basement of the US White House, then sent to news organizations around the world. And, had they been interested, they might have learned that the best of these items were leaked to a few favored reporters several days before they were distributed in general.

The primary theme of the anti-private commerce stories was that terrorists might be using Gamma. There was little if any evidence of such a thing happening, and the news people always said "possibly," yet the impression was very clear – there was a correlation being made between private commerce and terrorism. This began to show up in the plots of television shows and of movies.

Talk radio and Internet news people were divided on the anti-Gamma campaign. They disliked the government and media use of innuendo and half-truths, but many were unsure whether terrorists really did use the system. The establishment news outlets, on the other hand, spoke with nearly a single voice in their dislike for Gamma, and they all kept repeating the same emotion: Gamma is dangerous, and undermines our way of life.

For the most part, James and Frances didn't concern themselves with Gamma anymore. They had two beautiful children, and raising a family was now their focus. Beside, Gamma didn't need them. There were now millions of people involved. When problems sprung up, there were more than enough people to solve them. Nonetheless, they stayed in-touch, and there was no avoiding the anti-Gamma campaign, which reached the Netherlands on a daily basis. It bothered James. He had seldom ever turned back from a battle, and it hurt him to stand aside without fighting back.

Every so often Frances would find Jim in his office talking back to the television. “So, we’re the evil facilitators of terror, are we? Yeah, well how many terrorists use your telephone system, asshole? Maybe all of them? And how many use the mail? So, why don’t you want to close *them* down? And how about your banking system? *All* money laundering goes through that, so why not shut *it* down? No, you only want to shut down what you don’t control, you lying pricks!”

This concerned Frances at first, but she learned to let Jim blow-off his excess pressure. You can’t ask a life-long fighter to turn away from the fight completely. She gave him back-rubs and reminded him of his annual piece in the Wall Street Journal.

Jim had republished his original essay on its one-year anniversary, but hadn’t taken time to write a second essay, as he had originally planned. He was simply too busy with a new child.

“Jim,” she said as she walked into his office following one of his diatribes, “when are you going to write that second essay?”

He turned, looking both surprised and curious. “I don’t know. Why?”

“Oh, just because it seems like a good idea to me. I know you don’t want to jump back into the battle, but I think it might be good for you to speak your mind.”

His expression was as if he had just discovered something very pleasant. “You know, I think that’s a great idea. Thank you.”

“Your very welcome,” she said, walking out and feeling very happy with herself.

* * * * * * *

“Juan! Juan! Come here!”

There were two men in dark suits at Martha Castro’s front door. She didn’t know who they were, but it was obvious that they represented some government agency. Juan understood from the sound of her voice that there was trouble. He picked up his old Marine knife, reversed his grip to tuck it behind his forearm, and proceeded to the front door, which he chained and opened several inches.

“What do you want?” Juan was a mixture of angry and frightened. Marta was now moving away from the door into the living room.

“Only to make a delivery, Mr. Castro. We only want to deliver something to Mrs. Castro, and to get her assurance that she will deliver it to Mr. Farber. We would have delivered it to Mr. Farber’s office, it has been closed lately. We know that Mrs. Castro still works for him, so we came here. We are sorry for the intrusion.”

“You weren’t very sorry for the intrusion when you threw my wife out of her office in January, and into the cold!”

“That was a very unfortunate event Mr. Castro, and the officers involved have been disciplined. We are sorry. It will not happen again.”

Juan was partially pacified, and less scared. At least they apologized. He glanced at Marta to make sure she had heard the apology. She ever-so-slightly nodded her head. It would have been almost imperceptible to anyone else, but Juan understood her acknowledgment.

“So what is it you want Marta to deliver for you?”

“Just this letter Mr. Castro.”

“And then you don’t come here any more!”

“That will be fine Mr. Castro. After this, we will not bother you again.”

“Good… And Marta only works for Mr. Farber for three more months, you understand? Then she retires!”

“Yes sir, we understand. May Mrs. Castro talk to us for one moment, sir?”

Marta was walking up at the same time, and extended her hand to take the letter.

“What is it you want me to do?”

“Only to get this to Mr. Farber ma’am.”

“I don’t see Mr. Farber anymore.”

“Yes ma’am, but if you could just tell him that you have it.”

Marta thought for a few seconds, which to her seemed a minute. “I will give it to his attorney.”

The men looked at each other. “That will be fine ma’am. Good night.” And with that, they walked away.

Marta opened the envelope and looked at the document.

“What is it Marta?”

“Well… it looks like an invitation for Mr. Farber… to something in Germany.” Juan and Marta looked at each other, wondering what it meant. “I’ll go send it now to Mr. Farber, Juan.”

Marta turned on the computer that Farber had sent to her, logged-on, and sent an encrypted email to Farber’s secure address.

Hello Mr. Farber,

I just had two more government men, this time at my door. But no problem this time. Juan answered the door for me, and there was no problem. They

did give me a letter for you. It is short, so I will just type the contents for you here.

- - - -

To: James Farber

Mr. Farber,

Please accept this invitation to the annual meeting of the Bilderberg group. We will be meeting this year at the Maratime Hotel complex in Bonn, Germany from 21 through 24 August. Your name will be placed on the list for admittance and a room will be reserved for you. You are welcome to bring one companion. Many of our members are very anxious to discuss private commerce and its implications for the future.

In the event that you may be worried about your personal security, please be assured that you have my personal guarantee of safe, unobstructed passage to and from our meetings. You will not be interfered with.

Sincerely,

Peter A. Van Vlack

Central Director General,

Federal Republic of Germany

- - - -

That is all there is Mr. Farber. I hope this is good news. I told the agents that I would give this to Mr. Miller, but when I opened it I found it was easy just to send it to you. I will give it to Mr. Miller tomorrow while I visit him about our lawsuit against the FBI for throwing me out in the cold. If we get the settlement Mr. Miller expects, Juan and I will travel around the world, then maybe find a warm place to retire.

Thank you,

Marta

* * * * * * *

Martha,

Thank you for sending me the note. I'm not sure if it's good news or not. I'm not going to these meetings, although I might send a friend in my place. We'll see.

Don't tell anyone, but when you take your trip (Miller assures me that you'll have a nice settlement very soon), let me know your schedule through

Europe. We'll have to be kind of secretive about it, but I'll bring you and Juan to our house here and you can see my daughters.

I hope it will be soon.

James Farber

* * * * * * *

"Phillip, this is James."

Phillip was on his way to London, to visit Anna and her family, then on to Lyon to see his son, Joel. He was looking forward to a couple of weeks of playing dad and grandpa, and visiting some friends.

"Hey Jim, how are Frances and the new baby?"

"Oh, they're great. But listen, I have something for you here."

"Oh yeah, what's that?"

Jim laughed before he spoke. "Well, believe it or not, I have an invitation signed by the Central Director General of Germany, inviting me to the annual meeting of the Bilderberg Group. Can you believe that?"

"C'mon, you're not serious, are you?"

"Completely. They want to talk about private commerce."

"Whoa… so, are you going to go?"

"Nah. I've got two babies and I've retired from that stuff, at least until my kids are grown. I thought you might want to go."

"Well… I'm not so sure… I've been trying to retire too."

"Yeah, I know. But this is a ticket to the inner sanctum, Phillip. That's your specialty, not mine."

"I don't know, Jim."

"Okay, that's fine by me, but it might be very helpful for to talk to some of these people. If nothing else it would help to locate our enemies."

"Well, that is true. But they might just be trying to get their hands on one of us."

"Yeah, that's possible, and they're certainly aware of that concern. This Director – and he is a major figure – gives me his personal guarantee of safety in the invitation… not that I would put too much faith in that. I'll tell you what… I'll write back to them telling them that I can't come, but that I have someone who could represent me. We'll see what they say, and you can think about it in the mean time. Sound good?"

“Sounds very good, Jim. Well, well… this will be interesting. The big annual gathering of the establishment… Presidents, key Legislators, top media people, financial Titans… the whole lot of them.”

“Like I said, crossing intellectual swords with those people would suit you far better than it would me. Why don’t you talk it over with McCoy, and see if he thinks it could be safe.”

“Yeah, I will.” Then Phillip stopped. Julia had told him for years that he was going to work himself to death; that he’d never be able to turn down the next cool project, and that he’d kill himself through overwork, just like a lot of his heroes had done. “But, Jim…”

“Yes, Phillip?”

“When I get done with this one, I’m getting out… all the way out. No more projects, no more fights. I’m quitting indefinitely.”

“I don’t blame you Phillip. So, what are you going to do when you quit?”

“I think I’m going to alternate between playing grandpa, traveling, and laying around on beaches. The truth is, if I don’t get away from the tumult for a while, I probably won’t live long.”

“Okay then, I’ll expect you to vanish from public view in September. Might I suggest that you publish a few more essays between now and then? I’d like you to cover all of the essential subjects.”

Phillip smiled. “You bet, Jim, I’ll do that.”

“Great, Phillip. And I’ll let you know when I hear back from the Director. I’ll send you a copy of the invitation, too. Bye.”

* * * * * * *

It was a year of war for the minds of common men. Knowledge of the Gamma markets was everywhere, and every ‘right-thinking’ figure stood in opposition to them. Every leader of any organization that received government money was issuing statements to their people that unregulated commerce would destroy them. Patriotic appeals were made in dozens of countries, all drawing upon allegiance to ‘the land of our fathers,’ ‘our ancestral home,’ or a dozen other slogans. Appeals were made to elderly people to talk to their grandchildren… that if the Gamma markets kept up their pensions and government checks would stop. Minority groups blamed Gamma for any reduction in government spending, calling Gamma racist, because it hurt minorities worse than it did other people.

At first the politicians didn’t want to address Gamma directly, fearing that they would simply draw more people to it. But now they were passing ‘fugitive money’

laws, and attempting to track down all money that was made on their land then moved elsewhere before it was taxed. They began to criticize the Internet as uncivilized and dangerous. Businesses were required to submit monthly reports of all payments they made to any outside contractor or service. Huge fines were levied for non-compliance. Rewards were placed for the recovery of untaxed money, and anyone whose information led to a recovery was to be paid one third of the amount recovered.

The talk-radio hosts were still divided, and some radio stations were pressured into removing broadcasters that defended Gamma. The most popular Internet sites, which had previously been divided half for Gamma and half against, were now three fourths in favor of private commerce. The attacks on the Internet had convinced them that the governments no longer deserved the benefit of the doubt.

Graffiti began appearing in London and New York, usually in gold and white, saying *Opt Out* or *Gamma*. Similar graffiti was found in other cities shortly thereafter.

The markets themselves continued to grow. Huge numbers of people in Asia were joining; in fact, it had become a popular symbol of individuality to do business in one of the Japanese Gamma markets. People in Cuba, North Korea, Burma, and the other remaining dictatorships were logging-in to any possible Gamma market as soon as an Internet connection could be found. Almost every educated person in such a situation was looking to Gamma as a place to sell their services for a fair price. A great number of people played good establishment boy during the day, while secretly a player in Gamma by night – or when no one was watching them at work. Rumors of stunning new inventions began to circulate. New drugs were available, new genetic treatments, even cloned organs were available, but only in the private digital economy. The regulated economy had most of these treatments tied-up in approvals for seven to ten years, or more. And that, after you found and paid the right people to get your product approved. In private digital economy the customer did his own safety checks, but you could have the treatment you want, when you want.

Beside this, a trade war was breaking out. The Europeans were blaming American companies for exporting antisocial ideas and placing tariffs on US goods. The US, in return, raised their already-high tariffs on European products. Then they both raised tariffs on Asian goods, which they couldn't allow to enter their economies at a relative discount. Large companies and political contributors were calling their politicians daily, making sure that their business would either be protected or avenged. It was getting out of hand, and the usual G8 manipulation of the stock and precious metals markets was beginning to fail. Scapegoats would have to be made, and quickly.

* * * * * * *

James Farber was awakened at four o'clock in the morning with Frances twisting and sweating, obviously in a nightmare. As he debated whether to wake her, the dream began to subside, and she opened her eyes.

"Frances, are you all right?"

"Uh… Jim. Oh, that was a very unpleasant dream."

"Yeah, I could tell… What was it?"

She gestured for him to wait a few seconds, then rolled over to a more comfortable position. "Well… in the dream, I was going about my daily chores, and passed by a mirror on our wall. Something about the mirror caught my attention, and I stopped to take a good look." She paused, looking uncomfortable. "And when I looked at it, I could see everything else in the house, but couldn't see myself!"

"Whoa… that's kind of spooky."

"Yeah, it was. But that wasn't all."

"Go on," Jim said, wondering what was happening within Frances to cause such a dream. He wondered if it had anything to do with the Breakers treatment after Jessica was born.

"Well, I should back up and say that I had almost the same dream a few days ago. A few details were different, but it was essentially the same." Now Jim was fairly sure that there was some substance to this dream, not just a too-full belly.

"Anyway, I looked again, and still couldn't see myself. So I went up to our little bathroom upstairs, closed the door, and went to my own mirror. I could see myself this time, which made me feel better, but as I stared at myself, I noticed that there was something way up above my upper teeth, almost up behind my eyes. I pulled my upper lip back as far as I could, and saw that there was some sort of implant there. It also seemed like I had known all about it when it was put in, but somehow I had forgotten. Am I making sense?"

"Well, yeah, you are, Frances, but it sounds pretty nasty."

"Oh yeah?" she laughed just a little, "well, this implant had some sort of wires attached to it, that went into my head, how's that?"

"That's worse."

"Yeah. Anyway, this is where the dream stopped the first time. But this time I made myself stay there and inspect the implant… and then I forced myself to grab it and pull it out of my head. Then I searched the other side of my mouth, found another one, and pulled that one out too. Funny thing is, once I pulled them out, they didn't look so scary." She began to smile now. Jim wondered why, but waited rather than asked.

"Then, Jim, I threw the implants away and walked back downstairs to the mirror."

“And this time you could see yourself?”

“And this time I could see myself… bright and shining.”

* * * * * * *

Three weeks later, it began to happen again. Frances seemed to be having a bad dream, waking Jim up. But this time, the dreams seemed to lead nowhere. They were dark, unpleasant dreams of Frances having something stolen from her and her life being made exceptionally difficult, with no recourse available. There were no family deaths, and no ghouls jumping out at her; so the dreams didn’t have a horrifying nightmare aspect, but they were very unpleasant and started her days on a very bad note.

Privately, Jim sent a note to Phillip, who seemed to know how to interpret dreams. Phillip replied as follows:

“Honestly, Jim, I think Frances is struggling to make a big step forward. These things are quite murky, so I’m not certain, but to me, this sounds like it is going to resolve itself well. Think of it as her fighting her way through some nasty underbrush to get to a prize. I just hope it’s over soon.”

For almost two weeks, these dreams continued, almost every night, until the dream resolved into one consistent set of impressions. Frances was always being robbed, though she could never quite tell how, why, or by whom. In the dreams, she was always in a place that was dark and misty, so she could barely ascertain her surroundings. The main point of the dream seemed to be that she was endlessly frustrated and felt very dark.

* * * * * * *

It was about five o’clock in the morning, just before sunrise. Frances sat up in bed, breathing hard and wet with sweat. Jim sensed something wrong and sat up simultaneously.

“Again?”

She nodded. “Yes, but I got to the end this time, Jim… Although I’m not sure I understand it.”

“Okay, breathe a little bit first. Are you all right?”

“Yes… I am, just a bit over-wrought.”

“Okay, can you tell me about it?”

She turned and sat on the edge of the bed, with her feet on the floor. Jim slid himself next to her and waited for her to speak.

"Okay," she said, taking a few seconds to steady herself, "Here's what happened… I was in this same dark place, and feeling very dark… again my things were taken away, and I didn't know why. Actually, it seemed that I was being very perceptive even to know that there was theft involved… to sense anything distinct beside just a darkness." She was speaking slowly and carefully. Jim wanted to comfort her but not to intrude, so he sat close to her and waited.

"I began to see a little bit better. And I could see a car in front of me, and somehow I knew it was mine. And there was a man taking things out of it… stealing my things. I stood there for a while, not knowing what to do. The man didn't seem to notice me at all. But I knew that those were my things he was taking. I had to do something, but I tried, and I couldn't speak. I wanted to yell at him, and nothing came out of my mouth, almost as if those muscles were paralyzed."

She stopped. Again, Jim considered putting his arm around her and hugging her, but he just didn't think that was right.

"Then…" She turned to Jim. "I looked down and gathered whatever strength I could find in myself. Then I looked back up at the man taking my stuff, and said, 'No.' My strength was so small that the words were quieter than I'm using right now, almost a whisper, although I was trying to yell as loudly as I could. But… the man heard me! He turned to see who had spoken… I was scared, wondering if he'd attack me. As weak as I felt, I don't think I could have put up much of a fight. But he ran off, which scared me again, because it looked like he ran almost right for me. But as he approached, he just disappeared… like he ran out of the frame of a movie."

She stopped now, seemingly to catch her strength again.

"Is that all, Babe?"

"No, there's more, James. Hang on."

Now he did put his arm around her. "Take your time, Doll, it's okay now."

They sat together for another half minute or so, then she straightened herself to finish. "Okay… after the man had run off, I just stood there, wondering. I could see the car in front of me, and I was relieved that it was no longer being stolen from, but everything was still so dark and confused. And then…" She took a deep breath and tried to keep her focus so she could explain it correctly.

"And then something in front of me began to move… and I saw a workman carrying off a huge piece of dark plate glass that had been in front of me the whole time. I looked more carefully, and there was a man on each end of a huge piece of darkened glass. It had been in front of me the whole time, and I hadn't known it. I thought I was facing the man who was stealing from me, but I wasn't. That's why he seemed to run off into nowhere. He and the car had actually been behind me!"

“And that’s all?”

“That’s it. After that I woke up.”

“Wow.”

As the sun began to stream into the house, Emily, as was her habit, began to call out for either Mommy or Daddy, wanting to get out of her crib and begin exploring for another day. The child was amazingly inquisitive; she wanted to see everything, to feel it, to taste it, to know it. James stepped in front of Frances to go to Emily and suggested to Frances that she should take a shower and regroup. She thanked him and did so. This would give her a bit more time before Jessica would arise, hungry as always and desperate to nurse.

Jim changed Emily then fed her. By the time Frances was finished with her shower, Jessica was up and crying for her. Frances wrapped herself in a large towel, carried Jessica into her bedroom, and fed her there. When they were done, she carried Jessica back to the nursery and changed her. From the window she saw that James had put Emily into some warm clothes, taken her out to the back yard, and was alternating between watching Emily and reading his Wall Street Journal, while drinking a large cup of coffee.

But James was not reading the paper as closely as it appeared. He kept thinking about the dream. He had a deep feeling that there was something important about it, and that he didn’t understand it. Emily started to reach for a clay flower pot that was on top of an old outdoor table, which caught his attention. He was about to call to Emily and tell her to stop, that she could get hurt, but somehow that felt wrong this time. He didn’t know why, but Jim had learned years ago to first pay attention to such instincts and to figure them out later. He got up and walked over to the child.

“Emily, look at me.” She did. “Emily, remember the man you saw with the hurt on his arm?” Emily had noticed a prominent scar on the arm of a neighbor a few days before, and it had taken them a while to explain to her that bad hurts don’t always go away. He waited until it looked like she understood sufficiently.

“Emily, don’t let your arm get a big hurt. You see this pot?”

“Yes,” she said, in her small two-year-old voice.

“Here, feel how heavy it is.” He brought the pot down to the ground and tipped it so she could place her hands against it and feel its weight. He showed her twice, to make sure she grasped the concept. “Now, Emily, if you pull on this bottom part here, this top part could fall and give you a big hurt. Protect your arm from that Emily. You like your arm, right?” He was speaking slowly, trying to use only words that he knew she understood, which wasn’t easy. She nodded that she did understand. “Then, if you like your arm, keep it away from hurts, okay?”

She looked at him with recognition, agreeing that keeping her arm safe was a good thing. Then he picked her up, and explained to her how large, heavy things could fall.

He repeated the lesson to make sure she understood, and placed her back on the ground, going back to his coffee and newspaper.

"So, getting a bit of that nice frigid air?" Frances was smiling, carrying a thoroughly bundled baby Jessica in a baby chair, and her own cup of coffee. She sat down and picked up one section of the paper.

"Yeah," said Jim, "I thought that since it wasn't too cold, I'd take advantage of it and let Emily get some air too. I see our baby woke up as well, huh?" He was playing with Jessica, and appreciating the miracle of reproduction. "Just amazing," was all he said. After a moment, he sat back in his chair and picked up the paper. But, again, he didn't read much. He was sure Frances would soon be trying to find the meaning of her dream, and he was sure that the answer would have to come from her, not from him. He wondered if he could do anything to help her find it.

"Jim, do you think that dream has any relevance or meaning?"

"Oh, yeah, I do."

"Then tell me why."

"Well… because it was roiling around inside of you for a long time, and seemed to push very hard to make its way to your consciousness. I think there had to be a good reason for that."

"Huh… well, I think I agree, but that leave us with the question of what it means. Any ideas?"

He tried to think of something that would be helpful, but didn't come up with anything. "No, nothing but the obvious… that you were feeling very dark because your goods were being taken, that you couldn't stop it, and that you eventually gathered strength enough to say no, and that the theft then stopped. I'm afraid I don't know what to think of the plate glass."

She looked down, deep in thought. Jim kept an eye on the children to compensate.

"I think there's something very important about that last part, Jim, but I don't know what." She seemed stuck, unable to move forward.

"All right, sit up." He took a commanding tone in his voice now; something he never did when speaking to Frances. She sat up. "Work with me, Frances."

He was speaking fast now, as if directing players in a sporting event, or in a military exercise.

"We begin with your goods being stolen, and you feeling very bad as the result. Yes?"

"Yes," she said, matching his tone and intensity. "But the theft was not necessarily literal theft… it was more symbolic… the loss of important things that were mine."

"Good. And the car?"

“Irrelevant, just a tool to help the dream make sense.” She wasn’t sure how she knew that, but it dawned on her just before she opened her mouth.

“Now, what about the difficulty of saying ‘No’?”

“I’m not altogether sure, but it seemed like the ability to say no was something I should properly have had, but the ability had atrophied long ago, and was barely functional.”

“Anything else on saying No?”

“Nothing.”

“Fine. Then what about the glass? It was dark, correct?”

“Correct.”

“And you didn’t notice it before the end?”

“Not at all.”

“Then why is the glass significant? What does it mean?”

“I don’t know, Jim.” She was beginning to get tired of his demands and shot him a look that expressed her irritation. But instead of reacting as she expected, he raised his voice to just below the level that would cause concern to their neighbors, and increased his intensity.

“But what if you *did* know, Frances? What would that answer be?” She looked at him blankly, bristling at the illogic of his statement. Now his eyes were very demanding, as well as his voice. “You heard me! What if you did know the answer? What would it be? Tell me now!”

In surprise and anger, she yelled back at him. “How the hell should I know? It took my whole field of view…” Something was coming together in her mind. Jim had seen this look on her face before, but never this pronounced. “And it was dark, and it misdirected my vision away from the thief!”

“And… ?”

“And that’s how it is with people! They are always looking at the negative, at the dark, at the ugly. That’s what they see, and no more. They sense the thefts, but they can’t find them, can’t really react to them… they’re always looking in the wrong place!”

She understood, but he wasn’t so sure he did. She got up from her chair and paced around the yard, ignoring him, ignoring the children, and talking quietly but intently to herself.

After several minutes, she turned and said, “Why did you do that to me? Push me like that?”

“Because I thought it was necessary.” She looked slightly hurt, so he stood, walked to her, hugged her, and said, “Don’t worry, I have no plans to do it again… and I

wouldn't have risked it if I didn't think that in retrospect you would have wanted me to." The fact that he was thinking of what she would have wanted, made her feel better.

It was later that afternoon when she walked into his office where he was working.

"What if I *did* know?"

He looked up and smiled.

"I say I have no idea, and you demand to know what I think the answer would be if I did know? What kind of stupid word-play is that?"

He laughed loudly, pushed his chair back from the desk, and motioned to her to come to him. He sat her in his lap, looked up softly at her, and said, "Well, it worked, didn't it?"

Now she laughed. "Yeah, I guess it did, but where on earth did you come up with that one?"

He smiled and gave her a mischievous glance.

"Phillip!" she said.

"Yep," he half-laughed, as Emily waddled into the room. Frances picked her up.

"You want to illuminate a bit?"

He was still laughing slightly. "Sure… that's one of Phillip's secret tricks when he needs to figure something out. He says he changes his consciousness… however that is done… and demands answers of himself. He says he got the idea from a scripture that says 'You know all things'… that he decided to act as though that verse was actually true, and demanded answers of himself."

Frances tilted and shook her head. "This is no normal guy, is he?"

The next morning – and with the dream not returning – Frances decided to ask Phillip about the subject of a negative focus. At first she was going to call, but then she decided to write instead. That way she would have a permanent record of everything in her notes. Beside, she wasn't sure where Phillip was. She wrote two and a half pages, and sent them.

* * * * * * *

Meanwhile, John Morales was settling into the strangeness of Tokyo and to the adventure of new friends. His exit from the United States had been uneventful and he had thoroughly enjoyed his four-week stay in Paris. He had never been there before, and it was better than he had expected.

The people he met at the Skunk Works were overwhelmingly English-speaking, and he was spending enough time with them that the strangeness of Tokyo didn't seem to press in on him. In fact, Tokyo seemed more like a place he was just passing through, and he found it surprisingly liberating to be in a place that he didn't feel beholden to.

His work began as he had expected. He fit in very well with the other computer jocks, trading tips on breaking passwords, notes on how various systems worked, who had broken into what previously, and so on. They even surprised him by showing him the backdoors for at least a dozen government systems – US, EU, and UN. It turned out that they got considerable help from the old programmers who built the systems originally. Always an anti-authoritarian and free-minded breed, these people sent over their secrets when they saw Gamma attacked. This explained how the Hunters were so successful. John had guessed that they were highly skilled (which they were), but he couldn't imagine that they could be *that* good. Having the secret backdoors explained a lot.

But as well as Morales got along with the Hunters, he seemed to be drawn elsewhere… to the researchers. Several times per day, he found himself walking over to one group or another, and enquiring about their work. What were they trying to prove? How was the experiment constructed? How were variables eliminated? In all his life, he had never even imagined himself doing scientific research… it was not something he ever saw, or had even considered within his realm of possibilities. Yet when he actually confronted it, he was irresistibly drawn to it.

After two weeks of nonstop questions, a group of researchers offered Morales a half-time job managing a medical experiment. He enjoyed it immensely, and stole away whatever free time he could find to read biochemistry texts.

* * * * * * *

Hi Frances,

Sorry it took so long to get back with you. I've been traveling with a few of my grandkids.

I am so pleased you are breaking new ground in this; it is one of the subjects I came across years ago, and wanted to really focus on, but didn't get to.

OK, here are some thoughts:

I first came across this idea in the work of one of the 20th Century's great Christian thinkers, a man named Kenyon. He wrote about sin-conscious versus righteousness-consciousness. He said that the work of Christ was to remove us from a consciousness focused on our sins (deficits), to a

consciousness focused on our righteousness (assets). Did you know that there is even a scripture that says, “You are the righteousness of God?” What would someone who truly thought of himself that way be like? (A lot better than most people, I think.) What would it be like to have no sense of built-in fault and weakness? But rather to see and appreciate our own innate goodness, our abilities, and our beautiful possibilities.

Anyway, Kenyon is obviously coming at this from a purely religious perspective, but he is right; the central picture of the austere, judging God, of the judging ruler (same thing, writ small), of the chastising parent (smaller still) - all of these teach people to look at deficits and to interpret everything as if it were or could be a negative thing… to examine every neutral thing for an aspect that could cause pain, embarrassment, or loss. Then, all of the anti-self ideas that humanity swims in fill any leftover gaps and seal the mind. It is all a mistake. It is all harmful. It must all be eliminated if we hope to have healthy souls. And if you try, you can recast every “thou shalt not” as an opportunity to do good.

Beside all of this, the negative focus is simply a logical error. Proper thinking is to examine positive and negative aspects on equal weightings… at equal volumes, if you will. To radically over-weight the negatives and to pass over the positives, as is endemic in humanity now, is simply an error. It cannot help but whither the soul, and leads to endless pain and disaster.

What you have come upon, Frances, is a monumental issue.

Congratulations!

Phillip

* * * * * * *

James had been out this day, running a few errands in Amsterdam and conducting one meeting. He got home just before dinner and happened to notice Frances’ letter from Phillip, which she had printed, and had apparently been reviewing. He thought he would ask her about it during dinner, but feeding and cleaning the children kept him from it. After dinner, however, he convinced Frances to get a neighbor girl to watch the children for them, and to take a walk together. The night was cold, but she agreed.

As they made a circuit around Lisse, their conversation made its way from the children to the dream and Phillip’s comments. Frances explained her letter to Phillip and his response.

“And do you really think it’s as big a deal as Phillip says, Frances?”

Well, I'm not absolutely certain, but it seems very important. From childhood on, it is the negative things that we hear at high volume. When you do something well, you may get a few kind words, but when you do something bad, you get yelling. When you pass tests, that is expected, but when you fail, you get dire consequences. All of this focuses us on negativity."

"Don't you agree, James?"

"Yes, I suppose I do."

"And do you remember Phillip's fairy tale explanation?"

"If you mean that first time we went to dinner, yeah, I think I do."

"Well, those fairy tales leave you focusing on how you fail to meet the standard of the perfect prince, or the perfect princess. Our deficits become central to our minds, and everything else – all of our value – doesn't show up. All we see are our deficits.

"All laws and commandments are negative-centric. Any of them could easily be recast positively, but no one thinks that way. It would seem silly. Humanity has been trained to pay attention to negative things and negative possibilities, and to ignore their own positives."

"Then what's the other side of this, Frances? What should be done?"

"Okay, Jim, look at it this way… What if we gave ourselves credit for our own goodness and abilities? What if we considered how wonderful we were? If we reveled in our abilities? If we gloried in the great things we are able to do, rather than worrying about the things we're not able to do? What if we thought of ourselves as righteous beings walking the planet, rather than as dark beings, always on the verge of error?"

"Well… that would be a huge difference!"

"That's right, and a positive one. Phillip is right. Try this; say, out loud, 'I am righteousness walking the earth in human form'… go ahead."

He felt strange saying such a thing, but he did it anyway.

"Now, Jim, how do you feel when you say that?"

"Different, to be sure." He didn't put the pieces together till a few minutes later, but what it actually reminded him of was saying "I *did* see that man hurt his wife," when he was a boy… one of the key events of his life.

"Did it feel like something inside of you is being reactivated?

"Yeah, maybe so."

"Jim, this is big. I don't even know how people who have their focus restored to neutral, let alone positive, will think of themselves. But that is the way I want my children to grow up." Her gaze grew distant again, and she slowed down.

“Jim, this means that we’re going to have to work hard to keep them from being focused on negatives… the whole world is against it…” She realized just how important this was to her. “Do you agree, Jim?”

“Well, let me think about this for a few minutes, will you Frances?”

“Sure,” she said, and they walked on for another kilometer in silence. She felt like she could barely think or breath, waiting a seemingly endless time for an answer. So still was her mind that she didn’t even worry about what he would say, or prepare any responses.

“You know what, Frances? I think you’re right.” She grabbed his arm and leaned on him in relief. “Now, I’m with you 100 percent in principle on this, but I’m not certain what our best actions should be… although I’m sure you’re right that we’re going to be a lot different than other people, and teach our kids differently.” This made Frances very happy.

“And speaking of that, Frances, I’m getting a bit uncomfortable living here.”

She remembered her conversation with Anna, and that she hadn’t taken time to reexamine it. “You mean the Santa controversy, Jim?”

“Yes, that and a few comments that have been made to me since.”

“What sort of comments?” she asked as they walked around a large puddle in the old road they were following.

“Oh, a few things about us not respecting traditions.”

“I haven’t heard anything.”

“No, the people here are polite, and they wouldn’t say anything to a mother of two young girls, but they have made a few cryptic remarks to me. So, if we are now going to be even more different, I think that we can’t stay here for too long.” He wondered why people always said that moving around was bad, but didn’t take time to explore the question. “Does that make you uncomfortable?”

“No, not really. It makes sense.” Then, she stopped and smiled.

“What?”

“Jim, how would you like to spend a few months in Prague?”

* * * * * * *

Phillip and Steve Caputta found themselves corresponding; not often, but at length. Steve asked important questions, which required lengthy answers. Phillip enjoyed this far more than he thought he would. It had been a long time since he had worked with the Bible, and he found it interesting to go back to it a little bit. It had been long

enough that he could read it now, without religious ideas intruding too powerfully into his mind.

Steve seemed interested in learning how to explain Phillip's ideas to other people. "And to allow himself to believe them as well," Phillip thought. But Phillip also wondered if there was more to it than that. After answering one of Steve's difficult questions, Phillip asked him to meet in one of the Gamma chat rooms to talk further.

SC: Hi Phillip, something's on your mind?

PD: Hey Steve. Yeah, there is. I'm going to retire from all this stuff.

SC: Wow! But how do you retire from thinking?

PD: Oh, I don't mean that I'll stop figuring things out, just that I won't be working on it. All the stuff we talked about didn't just come to me, I studied long and hard. VERY long and VERY hard. But from now on, I'm not going to. I'll still read things that interest me, and I'm sure I'll come up with new ideas, but I'm not going to work at it like I did. And I'm not going to try to get my ideas out to the world.

SC: Are you tired?

PD: Not really tired; more like worn. I pushed against huge obstacles for a lot of years… decades really. I've spent everything I can, and then some. If I don't stop now, I'll end up sick or dead before long. There is only so long you can abuse yourself before you have to pay. Usually you get about 20 years. I'm well beyond that. I'm getting out before it's too late.

SC: I understand. Does this have anything to do with the private markets?

PD: No, nothing except that the markets were tiring work. Beside, they don't need me anymore.

SC: Yeah, they seem to be doing just fine, in spite of all the hatred.

PD: Yes, I'm pleased. But listen, Steve, I want to ask you a couple of questions.

SC: Shoot.

PD: OK. First, if I get any new ideas, can I send them to you for appropriate distribution?

SC: I guess so. Is there anything in particular I should do with them?

PD: Nothing particular, only to get them out in the best ways that you know.

SC: I guess I can do that. I hope I do it in a way that you'd like.

PD: Don't worry about that, Steve. Any benefit that comes from here on out is a bonus.

SC: OK, I'll do it.

PD: Great, I'll just send you emails if I run across anything interesting. But I do have one other thing I'd like you to think about: Have you ever thought about writing?

SC: Phillip, I can't do your job.

PD: I'm not asking you to do my job. Just to do your job… that is, if you think it might be something you'd like to do.

SC: Well, I have thought about it. But I'm not sure I'd be good at it.

PD: I understand, but I wish you'd think about it a bit more. It just takes a lot of effort.

SC: I will. But let me ask you this, what are you hoping I'll write about?

PD: Oh, I guess the things we talked about in Vancouver, for starters.

SC: Damn, you're good.

PD: And by that you mean…

SC: That I've already been thinking about writing that up, more or less as an interview.

PD: Sounds like a great idea to me.

SC: Interesting. I'll pursue that. Almost thou persuadest me to be a writer.

PD: I would that both almost and altogether… except for my scars.

SC: I understand. Any other ideas or advice if I decide to be 'altogether'?

PD: Just to be as honest and truthful as you know how to be. Oh, and do not ever let them turn you into a leader. Let them think and live for themselves. If you can be a bit of a specialist in some areas and throw some good information into the mix, that's great, and that's where you should stop. There are people who desperately want a leader. Rather than thinking and living for themselves, they want someone else to do it for them. Don't try to save them, and don't spell out every little detail for them – let them do it themselves. You see that I am leaving, right? I did my part to help a few individuals wake up, and I'm glad I did. But I'm not their comforter, and I'm not their source. If they don't want to get off their asses and live under their own power, screw 'em. There are plenty of copies of the essays in existence. If thirty years from now they've all vanished, I'll republish. That's all.

There will be people who just want to keep sucking in. And when things get difficult, these are the ones who will turn on you. OK, I've ranted a bit. Anything else?

SC: Only that I want to stay in touch.

PD: No problem, Steve, write any time; just don't ask me to do much.

SC: It's a deal chief, I'll talk to you soon. Enjoy your retirement.

PD: Thanks, Steve. I'll let you know if I come through the Northwest. Bye.

* * * * * * *

"Phillip, you need to be here. Something important is happening."

It was late April, and Europe was blossoming after a long winter. James and Frances had arrived a week earlier, and had been surprised at the number of people who had shown up at the same time. They had told a number of their friends and relatives where they would be, and many of them came. In fact, Frances had specifically told several friends to "bring any nice person you know." Apparently they had. And as it turned out, Anna had said virtually the same thing to many of her friends. By the end of the first week, it was clear that something unusual was happening. Twenty or thirty people were there, and were sending notes to all of their friends, telling them what fun they were having. It seemed like people were simply springing up in some sort of spontaneous generation. Jim flew to Amsterdam for three days and when he came back, most of the faces were new.

Phillip paused for a moment, moved his desk phone to the side, and put his feet up on his desk. "Okay, Jim, tell me what's happening. You're in Prague with Anna and her family, right?"

"Yeah; with Anna, Larry, and a couple of hundred other people."

"A couple of hundred?"

"Yeah, and growing daily."

"Whoa! And what are you all doing there?"

"Well, that's a good question, Phillip. The idea was to come and live here for a few months… hanging out together, helping each other, finding a few adventures, and so on. Well, we told a bunch of friends to come, so did Anna, and then those people told their friends… and it kept going."

Phillip was smiling broadly… he had seen this before. "Kind of spontaneous, Jim?"

"Yeah, completely."

"And a very high caliber of people?"

"Yeah, very high."

"And… a lot of cooperation, trading, and brainstorming?"

"Yeah… what do you know about this?"

Phillip laughed. “Just that those are the types of situations that I live for. Listen, I’m in France with Joel, but I can get out of here in a day or two. Get me a nice room?”

“Count on it.”

“Excellent. Oh, and one more thing, Jim…”

“What’s that?”

“Get some of the boys together, and tell them to buy or lease a few apartment houses and get ready for more people. This is too good to stay small. There are probably ten other guys calling friends right now, just like you’re calling me.”

“Will do. Bye.”

The people kept coming. The quality of the event itself was certainly the core reason for this, but there were contributing factors. An exodus from the US was continuing. With their nation turning slowly into a police state, the most thoughtful people began to find ways to escape, many with plans to return once their nation stepped back from the precipice. The gathering in Prague was the natural place for these people to go – to reorient themselves, and to find other people in their situations.

Beside all this, Gamma people were now being blamed for nearly every imaginable ill, economic, military, or social. Thus far, most people considered such accusations to be simple rhetoric, but they knew the example of National Socialism too well. They did not want to play the role of the Jews, once rhetoric became conventional wisdom. Many decided that it was time to move on.

But in Prague, every day was an adventure. People would wake up in the morning, take care of whatever business they had, then walk down to one of the local cafes to see who was there and what new things were happening. Once you hit one or two of the cafes, you never knew where the day would go, or the next week or month for that matter. There were so many people, so many projects, so many opportunities. And every few days, the crowd had greatly changed. One group would coalesce, combine their talents, refine a new venture, then not be seen in the cafes for days on end, being busy in their apartments, laboratories, or manufacturing shops. Occasionally they would take a morning or an afternoon off and say hello to the café crowds, but they were immersed in their projects, and didn’t want to surface until the project was ready.

There was a stream of new faces. A few old, a few young, a great many in their thirties and forties, all shapes and complexions; all there to get in on the energy of the festival, contributing and feeding from it. When he arrived, Phillip jumped right into the action, and began comparing it to the great medieval trade fairs.

Nearly everyone who came to Prague wondered what would become of this. It seemed unlikely that it would last for a long time. The rulers would have to stop it,

once they really understood what was happening. But at least the rulers were slow, and it could be many months before they moved adequately.

One of the interesting things about this spontaneous festival was that it began to spawn a great many mini-festivals. One group left Prague for Budapest and began to work with the musicians there. Some set up concert tours, others made recordings, some worked on film scores.

Another group went to Estonia, where opportunities beckoned. Some to other places in Europe, some to Asia, and others to New Zealand. But all of them went to the next place for some reason, and usually planning to move again within a year or so. And these were not just single people. Married couples and couples with children were very well represented. "What better education," many of the parents would say, "than to live and work around the world?" These were close, interconnected families… parents deeply involved in their children's lives and education, and the children deeply involved in the parents' lives and work. They functioned very well, and the children were unusually healthy.

By mid-summer, the 'Prague Spring' festival was winding down. Some of the Gammas stayed, but most moved on. The experiment had been a success, and it was now widely known how wonderful such events could be. By late summer, there were at least four similar festivals in Helsinki, Tallinn, Sydney, and Bangkok.

Chapter Seven

Hotel Maratime sits on one of the main streets of Bonn, Germany, with several associated buildings located just across that street. Bonn was the capital of Western Germany until the reunification, and the Maratime complex was built for secure use by government officials. The hotel itself was a modern facility with glass walls, huge meeting rooms and auditoriums, spacious hallways, and every modern amenity. Security for the Bilderberg meeting was very tight, as it was for the dozens of other meetings held there every year, mostly for German, European and UN governmental groups. There were soldiers, camouflaged vehicles, and coordinators with radios lining the driveways to the building. The attendees, in typical fashion, acted as if the security people were invisible.

Phillip and Bill McCoy had flown to Cologne that morning, and taken two trains to arrive within a few hundred meters of the Maratime. They walked up to the hotel, smiling at a couple of friendly-looking soldiers along the way.

"Hey, Phillip, should I tell them that you're the guy who wrote *Soldier With Honor*?"

Phillip smiled. "Not now, but you never know, we might want a few extra friends soon."

"Well, maybe later. But don't worry about friends, I've already spotted one."

The friend McCoy referred to was a member of the German military, but unbeknownst to his colleagues, he was off for a week, working for Bill McCoy. There were two others like him, one British and one Italian. They were being well-paid to watch over the two men. A good friend of Bill's ran a security group in Berlin and had access to some of the best freelance soldiers anywhere. If there was a problem, half a dozen additional men could arrive within two hours, a dozen more within a day.

Passing through security was fast and courteous. There was a walk-through metal detector and a passport check. The security people were the most professional and courteous that either Phillip or McCoy had ever seen. At the end of the security area was a smiling young lady handing them badges and welcoming them to the meetings. Once inside, there was a large coat and baggage check area to the left, hotel restaurants and stores in front of them, and large open areas and meeting rooms to the right. They made their way slowly toward the meeting rooms, while a greeter handed them schedules and brochures.

The two men sat down at a small café area at the far end of the open area, and reviewed the materials they were given. As they looked around, they saw several heads of state, broadcasters, and many significant businessmen.

“It does have its own sort of charm, doesn’t it Phillip?”

Phillip smiled. “That it does, my friend. There is definitely a high associated with status and power. And it does feel nice.”

“But..?”

“But, it’s a rather nasty drug. If you get hooked on it, you keep going after power, and there is never enough. They’ve done serious experiments on this. People in power are healthier and more vibrant that others. It’s chemical… serotonin mostly. The feeling is nice, but the addiction is deadly, mostly to those around the addict.”

“So, do I walk out now, or do I enjoy my high?” Both men laughed.

“Oh, enjoy the high, Bill, just don’t enjoy it too much.”

As they talked and reviewed their papers, the President of Germany and his Foreign Minister briefly introduced themselves and said they hoped to spend some time talking to them in the next few days. Both Phillip and McCoy thanked them and said that they’d love to talk. A few minutes later, the chief executive of a European industrial conglomerate likewise greeted them and asked them if they would be at the evening cocktail party. After the industrialist walked away, they looked at each other, as if to say “Wow, this is something else!”

“Not your usual group of blokes, huh Bill?”

“Yes, I’d say not. Bloody amazing. But, Phillip, what do these people want from us? They’re being very nice, but we are hurting them. They wanted us here for some reason. What is it?”

“Well, we’ll find out at the meetings, won’t we?”

“Yes, but I know there are ideas in that head of yours.”

Phillip smiled. “Okay… the real insiders want to manipulate us into cooperating with them. My guess is that they want to merge the Digital Economy with the controlled economy. And these are not dumb people; they’ll make a compelling case.”

“Yes, I expect they will.”

“Remember also that there are several levels of people here.”

“Such as?”

“Well, first there are people who are here as a payoff and to get them hooked. You see the news people? That’s mostly why they are here. They played the establishment line, or they are trying to get them to promote the establishment line. They come here, experience the cool serotonin rush, and are emotionally tied to the people they meet here. Then, they are unlikely to say much against them; or will at least give them the benefit of the doubt – probably for life.

“Then, there are the government guys who are here to make friends and influence people. They want to get support for a new office, or maybe to get big people to support their ideas.”

McCoy had been watching people in the café, and watched them evaluating their notes from various meetings. “These guys seem to be interested in the content of the sessions, Phillip.”

“Oh, you are certainly correct, Bill. Actually, I suspect that we’ll be interested in the content of the sessions as well. The people making the presentations are among the best and brightest anywhere.”

“To be sure, but they seem more interested in the topics than in personal agendas.”

“Yes, for the moment they do. I’ll be very interested to see if things change in the evenings and at private meetings. And when I say that they have agendas, I don’t mean that they are necessarily malicious. They may very well think that their agendas will make the world a better place.”

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The first meeting that morning was a lecture on Islam. The speaker, previously Foreign Minister of Italy, was extremely well-informed and articulate. Not only was the presentation excellent, but the question and answer period was likewise of very high quality. The same was true for a panel discussion of strategic defense that followed shortly thereafter. The subject was not as gripping, but the quality of the presentation was excellent.

After the two morning meetings there was a break for lunch. Phillip and McCoy sat at a large table in the dining area, joined by three corporate CEOs, a reporter, and a former US Secretary of State. Conversation began around the topics covered in the morning, with both Phillip and Bill being fairly quiet. The Secretary of State knew that Phillip represented the world of private commerce, and that it was rumored that Phillip was a fascinating and original, if perhaps dangerous, thinker. He decided to probe him just a bit.

“So, tell me, Mr. Donson, which of this morning’s lectures did you enjoy more, and why?”

Phillip smiled. “Actually, I enjoyed the lecture on Islam quite a bit. By nature I am philosophically minded; so I like to understand the true nature of things. I’ve studied Islam a bit, but not nearly enough to get a deep understanding. The lecture this morning moved me along quite well. I liked that.”

“And your thoughts on the possible conflict of civilizations?” The Secretary was trying to understand Phillip’s real depth. He was interested not only for reasons of statecraft, which he was still quite involved with, but also because he had heard of

Phillip's unusual and surprising intellect, and thought he might be a very interesting man. The Secretary did not find many people who truly interested him.

"Yes, the difference in civilizations…" Phillip paused, recalling the analysis he had done several years before. "Well, it seems to me that there is a very distinct difference in the base cultures. Judaism, and the Christianity that came from it, are, essentially, the religions of farmers. The first Moslems were herdsmen, and to this day, I think their culture still embodies the sensibilities of nomadic herdsmen.

"Farmers learn to rely upon their neighbors. They help build each other's barns, share tools, lend their expertise for repairing their neighbor's equipment, and so on. They also respect each other's property lines. So, in farming, there are long histories of mutual help and respect for property.

"Herdsmen, on the other hand, tend to mistrust their neighbors and to hide information from them. When the nomadic herdsman finds good grazing land, he does not share that knowledge with another nearby herdsman. If one finds a hidden water hole, he does not disclose the location. So, the overall balance is much more toward *not* helping a neighbor. Similarly, property is less respected in nomadic cultures. And, of course, they developed different methods of warfare."

The Secretary was smiling, and even scribbled a note on his handout from the Islam session.

Phillip went on, enjoying himself immensely. The Secretary was an intelligent and well-read man, and could understand the implications of what Phillip was saying.

"Again, my understanding of the history of Islam is not terribly deep, but I have read the Koran and the Haddith." He paused. "I've not been impressed."

"And your thoughts on the current situation?"

"There are actually two things that concern me. First is the institutionalized teaching of hatred in the Islamic world. Secondly that they seem to see all of life as a zero-sum game. The situation looks very bleak to me."

The conversation paused for a moment as they were eating; soon, the newsman and a corporate executive took over as the primary speakers. As they all rose from the table to attend the next session, the Secretary asked Phillip for a minute of his time privately.

"Obviously, Mr. Donson, most everyone here knows who you are, and who you represent. So, you may expect a bit of questioning from people. They will, however, be civil, since that is the culture we have developed at these meetings. Now, as for me personally, I am not entirely opposed to your ideas. I have serious questions as to how they'd play out, but I am at least partially persuaded. But, of course, I am not in office, and I have that luxury."

Phillip looked at the Secretary, it seemed to him that he saw something of the man's soul. An exceptionally bright and insightful man who had few peers, who was

offered job after job because of his unusual skill. But he was under no illusion; he knew the dirty side of the game he had played.

"Yes, I understand what you mean by the luxury of being out of office, but what of the people here who are *in* office?"

"As I say, they'll be polite to you Mr. Donson, but do not forget that a man becomes a creature of his uniform. Many of these are good people, but when in power, they become creatures of their offices and their systems. In their natural state, they would be interested in your ideas, and might even agree with you on some matters. But in office, only one in a hundred would be capable of such nobility. And the truth is that I don't know who that one in a hundred might be.

"I like you, Mr. Donson, you are deeply honest, and I don't see much of that. We'll probably see each other again here, but if not, my email address is on the roster; please keep in touch."

Phillip smiled. "I'd love to. Thank you."

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The afternoon sessions were on NATO and the European Union. McCoy was more interested in these sessions than Phillip was. Bill remained after the last session to talk with several British officials; Phillip walked out to the café area and sat down to wait.

"You looked a bit bored in the afternoon sessions, Mr. Donson." Phillip looked up; it was the Secretary again.

"It's funny," Phillip thought, "to be having a conversation with someone you've seen on television a hundred times, behind a government podium." It somehow seemed that such people didn't exist in real life. Yet, here he was, as real and as normal as anyone else.

"I only say that because I've felt the same way many times, and I thought I recognized the look." The Secretary was hoping that he had not made a mistake.

Phillip smiled. "No, you got it right. I guess I'm not especially interested in the fine points of systems that I don't care for in the first place."

"Yes, I understand. Would you like to have a drink, Mr. Donson?"

"That sounds wonderful, but if we're having a drink together, you have to call me Phillip."

The Secretary smiled. "Very well, then, and you'll call me William."

The bar area was straight back from the front entrance, and not too long of a walk from where they were at the café. Most of the other attendees were dispersing,

though a few remained in groups, talking. Phillip and the Secretary – William – sat down at the empty bar and ordered.

"Just so you know, Phillip, some of these people would like to talk to you."

"Oh, I figured as much. Why? Did they send you as their emissary?"

William laughed. "Oh, they wanted to, but I told them that you were quite accessible, and that they should ask themselves."

Phillip appreciated this man more and more, but he still wondered if the he was as decent as he appeared. "And what do you think their reaction will be when I tell them that I consider all coercion immoral?"

"To be honest, Phillip, I think that they won't really understand it."

"You mean they're trying to figure out my angle?"

"Yes, primarily."

"And…"

"And if they can control you or manipulate you."

"So, do you recommend that I let them think I have a scheme, or frighten them by revealing that I have none?"

"That is a very good question. Realistically, not many of them will believe that you don't have an angle, so, if I were you, I would avoid the subject."

"Yes, that sounds reasonable." Phillip paused for a moment, then said, "So, come on, William, you're different from the rest of these guys; is this just part of the job for you?"

"More or less. My career centered around strategic analysis. I was very good at it, you know." He smiled.

"Yes," Phillip added in a joking voice, "some rather prominent people have said so."

"Yes. Well, I got into all of those situations because of my analytic technique. It actually started in my later twenties, and before I realized it, I was holding important offices and doing critical work. For a while I enjoyed it immensely, but it was a game to me. I was like a little boy playing ball, and they were letting me play in the big leagues. By the time I realized the depravity of some of the people I worked for, I was in awfully deep."

"So, how did you handle it?"

"First of all, it took me some time to come to grips with the situation. I gave them the benefit of the doubt for a long time. After all, this is the President of the United States asking me for my advice! That's a unique and intimidating situation. And, I was so focused on the issues sitting on my desk that I didn't have time for other matters. But… eventually I realized that I wanted to get out of it all. Finding a decent

way out, however, was very difficult. There were so many crucial issues. A wrong decision from me could have led to war. So, it took me several years to get out. It was a choice of the lesser of evils. Leaving earlier would have been better for me individually, but I had to stay until I could get out without causing people to die. It was not a simple proposition."

"No, I imagine it wasn't."

"They've tried to get me back, you know."

"I suspected as much, but no, I didn't know."

"Yes, several times. I will do consulting work for them from time to time; but I'm done being too deeply involved. I'm here partly because I like being informed by smart people, partly because I want to see what is going through these people's minds, and partly to keep my consulting business going well. It is a strange world in which I work."

"Yeah, I imagine it is. Do you miss the power?"

He chuckled. "In a few ways I do… riding around in limousines and the special airplanes, having traffic stopped for me, big status things, I guess, although I do still have a few of those. They provided their own special type of intoxication, but I don't miss them much, and they were always something of a moral irritant to me anyway. The accolades made me uncomfortable more than anything else."

"Yeah, I can understand that."

"Oh, your friend is looking for you."

Phillip turned to see Bill walking around near the entrance, looking for him. "Bill! Over here!" He walked over as Phillip and William sipped their drinks.

"I had thought I lost you, Phillip. Oh, hello Mr…"

"William will be fine, thank you."

"William, this is my friend, Bill McCoy."

"Pleased to meet you, Bill."

"Likewise, I'm sure."

Phillip pulled up a stool for Bill, and ordered him his usual Gin-and-Tonic.

"So, Bill, interesting conversation?"

"Yes, mostly. I, er… informed the British Home Secretary of what some of my friends in the British military think of him."

William laughed loud and long, while Phillip looked shocked. "Bill! We said we were going to be polite. No rants, no nastiness."

"Oh, I was mostly polite Phillip, but I just couldn't hold back altogether. I served with dozens of blokes, every one of whom would have paid dearly for the

opportunity to vent their spleen directly to that man. Well, since I'm the lucky bloke who actually got the chance, I couldn't in good conscience pass it up, now could I?"

Phillip laid his head on the bar in resignation and in disbelief. William laughed harder still.

"My God, Bill, you're going to get us kicked out of this place."

"Don't worry about it. In fact, I've got dinner lined up with half of the G8. They want to talk to you."

"All right, but you don't have anything else that you absolutely have to say to any of them, do you?"

"No, I don't think so."

Phillip looked at William. "Well thank God for that." They laughed again.

After another sip of his drink, and one more small laugh, William turned back to Phillip. "So, do you think they're after 'one country, two systems'?"

"Yes, I'm about as certain of it as I can be. Why, do you see it differently?"

"No, that would be my guess also… Well, I'll leave you boys to the evening's entertainment. I have a client dinner later. Good luck."

Phillip and Bill went to their suite, washed-up, and relaxed for an hour before the dinner. At eight o'clock they met their party in the entrance area and took two cars to a restaurant in Cologne. It was a Northern Italian restaurant, very nicely decorated. They were led to a beautiful private room and given three waiters. Both the meal and the service would prove to be excellent. The conversation through the beginning of the meal revolved around the day's activities and commentary on the various sessions and speakers. All participated and the discussion was pleasant.

After the main course, things began to change. Some of them began to make references to unregulated business. Before long the French Ambassador turned to Phillip, and said, "Mr. Donson, aren't you concerned that your system has been making the world financial system unstable?"

Because Phillip had already heard about every possible argument against private commerce, answering such a question was fairly easy for him.

"Honestly, Mr. Ambassador, I'm not at all certain that is true. International financial systems have long histories of instability, and I can point to many other causes for the problems you are experiencing, including your continual manipulation of the markets. The one exception that I would make to that statement would be declining tax revenues. That is partly due to our system."

A British Shadow Minister then spoke. "Very well then, do you not consider reduced tax revenues significant?"

“Oh, yes, I certainly do. But you must already know that this is a matter of principal to me.”

“Yes, of course, principle,” said the Shadow Minister, but he had actually been thinking, “Principle, principle, like Margaret bloody Thatcher, only worse.” He continued, “But declining tax revenues are a significant issue for all of us. How can we provide the services people need without money?”

“Well, the simple answer, sir, is that you can’t. But I would like to explain a bit.”

“I should hope you would.”

“Then I will. First of all, you are blaming our systems for your reduced tax revenues. And as I say, that is partially correct. But we are not alone. There have always been black markets, secret bank accounts, and creative accounting. That came long before us. Next, we don’t know or care if our customers pay taxes or not. We don’t ask, and we don’t advise them either way. Now, this brings us to the point: Once your governments cannot force compliance, the people do not pay. And since we do not assist you in that compliance, you are concerned, and, indeed, have tried to destroy our services.

“This is where the moral issue comes in. I consider all coercion to be immoral, save self-defense and a very few things of that sort. You would like me to force people to pay you. I will not do that.”

“And how do you, alone among philosophers, make that decision, and overturn the entire history of government and civilization?”

“Very simply – by studying and by holding to the truth. You see, there has always been one huge issue that has twisted philosophy, and that is rulership. Moral philosophy can be fairly well understood as it applies to normal events, until you throw in the concept of the ruler. The ruler is always given right to do things that are considered immoral for an individual to do. This, of course, requires volumes of explanations, revisions, and creatively fraudulent excuses.

“The simple truth is, sir, that being ruled is a form of being in servitude. Now, you can argue that for days, I’m sure; but such arguments serve only to explain away obvious truths in the most creative manner possible.

“Now, that does make all of you some version of slave-holders. And, of course, you think that I am being quite crude and insulting. Let me say this: I doubt that any of you got into the positions you hold because you wanted to make slaves. In fact, I’d be shocked. But whoever it was that set up systems of rulership a hundred generations ago *did* make people into servants, and no matter what sorts of ideas were in your minds as you went down your paths, you were operating within such a system.”

The Italian Minister could not hold back anymore. “And who are you to make such pronouncements?” His voice was filled with anger, with an obvious element of defensiveness as well.

“I have no position or authority that entitles me to any pronouncements over you, sir. I am simply a thinking man. But you know that I speak the truth; you simply wish that I would not.”

“All right, gentlemen, let’s have our dessert and calm down for a moment.” The French Ambassador wanted to keep peace at the table, and did so expertly. It seemed that he was the leader of the small group. They ate their desserts, and conversation went back to the day’s events, then to the sessions that would be held the coming day. After dessert was finished and drinks were being served, the French Ambassador took over again.

“Now, Mr. Donson, all of us have serious concerns about your private markets. I believe you are sincere in what you say about your moral issues. I, however, do not happen to agree, which I think you will acknowledge as my right?”

“Of course.”

“Very well, then, here are my concerns… *our* concerns: Your services are making things very difficult for us, and if we cannot pay our bills, elderly people will lose their monthly checks, medical care will be eliminated, and there could be welfare riots. I know you don’t want any of those things to happen, so don’t you think there is some way that we could work together and eliminate such things?”

“Well,” Phillip thought to himself, “he certainly is smooth.”

Phillip took a slow drink of some of the finest port he had ever tasted, and answered. “Actually, sir, the short answer is no, but I’d like to take a few minutes to explain that to you.”

Everyone but the French Minister looked angry when Phillip said no, though they remained silent. The French Minister nodded and said, “Please do, Mr. Donson, explain all you like, we are in no hurry.”

“Very well then,” Phillip answered. He took another sip of his port and continued.

“First of all, I do not control the Digital Economy. No one does.”

“I’m sorry for interrupting,” said the Minister, “but though you may not control them, you can still influence them. It is your moral philosophy that has guided them.”

“I think you overestimate that. I think my writings did have an influence, but so did the development of the Internet and encryption. I had nothing to do with those things, and they made private commerce almost an inevitability. Yes, I guided and perhaps gave them a moral foundation, but someone else eventually would have done something similar. At this point I don’t think I could dissuade them from their paths. Even if I tried, they would probably think I had mentally snapped. I really don’t think they would change their minds.

“But that is really a moot issue. The fact is that I am retiring from the whole business. I need time off for health reasons, and once I finish with these meetings, I’ll write a goodbye note, and then lay on a beach for a good long while. So, that makes two reasons why I can’t influence them for you.

“Now, let me address a hidden concept that you refer to. You imply that if you don’t provide money to old people or medical fees that such things will not be done at all. You imply that it is either government or nothing. That is a false assumption. I don’t want to attempt a history lesson here, but that idea is manifestly false. Everything that your governments do can be done by other means, and done more efficiently.”

“But there are some things that can be done only by governments!” It was the Italian Ambassador again, angry still.

This time, Phillip answered with force. His voice was not loud, but it was surprisingly strong, and with complete conviction. “No sir, that is not true. The only thing that can be done by government and not by private groups is involuntary taxation – raising money without the permission of the donors. Make any sort of argument you like, and an honest economist can rebut it convincingly. If ever that was true, it is not true now.”

“Mr. Donson…” It was the Frenchman taking charge again. “You do understand what kind of situation that places these men in, do you not?”

“Oh, yes sir, I do.” Phillip paused, knowing that what he was about to say would cause significant effects. If the governments these men ran became desperate, people could be killed. This thought weakened Phillip for a moment. Real people being shot and imprisoned… he did not want to cause anything like that.

“And the other choice is…” The thought leaped into his mind with such force that he almost looked around to see who said it. “Yes,” he thought to himself, “the other choice is to help them trash the best path to freedom in centuries, and doom generations to servitude.” He thought about how strange it was to be the one man who should make such monumental decisions. “Ah well,” he sighed to himself, “I’m the guy who stepped up to the job, and I guess I’ll have to do it.”

“I will answer your concerns on this subject, gentlemen, and then we will be done with this line of questioning for the evening; do we all agree?” Everyone at the table agreed.

“Good, then let me begin by saying that I have a good idea of where you’ll have to take this – draconian laws, hunts for fugitive money and fugitive citizens, outrageous penalties. Yes, I understand. The basic operating principle of your governments is being undermined. If you cannot take money involuntarily, you are out of business.

“My message to you, gentlemen, is that in the long run, you *will* go out of business. I do not expect you to like that, but I do hope that you will accept it. There really isn’t much way around it anymore. Please answer me honestly, and I promise

you that I will not disclose what you tell me. If current trends continue, how long before your governments have to seriously cut back their spending?"

There was an uncomfortable pause, followed by answers – from the Frenchman first. The estimates ranged from two to five years; more immediate than Phillip had expected.

"Well, then, you will have to make difficult choices quickly. That means that you have two essential choices. First, try to crush private commerce, and second, to adapt. I'll begin with the latter.

"My analysis is that your organizations will begin a classic devolution. This will manifest itself most painfully as a battle between central governments and local governments, accompanied by the cessation of one service after another.

The bedrock of your taxation is the ability to seize property for nonpayment. The central governments have something of an advantage at seizing financial assets, but the local governments have an advantage in seizing real property. Because of this, the local governments will win these battles – at least for the most part. If you want to stay in your business, you may wish to think about local government.

"But even local governments may eventually fall apart. There will almost certainly emerge free territories and free cities, where there is no forced taxation. In those places, what are now public services will be provided by private means. Remember that providing services is only a question of organization. To get firemen to show up and do their jobs you have to pay them; also to pay for their trucks and for the organization of their duties. Private companies can do that no less effectively than you can. And once your monopolies on these services are removed, the quality of service will rise as the overall cost diminishes. So, once a few free zones emerge, you will face competition. And, faced with a choice of using their own money as they wish or having it forcibly removed from them, few people will choose your system.

"Now, let me address the ugly scenario, where your organizations attempt to destroy the Digital Economy. Your only chance to do it is with Stalinist terror, and I don't honestly think most of you are willing to go that far. I hope I'm not wrong. Because if you did go that far, you'd likely put the world into a new dark age. The entire world economy would collapse, and I'm really not sure how bad it could get. The Chinese could take over, or perhaps the Muslims. But while such dark situations as these might not occur, even the best of the scenarios are quite bad.

"Thus far I suppose you don't like my scenarios. Nonetheless I do think they are accurate. Now, let me conclude: "I do not think you can get the Gamma people to turn around and go back. The genie will not go easily back into the bottle. I've already described to you what I think will happen regarding the devolution of your system. Next, I said that fighting it would be amazingly ugly. But this was only half of the story. I described the damage I thought you could do. There is another side to this, and I think you will like that even less.

"The truth is that you can either allow a slow devolution, or you can cause your own swift elimination. If you allow the Digital Economy to exist, you are likely to keep your game going through at least your lifetimes. But if you come after our people with force, you will drive them to destroy you. Right now, they aren't out to hurt you, only to be separate. But it wouldn't take much for a lot of them to turn against you. You see, once they leave, it's usually only six or eight months before the fog begins to clear. Then, they begin to comprehend just how perverse state servitude is, and how deeply it affected their lives. If you start hunting and killing them after they've passed that point, they are likely to turn on you with a force that you don't think possible.

"If you want to remain in power, or maybe even remain alive, I suggest that you leave them alone. You have great armies, but they have the ten million best and brightest on this planet. Don't piss them off.

"I'm done, gentlemen… Shall we?" With that, Phillip, followed by McCoy, stood up and headed to the front of the restaurant. "And my sincere thanks to whomever it was that chose such a wonderful establishment." The rest of the men joined them; the ride back to the Maratime was quiet and polite, though very tense.

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Bill and Phillip sat at the café near the large meeting room, enjoying a fine breakfast and amusing themselves by watching the parade of impressive people that walked by, and by naming them and their titles.

McCoy had taken a walk early that morning, the purpose of which was to check on his security men. In fact, he had spent over an hour talking not only with his three plants, but with half a dozen friends or friends of friends – people he had known in the British military or in his Home Office days. He also spread the word that the guy he was with was the one who had written *Soldier With Honor*. The security men were surprised and impressed. They asked Bill if they could meet Phillip. McCoy, of course agreed, and set it up for the next morning.

Two of the security men had followed Phillip and McCoy to the restaurant the previous evening. These men were armed, as were all of the security men, with 9mm automatic pistols, pepper spray, radios, and handcuffs. In addition, they had special stun grenades from Skunk 2. These fired an electromagnetic burst sufficient to stun any person within 20 meters of the device. This would obviously include Bill and Phillip, but with everyone in the room down, the security men could drag Phillip and Bill safely away before the others recovered consciousness.

"So, Bill, just how safe are we here?"

“Actually, it’s looking quite good. Tomorrow, early, I’m taking you to greet the men.”

“You told them I wrote *Soldier With Honor*?”

“I certainly did, and I also told them that you’d spend some time with them tomorrow morning before breakfast.”

“Good, that sounds nice. I like those guys.”

“Yes, and they are thrilled that you are leaving the Presidents, diplomats, and bankers to spend a bit of time with them. But, getting back to safety, our people are quite well in place, and are following us on our evening activities. Everything is going well.”

“Good. I hope we don’t need them.”

“As always.”

As they finished their breakfast, the French Ambassador from the previous night’s dinner walked by and stopped at their table.

“Well, good morning, gentlemen. I must tell you that you made quite an impression at dinner.”

“Would you like to have a seat, Ambassador?”

“For a moment. Thank you.”

“You realize,” said Phillip, “that we were not trying to maneuver anyone. I simply told the truth.”

“Strangely, I think I believe you, Mr. Donson. Some of the others, however think that you are… how is it that you Americans say… playing hardball?”

“Yes, you said it correctly. That was one of my concerns going into the meeting. So, what are they going to do?” Under normal circumstances, such a direct question to a diplomat is not asked, and certainly not answered. But Phillip and the Frenchman had developed something of an unspoken understanding. The two were far better matched intellectually than any of the others at the dinner, and a certain affinity developed.

“Of course, I cannot comment authoritatively on the long-term, but I know that they reported quite quickly and completely to their organizations. I also know that another… different… group of men would like to see you this evening.”

“And your thoughts on them and on the evening confronting us?”

“I think you shall find a quite different perspective than the one you faced last night.”

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The meetings the second day were of the same exceptional quality as the first. The two morning meetings covered satellite-based missile defense systems (with a wonderful panel discussion) and the possible development of China into a market economy, though not necessarily one based on democracy.

At lunch, they sat with a group of Professors, old-money investors, and corporate executives. The conversation was cordial, with several people at the table asking serious questions as to how the Digital Economy worked. This time McCoy answered most of the questions while Phillip listened. Bill explained the various types of investment vehicles that existed in the cyber-world, about venture finance in the Gamma markets, and about the significant rates of return that were achieved. He also explained that in a tax-free environment, investment returns and capital appreciation were frequently spectacular.

"Run the numbers for yourselves," he said, "whether it is your personal money or business money. Calculate the next ten years assuming a taxed economy, and then make the same calculations assuming an untaxed economy. The difference will shock you."

The table went stone silent after this statement, while they all did preliminary calculations in their heads, made mental notes to do proper calculations later, and had the good manners not to appear eager to consider the idea.

"And, of course, gentlemen, all of these things exist now, and if you would wish to partake of them, you could do so in complete privacy and anonymity. No one else would know.

"But let me go further. You gentlemen don't know me, but I have made a living as a financial consultant to a fair number of your peers. I know your concerns, and I know how you've handled your affairs."

One of the investors, an elderly man with an English accent, spoke up. "And what, sir, do you think those concerns are?"

"You will please forgive my presumption of familiarity with your situation, Mr. Worthington, but I have done considerable work for some of your friends. I always keep my clients' names unmentioned, but I assure you that you do associate with some of them.

"Your most basic concerns are with your public image. Wealthy people are negatively portrayed continually, and you have come to accept this as a reality to which you must adapt. So, you pursue your own interests on one hand, while carefully cultivating your public images on the other."

"So, then, you do not hold that we are selfish manipulators, getting rich of the efforts of the working man?"

“Certainly not. I have known a few people in your situations who were malicious, but quite the minority. When some of you make political contributions in return for tax advantages, I understand; you are trying to protect yourselves. And I fully understand that the people who are most vocal against you would do the same things if they were in your situations. Your problem is that you are the obvious targets for humanity’s envy. So, you cloak yourselves in the political causes of the average man and make sure that your public image is pristine and benevolent. What choice do you have? Lenin showed you what happens when envy is fully unleashed—you and your families die quickly.

“That is why the Digital Economy is especially important to you; there is no way for anyone to know who you are or how much money you have. Living in a mansion would identify you as rich, but nothing in our world can identify you. Envy, religious hatreds, ethnic hatreds, and all the others have no significance in a world of anonymity. In our conversations, most of us do prefer to express our personal opinions, including cultural experiences, but you do not have to. And if you want to disguise your identity as something else, you may do that as well. There is no way of tracing a cyber identity to a physical identity, unless you yourself give people clues.”

At this point, the next meetings were about to begin and they all gathered their notes, took their last drinks of water, and began heading to the meeting room. But as they did, Bill concluded with one final comment. “And, by the way gentlemen, my email address and web pages are noted on the roster. Should any of you have an interest in further discussion, please feel free to look at the web pages, then contact me privately.”

They all headed back to the meetings. As they went, Bill leaned close to Phillip, and said, “How much would you care to wager that I hear from three of them within the next month?”

“Think so?”

“Absolutely. I’ve never told you this, but I’ve been doing business for three English Lords and five members of the Italian Senate for the past ten to fifteen years. Most of those people have secret bank accounts and secret investments. It’s simply a matter of maximized survival.”

The first afternoon meeting covered the exceptional mobility of American culture – with an enormous number of people leaving the place of their birth and completing their lives in a distant place – and the effects of the same thing happening in a unified Europe. The second involved some rather arcane financial analysis, and they were both bored.

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After the last meeting, Bill and Phillip followed the same pattern as on the previous day; Phillip went to the bar and Bill remained in the meeting room, talking with whomever interested him. Phillip was happy to see the Secretary walking over to him at the bar.

"Hello William, care for a drink?"

"Thank you, yes." He sat down a bit wearily. "Scotch on the rocks," he said to the bartender.

William looked around, to verify that no one would overhear their conversation. "Well, I heard all about your meeting last night. You held your own quite well with them."

"Thank you, but I'm not sure most of them really understood me."

"Oh, believe me, they understood some of the things you said quite well."

"Such as?"

"Such as that they should think about moving into local government positions, and that their systems are set to devolve into nothingness."

"And what kinds of reactions did it solicit from them?"

"Oh, fear mostly. That and anger."

"Yeah, that is what I expected."

"Listen, Phillip, you may be right about the… what do you call it?"

"Usually Gamma, or just the Digital Economy."

"Thank you. Well, you may be correct. The best and brightest are certainly joining you."

"And plenty of middle class people as well, William. I didn't tell that to the group last night, but it is true. We have plenty of plumbers, managers, and shop owners."

"Ah, then all the more certain that a devolution will occur. But there are many ways that such a devolution could occur, and some are far better than others."

"And what are you thinking of, William?"

"When people in power are to lose that power, for whatever cause, you have to give them a painless way out. If you do not, they will cling to their power till their dying breath. If they control the military, they will use it; if they control the courts, they will use them. You must make it easy for them to walk away. That means that when any government office has lost its support, you must get someone to hire the office-holders and give them honorable jobs – a way out that does not cause them shame. If you do not, they will use any power they have… and I don't think I have to tell you that such circumstances have unpleasant results."

“No, you don’t… and you make a very good point. I think perhaps we will want to begin using your services.”

“That would certainly be fine, Phillip, but I was not trying to promote myself.”

Phillip laughed gently, and put his hand on William’s shoulder. “No, I’m sure you were not, but your analysis is compelling.”

“And who do you think will hire me, Phillip? You don’t seem to have any collective arrangements at all.”

“Oh, no, you misunderstand. We are not opposed to *all* collective action, only to *involuntary* collective action. Actually, we have both collective arrangements and even hierarchical arrangements, but they always end up being temporary and voluntary. I assure you that there are more than enough concerned individuals to afford your services. We have several legal defense funds, insurance funds, and the like. A strategic initiative fund would operate similarly. And, believe me, our people are deeply interested in the devolution of state power in the safest, most orderly manner possible. They will pay.”

“Very well, then, I will be pleased to assist. But please do not ever use my name. It could make great difficulties for me, you know.”

“Absolutely agreed.”

“Ah, I see your friend Bill is coming again, I’ll bet that he has arranged for you to meet a more interesting group of people this evening.”

McCoy was smiling as he walked up. “Hello gentlemen!”

Phillip was concerned. “What?”

“Phillip, you don’t trust me?” McCoy was enjoying the moment.

“What did you do?”

McCoy laughed. “No, don’t worry over it, Phillip; I didn’t do much this time. No one was offended.”

“Then why were you laughing as you walked up?”

“Oh, I think I just subverted half a dozen statists, and brought them into the free world.”

“Yeah, that’s been your mission all day.”

“Excuse me,” William interjected, “but are you saying that you just brought six of those men into your system?”

“At least I think I have.”

“In God’s name, how?”

“By telling them what level of capital appreciation they can obtain there.”

William sat back and turned slightly to address them both at once. “And it’s really that good?”

“Oh, absolutely,” said Bill, “just let me know when you’re ready and we’ll tabulate the numbers.”

“Very interesting.”

They sat silently for a few moment. Then, Bill spoke up again. “Oh, I forgot to tell you, we have another dinner set up.”

“And with whom,” asked Phillip in a mock English accent, “is it this time?”

“That’s a good question,” said Bill, turning serious again. “The President of the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston, to start with. But beyond that, I don’t know. We’re just supposed to meet in front at eight.”

Phillip turned to William. “Should be interesting, no?”

William smiled. “I think you’ll find it very interesting, as I think I know who these people will be, more or less.”

“Any advice?”

“No, nothing springs to mind. You’ll be honest as usual, and some of them will appreciate that while others won’t. They’re another type of international player. They won’t really try to bully you, though they may try to win you to their cause.”

“Oh my, how very interesting.”

“Yes, tonight should be an interesting one for you, gentlemen. Now, I’ll leave you for the evening. I have a young lady to meet for dinner later…” William paused, and leaned closer, “… or, at least she’s younger than me… it gets rather relative after a while.”

They all laughed and headed back to their rooms to prepare for the evening’s events.

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The dinner was held in an elegant and old private residence less than half an hour from the Maratime. The banker was present, as were a number of very significant retired businessmen, attorneys, and officials. Dinner was exquisite, as they had expected, and the conversation was engaging. After some time spent on more mundane matters, the discussion came around to the previous night’s dinner.

The Federal Reserve Banker, Dr. Donnelly, addressed Phillip directly for the first time since their original introduction. “You understand, Mr. Donson, that the people you shared dinner with last night are concerned with rather short-term things. We, on the other hand, are concerned with the next few decades. I think you know how

things sometimes work in big business – planning years in advance and pursuing opportunities that may take decades to play out. This need is even greater in the largest of human endeavors, democratic governments. Someone has to plan for the future, and since we are in the positions to do so, we have taken it upon ourselves."

Phillip smiled, and laughed almost imperceptibly.

"You are amused Mr. Donson?"

"Oh, yes. I'm sorry. I do not mean to discount you or your work, Dr. Donnelly, but I find myself in a humorous position." They looked at him, not understanding.

"Well, you must understand, gentlemen, that I was not born into the advantageous situations that you were, and I had to discover, with much effort, many of the things you take for granted. Along the way, I ran across dozens of wild ideas that I had to sift through myself, having no one who could help me understand them."

As Phillip paused for a moment, Dr. Donnelly said, "I'm sorry Mr. Donson, but I still do not understand."

"Yes, I wasn't done. I was thinking about the best way of explaining this. I suppose I'll be blunt. I was laughing, thinking about all the conspiracy theory people, and what they would trade for an opportunity to fill my seat this evening."

The rest of the people at the table weren't sure what to think of that statement, and nearly held their breath waiting for Phillip to continue.

"Oh, don't worry gentlemen, if you had grown up on the streets of Brooklyn, that would seem funny to you as well. I understand who you are and what you do. And no, I do not believe that you are trying to secretly steal the wealth of the world."

"And what *do* you think of us, Mr. Donson," asked an elderly man with an unusual English/Australian accent.

"I think that you are as Dr. Donnelly said, a group of men concerned with the long-term aspects of democracy. None of you are beholden to elected office and your commitments to individual governments and officials are temporary at best. You are all independently wealthy and generally have huge amounts of capital at your disposal. So, you do what office-holders cannot do. They are enslaved by popular opinion and are forced to consider policies that have short-term benefits and may lead to serious long-term hazards. You work behind the scenes to counteract the foolish acts of the popularity contest winners and seek the long-term benefit. Am I close?"

"Answered quite well, sir," said the old man. "And if you don't mind, please continue."

"As you wish. You influence people and events. As I said, you have vast wealth at your disposal to finance projects and ideas that you think are important. In addition to that, you have working relationships with almost all of the wealthiest families in the English-speaking world, and I'm sure elsewhere. You use these contacts to

extend your influence that much further. And, of course, you must employ agents of influence in a dozen different areas, especially in molding popular moods.

"As best I can tell, your desires are mostly benevolent. You act to improve life on earth, and to avoid major negative consequences; at least that is your aim."

Dr. Donnelly spoke again. "Very well then, Mr. Donson, now that we have that out of the way, let me address our concerns."

"Please do," said Phillip.

"You are trying to wake people up, Mr. Donson. Am I correct?"

"Yes, primarily. But with me personally, it's that I *was* trying to wake people up. I'm retiring once I finish these meetings. I've stretched myself far too thin, and for far too long. I need a decade or two off. But yes, in so far as my writings continue my work, I am trying to wake people up."

"And how many people have you woken up, Mr. Donson?"

"If you count all the people in the Digital Economy as awake, I'd have to guess at least ten million."

"And these people have, as you say, 'opted out' of the general political systems?"

"For the most part. They conduct as many of their activities as possible outside of the system, but they do work within it when necessary."

"We are very concerned about the long-term consequences of this."

"Very well, in what way?"

"Like you, Mr. Donson, I'll be blunt. If you provide a way out of the system for the top ten percent, the entire system will fail for economic reasons."

"Yes, I'm sure that's true. But you are saying that you want to use the hardest-working people as beasts of burden to keep a political system going."

"I would not say it that way."

"Why not? Making the words sound less ugly will not change the reality. In the current system, the top ten or twenty percent of productive people are slaves to the collective. Half of their earnings are taken from them. They are penalized simply because they work hard to improve their lives. If you wish to purvey such an idea, at least have the courage to face it honestly."

"Very well, they are enslaved, and we want to keep it that way. I don't like saying it that way, but you do have a point. There is, however, another side of this issue. If this situation does not remain as it is, the consequences could put civilization back five hundred years."

"Oh, I quite disagree, Dr. Donnelly."

"I understand Phillip, if I may call you by your first name?"

“Please do.”

“Thank you. I am Timothy.

“If you pull out the top performers, the rest of the system will be unable to support itself. The consequences would be dire and would long endure.”

Donnelly rose from the table, and pulled the curtains open on a window that overlooked, at some distance, a commercial thoroughfare. You see the trucks down on the street, do you not?”

“Yes.”

“Very well, now look at the various delivery drivers in the trucks. There’s one! Do you see the auto parts truck, and the driver?” Phillip had walked closer to the window, and nodded yes, that he did see the man. It was difficult to see well, but the man looked to be in his later thirties and somewhat disheveled.

Donnelly closed the curtains again, and they went back to their seats as Donnelly began to talk.

“As you know, there are millions of such people, Phillip. They’re right on the edge. If more than one or two things go wrong at once, they become unstable. They haven’t gotten what they wanted out of life and they are angry. What happens to this man if his mother’s check from the government stops coming? What if he loses the never-ending series of diversions from his unhappiness, and has to confront it directly? Perhaps you have not studied history as deeply as we have Phillip, but when economies break down, people like that are easy marks for a charismatic leader. Let the current world systems break down and these people will be ready. Anyone promising them vengeance and giving them someone to blame will have a million slavish followers tomorrow. Your system is far too individualistic, Phillip, and such individualism could lead us to breakdowns, and into a third world war. Then how much benefit would come to your top ten percent?”

Phillip’s expression was a sad half-grin. “I understand your argument, Timothy, but I do not agree.”

“And how can you not? Do you dispute the state of people such as that man? If so, history says that you are a fool.”

“Yes, I do dispute that characterization of their base state. What you are telling me, Timothy, is that these people cannot be left to their own devices. That they must be managed… kept full of beer, cigarettes, and television shows. That if they were not, they could become angry mobs with minimal provocation. I quite disagree.

“You make parallels with World War Two, but you are leaving out many pieces of the puzzle. I share your concern, but I do not agree.”

“And why not?”

“Because I believe that such people are capable of reason. That man’s ancestors, not too long ago, rose to the challenge of the Renaissance. He can too. And I also believe that to have individuals make their own decisions is far more effective and beneficial than decisions being made by some central authority. You have kept these people – or, I should say, *helped* keep these people – in positions where decisions were either made for them, thrust upon them, or where they were conditioned to make certain choices. How different would the man in the truck be, if he had been left to make his own choices in life, rather than being led by the nose through it? You want these people to be carefully managed, and that leaves them no room to grow. Growth requires trial and error, including mistakes and pain. In trying to eliminate pain, you also eliminate the direct confrontation with life that leads to learning.”

Donnelly was unhappy with the movement of the conversation, and suggested that they move into the front room for after-dinner drinks and cigars. As they went, he nodded to a younger man, perhaps in his forties, who had earlier been speaking to him quietly. Drinks were poured all around and cigars distributed to those who wished them. Quite expertly, the younger man drew Phillip off to one side for a private conversation. They were seated on two magnificent leather chairs, facing each other at angles, with a low table in between.

“Mr. Donson, my name is Arthur Blackstone, and I’d like to explain this to you a bit differently.” His voice indicated that he was an American, probably from the west coast.

Phillip declined the cigar that was offered him then turned back to Blackstone. “Please, I’m interested.”

“You and I have both spent time on American streets, Phillip. Do you mind if I dispense with the polite speech of the older guys?”

Phillip smiled. “Not at all.”

“Good. Now listen, you certainly have points to make, and we may even adopt some of them. But you’ve got to understand, we study these people, and they are not ready for self-rule. You said you wanted to wake people up. But you’re never going to get more than 20 or 30 percent. That’s enough to kill the current governments of the world, but not enough to create a better world system. If the percentage of people who listened to you ever approached 50, you’d have a chance, but they won’t wake up, Phillip. Your numbers will fall short. You can improve enough people to destroy things, but not enough to build something better.”

“And how can you convince me that not enough people would wake up?”

“Because they are suckers for every new manipulation of advertisers and governments. You see it every day, right?”

“Yes, that’s mainly true.”

"Those people, Phillip, the ones who have no critical reasoning skills, you can't reach them. They will not wake up. You could give them the overwhelming evidence, but they're not able to believe you. They're busy with the NBA playoffs, with new TV shows, with life as usual. Hell, how could we really be serfs when prime time comedy and sports keep rolling along? There's a new hit movie! Have you seen it?

"Go ahead, try to fit your message of state servitude into this picture! These people spend all of their conscious lives either at workplaces that we oversee, or watching TV shows that our best friends make. I don't care what kind of evidence you say you have – you're an anomaly, and even thinking about you and your evidence bothers these folks – and they don't want to be bothered. Don't you get it? Thinking about your evidence is a pain in the ass! They won't do it… will never do it. You're engaged in some sort of moral masturbation, Phillip. Joe Average doesn't give a damn whether you're right or not.

"All the manipulators have to do is keep their pictures in front of them. Your pictures don't fit in. You are a bother to Joe Average. He wants you to go away. You are trying to interrupt Prime Time, and this week's new mega-event! They own these people, Phillip. They're addicted. And even if things went very badly, they'd keep coming back. They are conditioned to their bread-and-circus culture. To them, those are the good times, and they know no other."

Phillip sat back in his chair, thinking about what Blackstone had said. Phillip had found long ago that in such situations, it was best to sit back and review the arguments; first to identify the primary factors involved, and then to examine the arguments based upon their fundamentals. Some people seemed to have a gift for coming up with fast answers, but Phillip had never been one of them. When he had a fast answer, it was because he had previously thought the matter through at length.

"I'll give you a moment to think about it," said Blackstone, "I should run to the men's room."

It took Blackstone longer than he had expected. Donnelly had spotted him along the way, and asked how it went. "Not bad," said Blackstone, "but he is a careful thinker, and I don't know what he'll come up with next. For now, anyway, he's thinking about what I said."

"Good," said Donnelly, "we've got a place for him if he comes around."

Arthur Blackstone sat back down across from Phillip, and remained silent while Phillip thought. The other men in the room were giving them space to continue their discussions uninterrupted.

Phillip took a sip from his glass then placed it down on the table that sat between the two chairs. He gathered the various thoughts that had crossed his mind in a loose order, and began.

“First of all, Arthur, I do not hold one man’s need as a legitimate demand upon another. That means that I would not demand that one man to make sacrifices for another. If a man wishes to help someone, I have no problem with it, and may in many cases commend it. But I will not demand it. Because of that alone, I would not attempt to shut down the Digital Economy.

“Secondly, I couldn’t shut it down if I wanted to.”

“The hell, you couldn’t! It was your theoretical work that put the system into motion, and your essays that brought people in.”

Phillip laughed. “And how are you so sure that the essays are mine?”

“Because no one else could have done it. No one else was thinking along those lines. Your earlier publications point directly to the essays and no one else’s do.”

“Fair enough. As for shutting them down, however, you have made a hugely inaccurate assumption.”

“And what was that?”

“That I put the necessary thoughts into those people’s heads. I didn’t. The thoughts were already there. I just gave them some confidence and filled a few blanks. These people already had the basic ideas, they were just afraid to admit it. And as for the essays, those are ideas that I put into cyberspace. They took root on their own, and spread because of the individuals who were affected by them. I can’t stop that.”

“Like hell you can’t!”

“And how do you suppose I could stop the essays?”

“By changing your theories… slowly, of course… and bringing them around to the idea that they are better served by not destroying the current system.”

“Oh, you want me to bullshit them into compliance.”

Blackstone was about to say, “I wouldn’t put it that way,” but he remembered what Phillip had said earlier – that making the words sound less ugly does not change the reality.

“All right, Phillip, you like it blunt, so, yes, I do want you to bullshit them; for their own good. If democratic governments fail, there will be anarchy and mass death.”

Phillip laughed. “What is it with you guys? You’ve all bought the same all-or-nothing lie about governments. What you wrongly call ‘anarchy’ occurs not when there is *no* ruler, but when there are *competing* rulers fighting for sole dominance. When there is no ruler at all, there is usually relative peace. Get your head out of the conditioning factory and look at the real histories.

“Next, the governments you so love will not just crumble, they will shrink and devolve. There are millions of government employees, and they’re not going to all

walk away at once. They'll keep their systems going as long as possible. They'll adapt and hang on for a long time.

"So, the short answer, Arthur, is that I will not bullshit people for you. If the truth doesn't work, then so be it. I will take my stand on that. And you are deeply mistaken in your view that Donnelly's delivery driver and people like him can't respond to my ideas."

"Good luck proving that, Donson. Not only are they absorbed in an entertainment culture, but they get their self-esteem from their politics. They hold to one party or another because it makes them feel like a good person. And you want to take that away from them? They won't give it up! Maybe they'll figure out it's a fraud a thousand years from now, but for the moment you can't help them. They're just not up to it. Let them have their farcical homelands, their bullshit political parties, and their groundless mystical beliefs. They're not going to give them up because you tell them the truth. They don't want to know any different! That would require effort – and they want to avoid effort at every possible point.

"Oh, I know, you'll say that living your way would be far easier; but only after they've expended a lot of effort to extract themselves from where they sit now. If you can't give them nearly-instant results, they'll tune you out Donson. Look around and see! If it's not in front of their face, flashing and making noise, they don't care. Period! End of story! Give it up, Phillip, you're too smart a guy to waste your time on them. They won't wake up, no matter how loud you yell."

Phillip was now getting angry. He thought of Jim's story of the cemetery in Warsaw, and how this man was both criticizing Jim's Shlomos and, at the same time, trying to prevent them from rising.

"That's about enough, Blackstone. I'm going to tell you one last thing; maybe you'll be able to understand it, and maybe not. But when I finish, you'll have heard my final answer.

"All of your arguments center around the inability of the masses to escape from their mental chains. You are wrong, and I'll tell you why:

"These 'Joe Averages' are not a lesser species than you and I. Their life experiences may differ, and their conditioning certainly differs, but their essence is the same. You see, I used to be a Joe Average, Blackstone, and I made it out."

"Yes, but you are an extremely unusual case."

"And what of my ten million? Are they all as exceptional as I?"

"No, they're not, they're following you."

"You just can't accept them as equals, can you?"

"No I don't. Because, as you wrote, 'reality matters,' and the reality is that they do not operate based on reason. They are slaves to emotions that are placed in them by marketers."

"No, Blackstone, that's how they *act*, but it is not essentially what they *are*.

"Maybe you are right, and I am as exceptional as you say. But my special talents have not allowed me to do things that the others *couldn't* do, only to do certain things faster and better. I had to build knowledge upon knowledge, just like anyone else; the difference is that I made the mental connections faster, and that I somehow stayed on-course. It took me years… decades… to make my way through the forest of obstacles, both ancient and modern, that I found in front of me. Somehow, I was able to make it through to the other side while still reasonably young.

"Then, once I did get through, I began to tell the others how to do it themselves and where the shortcuts were located. Now they are using my findings to make their own way through much more easily. How I ended up the one guy who could do this is still a wonder to me, but so long as I am that guy, I will use my abilities to honor and to assist your Joe Averages.

"And let me tell you the real crime of your systems: They manage people's minds, rather than allowing the power of those minds to be properly used. I can't even imagine how much better life on earth would be if the great mass of humans actually used their minds appropriately, rather than remaining as partially-thinking cogs in your machinery.

"I will not help you, Blackstone."

Phillip rose, and walked to Donnelly. "I am done for the evening, Dr. Donnelly. If you would call a car for me, I'm sure Mr. Blackstone will inform you as to the details of our conversation."

* * * * * * *

Bill and Phillip stood silently at the front door, waiting for a car to arrive. As they did, the old man with the English/Australian accent walked up.

"I heard your conversation, Mr. Donson." Phillip looked at him as if to say "How could you have?" The man smiled. "I sat in the right position, and turned my hearing aid all the way up." Phillip laughed. "That's beautiful."

"In any event, Mr. Donson, I understand your position. Blackstone and Donnelly will oppose your system, but myself and one or two others will undermine them. I listened to you carefully, and I think you may be right. At the least, you should be left alone until more results are in…" The man trailed off, seemingly in deep sorrow. "You certainly wouldn't know the details, but some of the acts of this organization – mostly before my time – were dead wrong, and caused immense suffering."

"Yes, sir, I may know some of the actions you are referring to. Even when undertaken benevolently, centralized control is contrary to human nature, and yields bitter fruit."

“You are a wise man, Donson.” Then the old man handed him a business card. “I’m not especially good at using the Internet, but if you send me instructions, I’d enjoy corresponding.”

Phillip, who had always had a special appreciation for old people, smiled, and said, “Yes sir, I will certainly send you instructions, and I would be honored to correspond.”

“Good… I am pleased. Well, I had best be getting back before they think I’ve switched sides.” The old man winked smartly, and walked away.

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Phillip woke early and went with Bill to meet some of the soldiers who were providing security. The soldiers who understood who Phillip was – perhaps a fifth of them – were thrilled. They had Phillip autograph T-shirts with the quotations on them, and insisted on telling Phillip stories. After about half an hour, Bill dragged Phillip back inside. Bill went into the meeting, but Phillip went back upstairs to nap.

At lunch, Bill stopped in at their suite to see when Phillip was coming back to the meetings. He found Phillip asleep in his bed.

“Say, Phillip, wake up for a minute.”

“Uh… ? Oh, hi, Bill, what’s up?”

“Phillip, it’s lunch time. Have you been asleep all morning?”

“No, I got up and read for a while.”

“Oh, I see. Are you going to skip the whole day?”

“No. I’ll be back down for the last session, and to talk to William again at the bar. By then I’m sure that we’ll have another offer for dinner.”

“Very well, I’ll tell that to the people who have been asking for you. Enjoy your rest.” The idea of people asking for him made Phillip think. Bill had turned to leave the room.

“Bill. Wait a minute. Who was asking about me?”

“Well… William… then one or two people from the last two nights, and a clergyman of some sort; I didn’t catch his name. Why? You seem to be reading something important into this.”

“Well, unless I’m mistaken, we’re going to have a very interesting meeting with the clergyman and his associates tonight. And Bill…” Phillip fumbled for the remote control on the night stand. Then he turned on the television and spoke very quietly, on the outside chance that there were listening devices in the room. “We should make an unexpected exit this evening after our meeting. If you have anything

important that you won't want to carry on your person, overnight it out now. For our dinner tonight, we'll carry anything we need in our pockets, and then just leave."

"Yes, yes, I know the drill."

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Phillip made his way to the hotel lobby mid-afternoon, ten minutes before the regular DHL pickup. He put some of his papers into a shipping pouch and sent them off to the office of a friend in Spain, something he did fairly regularly. When he was ready, he would ask the friend to ship the papers to him in Greece. Phillip then walked over to another café area and sipped a cappuccino while watching for the DHL truck. He wanted to be absolutely sure the papers made their way out of the hotel unmolested.

As he sat, a young clergyman, dressed in a long black robe and priest's collar, approached him. "Ah, Mr. Donson."

"Yes?"

"I am Father Forneaux, also attending these meetings. May I join you for a moment?"

Phillip pulled one of the chairs away from the table, and said, "Please do."

"Thank you."

"You are quite welcome." Just then, the DHL truck pulled up in front of the hotel. Phillip watched the driver in his peripheral vision, while trying to pay as much attention as possible to the young priest at the same time. His cup of cappuccino provided a nice diversion while changing his focus from one to the other.

"So, Father Forneaux, how are you enjoying the meetings?"

"Oh, very well. I especially appreciate the quality of the speakers. They understand their subjects thoroughly and also have the necessary skills to explain them in terms that are accessible to non-specialists."

"Yes, that is very nice. But tell me, why were you looking for me?"

The young priest smiled slightly. "Some of my superiors would like to have a discussion with you this evening, Mr. Donson, and they asked me to find you and invite you."

"I see." Phillip didn't like the feeling of being 'invited' to a meeting with Church leaders. Something about it seemed very ominous. "Perhaps it's just hereditary," he thought.

"And where would they like to meet?"

"We have a private room reserved at the Heidelburg Restaurant in Bonn."

“And at what time would you like to meet there?”

“The reservation is at eight o’clock.”

“Very well, then, you may tell your superiors that Mr. McCoy and I will attend.” Phillip paused for a moment. He wanted to ask what subjects might be discussed, but knew it would not provide him any further information. This young priest was functioning as an errand boy. Just at that moment the DHL driver left the front desk for his truck. Phillip was able to see his package being loaded in the truck, and was relieved. It contained an Argentine passport in a false name.

The priest stood up. “Thank you for agreeing to attend, Mr. Donson, I will see you there.”

“Yes, I’ll look forward to it,” answered Phillip, and returned to sipping his cappuccino and feeling deeply uncomfortable about the evening that lay in front of him.

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The last session of the day was on Islam again. This speaker expounded on a plan for a reasonable method of transition from Muslim dictatorships, reliant on external hatreds for unity, to more open societies. Afterward, both Bill and Phillip walked out together and over to the bar. It took William longer than usual, but they were in no rush and didn’t mind the wait. The young priest had found Bill, and invited him to the dinner as well.

“So, Phillip, are you expecting some fireworks at the meeting tonight?”

“I’m really not sure, Bill. With the other meetings, I knew what to expect. With this one, I don’t know. I think it all depends on their estimation of me. I think they see me as a having some weight philosophically, but I’m not sure if it goes any further than that. They may think I’m a wild eccentric, or they may see me as a very serious threat… I’m just not sure.”

“So, you want to play it for the worst case scenario?”

“Absolutely.”

The bartender asked them for their orders. Today, they both had fruit juice. The two of them sat, each silently thinking about the evening’s events and all the likely possibilities. For a long time they were content just to sit together, and to say nothing.

“Phillip, I have an idea.”

“Go ahead.”

“We should walk to the restaurant. I checked, and it’s only a couple of kilometers. We’ll just say we haven’t had much exercise and that we decided to walk. Then, on our way out, we hang out with the soldiers again, and make plans for them to pick us up at the restaurant – perhaps at ten o’clock – to go out drinking together. That way, we end up walking out of the restaurant with a military escort. And we’ll have our blokes following as well.”

“That’s brilliant, Bill! That’s our plan.”

Again, they sat in near silence. After several more minutes, William walked over.

“Ah, the boys who are making so many people worried.”

Phillip smiled, but with a bit of pain in his face. “So, is that the word on the street?”

“Yes, Phillip, I’m afraid so. They say that you’re so buried in your philosophy that you wouldn’t listen to Jesus Christ Himself.”

“Are they at least relieved that I’m retiring?”

William smiled sadly. “I’m sorry, Phillip, I’m afraid they don’t believe you on that score.”

“So they think I’m addicted to power?”

“No… worse. They think you are some unusual sort of politico-religious zealot; except they can’t quite figure out what your hidden beliefs are.” They all laughed in pained tones.

“So, do they think they’re sending me to Jesus’ representatives tonight?”

William looked concerned for the first time. He looked around, and spoke very quietly. “Phillip, there may be things about the Church that you don’t know…”

Phillip understood his concern, and matched his secretive tone of voice.

“You can relax, William, I know.” William still looked concerned, as if to say, “or maybe you just think you know.” So, Phillip continued to keep his voice very low, and went on. “I know how deeply they are involved in world affairs, and that they wield more global influence than anyone would ever admit publicly. That they have amazing resources, and that while religion is their public business, their private business is to direct the rulers of the earth – by a hundred techniques – into the paths they wish for them.”

Now William looked just as scared as before, but with some additional confusion mixed-in. He spoke in the same hushed tones. “How did you learn this?”

Phillip tilted his head and spread his hands in a depreciating gesture. “I did a lot of studying, and put two and two together. Then, luckily, I was able to confirm it with some intelligence agents.”

William looked directly into Phillip's eyes for just a moment, trying to convince himself that Phillip was telling him the truth… that he had figured this out by himself. He paused just a moment, dropping his head halfway. Then he raised his eyes back to Phillip, and said, "In that case sir, you *are* a genius."

"Thank you."

"Yes, you are welcome. But listen to me, Phillip, I have to leave in just a moment. Before I do, I have one more thing I need to say: Be very careful what you talk about tonight. A complete record will be made of the evening's events, and they will assign four or five men to analyze everything you say. And this team of analysts will be very, very good. If they haven't done it already, they will find some young priests and order them to infiltrate your system. They'll spend years if necessary, doing absolutely nothing *but* infiltrating your system. Remember, their people have no wives and children, none of the usual obligations, and they are very well educated indeed."

William paused, searching his brain for any last things he should tell Phillip before he left. "Remember, they always have contingency plans, and they have unlimited resources, including hundreds of millions of deeply faithful followers. All right, I must go now. Phillip, you will be careful?"

"Yes, William, I promise."

"Good. Do let me know how it turns out, will you?"

"Yes, I will."

William walked back toward the meeting rooms, and Phillip and Bill both turned around on their bar stools; facing the front of the Maratime, with their backs resting against the bar. They spoke to each other in half-monotones, while looking straight ahead rather than at each other.

"You thought it better not to tell him that we were leaving tonight?"

"Yes. Better for him that he should be surprised along with everyone else."

"Yes… good call."

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As the men sat at the bar, silently, a man who appeared to be a very senior clergyman approached.

"Mr. Donson and Mr. McCoy; I am Monsignor Albino." They shook hands. "I am pleased to meet you." Phillip and Bill returned the pleasantries. "They told me that you will join us for dinner this evening."

“Yes,” said Phillip, “but I am quite lost as to what you would like to talk about. Would you care to give me some idea of the subject matter?”

“May I join you?”, asked the clergyman.

“Of course,” said McCoy, as he motioned them all to a group of chairs a few meters away. They sat.

“Mr. Donson, we wish to talk about your ideas.” Phillip didn’t respond, leaving a slightly uncomfortable pause, and inducing the clergyman to continue. “You have turned morality upside down in your teachings, Mr. Donson. You are opposed to selflessness, you disdain unity, you are quite at war with altruism. Those are quite opposite to what almost the whole world believes, and such ideas concern us.”

“Yes, I am sure they do. But your statement is not precisely correct.”

“And how is it not? I have read your work.”

“I am not seeking to *defeat* altruism and the others, only to tell the truth that they are misstatements, and are fraudulent as they are commonly used. That is, that they do not match reality, and are therefore false. These truths having been told, my work is done.”

“Very well, I understand.”

Phillip continued. “You also said that my writings are opposed to what almost all the world believes. That is only true in a certain sense. People do service to altruism, selflessness, and unity with their lips, but their inner natures are quite different. They pretend to believe in those things, thinking that they are supposed to. But although they may learn to pretend quite well, their true natures do not agree. And this is not a minor issue, since the anti-self ideals act as substitutes, and tend to displace authentic virtues such as self-acknowledgment, integrity, understanding, and the desire to bless.”

The Monsignor was silent for quite a while, then finally spoke. “I can see why so many people are concerned about you, Mr. Donson, your ideas have a certain uniqueness and simplicity to them. I think we will enjoy our discussions this evening. But until then, I must undertake other activities. Good afternoon.”

The clergyman stood and walked away.

Again, Phillip and Bill sat silently. And again, Phillip began thinking about how many men with new ideas had been called before the councils of ‘concerned’ Church leaders. Galileo, Wycliffe, John Huss, and countless others. Now, he was preparing to walk into their council, willingly. “Well, my reason for going…” He stopped. His reason for going was inertia. He had gone to the other meetings, so he had simply continued the pattern. “Not good enough!” he said to himself sternly. “Why should I go?” he asked himself, “They know everything they’re going to know about me, and I already know far more about them than they’d ever admit.”

“Bill?”

“Uh-huh?”

“Aside from simple inertia, why are we going tonight?”

“I’m not sure, Phillip, it’s rather been your game here.”

“Yes, I know. Can you think of a good reason?”

“Ahh… no, I can’t.”

Now Phillip laughed. He was thinking of Farber, and his unassailable locker-room logic. “Nothing to gain?” he would say, “Ditch ‘em!”

Phillip stood up. “Come on, Bill, we’ve got two-and-a-half hours before they’re going to start looking for us, let’s get the hell out of here.” McCoy looked at him quizzically, not understanding what he meant. “Screw ‘em, were cutting class. Let’s go catch a train.”

They picked up the best cigars available at the hotel store and lit them in celebration as they walked out the door. They exchanged greetings with a few soldiers and walked down the street. A few blocks later, they caught a passing taxi and went to the Cologne train station. They caught the first train out, headed to Milan. As usual, they purchased their tickets with cash, leaving no trace.

McCoy called his three men from the train station and told them to conduct surveillance at the Heidelburg Restaurant, to email a report to him, and to cancel the operation.

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Surveillance: Heidelburg Restaurant, Bonn, Germany, August 23.

Ten clergymen gathered in a private room at the restaurant, which is an old, 2-storey brick building; very secure structure. The facility was closed to all other patrons from 19:00 to closing.

We were able to place one wireless listening device at the entrance of the dinning room prior to all early patrons being removed. Transmission quality was not good, but we were able to understand some of the conversation. (More later.)

The private party (all clergy) arrived in three limousines at 19:45 They entered the private room, and one man said something about a conversation with Mr. Donson, details unclear.

At about 20:10, they became concerned that you and Mr. Donson had not arrived. They phoned the hotel and could not find you. There was further conversation about your whereabouts, but we could not understand it.

At 20:30, they ordered their food, and ate.

At 21:03, they said that you and Mr. Donson would not show up, and they began to discuss how to undermine Mr. Donson's ideas. As mentioned earlier, details were difficult to perceive, but main points were as follows:

1. That they should identify every exception and any inconsistency in the philosophy, then to expose such a flaw as if it were the only thing that mattered.

2. To fill any gaps in the philosophy with simple, instinctive ideas that supported traditional beliefs.

3. To develop a network of friends in Gamma circles, to turn these people into leading voices. That these people should inject the ideas that support Church and state interests.

4. To bring Gamma people back, step by step, into traditional thinking. They suggested that this may take several decades, but that in time they would succeed.

5. To make the philosophy seem very complicated and difficult to understand, thus repelling 'uninfected' people from it. To do this by arguing publicly and continuously over the most arcane and difficult portions of the philosophy… to artificially complicate them as required.

6. To assign their best people to this work. (Numbers were mentioned: 50, 100, 200; but we could not ascertain which they agreed upon.) Also that these people would have complete cooperation at every level.

At 22:44 the group left the restaurant and returned to Hotel Maratime,

arriving at 22:57.

End Report.

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‘Prague Spring’ had energized the Gamma communities. The vast majority of them had not attended, but the very concept of such events, of such a style of living, was contagious. People now looked for opportunities to gather. None of this was lost on the Skunk teams. Some of them had attended and a number of them now committed themselves to ‘riding shotgun’ for the festivals. One group provided aerosol tranquilizers, so that if one person was accosted by police, a dozen others, called on their cell phones, would swarm around and use their sprays to drop the policemen. So far, there was no need for this, but it would be foolish to be unprepared. They had other means of self-protection as well.

The Hunters were infiltrating every border-control computer they could. Rather than shutting them down altogether, they randomly flooded the systems with so much useless data that the systems did not operate. This could be done for days on end if a number of Gamma people needed to get in or out of some place undetected. It also made border-crossing surveillance too expensive to maintain.

Frances and James kept the house in Lisse, but rented it out for a year and went from Prague to an Italian town on the Mediterranean called Marina di Massa. It was close enough to several larger towns to provide all the services they needed, and surrounded by other small resort towns to spread their visibility. James and Frances had found this town a few years earlier and talked about going there to a number of people in Prague. They weren’t sure how many people would show up, but it was quite possible that there would be hundreds.

They arrived in Marina di Massa in mid-September. Frances had refused to show up until tourist season was over. “I don’t want their pre-packaged fun,” she said, “I want to create my own.”

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“Julia, when are you going to come see us? It’s been something like two years.” Frances missed Julia, and she was also concerned about her. She tried not to call Julia too often; something gave her the impression that it would be better that way. But now she had a bit of time on her hands, and she wanted to understand what was

going on inside of Julia. It might be more difficult later, if a lot of people showed up here in Italy like they had in Prague.

Finishing her medical degree and residency had been important to Julia for reasons that eluded her. She understood that Julia had always wanted to be a doctor, but she was so focused on it these past years that she had done almost nothing else. She and James had tried repeatedly to get her to visit, to no avail. She didn't even write very often.

"Well, Frances, I think I can come soon."

"So you're done with everything you needed to do?"

"Well, for now, though I still have a few loose ends to clean up." Frances was relieved. For a moment, she wanted to convince Julia to move to Europe and join them, but that seemed too much, too fast. Julia was traveling her own path. "But what path?" Frances wondered. There was an element to Julia's medical career that she didn't understand.

"Oh, I'm very pleased, Julia. We're going to be here on the Italian coast all winter. And I really want you to see my kids."

"I promise, Frances, I'll be there by the first of the year."

Just then, Jessica cried. "Oh, I should take care of the baby, Julia, can I call you back later?"

"Sure," she said, "I should be here all day today."

"Great. I'll see you then."

She hung up the phone, picked up Jessica, and took her to the changing table. It was only a dirty diaper. She kept thinking about Julia. Julia and Phillip. In many ways, they really belonged together, and in others, they constantly irritated each other. She wondered whether there could be any resolution to the situation, or whether it was simply a lost cause. Certainly it wasn't her problem to fix, but she did care about both of these people.

"Jim," she hollered across the hall, "would you please take over for me here?"

It took him a couple of seconds. "Uh, yeah, I suppose so. Something important?"

"Yeah, I need to talk to Anna… do you have their phone number?"

"Well, I'm not sure, but I just saw her on-line two minutes ago."

Frances almost jumped away from the changing table, but kept one hand on the baby. Jim took over for her.

"Have you still got the programs up?"

He laughed. "Go! I'm sure she's still there." Frances ran.

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FA: Anna, you still here?

ADH: Hey Frances! How are you?

FA: Very well, thanks.

ADH: Tell me about where you are now.

FA: Anna, you should come if you can. The place is deserted now, and we have the beaches all to ourselves. There are grand adventures to be had for the kids, and endless expeditions to be taken. We pull a couple of American style grills out to the beach most nights and we've invented all sorts of meals. Great wine is cheap here, the stars are vivid, there are Etruscan sites nearby (not to mention Roman ruins everywhere), and the most interesting people are starting to come through now.

ADH: Wow. I'll talk to Larry and see what we can do. He's received offers from two virtual Universities recently - one of them a very respectable name. If he took one of those offers… but, don't get your hopes too high… we'll see.

FA: Cool. Let me know as soon as you decide anything.

ADH: Absolutely.

FA: Listen, Anna, I have some questions for you.

ADH: OK, what subject?

FA: Ummm… your parents.

ADH: LOL. OK, go ahead.

FA: Well, it seems to me that in some ways they really belong together. But when they are together, they seem to grate on each other. Am I wrong?

ADH: No, you are correct. It was always that way.

FA: OK. Well, Jim is always adamant that I shouldn't meddle in such things (and I agree… mostly), but I really do want to understand this. What are the core issues?

ADH: All right, let me try to help you with this. My mom and dad get along wonderfully when they have a single focus. If you needed two people to save you in an emergency, they would be an excellent choice. But when the situations are more mundane, Dad always pushes Mom too far.

FA: Explain that last part please.

ADH: Sure. You know how Dad is always coming up with new ideas, and is overwhelmingly passionate about them.

FA: Right.

ADH: Well, this is too much for Mom. Let's see how I can put this in terms that will resonate with you… OK… Imagine yourself being married to a genius economist who is also the best writer you know. And, he has this overflowing passion. He comes up with every new idea before you can get close to it. Now, couple that with some childhood difficulties that left you with an inferiority wound. How would that feel?

FA: Pretty bad.

ADH: Right. That's the picture. Dad can be pretty difficult to live with. His passions overwhelm and displace the more mundane things of life: Things that most people (including Mom) find comfort in. Is this making sense?

FA: Yeah, I think so.

ADH: Rachel and I once decided that Dad really should have been born in the future. He wouldn't be the oddball there. And Mom shouldn't have gotten together with Dad until she was older and independently accomplished.

FA: Smart kids.

ADH: Ha! I think we were twelve and thirteen at the time!

ADH: OK, let me give you an example of this.

FA: Please.

ADH: You know that Dad can be something of an ascetic.

FA: Huh?

ADH: Well, not in the usual sense, but you should see him when he's working on new ideas. He eats and sleeps, of course, but only because he needs to. I remember my mom making nice meals, and him either missing them altogether ("you guys go ahead and start. I'll be in soon"), or sitting, eating, saying thank you, and going directly back to work.

ADH: Anyway, there's nothing really wrong about that, but Mom comes from a more traditional background where the husband's duty is to sit, eat, and really appreciate the meal. Dad just isn't wired that way. He appreciates the meal, but ordering out would do just as well. This kind of thing happened a lot. It left Mom feeling grossly unappreciated.

FA: I see. And your dad's perspective on this?

ADH: Mostly that Mom was being unreasonable. He quite understood her concerns and tried to accommodate them, but his basic nature is so different.

FA: How, different?

ADH: When he tires to care about man-made obligations - holidays for example - he just can't do it. To him, it's as if he'd be selling out to traditions and obligations that should have died out centuries ago. "Why should your happiness be destroyed by something like that?" I remember him saying. He obviously loved Mom, but he felt it was a fraud to 'prove' his love by giving her gifts. If he had to prove it with things… well… in his mind, that was insulting to both of them.

FA: I'm beginning to see what you mean… Have they seen each other recently?

ADH: Not really. Not in a while. I think they've only seen each other a couple of times since your wedding. I think Mom needs her space. Kind of regrouping after the twenty-five-year Dad Storm.

FA: Huh. Speaking of, where is your dad now? He seems to have retired as promised.

ADH: (Laughing again.) Yeah. I got an email from him yesterday. Get this: He's doing a slow motion tour of health spas in eastern Europe. He was in Bulgaria.

FA: Now I'm laughing. How does he sound?

ADH: As always, but a bit less animated… as if his attention has turned inward… or something like that. But mainly the same.

FA: OK, I should get back to the kids now. Thanks, Anna, you helped a lot.

ADH: My pleasure. Are you planning anything for my folks?

FA: Starting to… for your mom.

ADH: Good. Let me know what you come up with.

FA: Absolutely.

ADH: L8r.

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"Jim, I'm taking on a project."

"You mean beside the eighteen hours a day you spend on the kids?" He smiled, and she smiled back.

"You know what I mean, smart guy!"

He laughed. "Yes, of course I do. And what sort of project might this one be?"

"I think I'm going to make Julia rich and famous."

He looked at her in wonder. “What?”

“You heard me. I want to see Julia getting huge accolades and money.”

“Okay… you want to tell me why?”

“Yes. So she can stand next to Phillip on even ground.”

Jim looked very doubtful. “Frances, I don’t want to meddle in their relationship. That’s their set of problems to work out… and a very complicated set of problems, I might add.”

“Listen, Jim, I don’t know if they’ll ever want to get back together again, but I do want to make it possible. And until Julia feels like she can stand on the same level as Phillip, that can’t happen.”

“Okay, I can see your point, but it will never be external things that can make Julia feel that way. It has to be within her. If you just provide things to her, she’ll never get the inner strength you’re talking about.”

Frances stopped, then laughed at herself. “I’m sorry, Jim, I was being a bit dramatic, and wasn’t terribly clear. Of course, you are correct. What I should have said was that I’m going to make myself available to Julia. If she wants to do important and noteworthy things, which I think she does, I’ll be there to encourage her, and to help.”

“But only if she asks, Frances. Otherwise you can ruin the whole thing.”

“All right, only if she asks. But I am going to be available. Agreed?”

“Agreed.”

“Good. Oh, one more thing, James. I’m not going to be afraid of Julia getting public attention. There is a certain amount of self-esteem that people really do get from other people’s approval. Perhaps that’s not ideal, but it is the way most of us are.” She paused. “… although I wouldn’t want to see Julia rely on that…” James watched silently as her mind took a step forward. “Perhaps that’s the problem with it, Jim! Maybe enjoying acclaim is fine, but needing it is not. That would make sense!”

James smiled. “That’s a good point, Frances. Well done.”

“Thank you,” she said. Then she hugged him, laid the baby down, and went to her computer to make some notes. Two hours later she called Julia and talked for a long time.

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On October 5th, the Free Soul web pages posted a headline stating that Prester John had retired. Within two hours, the note was on four other web sites. Aside from the news of the retirement, which was a surprise to most who read it, the text went on to

say that PJ was writing a public explanation of the reasons for his retirement, and that all was well with him.

On October 6th, several dozen widely-scattered people became intellectuals. Most of them didn't think of it that way, but somewhere in their psyches, they committed themselves to the future of humanity. They decided that they would study, analyze, and help to create a better world for themselves and for their descendants. It would be months before most of them would begin to put new ideas together and longer before many of those ideas matured, but their paths were set.

It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. And so it seemed that Phillip's act of leaving pulled these people in; by some unseen mechanism drawing them from their previous lives into something grander.

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James Farber sat on the deserted beach at Marina di Massa almost every morning, alternately playing with his children and working on his new essay. In most ways he and Frances were separating themselves from daily contact with world affairs. He had moved all of his assets into safe, long-term investments and had four money-managers competing with each other for a larger share of his portfolio. This required attention only once per month, when his statements came in. He didn't even check the news much anymore. He felt strangely about this, so different was it from his habit of the past thirty-some years. But he also felt liberated by it… as if he had stepped away from a wearing struggle.

His only interest in world affairs now was keeping track of wars and oppression. So long as he could avoid those, little else interested him.

On November 2nd, his original essay was rerun in the Wall Street Journal, one month later than the two-year anniversary date he had planned. Again, it was a full page, paid for from one of the few remaining bank accounts in his real name. At the bottom of the page, a note indicated that there would be a new essay the next day. On November 3rd, the new essay ran in the Journal, in the Financial Times, and in the Times of London. This one would also have an effect, but predominantly on the more enterprising types of young people, which was not what he had expected. He wondered where this would lead, but also had a strange sort of resignation about it. He had done his part, and whatever came of it was fine. Perhaps he would do more in the future, but he felt no compulsion. His life was his own now, to be enjoyed with family, friends, and with ideas that he cared about.

Frances spent her time taking care of the children, doing a little bit of writing, and playing hostess to the stream of interesting people that were coming to Marina di Massa. On many days, she and the children made projects of gathering pieces of driftwood on the beach, and fashioning them into wonderful tables, benches,

ornaments, and wine racks… making their beach beautiful. All that was required was some glue, a few nails or screws, and some imagination.

Other times, she sat on the beach with children, both her own and others, and taught them their school lessons. And, almost always, people passing by would offer to help. As a result, these children – and there were many families with children here – were taught arithmetic, algebra and geometry by noted mathematicians, economics by University Professors, science by top physicists, and writing by professional authors. No better education, at any price, could have been found. What made it truly spectacular was that these teachers were doing this for love of learning… for their love of improving children. More than once, a Nobel Laureate sat in the sand, surrounded by a dozen children, illustrating concepts with pebbles. Seeds were planted in these children that would later mature wonderfully.

The children formed moveable, changing packs. On one day, there would be a trip to nearby ruins. One group of the children might go there, while another group would stay on the beaches, learning either from each other, from a parent, or from capable teachers who passed by. There may also be astronomy lessons at night, sailing lessons, and music lessons, all the same day. None of this was organized. The people who taught did so because they got enjoyment from it. The children cooked, cleaned, and mixed seamlessly with the adults whenever they wished to. And when they wanted to play with the other children, there were almost always responsible adults watching at a distance.

Frequently, groups of adults would take trips to Roma or Firenze for a few nights. Those with children would leave them with friends, and would generally return the favor later.

The natives of Marina di Massa were shocked that the beaches were active. This had never happened in living memory. There didn't seem to be any pattern to the activity, just people walking or driving from beach to beach, where people wearing warm clothing were coming and going, cooking, playing, and talking. While the weather wasn't very cold by North American standards, the locals thought these people must be quite mad, sitting on the beach during winter. On the other hand, a great number of the Gamma people took short-term leases on stores that were closed for the winter. They used these for offices and meeting rooms. This, of course, pleased the locals immensely. By the time spring approached, landlords were competing for the next year's off-season leases and trying to make sure that these people – whoever they were – would come back.

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The phone line from rural Greece to rural Canada was surprisingly good. Michael had obtained the phone number of the little Inn from McCoy, and called to check in

on Phillip. It was winter now. Phillip had finished his spa tour, and settled into a small Greek resort town.

"So, Phillip, tell me, are you enjoying retirement?"

"Yeah, Mike. I'm doing nothing, and loving it."

"So, it's been quiet?"

"Uh huh. McCoy was here a few days ago, but aside from that, nice and quiet. But I do have a few things on my calendar."

"Such as?"

"Oh, a couple of my grand kids are going to visit soon, and I'm going to go visit Jim and Frances before too long."

"Good, that sounds perfect…Hear anything from Julia?"

"Yeah, she called the other day. I think she's going to get out of the US finally."

"Good. Do you think you guys will start spending more time together now?"

"You know, Mike, I just can't tell. We'll see."

"And how are you feeling?"

He laughed. "Well, it's strange. I've been sleeping like a teenager, sometimes twelve hours a day. I think I'm just unwinding. I am enjoying the rest, but I think it will be a while before I unwind enough to locate myself. Does that make any sense to you?"

"Yes it does, and it means that you pushed yourself way, way too far."

Over the past two years Phillip had become, for the first time in his life, concerned for his health. He knew that his perpetual over-extension had put him at risk. Although he was not sick, he felt that all his reserves had been depleted.

"What would you recommend I do, Michael?"

"Just what you're doing. Eat well, keep sleeping, and be sure to get enough sex." Most people mentioning sex would joke about it. Michael was completely serious.

"All right, I will do that. Anything else?"

"No, except that 'eating well' should include vitamins, minerals, sufficient protein, and so on. Would you like me to send you a list of specifics?"

"Yes, please."

"I'll get it to you right away."

"Thanks."

Phillip trusted Michael's opinion implicitly. He knew that his information was the best available, and that unless he had strong reason to do otherwise, he would follow it precisely.

“So, c’mon Michael, what have you been working on? I want to know.”

“Gosh, Phillip, lots of things. You know we sold-off the Breakers company.”

“Right, and George is doing some part-time supervision.”

“And… I’ve got a free lifetime pass to all of their research projects.”

Phillip laughed hard. “Good negotiating, Michael, I’m impressed.”

“Yeah. And now that my new book is in print, I’ve been getting very eclectic, although I’ve been drawn more and more to Moreno’s old work in Psychodrama.”

“Really? I remember when Moreno guest-lectured at UC. He really impressed me.”

“Yeah, me too. And his work is really very interesting, not to mention shockingly effective at times.”

Phillip noticed himself getting excited about Michael’s work, feeling a big idea coming on; but then he abruptly stopped. “I’m retired now,” he said to himself, “I can’t go down that road.” His mind paused as he felt something else bubbling up in it. “No, I can take that road… short trips down that road… day hikes only. I just can’t take on any new projects.”

“So, what are the interesting things you’ve been looking into?”

“Well, I’ve been thinking about why the physical actions of the psychodrama technique were more effective than ‘the talking cure.’ And it seems as though the brain deals with abstract inputs – such as ideas denominated in words – differently that it does physical inputs, such as moving and speaking.” Michael paused for a moment to let Phillip absorb the idea, and then to respond. But Phillip didn’t respond; there was silence on the other end of the phone line. “Phillip? Are you there?” Michael heard commotion in the background. “Phillip?”

He heard a voice that must have been several feet away from the telephone handset, “Yeah, Michael, I’m here… … hold on a minute…” Phillip sounded desperately busy doing something. Michael began to worry that something was terribly wrong on Phillip’s end, but then he remembered… Phillip was coming up with a new idea.

“I need to get this on paper. I can’t forget this one.” Phillip was desperately serious. “All right Michael, say that again… that last part about inputs.”

“Okay, the brain handles physical inputs differently than it does abstract inputs. Physical inputs are generally taken with more gravity.”

“Yes! That’s it! Hang on while I write this down.” Michael waited for about half a minute, listening to Phillip mutter to himself. Finally, Phillip picked the phone back up. “Okay Michael, listen to this. Do you remember Mark Twain’s definition of faith?” Phillip’s pause was not nearly long enough for Michael to say, “No, I don’t.”

"Twain joked that faith was believing in something you know isn't so. And for most people that's true, but there's another kind of faith; I've experienced it several times. It feels like a heightened state of consciousness, like a creative force. It feels like it is your proper place to make demands upon the universe.

"In any event, you've just given me the key: The brain handles physical inputs differently than it does abstract inputs… almost as if the two used different circuitry."

Phillip was obviously clear in his own mind about this, but Michael was not. "So… ?"

Phillip's voice dropped in pitch. 'So… what if 'faith' – and the Greek term is 'persuasion' – what if the real faith is when the brain is persuaded to treat abstract inputs in the same was as it treats physical inputs… to run abstract impulses through the physical circuitry? I'm not sure exactly what the results would be, but it would certainly be an altered sort of consciousness, and perhaps it would open up new channels of the intellect. Oh, Michael, this could be rich. Maybe it's only an explanation of how superstition works… which would be important by itself… but what if it is a way to open new or forgotten mental abilities?"

"I don't know, P, but it could be important."

"Oh, hell yeah, it could be important. All right, I'm going to write this up a little bit better, and maybe follow the reasoning a bit…" Phillip stopped again.

"What is it Phillip?"

"Music! This could explain music's powerful impact on people. The mixing of auditory input – a physical stimulus – with the abstract inputs of sound movements and lyrics. Okay, I'm sorry Michael, I'm getting ahead of myself here." Phillip paused, remembering why he was retired, and why it was the right thing to do.

"All right, Michael, I'm going to spend a few minutes on this, then send you my notes. But after that, it's up to you to post them on the Internet, or to follow up yourself, or something, okay? I'm retired."

"No problem, P, I'll make sure they are distributed, one way or another."

"Thank you Michael my friend, you are a genius. Ciao."

"Okay, Phillip, see you soon."

It was frequently that way with Phillip. He latched onto a new idea with a seemingly primal force; so much so that it was hard to tell whether he was an ecstatic genius or simply a madman. You were generally left with the thought, "Well, time will tell." And, usually, time told that Phillip was on to something.

Phillip wrote his notes and emailed them to Michael within the hour. Then he purposely cleared the subject from his thoughts ('retiring it' was the image that passed through his mind) and took a nap. He woke later that day, and printed out

Michael's nutritional instructions, which had just arrived. Then he showered, dressed, and went to town to buy ingredients. Also to look for a Spanish woman he had met a few days earlier.

* * * * * * *

To all my friends:

I suppose that most of you already know that I have retired. It has been a couple of months now, and I am very happy with my decision. Not only did I need to retire, but you needed me to retire as well.

Let me explain: I have spent nearly my whole life working very hard, striving against huge obstacles, and taking on the most difficult projects. For whatever reason, I was compelled to do these things. And, truthfully, I am glad that I did most of them. But I also worked myself far too hard. I have studied other men who have been similarly motivated, and they all paid a severe price in physical health, and, sometimes, in mental health. I am not willing to continue down that road. Although my health has remained, I can tell that I have damaged myself. I think that I stopped before I did permanent damage – that I will recover. I certainly hope so. But in either case, I am taking a long time off. At least ten years, and perhaps the rest of my life.

In addition to this, the Digital Economy needs me to retire. As you know, I have played a rather central role in the development of the Gamma markets, the early Tango market, and in forming the philosophy behind these ventures. My essays have been widely distributed and quoted. All that is fine, and I do enjoy appreciation. But if I hang around, people will begin to rely upon me, rather than rising to challenges on their own.

My real job was to put important ideas in front of you, and, hopefully, to make them easily-understood. It has never been my place to lead you and guide you. That is your own job, and no one else's. So, if I am considered a leader, it is my duty to remove myself.

You have to live on your own. Leaders, especially charismatic leaders, provide a way for people to avoid living themselves and to live vicariously

through the leader. I do not want to come anywhere close to that. You don't need me anymore, if in fact you ever really did. Other people will step up and do my work, just as I stepped up to follow those who preceded me. And, with me out of the way, those people will be forced to come up with their own new ideas; to think on their own, to expand their consciousness, to open new territory. You truly are better without me.

I do not want to leave the impression that I will never be heard of again. I have plenty of friends that I keep in touch with, and I will certainly be buying and selling in Gamma. But my days as a serious player are over.

All of this being said, there are a few ideas I want to leave you with. These are mostly scattered pieces from my notes that never got published and that seem worthy. Make of them what you will:

• Your life is far too important not to be lived. Accept no substitutes, and be leery of delays.

• Keep thinking, keep improving, keep creating. Remember that once people leave their pursuit of the high and great, they are left to define their happiness by comparison with their neighbors. That gets ugly in a hurry.

• Stay with your principles. Once you deviate from them, you give the law of unintended consequences room to operate.

• Choose to experience your own life unrestrainedly; to vigorously use all of your talents, abilities, passions, and strengths; to move forward without guilt or shame; to revel in what you do and can do; to do it forcefully: To be, without apology.

• Learn to think about primary factors and to avoid categorization. For example, don't just apply the words 'good' or 'bad' to something; go deeper, and consider the benefits and harms caused by the thing in question. Know things for what they truly are, not as objects that fit in certain categories.

• There is no purpose of life, as most people seek. The only meaning to your life is the meaning you give it. That scares many people, but it also means that you get full credit for every good thing you do.

• Be valiant for the truth.

• Remember that we have all been negatively affected by life on Earth. We have all been damaged to one extent or another. Remember also that some of this was purely chance. Most of us in the Digital Economy have been less damaged than average. People born into worse situations (to illiterate families, to violent families, to drug-addicted families) may not escape their damage as quickly as we have. Don't demean them.

• Remember that the dominant culture of the 20th Century featured a continual effort to locate, glorify and manipulate the basest aspects of human nature. Good was frequently dismissed simply because it *was* good. It will take time for people to get over this.

• You have many powerful enemies.

• The freer you get, the more clearly you will see and understand life. And, seeing more clearly means that you will perceive not only wonderful new things you can do. You will also recognize, for the first time, some very unpleasant things that are difficult to bear.

• Remember that the errors of logic and psychology you rightly oppose are necessary for some people. They are the cloak that protects them from things too painful to face. Do not simply take away their cloak. If you cannot replace the cloak with something better, leave them alone until you can. Do not break the damaged person, heal them.

• When we become truly healthy, there will be no need for embarrassment, no need for shame. We will be happy about ourselves and what we do. This will occur incrementally, as we re-value and improve ourselves, and as we eliminate mystical and false standards of morality. This will not happen instantly or without some pain. Like the bound feet of ancient Chinese women, our souls have been bound by a backwards morality. Do not think that simply removing the bindings will be enough; there will be significant

adjustment involved. But a warping of the soul is not as permanent as the warping of bones. We may always remake ourselves, though the process may require significant effort.

• If you have been deeply damaged, and fear that you will never be able to reach greatness, know that you may always do things to make greatness possible for others. And know that this too is a form of greatness, and not a minor one.

Remember that I have loved you.

PJ

Appendix A

This appendix contains articles, essays, and notes that are referred to in the text. They were composed by the author during the writing of this book.

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THE GOSPEL OF RADICALISM

BY: PRESTER JOHN

Just a few hundred years ago it was a standard medical practice to bleed sick people; to make cuts in various parts of their bodies and to drain blood from them. Most people submitted to this useless and frequently harmful treatment without question.

Would you have been one of them?

What do you think of the bleeders? Does it seem to you that they were from a primitive and ignorant age? Well, guess how your descendants are going to think about our generation in a few hundred years! Unless you can break with the clamor of popular opinions, you are doomed to that fate.

All of the social, sexual, and political norms that people now hold dear will some day be gone, and will look as archaic as praying to the gods of wind and rain. Rationalize anything you want, but most people are living in ways that will be pitied by future generations. The fashion of this world will pass away. And it will not be missed.

Look at our history: 6000 years of wars, famines, epidemics, and nonstop emotional misery. Dear God, isn't it time to question the rules we've been living under?

At some point, shouldn't it become obvious? How much misery do you need before you start to ask hard questions? Shall I recite statistics to you of how many millions of people were violently killed in the past century? How many millions were starved to death by the authorities that ruled them? How many people – probably billions – who are emotionally damaged to the point of reduced function? What will

it take? Are you in so deep a fog that you will *never* question whether something is fundamentally wrong?

Humanity in our time remains in infancy. We are essentially unlimited creatures, yet we have been wallowing in abject poverty – physically, mentally, and spiritually.

We have natures that are suited to high adventure, yet we remain stagnant. Why? Because we've been conditioned only to *exist*, not to *live.* That conditioning was imposed upon us as weak children, then reinforced during many years of compulsory training. After a while, we learned not to buck the system, and eventually to find a safe place within the social order. We are afraid to venture too far out. The powers that be make sport of ruining people who venture too far out of bounds; so we stay safe, and ignore our selves in the process.

Safety is a fine thing to choose when you are five years old, but not when you are grown!

Your life is too valuable not to be lived. By virtue of being a healthy human, you have what seems to be unlimited potential. Why the urge to sit quietly? Why the fear of movement and expressiveness? Why the paralyzing fear of being different?

Wake up! Don't be satisfied to merely exist. Live!

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THE ALLEGORY OF THE SWAMP

BY: PRESTER JOHN

Swamps are smelly, uncomfortable, and full of dangers; but if you have lived in one all of your life, it seems normal to you. Also, if you had never ventured beyond the borders of the swamp, you would have no idea that anything better existed. If you tried to imagine life outside of the swamp, you would have no mental images to draw upon.

In my last essay (The Gospel of Radicalism), I hoped to convince you that the world is massively screwed-up, and that compliance with it will keep you screwed-up. My favorite analogy is that of living in a swamp. The swamp stinks and it is host to an abundance of dangerous animals, yet it can be survivable. Not exactly a nice place to live, but not impossible to live in either.

If I am correct, almost all of the great social arguments of our time revolve around organizing life in the swamp for maximum survival. But there is a far simpler, more

elegant answer: Leave the swamp. However, when such an idea is proposed, people always say "Oh yeah, and go where?" They have no ideas of what any other type of life would look like. And so, they sit back down in the swamp, and try to stake out a bearably uncomfortable spot. Sure, thousands and sometimes millions of people are butchered every year in wars, certainly emotional damage is endemic, and yes, the world is desperately confusing and unstable. But it is the world they know, and they do not believe another world could exist. So they sit. They may be miserable, but they will not move.

There's only one way out of this mess, but it requires things that most people don't want to do: To think rigorously and to try truly new things. You don't suppose that we could get out of this mess by using feelings, do you? Ten million Germans felt just fine about murdering all the Jews of Europe; half a nation of Turks felt fine about murdering a million Armenian women and children; and you can fill in the blanks for a hundred other slaughters. If the 20th Century could teach us anything, it is that reliance upon feelings is the *most dangerous* of foundations.

No, to get out of this, we will have to fly in defiance of our feelings, and think. The truth is that most people will do almost anything rather than this.

How did we rise out of starvation? By hard thinking, experimenting, and allowing human energy – the energy of correct thought followed by action – to operate without constraint. The same thing applies to a hundred other examples; figure them out for yourself. Unless you can find answers *that don't seem right*, you'll never get out. (If the correct answers seemed right to you, you'd already be out of the swamp.)

The only way to find such answers is getting down to objective facts, and seeing where they logically lead. Right now, the swamp feels normal to you. You've noticed the smell, and you've seen the crocodiles and snakes kill people. You want the smell and the killing to stop, but you don't think anything exists beyond the borders of the swamp. You have no feeling for anything else, and you are afraid of the unknown. But if you ever want to get away from the smell and the killing, you'll have to leave the swamp. Smell and killing are the nature of the swamp – they will not change, no matter how many leaders and their "New Plans" promise you otherwise. If you want to get to a better place, you'll have to leave the familiar place. I don't know if I can make it much simpler than that.

There aren't any shortcuts. You'll have to put two and two together, and do it doggedly, if you want to escape the smell and the carnage. If you are not willing to pay that price, you'll remain sitting with the masses. It may be that you'll be able to avoid the killing. And if you are lucky, you may be able to avoid some of the emotional damage. Or, maybe not. In any event, your children and grandchildren will end up in a stinking danger zone.

Your choice.

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PJ's Q & A (#1)

Q: Prester, you are founding your version of good and bad upon self-interest. How can you leave doing things for others entirely out of the picture? No selfless deeds? Sounds like hell to me.

Seminary Steve

A: Steve: First of all, using the phrase 'doing things for others' creates confusion. *Who you do something for* does not make an action good or bad. It is *what you do* that makes it good or bad.

Everything people do is for self-interest. That includes giving to charity and nursing the sick. You do it because you value the people you are helping. You think it is worthwhile to birth some kindness into the world. You are doing this because it makes you feel good. It may make other people feel good, too, but you are doing it for yourself.

Choosing not to use other people wrongly – to treat them well and to be benevolent – that is *not* selfless. That is an expression of integrity, based upon your self-understanding of what being treated wrongly is like.

Using selflessness as the definition of good is a scam. It is contrary to human nature, it is dishonest, and it never works. And don't think that it comes from the Bible, because it does not. 'Loving your neighbor as yourself' assumes that you first love yourself. This commandment is built entirely upon self-interest, and without self-interest it has no meaning at all.

Let me tell you something, I've done the "selfless" thing. And I mean that I have *really* done it, not tried to do it 'as best I could.' I did it full-out, with all my strength. And do you know what? It's a fraud. The people who have really lived altruistically are either in deep guilt over their inner inability to enjoy it, or have realized that it is BS. It is a doctrine that contradicts human nature. It has never worked and it never will, unless we someday become a race of hive-bound robots. If you don't believe me, go do it! Go live completely altruistically – do everything for others. But really do it! No half-hearted attempts – you go give it everything you've got. Then you'll know the truth of the matter.

Do you want to make the world a more beautiful place? Wonderful, go do it. But don't ever think you are being selfless. You are being the opposite of selfless. When you are making the world better, you are upholding your self. You are honoring your

own love of beauty, life, and peace; you are working to bring your version of goodness into being. Be proud of what you are doing!

Don't degrade yourself to say that the only good you can do is when you get your evil self into some sort of coma! It's a lie. Take credit for the good you do! And unless you are doing it at someone else's expense, don't ever feel bad about doing good to yourself!

PJ

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PJ's Q & A (#2)

Q: Prester, I suppose you'll think I'm not willing to let go of this subject… and I suppose you're right. Again, you go back to self-reference to establish goodness. I can't argue with you about the scripture that says "love your neighbor as yourself." (Yes, that is built on self-interest, though I've never had it pointed out to me before.) BUT, isn't man's nature flawed? All the evil we see every day should at least tell us that. And if human nature is flawed, doesn't it follow that it is not a reliable guide, and that a definition of goodness must come from somewhere outside of flawed man? I know I sound like I'm challenging you here, but that's not my only point. I really think I am correct.

Seminary Steve

A: Steve: Please don't ever think that I'd like you to disregard your own judgment. You are to be commended for sticking with it until you are convinced otherwise.

As I see it, you are making a couple of assumptions that I do not. First, I do not think that man's nature is necessarily flawed. Most men's *actions* are obviously flawed, but not necessarily their natures.

Next, even if man's nature were flawed, that does not mean that he could not use other tools to ascertain the true and the good. In fact, that is exactly what science does. By careful observation, reason, and verification, we can discover truths that we were initially blind to, or even opposed to.

Steve, I know you are a seminary student, so I want to give you a couple of things to think about:

When man was in the Garden of Eden, there is only one thing ever mentioned about their thinking: "and they were not ashamed." So, the only thing we know about

the inner life of someone living in paradise is that they are not ashamed. Interesting, no?

There is obviously a great deal to be said about the Bible's story of the fall of man. But Adam and Eve's big mistake comes before they eat the fruit. They erred when they judged their own natures to be insufficient. The serpent says that if they eat the fruit, they will be as Gods. But God had made them in his own image, and had said that everything he made was "very good."

Were they fully developed? No. But they could have grown and matured into being "as Gods." They were, by nature, suited to such growth, and they didn't need the fruit of the tree in order to get it.

Remember now the line in Phillipians where Paul says that Jesus "did not think it robbery to be equal with God." Adam and Eve decided that their natures were insufficient to be equal with God. They were wrong. Jesus, on the other hand, *did* believe that his nature was sufficient.

Adam's mistake was to undervalue his nature.

If this is correct, then it may well be the mistrusting and devaluing of one's own nature that causes the evils that we see around us every day. If our natures are not automatically bad – but if we nonetheless treat them as if they *are* bad – wouldn't that lead to a host of problems and mistakes?

If a man did believe in the sufficiency of his own nature, what would he be like? What would it feel like to be completely unashamed?

PJ

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REALITY IS DIFFICULT

BY: PRESTER JOHN

Yes, reality is difficult. Life is sloppy, unsettled, complex, and frequently more than people are capable of handling. That's the sad truth. Reaching some sort of comfort level with this situation is difficult but important.

Someone once said, "Any clear way, though it lead to death, is better than the tangle of uncertainty." I can understand this feeling and I expect that many of you

can also. Sometimes a clear choice would be the greatest blessing in the world. Notice that deeply religious people will even pray for "the time of the end," knowing that they would likely be killed during that time. Their reason is that during these expected times, good and evil will be clearly distinguishable. Good will be obvious, and evil will be obvious. Many of us would gladly face death to know for sure that we were doing purely what is good. Real life doesn't give this to us often.

Almost all humans are uncomfortable with unsettled ideas, and work to clear their minds of contradictions. We generally try to put every major concept into a category, and to keep it there.

The promise of simplicity is appealing, but it is false. The world is not simple, and will not be simple any time soon. Trying to see it that way requires errors of logic and purposefully ignoring or devaluing many things. Simple explanations, especially of problems, have frequently led to scapegoating, and sometimes to genocide. Life is complicated and uncertain. The people who were nice yesterday might be hateful tomorrow. I'm sorry, but that is the truth.

The world we live in is a confusing and difficult place. Sometimes it will be too difficult for you to handle, and you'll fail. Again, I'm sorry, but this befalls us all. From time to time, we all need a little help. Pretending that things are simple won't help. And no one is going to ride in and save you from uncertainty. Anyone seeming to is a liar, and probably a would-be dictator.

I wish I could give you a fast, easy fix for this situation, but I can't. Get used to it, and deal with it as best you can. Pick friends who strengthen you and who will help you in a low moment. Be thankful if you have a family that cares for you. It's hard for all of us. Maybe someday we can learn to handle this better, but for now there is no magic fix – it's just too hard sometimes. I'm sorry.

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COVETOUSNESS AND REVALUING THE SELF

BY: PRESTER JOHN

During my years as a rabid follower of Jesus, I spent a lot of time going over Bible texts. (And I do mean a *lot* of time.) Even though I no longer think that those texts were inspired by an omnipotent creator, I do recognize that they were written by a lot of very insightful guys, who, if not always finding the right answers, were at least

asking the right questions. One of the things I discovered in my studies was the real meaning and significance of covetousness.

Covetousness is one of those old words that was little-understood even in the old days. Most people think it meant something like envy. But that falls significantly short of the real meaning. Covetousness has to do with something deeper, with valuing ourselves. Do you think that you have the ability to create what you want to out of life? Now, I'm not asking you if you have actually *done* this. We all know that the world is fraught with traps, difficulties, and sometimes insurmountable obstacles. But, if those obstacles didn't exist, would you have the built-in ability to create what you want?

Let me provide some background on this by giving you a very literal translation of a passage from the Bible (Ephesians) that seems to refer to what happened after the famed episode in the Garden of Eden, beginning just after man was ejected:

"They went plodding through life in the ineffectiveness of their consciousness. The stream of their consciousness was dimmed by the solidification and desensitizing of their core. And so, they became non-participants in the divine life. This hurt them so badly that they became apathetic, and in that state, gave up control of themselves, and toiled in a reverse catharsis, with covetousness." The exact rendering of the word "covetousness" here would be "more-hold." That is, they sought to hold more than they had created on their own. By wanting to hold on to more than you've made, you are judging yourself as incapable of making it yourself.

People who conceive of themselves as worthy of good things, valuable of themselves, deserving and expectant of pleasure, are not covetous, since *covetousness presupposes that you cannot get what you want by your own virtues, and must seize it by fraud.*

Thus, when you sell out (reach a point where the money is good enough for you to sell your honor), you are naming your own value. This finds application in myriad ways.

The point of this discussion is that all humans of our era must fight to revalue themselves. All of us have been touched by covetousness in one way or another (probably in many ways), and have accepted a devalued self-estimation. (There's another very interesting Bible passage that literally translated says, "according to your estimation, it happens unto you.")

No, having devalued your self is not your fault. We were all born into this. These ideas have pervaded all generations and groups of men throughout recorded history. We learned it from our parents and associates, who learned it from theirs. But though it is not your fault, it remains your problem to fix. The solution is to revalue yourself. This does not mean that you should become arrogant and fake. It means that you should analyze your own self-image and refuse to act on a low or negative estimation of yourself. This will be slow process, and difficult at times.

By virtue of being a living human, you have immense capabilities. Yes, there may be difficult, or even impossible, obstacles in front of you; but that does not change your basic abilities – they are there, and are more powerful than we have understood.

Remember that sacrificing truth and honor to what seems immediately necessary is based upon either a low estimation of yourself, or – only occasionally – upon truly impossible obstacles.

Work on it. It'll take time, but work on it.

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THE UNITY IDEAL

BY: PRESTER JOHN

It seems that almost every political or religious philosophy holds to what I call the Unity Ideal. This is the idea that if we could all just be completely unified, every problem would whither away, all our needs would be met, untapped power would spring into action… .or something along these lines.

It is false.

Certainly this is an old, old myth, and there are stories supporting it in most of the holy books and national myths. But it is not true. The unity ideal is a spiritualized dream of getting something for nothing.

Unity is a false god. An idol.

The Unity ideal is infantile and needy. People who embrace it hope to cover their personal deficits – without having to face those deficits – either by magic or at the expense of the collective. By embracing unity, the individual seeks an improved situation, either by virtues supplied by others or by some special magic that will spring forth if we just submerge our individuality a little bit more. People who would never fall for such a scam in business are able to overlook the 'something for nothing' aspect of unity because the transfer payments are obfuscated by the group's unfathomable size. Unity implies that everything can melt into one, so there is no reason to feel like your deficits are made up for by others – your deficits are supplied by an unseen God once you all start to melt together.

I'm sorry friends, but there is no unity magic. In fact, all evidence leads to the opposite conclusion: If anything approaching magic is to be found, it is in individuality.

Where individuality has had the upper hand, prosperity, growth, and invention have defined the times. Where collective ideals (such as all melting into one) have had the upper hand, humanity has slowly sunk toward an animal level of existence. And I should add that a group of humans 'acting as one' has never been maintained except by force and by terror.

Consciousness seems to organize itself into the minimal sustainable unit; or, stated in reverse, into the maximum sustainable concentration. (That's nothing but my observation, and I certainly don't have the time to prove it empirically.)

If this is true at all, then strong social grouping may alter the functioning of consciousness, diluting or devolving it, even if only temporarily. (This might help to explain the madness of crowds.)

But regardless of my unproven personal hypothesis, it is clear that the more individual the unit, the greater the ability of its consciousness. So, where does the unity ideal stand? Nowhere – It is a false god. It pumps your emotions, but it does not save.

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MYSTERY

BY: PRESTER JOHN

Humans have a predisposition toward pattern-seeking. In most areas of life, this serves us well. But like all such things, it can be applied negatively as well as positively.

Pattern-finding, as applied to thinking, is called *inductive logic*. This is the process of beginning with specific information and extending it to a general conclusion. For example, we observe fish, swimming in the ocean near our home. Then, at some distant location, we see fish in the ocean again. We then say "the entire ocean is the realm of fishes."

Inductive logic – mental pattern-finding – while useful for hunches or hypotheses – is never acceptable as proof. ("I have known three drunks, and all of them were Spaniards; therefore, all drunks are Spaniards.")

Mystery is an excuse to believe in inductive logic; to accept it as proof.

Mystery is a sort of mental shunt; a glitch in the programming. But people like it. They get an emotional boost from it, akin to the thrill of discovery. It is useful for bypassing or explaining unpleasant aspects of reality. By finding a plausible pattern, then referring to a mysterious or super-rational force as a catalyst, a fallacy of inductive logic can be used to save the individual from things he/she would rather not face. And please believe me, I am not trying to criticize people for making this error. There are few of us who do not share an inability to face certain things, and I think there are none of us who have not made such an error.

No, I am not trying to condemn. I am trying to point out an error that has caused great harm; an error that has been used against honest men and women for millennia; an error that we can eliminate, or at least minimize.

Mystery provides an emotional boost that can be quite welcome in certain situations. When people do not actively live (as opposed to simply existing), or are not *allowed* to actively live, mystery is usually present, if only as a coping mechanism. If circumstances prevent you from ever experiencing the thrill of true discovery for yourself, mystery provides a similar emotional boost. Like a sort of morphine, mystery can soothe the mental agony of slavery. But also like morphine, it is a cruel drug. People addicted to it learn not to actually *live*; various mysteries safeguarding them from responsibilities and from reality. As this mentality spreads, it displaces competing ways of thinking and living.

This situation becomes critically destructive when one healthy person does somehow emerge in their midst. The person who is capable of loving reality and loving life creates more contradiction than can be borne by the others. Then, for the comfort and sanity of the many, the healthy one must die.

PJ's Q & A (#3)

PJ: You obviously believe in unregulated commerce. But doesn't that make it simple for Robber Barons and their monopolies to take over the world? Big corporations can do whatever they want, and we aren't strong enough to resist.

Feeling anti-capitalist.

Feeling: You are afraid of a ghost story. The truth is that the only way any monopoly has ever endured has been through state force. Go look it up and see. Free markets destroy monopolies quite well. The stories you've heard are half true and selectively chosen for their emotional impact.

Now, I'll let you in on the big secret: The real 'means of production' is not money and machines, as Marx thought, it is people. People create the machines; people operate the machines; people use the money. Money and machines are simply tools.

It is the thinking man that is the real means of production. And ownership of this man is everywhere in the hands of a monopoly. In virtually every place on this planet, a monopoly of rulers owns the production of the people. They take their percentage of all production, and make the rules of the producers' lives.

And, I should add, governments make possible the monopolies and sweetheart deals that you rightly despise. These are the real culprits, not the free market.

So, if my explanation is correct, then it is governments that are the sole owners of the means of production; each with their own territorial monopoly. Most everything bad that Marx attributed to the owner of the means of production, applies, not to business owners, but to the rulers who enforce financial sovereignty over a territory. Thus the true class warfare is not between men of varying degrees of wealth, but between the men who wish to control the lives and goods of others, and men who wish merely to be left alone to tend to their own lives.

PJ

PS: For those of you who study such things, Marx's errant economic thought begins with a mistake in the Labor Theory of Value. It is not mere labor that adds value to land or material, it is intelligently-applied labor. It is not just the value of sweat, but the value of creativity and intelligence as well; the later generally being the more important part.

WHAT IS "GOOD?"

BY: PRESTER JOHN

The defining of good and evil is of considerable importance, and few people have ever done it in a way that is understandable and which matches reality. Here it is in four easy steps:

1. Inanimate objects such as rocks, water, and air exist on their own.

2. Living organisms must act in order to survive.

3. If a living organism ceases to act (and act correctly), it dies. The elements that contained the life remain, but the life itself ceases to exist.

4. Therefore, the "good" for a living organism is that which furthers its

survival and improvement.

Life – whatever it is – is not just the matter contained in our bodies. If we die, the matter making up our bodies remains, but the 'life' disappears. It is gone. The same thing happens to animals, the same to plants. If the organism does not act, it dies. So, to any living thing, the 'good' is an action that preserves and enhances its life.

Every action is known by its consequences: What causes benefit is 'good;' what causes harm is 'bad.'

This is the *principle* of good and evil, and it need be no more complicated than that. Now, if you want *rules of conduct*, then it becomes difficult. The world is complex, and any given action may have many consequences, frequently both beneficial and harmful. Correctly defining a rule is almost impossible, since the situations in which it will be applied may be infinite.

Is 'good' a selfish concept? In the classical definition of that word, yes. Unfortunately, hack intellectuals have turned the word 'selfish' into a synonym for 'destructively greedy,' so for now it's better to say 'self-interest.' Yes, good is based upon self-interest. Always has been, always will be. Sure, there are a hundred knee-jerk challenges to such a statement, but they all come up short. For instance: "So, I'll just shoot you and take your money – that'll be better for me!" These are intellectually silly, although they seem emotionally potent to most of us. Will you really be better off with my hundred dollars, but with all my friends (and every righteous man) chasing after you? Not likely.

If you project self-interest over a long period of time, you will find that it differs very little from traditional ideas of morality, such as the Ten Commandments.

Analyze this for yourself, and see if it is right.

Now, I'd like to go back to an important phrase I used in step number three: "act correctly." Running around in a circle is certainly an action, but it would not be a "correct" action if your goal was to grow enough food to feed your children. Correct action produces the desired results. Anything else is "incorrect action."

So, how do we humans find the correct actions – the actions that lead to our survival and growth?

Animals are born with instincts that guide them in getting the food they need for survival. Humans are not. We are born with no protective furs or armors, with no claws, without ripping teeth. Animals are automatically equipped for survival upon this planet. We are not. Our bodies are functional, but they alone are grossly ill-prepared for survival. A naked, insane man in the wilderness dies quickly.

Nature births animals into the world complete with all the tools and instincts of survival. Nature births humans into the world with minimal means of survival, save their minds. We must rise heroically above nature in order to survive. To do this, we must use our minds, and use them correctly. Nothing else works.

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CORRECT THINKING

BY: PRESTER JOHN

You don't have to think if you don't want to. You can dial it down, and just observe and react if you prefer. A lot of people do, you know. They watch what's going on, and even react to it (usually by recalling slogans that they've stashed away in their brains), but they seldom analyze things. Instead, they simply follow the dominant opinions of their place and time. In some ways, it's easier, and you can do that if you'd like.

Not that I recommend it. All sorts of unpleasant things can happen to you when your reasoning is turned off, but that is not my point right now.

These essays will not be popular among authorities and rulers. I tell you now that many people will reject these ideas and ridicule them. But are they true? That you alone must decide. And you must decide by examining the ideas, comparing them to reality, and seeing if they hold up. These ideas will not fit in with most political, religious, or social mythologies. If those things are important to you, forget about my stuff, it will only cause you trouble.

But are they true? Don't ask someone else to figure it out for you. There are no short-cuts that work. If these ideas interest you, then you must find out if they are true, and you can only do that by testing the ideas yourself. Intimidation is your enemy, and serves only to shut down your mind. Don't take my word for it. Don't take anybody's word. Figure it out for yourself.

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How To Know Things:

1. Observe things.

2. Form an explanation for what you observe.

3. Test your explanation.

How To Develop New Things:

1. Observe things.

2. Arrive at an explanation of what you observe.

3. Extend your explanation. (Extrapolate.)

4. Test your extrapolation.

Short version of developing new things:

1. Begin with one or more things you know.

2. Extrapolate.

3. Test your extrapolations.

No shortcuts are allowed. Hunches are fine for extrapolations, but may never be substituted for tests.

The Lessons of Reality:

1. The universe is comprehensible. (If not, you couldn't tie your shoes, much less fly an airplane.) No, we don't understand everything in the universe now, but given enough time, we might.

2. All humans pursue happiness.

3. Happiness is subjective.

4. Perceptions may vary, facts do not.

5. Perceiving reality is better than avoiding it.

6. Cause always precedes effect.

FARBER'S FIRST ESSAY

It began with rogue traders and the merchants of Venice. They really didn't know what they were building or how it would work. They merely struggled for the betterment of themselves and their families.

It began to break out when the deep superstition of the middle ages cracked open under the strain of new philosophies and religious ideas.

It found room to thrive wherever new and wild vistas were found. It expanded with each discovery of far-off new lands. It made its home everywhere the old order was broken up and fresh starts were being made. It took a firm root in America and flourished there for over a hundred years.

Never again, where history is recorded, will there be any question as to whether or not it works.

"It," is the great discovery of the modern era: the positive-sum game. It is the liberation of human energy to do its appropriate job. It is the operation of creation, using the only counter-entropic force we have: free human energy.

You can see it work everywhere from the research lab, to the front office, to the construction site. It is what drives the entrepreneur to develop and produce a new product or service, and it is what gives the construction worker pride when his skill

overcomes a difficult problem, turning his blueprints into a functional structure. Why is the construction worker proud, and why does the entrepreneur exult? Because they have done the one thing that all humans have the impulse to do – to create something good that would not have been otherwise.

Human energy is the great creative force in the world. Without it, things tend to entropy. (As the second law of thermodynamics states, "closed systems tend to entropy.") Without active and creative human energy, everything goes back to an animal level of existence.

This human energy does not function by obedience and compulsion – it cannot, no matter how many rulers wish it were otherwise. Look at the command economies of the dead socialist world; within several decades their occupants were reduced to an animal existence. Look at the millennia when constrained people lived at the pleasure of their Kings, seeking permissions from their rulers to live and work. They continually starved and died. Things began to change only when freelance merchants began living according to their own minds and braking away from the permissions of their rulers.

When human energy is free to move, creativity goes wild; as do motivation, happiness, and the accumulation of wealth. When it is restrained, the descent to animal existence takes over again.

The discovery of this fact is what differentiates us from the middle ages, and not much else. Do you think the people who lived in those dark times were inherently less intelligent than we are? They were not! You and I are their direct descendants, not many generations removed. We are essentially the same.

The term *positive-sum game* signifies that this system creates more than the sum of its parts. The only real magic – human energy – creates more than it started with. Take some raw materials that are of themselves are of little worth, and when you add human creativity you can create vehic les, computers, and space ships. The materials themselves have been around since the creation of the earth, if they could have turned into something great of themselves they would have done it long ago. But they cannot – it is only when humans manipulate them according to their own ideas that they gain any real value. Thus, five dollars worth of materials becomes a product worth thousands of dollars.

They who do not play the positive-sum game instinctively fall back into being motivated by envy. Ultimately, they find reasons to feel that "there are only so many pieces of the pie." This is the seed of destruction.

The next thing they say is "if you have a bigger piece of the pie, then someone else has to have less." That is a zero-sum game – the idea that nothing is really created, just moved from one hand to another. Not only is it false, but it is also the credo of every envious looter who speaks of 'fairness' and 'equal distribution of wealth,' but who secretly hopes to get a share of the wealth held by others.

The real controversy of our time is this: Is human energy allowed to work in the world, or will it be tied down? The miserable experiment of communism has taught the world's rulers that the positive-sum game is necessary. So, their plan now is to allow human energy to work, but to siphon off as much wealth as possible without killing it all together. We productive people are carrying the governments of the world upon our backs. Are they worth half of our efforts – half of our lives?

They take half of our earnings away from us continually by a vast web of taxes, fees and regulations – for what benefit? "To help the poor," they say, and clamorously infer that if you disagree you are a heartless and dangerous person, and further that all will despise you. But if our money is forcibly taken from us, is not the state robbing us? Any dictionary will tell you that this is so, but it is considered poor form to say so – even to consider it.

And are the poor better off? Certainly some of our money goes to the poor (although most is eaten up in the bureaucracy). This feeds their bellies insufficiently, while at the same time locking them into a life of dependence that wages an unending war upon their souls. Is that a good thing? Are the poor better off for this robbing of producers and living in a state of dependency?

Many of you will gasp, and reel in shock that I would challenge the respectability and honor of your tradition, and you fear to let yourselves consider my case. You have come up against someone who does not share in your conspiracy of compliance. You must either turn away from these subjects or face the prospect of becoming a radical, and of people saying bad things about you.

Are you angry? If so, it is not because I am wrong. If that were the case, you would simply turn away. You are angry because I am ill-mannered enough to bring up subjects that you wish to avoid. My ideas bother you. When they come up, you divert your mind to pat phrases like, "that is the price we pay for our society." You dodge reason, and shunt your thoughts away in order to keep your mental comfort level. You do not face these ideas head-on because you are afraid of them – you are afraid that you might have to agree with them. And then you would have to face the choice either to be a hero or to be a coward.

I stood one evening in IBM Plaza in Chicago, looking over the river-front skyline as the sun sank in the southwest, and realized that the towering monuments to human effort in front of me were the results of the positive sum game run at only half-speed. Chicago was wild and open from the 1830s through the 1890s. Then, slowly, the curbs and limits were imposed by do-gooder government and collectivist types. These inevitably slowed the workings of a city that had been, as one writer said, 'geared for giants.' But the restraints were not enough to stop the positive-sum game – only enough to slow it down.

The Chicago skyline I watched was the result of the positive-sum game being played at half-speed, yet its results were awesome. I thought about what might have been if it were allowed to operate unfettered. And then I thought of the greatest

example of the positive-sum gave during my lifetime – Hong Kong. It went from rice fields to the grandest city of the east in one generation – an explosion of unrestrained human energy.

What things we have been deprived of! What glorious accomplishments aborted and still-born! And now our recent explosion of technology has become the target of bureaucrats world-wide. Where will we go from here? Will the positive-sum game once again be strangled, or will it migrate to new and open lands?

But! Moving to a new land will be a problem, won't it? There is no land on this planet that is not claimed by some gang of rulers. So, until cheap space flight is achieved, there is only one new country to be found – cyberspace. So escape there we shall. And there we will – and must, for our own sake and for the sake of our descendants – establish the positive-sum game without restriction.

Toward that end, we have built a private free market. We used our own money to do it, and we've broken no laws that we are aware of, save laws that outlaw privacy. Now, the rulers are trying to stop us. Why? We want to run an experiment, and see if freedom really is better than servitude. Why won't they let us try? Are they interested in the betterment of mankind, or are they really interested in monopoly powers? All we want is to be left alone and to try freedom. Why is that threatening? And why do they wish to imprison us?

James Farber

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FARBER'S SECOND ESSAY

History books tell the stories of Rulers. Some are Kings; some, Emperors; some, Presidents or Prime Ministers; and some, potentates of more exotic name. A few of them were more or less benevolent, and others were tyrants. Most were in-between. But they all held one thing in common – they maintained a monopoly on the use of force in their territories. They maintained their right to use coercion, and to prevent all others from doing so.

Stripped of romantic rhetoric and patriotic emotion, the essence of rulership is the ability maintain a monopoly of force. Argue if you like, but you will be arguing with the dictionary.

Every reform of government and rulership to date has kept the central mechanism of coercion in place. Did some governmental reforms lead to improvements?

Certainly. They made things considerably less bad. But they left centralized coercion in place. And for every 'good' leader that has come along, such as a Washington or a Churchill, we've had several times as many Stalins or Maos.

I have friends who study such things, and they assure me that roughly two percent of all people are would-be dictators; if they had the opportunity to oppress the world, they would. Another twelve percent or so are would-be facilitators; that is, when one of the two-percenters comes to power, they are glad to fill a slot and vigorously exercise power over others. Like it or not, these people are out there, and they are drawn to the levers of power. And once every so often, they have their turns. When they do, innocent people die in large numbers. Over one hundred million died this way in the past century. Try to comprehend that… one hundred times one thousand, times one thousand people. Boys, girls, men, women, teenagers, short, tall, strong, weak, dark-skinned, and light-skinned. All of them dead because twisted people were able to take hold of centralized force.

If you have wondered why some of us are so determined to keep governments out of cyberspace, please understand that this is why. We've had enough of centralized force. We're removing the whole mechanism. We think it was a mistake from the beginning. We don't want there to be anything for the two percent to grab.

If you want coercive rulership, keep it; we won't try to take it away from you. But we have chosen to opt out. Don't try to reign us back in. We won't try to make you live our way, and you don't try to make us live your way. We are not your property.

Our arrangement has no central mechanism of coercion, and it has been working quite well for several years now. We like it. This new arrangement has, however, surprised us in several ways. One of the things we discovered was that once you remove the mechanisms of coercion, you remove something else – politics. Politics is the art and science of managing centralized coercion. This is the reason political debates are so infuriating: the final decision leads to unopposable force. Once the political process is completed, you have the choice either to obey or to be punished.

Coercion is the *sine qua non* of politics; the thing, without which, politics would not be politics. Indeed, if you remove coercion, politics becomes something else – economics.

Things work by economic means here. If you don't like the way a market operates, just move to a different one. Or, if no one does it the way you think is right, start your own. There are no protected services here, and nothing mandatory. You may opt out of anything you don't like, or offer any service you like. We couldn't stop you if you wanted to start a communist collective. The only limitation would be that you could not force anyone to join or remain part of your collective; we have no mechanism for that. The entire system is built around the idea that persuading people to trade with you is moral, and that forcing them is not.

We think our ideas are right, but we will not impose them on you. You can hold whatever ideas you like, just don't impose them on us.

All this being said, what really concerns your rulers, and what is driving them to demonize us, is that people are leaving their systems and joining ours. Your children are joining the private digital economy in huge numbers.

No, the young people are not joining us for historical and philosophical reasons; those things are mostly for us older people. Young people, as always, are looking for adventure and opportunity. In your regulated world, very few people ever get much real adventure or overwhelming success. They read about such things in novels and celebrity tabloids, they see them in movies, but very few of them will actually experience such things. Our world, on the other hand, has adventure and opportunity in wholesale quantities. Your children may have to work hard to get it, but a big life is waiting for them if they wish to earn it.

In our realm, intelligence, daring, and perseverance are rewarded far more directly than in your regulated world. Here, you can be a complete unknown, with no connections and no wealth – but, if you can learn to provide excellent ideas or services, you can get rich. No one here knows or cares about the color of your skin, or your sex, or who you sleep with, or anything of the sort. If you can produce, you're a player. Want to go from rags to riches? Pick a valuable skill in our world, throw yourself into it with all your might, excel at it, and start selling it. Time and effort are all you need. You don't need friends in the right places… only value to offer.

And there's more: The truth is that the best rewards come to those who are first at something new. Jobs and Wozniak were the first to produce a good personal computer, but other people would have done the same thing within a year or two. They got to do all the cool stuff only because they were first. You can say the same thing for every other discovery or invention. Human knowledge is built piece-upon-piece, and new discoveries follow, more or less, in that sequence. If you want to do the really fun things, you have to get to the front of the line.

The stream of human knowledge is now firmly rooted in our world. The frontier of Alvin Toffler's third wave is in cyberspace, and that's where the front of the line can be found.

Now, let me tell you about the future of the third wave :

The central ideal of your old world is coercive authority. This is embodied not only in rulership, but in schools, in families, in religions, and in most every area of life. We were all born into a world that told us, "Do what you are told, or we'll hurt you." Our parents told us that, our teachers imposed it on us, our gods are envisioned this way, and certainly the rulers of the earth operate this way. From birth to death, continually, it confronts you all.

Having lived with these ideas for a hundred generations, humanity is used to this, and can survive it moderately well. But it is far from ideal. From birth on you are trained to sit, to obey or else, to worry that you might do something wrong without realizing. It puts you in a sort of perpetual cringe, unconsciously cowering in

expectation of the next blow. Being used to it is no reason to think that it isn't damaging.

We have eliminated this. It has no root here, no mechanism. This is having an effect on the world already, although it certainly has a long way to go. But it is here, and it is *not* fading away.

It may be a generation or two before we begin to see how the coercion-free mind works; longer before it becomes dominant. Nonetheless, the seedlings have been planted, and they are thriving.

We certainly didn't start this. Its roots trace back to every free thinker, to every rebel for truth; to the true heroes, who, in a thousand areas of life, had the courage to be right, even in the face of opposition. We are simply carrying on their work at the moment when it threatens to reach critical mass.

If we were simply one more reform movement, we would seek to conquer your system and run it our way. That, however, is not what we are. We do not accept coercion as moral. We do not wish to coerce anyone, and we will not submit to being coerced. We do not want to run your system.

If all of this seems threatening to you, I'm sorry. I know how that can feel. We are not your enemies – we are your friends, and we are also your future. We will not harm you. We do not want to take your governments away from you. We do not want to control your governments. We are not asking you to change your lives. We are only withdrawing from your game. Go your own way in peace. We wish you well. We still love you, we still care about you, we'll still spend time with you, and in the right situation we would still defend you. But we will not remain part of your coercive systems. We are pleased to share this planet with you, but we do not wish to share your social structures. We want to do a new thing – a better thing.

If you wish the best for your children, encourage them to step into the new world – a world where they can own their own lives and enjoy the fruits of their own labor. A perfect world? No. But a much better world than one with centralized coercion and obedience to authority as its main pillars.

We do wish you well.

James Farber

Appendix B

This Appendix contains the record of Phillip's conversations with Steven Caputta (Seminary Steve) in Vancouver, as referred to in Chapter Six of this book.

* * * * * * *

"All right, Steve, let's begin by saying that the truth comes first. Whatever our ideas may be, they have to stand up against truth. If not, we're just deceiving ourselves. Agreed?"

"Absolutely agreed."

"Have you ever studied any Greek, Steve?"

"Yeah, that's one of my better subjects."

"All right then, do you remember the Greek word for truth that is used in the New Testament? And do you know what it means?"

"Sure I do! The word is Alethea, and it means 'not concealed.' 'Truth' is a decent English word for it, but 'what exists' or 'reality' might be as good or better."

"Yes," said Phillip, beaming. "So when the scriptures talk about truth, or the spirit of truth, they are also saying 'reality,' or 'the spirit of reality.'"

"Yes, absolutely, as far as the scriptures are concerned, truth is reality. There is no other kind. And the Hebrew is even stronger in this than the Greek."

"All right! Now we have a foundation!" Phillip was getting a bit loud again, and decided to lower his voice while inside, and perhaps to take a walk later.

"Now, Steve, if truth – reality – matters most, then we have to admit that there are problems with the scriptures." Steve looked as if he were half-minded to agree, but wasn't quite sure he want to allow his mouth to say the words.

"Look, I know how it feels, Steve, you've founded all sorts of ideas on scripture and defended them against people who believed nothing – who didn't want the scriptures to have any value – and you don't want to turn your back on what you've learned and experienced. Am I close?"

"Yes, you are."

"All right, what I'm telling you is that the 'all or nothing' idea is wrong. You know as well as I do that there are problems with the scripture… but admitting the truth – the reality – doesn't mean that you have to turn your back on everything you've ever learned or experienced. It doesn't have to be all or nothing." Phillip paused for a moment, and let his ideas sink into Steve's mind. He went on, "What if Abraham

hadn't changed? Or Moses? What really set those guys apart was that they had the courage to change, even if they were the only person to do so and all others were opposed to them.

"You know the truth, Steve: Paul and James are quite at odds with each other. Either the law was abolished, as Paul says, or it is still completely in force, as James says. Either Ephesians is wrong, or James is wrong. And it's not just a case of our intelligence being too weak to understand – that's a bogus explanation. You remember how Jesus reprimanded his disciples: 'Know ye not of your own selves, what is right?' He told them that they could and should know – and this before the resurrection and the giving of the spirit. And I could go through lots of other examples, you know."

"No, you don't have to Phillip. I know them myself." Steve looked both beaten and brave at the same time. "I know that you're right; I just never wanted to say it myself."

"I understand Steve. It took me a long time. But also understand this: Even if the scriptures were a complete fraud, that would not make any of your experiences fraudulent. It might mess-up your *explanations* of the experiences, but not the experiences themselves. They happened. They were real. They were not nothing. Come on, let's take a walk."

After their long lunch, Phillip and Steve took a walk to a grocery store. They bought a few things they needed; some fruit juice, a razor, shaving cream. The concierge had given them a map showing the way there. The route between was long, but it was a pleasant route, through a large park and a quiet residential area. They talked along the way.

"You know, Phillip, I've read a few of your articles."

"Really? Which ones?"

"Well, I remember one a long time ago on meditation. You were writing about Isaac meditating regularly, about Jesus spending hours in meditation, and about Christians being afraid to talk about meditation because it sounded too Buddhist."

"Wow. I didn't think anyone would remember that one! Yeah, I learned a lot while writing that one. All of the ancients seemed to meditate, and I think that a lot of us missed something by fearing it."

"Yeah, well that is more or less what I remember. And there was one other article I remember, more recently. I think it was about the spiritual ideals of Aristotle, although I didn't have time to read it – I just scanned it quickly."

"Well, you're close. It was about the radically different ways Aristotle and Plato had of looking at the universe, and applying them to spirituality."

"Explain that, will you?"

Phillip smiled. “Well, I’ll give you the short and simplified version. Aristotle – basically – taught what we were talking about earlier, that reality is the final judge; that things are what they are, and that we should use reason to know things. Plato – basically – taught that there was a higher, better, unseen reality to which all the earthly should conform. Really, it was Plato that originated our idea of Heaven. In the older scriptures, the word simply means the opening between the ground and the clouds, or as we might say, the atmosphere.

“Anyway, Plato gave us the idea that everyone adopts – that there is a heavenly pattern that is the true reality. ‘The pattern above’ is what he called it. Problem is, there’s no evidence for it. Not that that stopped anyone.”

Phillip paused for a split-second, and smiled – mostly an internal smile, which showed just slightly on his face. The pieces had fallen into place again. “God, I love this,” he thought to himself. This didn’t often happen when he was young. But now there were enough of the correct pieces coming together inside of him, and he seemed to put solutions together without even trying.

“Steve, remember earlier, you said that there is only one ‘truth’ in the scripture?”

“Sure.”

“Well, where do you think everybody gets the idea of a superior truth?”

Steve looked quizzical, trying to understand Phillip’s point. “All right, we said that the Bible knows only one kind of truth, and that this ‘truth’ is simply reality, right?”

“Yes.”

“But we have millions of people who think that there’s one truth for telling the truth about facts, but that there is another truth for the secrets of the universe – truth spelled with a capital T, if you will.”

“Yes, almost everyone believes that.”

“And is it Biblical?”

“No, not at all.”

“That’s right. They get it from Plato’s pattern above.” Then he waited for Steve to put the thought together. They sat down on a park bench they were passing, and Phillip let Steve take his time sifting through the ideas he had just given him.

“It’s amazing,” Phillip commented silently to himself, “how hard it is to get some of these ideas for the first time. You have to grind your way through them, putting A with B, and letting the connections in your head develop.” There had been many times when Phillip knew he was on to a new idea, but it just would not connect in his brain. This was especially slow when he was thinking along lines that were truly new. He would sit and track the problem logically – step one, step two, step three. After he had reached his answer, it seemed easy to comprehend – frequently so

simple that it sounded foolish. But it was hard and slow to reach the new idea the first time. "Ah well," he had reasoned, "at least I do get there eventually."

"I see what you mean. If all 'truth' means is reality, then Plato's pattern above has to be judged as false. There is no evidence, so it cannot be called 'true' in the real sense of the word. So… if you want Plato's ideas to have some legitimacy, you have create a second type of truth that has no relation to objective facts!"

"You're a quick study, my friend." Phillip rose, and they continued their walk.

"But, Phillip, why did everybody buy into this? There must have been some cause. They wouldn't all just think this without some reason."

"Fair question, Steve. You would think that there must be something to it if so many people believed it. And, of course, there were plenty of reasons. I'll try to give you a few, but you'll have to remember that people have always been suckers for a big lie. Or, more correctly, they've always been suckers for a lie that promised them something for nothing.

"Really, the whole thing grew out of what we now call sympathetic magic. Do you know what that means?"

"No, I'm not sure that I do."

"That was the religion of the old world – the early agricultural world really. The basic idea of sympathetic magic is that by performing some sort of sacrifice that is parallel to what you want, you could influence the forces above – gods, usually – to act sympathetically, using their vastly superior power. Thus your goal is accomplished with far more power than you could ever summon yourself. In the early agricultural days, the desperate farmers would have some sort of fertility ritual, which they hoped would influence the gods to act along with them, and make the earth fertile. That may sound crazy to us now, but to a desperate, starving farmer five or six thousand years ago, it wasn't. So, they had all sorts of rituals designed to get the gods to use their vast powers to make their crops fertile."

Steve nodded, indicating that he knew in general terms what Phillip was talking about.

"Anyway, all of this was an obscure effort to get something for nothing – to get more than they had earned. However, it's a funny thing; some of these folks went so far as to sacrifice children to the gods to get what they wanted, and yet the ability they needed was theirs all along. The proof of this is that their descendants are now getting harvests far, far better than anything they ever asked for, simply by using the faculty of reason and hard work – abilities they possessed all along."

"Yeah, that's true."

"Right. Now, Plato turned that basic idea into something far more modern. He created a mythic *pattern* above – a society instead of a god. Then, he promised people that if they could imitate that pattern above, great things would spring into

being. In essence, he replaced the god with the ideal collective, and tied the same idea of sympathetic action to this pattern above. Now we call it Idealism, with the implied promise that holding to pure ideals unleashes magical results. Can you see why rulers and politicians would latch onto this idea?"

Steve paused, assimilating Phillip's words. "Oh, heck yeah!

"Good. That was why Plato kept writing about the right ways to govern people. And people began to assume that if their government was good, everything would work well. So well, in fact, that they would get more out than they had put in. Of course, once the rulers decided that this was the idea they wanted people to have, it didn't take long – maybe a generation or two – for the priesthoods to get the ideas planted in people's heads. After three generations, everyone is so sure it's true that serious questions about it would be seen as undermining their way of life – dangerous questions brought by impertinent people."

* * * * * * *

After their walk, the two men had gone back to their rooms, and decided to meet back at the restaurant or bar for a late dinner. Phillip almost always preferred to do things at off-hours, avoiding crowds and delays. This day was working out perfectly that way. They found each other at the bar, and decided to eat their dinner right there.

"Phillip, what you wrote about Adam's mistake being to underestimate his own nature, and that Jesus didn't do that… that's very powerful, almost frightening, but I just can't wrap my brain around it yet."

"Good, you're getting it."

"No, Phillip, I'm not getting it; that's the problem."

"Yes, Steve, you are getting it. Let me explain: When you get such a big and different new idea, it takes time to work its way into you. You've seen microscopic photos of brain cells, haven't you?"

"Sure. A hundred little tendrils, making connections every which way."

"Right. Can you see from that how interconnected our thoughts must be?"

Steve nodded agreement.

"Well, to throw a big new idea into that mix is difficult, it requires a lot of rerouting and adaptation. Now if the idea is true – if it accurately reflects reality – then it is a tremendous asset, but it will still take some time to work itself into place. And even then, the brain will probably have to replace or modify a number of contradictory connections in order for the great new idea to function freely. All of this takes time."

Steve was getting very comfortable with Phillip. He had expected him to be stiff and a bit regal; a lot like his early school teachers. But Phillip was accessible. So much so that his ideas, radical as they were, almost seemed natural and obvious.

So, what else would you like to talk about, Steve?

"Well, I'd like to get a long-term perspective here. Anything you can give me to help?" Steve smiled at Phillip, who smiled back.

"Sure. I think I can do that. Let's start by saying that the Bible teaches a religion of agricultural societies. Christianity and Judaism are not religions of hunters, or of nomadic herdsmen. They are the religions of farmers; of the agricultural revolution."

Steve looked rather incredulous. "Uh… you want to back that up a bit?"

Phillip smiled. "Sure. Look at all of the terminology: Lord, master, servant, kingdom, and so on. The God the Bible describes is like an agricultural ruler, only bigger and better. All of this is the mentality of the agricultural age, and the monotheism of our day remains within those limits. It has, however, changed dramatically over time."

"Yeah, you're right, Phillip, monotheism has changed a lot. But somehow it keeps going. Any thoughts on that?"

"You mean, why has monotheism been successful?"

"Yes."

"Okay, the short answer is, because it produces better ideas. Now, that requires a bit of explanation. Would you like me to go on?"

"Please."

"All right. Humans are, at their most essential, individuals. When I hurt myself, you feel no pain; when I experience pleasure, it affects you not at all; my thoughts do not stream through your mind. More importantly, our use of energy and creativity are individual enterprises. We may help and encourage each other, but human energy and creativity operate individually, not collectively.

"Also, what people hold to as the highest and best has a profound effect on their thinking. Monotheism sets an individual on the throne. 'Hear O Israel, the Lord is one.' It sets a distinct individual as perfection. With that pattern in the minds of men, they are less afraid to think as individuals, which suits their basic nature. As a result, they tend to come up with marginally better ideas and to produce better results.

"You can see that where the monotheistic ideal has held sway – whether it be in a geographic area or in a mobile culture – there have been more inventions and discoveries. Where the ideal of a collective being the highest and best rules, as in socialism, things degenerate to a low level of life. Monotheism has succeeded because it induced men's minds to work somewhat better than the minds of their neighbors, who held a collective or a plurality as the highest and best."

They ordered their food and ate it slowly, watching a soccer game on the television, and talking on and off about lighter subjects – sports, family, cars, and

movies. They both went to their rooms, and agreed to meet back at the bar an hour later.

* * * * * *

"All right, Phillip, let's get back to monotheism changing. Actually, why don't we start at the beginning – chronologically, that is – and go from there?"

"All right, that sounds reasonably good, but can we skip some of Genesis and the distant past? Otherwise we'd have far too much to cover."

"Okay, but I may want to go back to that later."

"Fair enough." Phillip opened up the Bible they had brought back to the bar.

"Let's see… Ah! Let's start here, with Nimrod, okay?"

Steve laughed. He could see Phillip's mind going in a certain direction, and he didn't want to stop him. It was simply too interesting to let the man go where he wanted. "Sure," he said, "Nimrod is fine."

"Good. You know, I used to read the story of Nimrod, and had a feeling that there was something far more to this than I was seeing. I have a friend who is a superb historian, and I actually hired her to research the subject for me. And she came up with some really interesting stuff, too. It turns out that Nimrod shows up quite significantly in ancient history, usually going by the name Ninus, which I presume is more of a Greek or Roman rendering of the name, with Nimrod being the more Semitic rendering. There is an ancient historian who says explicitly that Nimrod and Ninus are the same person.

"Anyway, this guy was the first person to rule over other men. Or at least the first person recorded to have done so. The story goes that in those early agricultural days, the beasts were creating problems for the farmers. You can even find some references to this in the Torah. So, Nimrod came in and killed the animals. Nimrod, 'the mighty hunter before the Lord.' Then the Bible says that he built a number of cities. Now, in the old days, a city might be only a central courtyard and a well, surrounded by walls… a place of safety all the farmers could go to if threatened. Not many people lived there full-time.

"The history books tell the same story as the Bible, but with a different twist. They say that Ninus was the first man to train young men in the arts of war, and that he was the first to go out and rule over other men. Ninus made himself King and ruled militarily. He was also the first person to have a legend – the mighty hunter. I presume that this legend was quite useful to him in justifying his rulership.

"So, this is a picture of the early agricultural world. Making sense so far?"

"Yes, it makes sense. Go on."

“All right. At this time there is no real monotheism as we know it. These cities are eventually swallowed up by regional rulers and become Kingdoms. But to hold them together, the rulers learned that they need a priesthood.”

“Wait a minute. Explain why the rulers would need a priesthood. Wouldn’t that come more from the people than from the rulers?”

“Oh, it may have come partially from the people, but it was always the rulers that established the priesthood and paid for it. Here’s why: These rulers – and they were thugs, really – want their take of the produce at harvest time. Remember, in the old days, taxes were collected either as crops or as labor, very seldom as money. If you are a ruler, getting your share of the crops from your own city is easy; you have lots of soldiers, and denying you would be virtual suicide. But the people in your more remote cities might be minded to hold back on you. So, if you want to collect everything, you’ll have to have lots of soldiers in every town. That’s expensive, and limits the territory you can rule. So, eventually, someone figured out that getting people to give willingly would be much better.

“This is where the priesthood comes in. You have to begin with a huge god, or several powerful, all-seeing gods; then you must convince people that by displeasing the gods, they will ruin their harvest. And there are two more pieces: First, you have to make the King very special – God’s agent on the earth. And secondly, you need a local representative to reinforce these ideas in the people. One priest is a lot cheaper than a dozen soldiers. So having a priesthood allows you to expand your kingdom, which is what these thugs really wanted.

“As best I can tell, the Egyptians were the first ones to do this well. They came up with an ethos that goes something like this:

“‘A special man is necessary to touch the Gods. Since mankind is a fallen race, the average man does not have the ability to do this. So, the King and the High Priest have to become special men. They must undergo secret rituals and be kept separate from the degrading affairs of daily life. To make this possible, the people are to donate their crops and their time, making the King and High Priest free to act as conduits between heaven and earth.’

“These guys took the older fertility cult ideas and channeled them to their own uses. The threat was always that unless the people did as the Priesthood said, the gods would not be induced to grant them a good harvest.

“Now, if I’m not mistaken, most of the inscriptions we find – about making offerings to the Gods to assure great harvests – were not made because they reflected the beliefs of the citizens, but as part of tax compliance campaigns. The rulers were trying to convince people that paying taxes allows the King and Priests enough time to be conduits to the heavens, and thus provides you a magical harvest.

“Then, they started building temples and monuments under the rationale that these things would help them connect with heaven. By convincing people that massive

structures and dramatic statements were necessary to reach the Gods, a larger share of crops and labor could be collected more easily… and, even people from the furthest cities would be emotionally tied to the great monuments and to the kingdom that built them. For all of this, a priesthood and a theology were necessary. It worked brilliantly, and soon the pattern was being copied far and wide."

"And what about monotheism?"

"Oh yeah…" Phillip laughed at himself. "As you can see, Steve, I tend to wander some times."

Steve laughed too. "Well, I can't say I blame you. All right, Phillip, leaving priesthoods, now let's go back to monotheism."

Phillip smiled. "Certainly. Monotheism really began during Egypt's glory days. You know the story of Abraham, the man said to have invented monotheism. Presumably he became convinced that there was only one true god, and rejected all others. The Bible never tells us how Abraham comes to this conclusion, and Abraham never seems to talk about it. But it is clear that he worships one god only.

"Interestingly enough, at about the same time, there is one Egyptian King named Akhenaten, who invents a form of monotheism. He was rather quickly deposed, as were his ideas, but whether or not this man has anything to do with Abraham, I cannot tell.

"By the time of Moses, the tribes of Israel seem to be the only monotheists around. I'm not sure that's entirely true, but that's the story the Bible tells. It's very interesting to see what happens; Moses takes his people out of Egypt, but they bring a lot of Egypt's religion with them. The priesthood, the Ark, dwelling places for the divine, and so on… these are all from Egypt, not from Abraham. But Moses leaves two things out – multiple gods, and a King. The people who leave Egypt are a huge family, not a nation.

"So, they live without a King for a few hundred years or so, and you know the story of how they rejected God to get one."

"Sure, Samuel and Saul."

"Right. And then they end up alternating between the god of Moses and the gods of the locals the whole time."

"That's right too."

"Next comes a big event, the Babylonian captivity. As far as I am concerned, this is where monotheism really develops. When the Jews went to Babylon, they couldn't take the gods of the land with them – these were territorial gods – so they took only the god of Moses with them. And more importantly, they developed intellectual pursuits. When Judaism was the religion of a geographic area, protecting that area militarily was paramount. But when land was no longer an issue, they were forced to make ideas central to their culture."

“Actually, Babylon was a major center of Jewish culture until Islam drove most of them out, something like a thousand years later. Even during the time of the second temple, a lot of the real intellectual force came from Babylon. I’m guessing that this is where the Hebrew scriptures were really assembled, and where the whole story was put together.”

“Wait a minute. What do you mean by ‘story’?”

“Oh, no… relax for a minute, Steve. I’m not saying that it’s all fiction. I’m not sure what percentage of it is historically true – the percentage might be high. But it seems that it was at Babylon that the story was put together, presumably from older documents, and stories that had been handed down through the generations.”

“Because you know that there’s evidence that backs up a lot of the Bible.”

“Oh, yes, I’m aware of that. Like I said before, I don’t think it’s all or nothing. I think there is truth in the Bible, but I am also honest enough to admit that there are errors in it as well.”

“All right, that’s a fair position.”

“Thank you.” It was strange, the way Phillip said “Thank you.” The tone of his voice and his eyes expressed appreciation for Steve’s kind judgment of him. Steve was accepting a lot of different and threatening ideas from Phillip. Coming from Steve’s background, “that’s a fair position” was a significant statement.

“Now, as we move on from there, it gets really interesting. All of a sudden, the world begins to hear new ideas coming from the Greeks. These people don’t have monotheism, but they have another big idea – a belief in individual human ability.

“Because of the geography of Greece, building a large Kingdom… projecting power at a distance… was simply too difficult. So they never developed a strong nationalistic priesthood. Their mythology was more a set of moralistic fables than a theology. And another thing happened – these guys began to develop an intellectual life separate from rulership or the priesthood. Actually, they began to give thinking predominance over rulership, at least to some extent.

“The Greek myths were different. They were written so that people could find meaning in them. The older holy writings were primarily rules of behavior. ‘Do this, and things will go well.’ The Greeks had stories that were meant to address the reader’s inner life. The theologies of the Kingdoms addressed men’s actions; the Greeks had stories that addressed men’s souls. And there was something else… in the Greek myths, men were not small, insignificant, and powerless before the gods. In Greek myths, people challenged the gods, and sometimes won! In addition, they beat the gods, not through power, but through superior thinking.

“All in all, the Greeks presented the world with a radically new set of ideas. This was not lost on the intellectual Jews of Babylon. In their own way, they began to put Greek ideas into Judaism. This showed-up most in the new Jewish ideas of the

superiority of intellectualism and justice over power, and of finding meaning in their writings."

Phillip stopped. He took a deep breath, and knew that he would have to wait a while before going on. Steve watched him and said, "Enough for now?"

"Yeah, Steve, what comes next is a bit much for me at the moment. I need a break."

"Yeah, I could use one myself. Why don't we just take the rest of the night off, and meet back at the restaurant for breakfast? Say at eight o'clock?"

"That's a good idea, Steve, eight o'clock it is." As they walked together to the elevator, another thought crossed Phillip's mind. Immediately he spoke.

"You realize, of course, that while there is evidence to support all of these ideas, there is only good scholarly evidence for some of them."

"Yes, I…"

"And I'm simplifying them as well. Reality is always very complex…"

"Phillip, I understand. I know that you are giving me general ideas and facts. I know that serious study would be required to state all of this precisely and scientifically, and that some of the details might be a bit rough. It's okay, I understand." Phillip nodded, and his eyes showed relief. He had been challenged on fine points and details so many times that he had a nearly automatic disclaimer routine. But the truth was that most of the people who tried to pick his ideas apart were not doing so because they knew of contradictory evidence; they just didn't want what Phillip said to be true. For whatever reason, his ideas threatened them and they wanted to get rid of Phillip and his troublesome ideas – facts or none.

Steve's floor came first, and as he got ready to step out of the elevator, he said, "By the way, what is it that comes next?"

Phillip smiled wryly, like a man who knew that he was about to tackle a difficult task. "The 1st Century," he said.

* * * * * * *

The sat in a booth at the restaurant the next morning, ordered, and took up precisely where they had left off.

Phillip looked rested, and ready to talk now. "Okay, you ready?"

Steve enjoyed seeing a guy older than him with a young man's enthusiasm.

"Hit it, Phillip!"

"Very well, then. The 1st Century is when everything reaches a critical mass. This is when monotheism changes and splits into at least three large streams."

"The three streams being?"

“Steve, do you mind waiting till I develop the ideas? I promise I’ll get there.”

“Steve smiled. “Sure, if that works better for you, go right ahead.”

“Thanks. Most of the action in the 1st Century takes place in Judea. The Jews are living there under some rather severe Roman oppression, with a more or less fraudulent priesthood, and with militant messianic ideas running hot. Greek ideas, sans the Greek gods, are very much a part of the culture, and intellectual pursuits are respected highly. Nonetheless, the need for power is obvious every time Roman troops march through town.

“As this period begins a very significant rabbi named Hillel begins to influence Jewish thought. This is the man who develops the golden rule that people talk about. Although in his version – which is better than the usual one by the way – he says ‘what is hateful to you, do not do to any man.’ Hillel gets the idea across that personal integrity – being true to one’s self – opens the gates of heaven. That is, maintaining one’s integrity opens up springs of ability in that person.

“At the same time, there was a radical group out in the region of Damascus that were calling themselves the Children of Light. We usually call them the Essenes. These people had decided to commit themselves entirely to what they thought was right – in their case, the law of Torah. They discovered that making a complete commitment to something also opens springs of ability in people.

“Steve, have you ever heard the great Goethe quote on commitment?”

“No, I don’t believe I have.”

“Well, it contains the same lesson. I don’t remember all of it, but part of it says,

‘Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.

The moment a definite decision is made,

all sorts of events spring forth,

which would not have otherwise.’

“That’s what the Essenes learned.

“So, into this mix comes the monotheist’s enthronement of the individual above the collective; the Greek ideas of men being great enough to approach the gods on their own – with no priesthood between – and even to challenge the gods; the Jewish and Greek high regard for reason and meaning; Hillel’s teaching of the power of integrity; and the Essene discovery that definite commitment has magic in it.

“Quite a mix, no?”

“Yeah, I’d say so!”

“Right. Well, as this begins to develop, two men begin to put the pieces together, and turn them into something that reaches a critical mass, and breaks out into stunning results.”

“You’re talking about Jesus and John the Baptist, aren’t you?”

“Yes I am.”

Steve was now considering Jesus and John from a new vantage point; as emerging from a certain set of ideas. He had never done this before.

“Okay, we said that there were a number of ideas all coming together at the same time and place: The individual above collective, belief in human greatness, respect for thinking, a desire for meaning, a belief that integrity unlocked human ability, and the discovery that commitment had magic in it.

What was really required here was for someone to integrate all of this… to take in all of these ideas, to weave them together, and to see where they led. Now, I should add that this was a tall order. To really integrate these ideas, you would have to understand Judaism, Greek thought, Rabbi Hillel, and have experience with the Essenes. Greek thinkers and the Essenes didn’t mix much, as you might imagine. It would be an exceptional person who could run in all these circles without getting a bit bent.”

Steve laughed, and then looked impressed. “And do you think John the Baptist did that?”

“Well, I’m not sure. You know that it’s awfully hard to make good guesses at a two thousand year distance.”

“Certainly.”

“My best guess is that John began to put all of these things together. He was almost certainly one of the Children of Light, or had at least spent a lot of time with them. He shows up in the Bible, coming more or less from the same area as the Essenes, using a lot of their terminology, and acting a lot like them.”

“Yeah, I’ve heard that case made before, and it does seem to hold together.”

“Yes, it does. So, John begins to immerse people as a sort of ritual, demonstrating a new birth, or new start to their lives. Now, lots of people had done this prior, but there is one big difference in John’s baptisms – John demands hard-core repentance. Notice the language John uses: either you deeply and completely repent – and do works that prove your repentance – or you are in extreme danger. Anyway, I’m not sure exactly what John might really have taught, but it is pretty certain that he’s trying to get people to make a rock solid commitment to changing their lives. A full, life-or-death commitment. And why would he do this? Because he found out that it worked, probably from experience with the Essenes.

“Am I making sense so far?”

“Yeah, Phillip, you are. Go on.

“John seems to have put together the basic monotheistic creed of an individual being seated on the throne of glory, commandments addressed to individuals, and so

on, then added the discovery that commitment has magic in it. However, the scriptures don't show a strong belief in human greatness, or in reason, which may simply be due to the minimal coverage they give him. He certainly believes in integrity, although the text doesn't say it explicitly.

"You can also see Jesus doing the same thing, and promoting the same theme at the very beginning. 'Forsake all, and follow me,' and the like. Complete commitment.

"So, John begins taking this message to the people of Judea. Jesus joins him in this, and then apparently begins putting the rest of the pieces together. He talks about integrity, telling people that they will be judged according to their own words. That is, God will call them righteous or unrighteous depending on whether their actions followed their own words. That's integrity.

"He also believes in reason, telling his disciples that they should 'know, of their own selves, what is right.' In other words, he expects them to use reason to determine the truth. He continually makes reasoned arguments. 'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, because you build the tombs of the righteous, and say, if we had been in those days, we would not have, *therefore* your own words condemn you… ' and so on. The parable of the sower is a primer in the psychology of humans dealing with new ideas.

"The parables were brilliant devices to make men think abstractly. If you can do some abstract thinking, you'll get the real meaning, but if not, you'll only get a story – a fable. This was really a tremendous technique. It got meaning across and it induced people to higher and more productive modes of thinking.

"Really, if you can ever look at Jesus' teaching without feeling all religious about it, you'll find these basic concepts over and over. But it's regarding human ability where he gets really new and interesting."

"I've been waiting for you to get to this. Go on."

"What really stands out is Jesus' discovery of healing. This type of thing happened occasionally in Judea and elsewhere, but nothing like what Jesus did. He was introducing healing as a newly-discovered ability that we all had; a human tool that he had newly figured out how to use. He would come into a town and heal the sick people, town after town after town. And the thing that always bothered me – at least until I understood it – was that he refused to take credit for a lot of the healings. He would always say 'your faith made you whole.' And then he goes out of his way to prove the point. He sends out the twelve to do the same things he does. Then he sends out seventy to do the same things he does. And they do those same things. They get the same results. It's as if he's saying to the entire nation of Israel, 'If I'm special, how are your children doing this?'

"Through all of this, he is trying to show that all men are capable of doing extraordinary things; that men have amazing abilities that they have not yet used. He

believes deeply in the greatness of men, and sets out to prove it to all who have eyes to see. That's really quite clear, wouldn't you say?"

"Well… yeah… now I think I would say so.

"All right, Phillip, I've got questions for you now."

Phillip smiled. "Go ahead Steve, anything you want."

"Do you believe in the resurrection?"

Phillip smiled. "That's the primary question I'd expect you to ask. To be honest, I'm not sure. I believe that exceptional events can happen; I've seen them and I've caused them. So, if a man as great as Jesus were raised from the dead, I wouldn't be completely shocked. But to accept it as fact – not just as a possibility, I would need evidence. I might feel like he rose from the dead, but I can't allow that to convince me – people feel a lot of things that aren't true. Can you understand that Steve?"

"Yeah, I guess I can, but not believing in the resurrection that would upset a lot of things for me."

"Oh, believe me, it once upset a lot of things for me, too. I know how strange this sounds to you."

"Phillip, your answer says that you don't hold the scriptures as reliable. Talk to me about the authenticity of the scriptures."

"Are you sure you want me to?"

"Yes, I do."

"All right Steve, would you like me to start with the Old Testament or New?"

"Well, with the Old I suppose."

"And what is you knowledge base on this?"

"Actually I know only a little on the Old Testament, and a fair amount about the New Testament text."

"Okay. Let's begin by saying that we have no record of the Hebrew scriptures before Babylon. Now, that is significant because we do have records of holy writings from other places, many centuries before this time. That would indicate – though not prove – that the Hebrew scriptures didn't exist before the 6th Century BC. If the Torah was really written during the time of Moses, we would expect to find at least partial copies from that time. But as yet, we have found none.

"And do you think the Old Testament scriptures were written in Babylon?"

"I think they were assembled in Babylon. The question is, assembled from what? How many of these stories were Hebrew stories, how many did they borrow from other cultures and make their own? To be honest, I don't know. I suspect it is a mix of both. Insofar as that goes, there's nothing dishonest about it, except if you

knowingly pass it off as original and the true words of God. But again, this was so long ago and far away that there's no good way to tell.

"I can tell you, however, that I find the Hebrew scriptures to be a wonderful collection of writings."

"But not the word of God."

"No, not the word of God. And that goes for the New Testament as well, Steve. If these really were the pure words of God, then God is far more confused than I am." Steve looked a bit surprised at Phillip's boldness in devaluing the scriptures. "I know that sounds a bit harsh, Steve, but one has to be honest. Listen, I know that holding firmly to the scriptures led a lot of people out of darkness during the Reformation, and I'll get to that later. But with the god of the Bible ordering genocides, and swearing that certain thing will happen – which do not happen, my statement holds up to the facts. Nonetheless, I do respect the old 'sola scriptura' crowd, and if you give me time, I'll be able to make sense out of that seeming contradiction."

Steve smirked. "I've already spent a day, and I'm not going to stop you now."

Phillip smiled back. They left the hotel and took another long walk, this time exploring in a different direction.

"So, those are the basic facts on the Hebrew scriptures. Why don't you tell me what you know about the New Testament."

"Well, I know that the writings were assembled at the Synod of Carthage, 397AD, that none of the original texts exist, but that a few very poor texts, apparently from the 2nd Century, do exist. The majority texts are from a much later period, but they do agree with each other almost completely."

"That's correct. Now, the critical thing here is the timing. The Council of Carthage comes almost four hundred years after Jesus. By that time, the teachings of Jesus and John had become 'the way,' then 'Christianity,' a variety of heresies, 'orthodoxy,' 'Catholicism,' and still more heresies. A hell of a lot happened between Jesus and the complete New Testament. Something like twelve generations passed during this time. Think about that. A lot happens in twelve generations.

"And let me add something here. It is my opinion that Jesus and his first followers were a very secretive group. You can see plenty of evidence for this in the gospels, and it would certainly explain all of the wild ideas about him that sprang up almost immediately."

"In what way do you mean?"

"Well, if his teachings were as well known as we might be led to believe, there would be relatively little room for some of these wild ideas to grow. And, believe me, there were a multitude of strange ideas about Jesus, and people fought incessantly over strange things, such as whether or not he had a real physical body. So, I think that he was very secretive, and that these ideas could make some progress

because there were so few people who could have said 'I was there.' I think that he kept his group of disciples very small, and that none of them really understood. He was a man out of his time."

Steve didn't know what to make of this idea. It was brand new to him. Certainly the gospels do show Jesus being secretive, but Phillip's ideas were a bit beyond what he had ever considered. "All right, Phillip, I'll have to think about that one. Please go on."

"Sure. The truth is that the gospels don't seem to be common for a long time after Jesus. Now, I'm not getting this idea from some strange scholarly group; I'm getting this from the writings of the 'Church Fathers' – Christian leaders who wrote during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. These guys almost never quote a gospel text correctly. They attribute things to Jesus that we have no record of, and repeat sayings that we have, in significantly different forms. So, there's almost no way there were common gospels during those years. Everything in those days was word of mouth. When one of these men needs to prove his point irrefutably, he says 'I heard this from the mouth of Andrew the Apostle when I was a boy,' or 'I learned this from Holy Polycarp, who sat at the feet of John the Apostle.' The word of an apostle carried weight, not words written on paper. This indicates that the earliest of these people purposefully didn't write their ideas. As Jews, many of them were certainly literate, so it's rather obvious that they didn't want their ideas spread far and wide. This is another reason why I think that secrecy was of major importance to Jesus and his earliest associates.

"Probably the first widespread Christian writings were the letters of Paul. But remember, while he is certainly a brilliant and fascinating man, Paul is definitely not a member of the founders or early followers of the ideas that became Christianity. Actually, he was quite likely considered the enemy by many of the early group. There is evidence of this in the New Testament, and a lot of evidence in the Dead Sea Scrolls, if my readings are correct. "Early Christianity – if we can really call it Christianity – was a radical messianic sect. These would have been composed largely of the followers of John and the Essenes near Damascus. This is the group that Jesus' brother James became head of once Jesus was gone. They were zealots, concerned with the end of the world and a messiah who would wipe out the Romans.

"Apparently Jesus tried to change them and their thinking, and they were minded to follow him because of the healings. But they never quite got it that they themselves had the ability to do great things. So, once he was gone, they made him out to be completely special and unique. Mysticizing him was easier than rising to the level he tried to show them was possible. So, they chose a supremely legalistic man like James and went back to their messianic dreams. I think a few of them tried to continue the true teachings, which led to a lot of the information that we have today.

“Anyway, this is one of the three streams of monotheism I mentioned to you earlier. This stream dies out with the destruction of Jerusalem in the 60s and 130s AD.

“As I say, the group was secret at the beginning, and we can only guess as to why. So, because Jesus’ real teachings weren’t known, or perhaps just weren’t talked about, many versions of the ‘true teachings’ soon sprang up. We know of dozens. Over a few generations, all sorts of apocryphal Hebrew writings and a very interesting series of pagan writings called the Sybils worked their way into Christian literature. In fact, a lot of the Fathers held the Sybils to be prophecies given by God to lead the nations to Christ.

“In this mix we find Paul’s epistles. There is no question that the quality of thought in Paul’s writings is far, far above anything else we find. Right or wrong, he is a master of ideas. Most of these other writings are just awful. Paul is lucid, even brilliant. The power and quality of Paul’s thinking makes his work permanent. Paul is a major force everywhere but Judea. The original Jewish believers hate him for corrupting the faith, but the gentiles keep copies of his letters, and get some of the core message from him.

“Nonetheless, confusion rules the day, with not only hundreds of supposedly true documents, but with dozens of sects – radically different – each claiming to have the true message. And this goes on, not for years, but for centuries.

“Eventually, Paul’s writings form the core of a new type of Christianity. The Jamesian–Essene type of monotheism is gone early in the 2nd Century, and Paul’s version spreads. But there are many movements, all claiming Paul. Eventually, some of these groups would be brought into the religion of Rome, to make what I call the second stream of monotheism.

“And before I get to the development of the Roman Church, I don’t want to forget the third stream of monotheism I mentioned, which is Rabbinic Judaism. Like I said, this began forming in Babylon, and by this point has developed a rich literature and a long scholarly tradition. Being moved out of Judea (for the most part), they spread across the Roman Empire, and quite soon, their long story of persecution begins in earnest. The important thing here is that Judaism becomes a portable and dynamic religion, distributed over all the inhabited earth. The rabbis build mechanisms of improvement and change into their culture, and young rabbis make their marks by coming up with better ideas. It is something of a free market of ideas – loosely within the bounds of their tradition, of course.”

They were approaching the hotel again, after a considerable walk. Phillip was tired again; he had needed more rest lately.

“Steve, what do you say I go take a nap and I’ll give you a call this afternoon when I’ve had a bit of rest?”

Steve was a bit concerned. He didn't feel at all like taking a break. But he agreed nonetheless. While Phillip slept, Steve ordered room service and read through many things in the Bible he had brought with him.

* * * * * * *

Phillip slept till dinner time. Steve waited patiently, then took a short nap himself. They met back at the restaurant at seven o'clock. This time they got a table at the back of the restaurant. It was quiet, with no else one sitting in the area.

"So, Phillip, where will you pick-up?"

Phillip took a breath. "With the Roman take-over of Christianity."

While Phillip paused, Steve jumped in. "You take a Protestant position then?"

"No, not really. But again, the truth is the truth. And the facts are that Rome took over Christianity, and with great bloodshed made it the state religion of Rome.

"But let me give you a bit of background first. As this story gets underway, Constantine fights ruthlessly to gain control of the Empire. Eventually he wins, but he also knows that the core of the Roman Empire, Western Europe, is in trouble. This is common knowledge at the time. The Romans complain incessantly about the softness of their youth and their lack of duty to the empire. The Romans have to hire the northern, Germanic people as their mercenaries because the young Romans won't do the job.

"So, Constantine does two things: He moves his capital to a new city at the east of the Mediterranean, and he makes Christianity the most favored religion. It may be that he did this because Christians showed extreme courage and he hoped that would spread; or it may be that he liked the Christian willingness to suffer and obey. But it was certainly not that Constantine became a Christian. That is patently false.

"But you must remember that the Christianity of this time bears no resemblance to the original Christianity. The original teachings were about individual enlightenment and truth. The Christianity Constantine promoted was a cold religious organization. They had long before given up the idea of being holy and separate and were seeking status and power like the other religions. There were, of course, a few primitive Christians remaining, such as the Montanists. But Constantine and his followers had them destroyed, along with the other non-Catholic groups. They could either become Catholics, who were also called Orthodox at the time, or they could be wiped out. The Roman soldiers had been given their orders, and they obeyed with their usual ruthlessness.

"Constantine gave Christians, especially clergy, immense favor: Freedom from taxes, freedom from all public duties, special treatment in legal proceedings, and so on. As you might guess, the Romans decided to convert quickly and it became the wish of most parents that their sons would enter the clergy. It simply meant a much better life for the child.

“Now, Constantine’s successors often weren’t as zealous in this as he was, but they didn’t try very hard to reverse it either. And, of course, with so much power on the line, the endless clerical arguments regarding Jesus’ true nature and so on went wild. If you hold power by virtue of your beliefs, beliefs are the things you fight over. And they didn’t disappoint.

“After a while, anything beside Christianity was brutally suppressed. The adherents of Mithras, Arian Christians, and Pagans were all ‘stricken with the avenging sword’ by order of Emperor Theodosius. This eliminated other religions throughout almost all of Rome. They ordered their writings to be burned, the property confiscated, and so on.

“For example, for a long time we were aware of writings that said people called Gnostics were one of the largest sects during the first few centuries, but could find only scattered citations from their supposedly numerous books. There was a lot of debate whether these stories were really true or just made up, since there were no records found. Then in the 1940s, a cache of Gnostic documents were accidentally found buried in a backwater Egyptian town. And indeed they had been a large group with an extensive literature. But Rome so thoroughly eliminated their writings that we would know almost nothing about them were it not for a chance find in a forsaken Egyptian town. God only knows what other documents they erased from history.

“So, as the civil government is crumbling, the Church is getting stronger. They did everything the old priesthoods did, and then some. The gave the people monuments and relics, they scared the hell out of them at every possible turn, they made them confess all their bad thoughts to them, and succeeding in making them believe that if they displeased the priesthood they would be thrown into a pit of eternal torture.”

Phillip could tell that Steve was a bit uncomfortable with his characterization of the Church. It was the same thing that happens in many such cases – a monstrous evil is simply too difficult to face, and people begin mitigating the evil rather than accepting the truth about it.

“This makes you uncomfortable, Steve?”

“Yes, it does. Aren’t you coming on kind of strong?”

Phillip took a deep breath and looked at him. “Is what I said true, Steve, or is it false?”

“It is true.”

“Good,” said Phillip. “Now, Steve, you are taking a stance that I’m hitting the Catholics too hard, and I understand the feeling. Obviously there are a lot of nice people who hold to the Catholic faith, right?”

“Yes. Most of my relatives.”

“Okay. I didn’t say that they were evil, did I?”

“No, you didn’t.”

“And do you think that I hate them, and consider them evil people?”

“No, not at all.”

“Good, because I don’t. My argument is with the Catholic organization, not with individual Catholics. Nonetheless, if you want to discuss this, we cannot turn away from the truth because it is uncomfortable. Agreed?”

Steve took a drink of water, took a deep breath, and said, “Agreed, please continue.”

Phillip looked at Steve with respect; he appreciated his bravery.

“All right… the truth is that these guys enslaved the minds of the people of Europe. I use to thing that this was done on purpose, but reading Gibbon made me think otherwise. The Church began ruling people’s minds because that was the natural thing to do, given the ruling structures of that time. They did what all such organizations always do – they maximized the organization’s reach. Truth was obviously a secondary concern. Certainly there have been many fine, exemplary people who were priests, monks, and so on. Many of them did wonderfully noble things. But the overall organization was built upon fraud and force. This amount of blood shed at their hands and at their urging is almost incalculable. A history of their crimes would be unreadable; people couldn’t bear to take it all in at once. Uncomfortable or not, that is the truth.

“Now,” Phillip said, “can you see how sola scriptura – following the nothing but the scriptures – was the only way out of this mess?”

Steve looked blank. He didn’t understand what Phillip was getting at. He was just recovering from all the bad things… though certainly true… that had been said about the Church.

Phillip went on. “Look at it this way, Steve. The minds of these Europeans were in deep superstition. They were mainly illiterate and were not allowed to see the scriptures for themselves. So, their minds were deeply affected, and surrounded by people who were similarly affected. They gave the Church the benefit of the doubt at all turns and lived in fear of Hell. In this situation, it would have been impossible for most of them to just forsake all of this at once. For someone raised in superstition since infancy, that is simply too big a step to take.

Phillip stopped, looking to see if Steve was still with him.

“Yes,” Steve said, “I understand.”

Phillip went on. “So, being in this situation, they get out of it by being *more* Christian than the purveyors of superstition. By being more righteous, by being more faithful to the scriptures, and by separating from the superstitious.”

Steve’s eyes opened wide. “So that’s why getting the scriptures into the common languages was so pivotal!”

Phillip smiled. “That’s right, by being able to read the scriptures, they could be more faithful to them than the Priests, and could see how corrupt the Church actually was in comparison.”

“Oh my God, I see what you mean. Sola scriptura gave them a way out. And that would be why guys like Huss were willing even to die for telling the truth, they weren’t doing it just for a religious interpretation, but to keep a way of escape open to men.”

“You’re a very perceptive man, Steve.”

* * * * * * *

They decided to take another walk. The evening was beautiful, and the city lights looked inviting. At first they talked of family, friends, and business, but in due course their conversation returned to its previous subjects. “Phillip, why don’t you pick back up in your time line please.”

Okay, Steve. You’d like me to pick back up at the Reformation?”

“Yes, please.”

“Sounds fine… The reformers, by following the scriptures explicitly, began to reassemble the pieces. The original synthesis of Jesus and John, at least as I see it, was first mysticized, then submerged in Roman superstitions. These people rejected Romanism, began putting together some of the clues they found in the Bible, and reassembled some of the pieces. You’ll notice that the reformers immediately reject the priesthood and confession. They also jump into printing books and are friendly toward commerce. So, they are again championing individuality, ability, and integrity. Granted there are huge problems remaining, but they make important strides.

“A different version of human ability began to come back – albeit haphazardly and sometimes poorly – with the rediscovery of healing in the late 19th Century, and with the outbreak of Pentecostalism in the early 20th. And again, the people exploring these abilities were doing so in pursuit of the perfect truth of the scriptures.

“Now, there were serious problems with the beliefs of all of these groups, and in some ways they were as superstitious as many of the middle-ages folks. But that doesn’t mean that their results were nothing. Exceptional events are not to be discarded just because they are tainted by some of the participants… or even if they are tainted by *all* of the participants. There were a lot of people who were healed. I’ve seen it, and you’ve seen it too. People being healed and getting insights are good things, things that should be welcomed and encouraged. But they came out of extreme commitment to old and problematic scriptures. And the people who had some ability this way were sure that separating these abilities from the most stringent forms of Christianity would be a heinous sin. This gave people who were opposed to

superstition no way to access these abilities, and led them to condemn them as just another new form of superstition.

"My desire – and I am not alone in this – is to separate these experiences from religion. Being supremely faithful to the scriptures was necessary, and made a lot of progress psychologically possible to us, but I don't want people to have to swallow fundamentalism in order to experience exceptional things. We need to get over that hurdle. Does this make sense to you, Steve?"

Steve understood Phillip quite well. Too well for his own comfort. "Phillip, I want to get back to the hotel and write some of this down, just for my own sake. These are very difficult ideas, and I'm not sure I'll remember them if I don't."

"Yes, I understand."

They took a cab back to the hotel, and called it an evening. In the morning, they met at an interesting restaurant they had seen in downtown Vancouver.

* * * * * * *

"So, did you make your notes?"

"Yeah, I sure did. Ten pages I think."

"Wow. Anything that I said unclear?"

"Yeah, there is one thing."

"Well, that's what I came here for. What is it?"

They smiled at each other. "Phillip, you keep talking about the mysticizing of Jesus and John's message, but I'm not sure I understand what you mean."

"Oh, I did kind of breeze through that, didn't I?"

"You sure did."

"Okay, perhaps the 'mysticizing of their discoveries' would be a better term."

"Either way is fine by me."

"Good. Jesus and John had put together the ideas we talked about the other day, individuality, integrity, commitment, and so on."

"Right."

"So it seems that when all of these things came together properly, it changed people. Not just got them healed, but changed the way they experienced themselves. I am convinced that this is what comes down to us as the 'new birth' experience. You know the scriptures I'm talking about, and you know something of the experience, right?"

"Yes I do."

“I think that this experience is a natural effect arising from Jesus’ synthesis of ideas… of understanding them and of acting upon them. It seems that at a very early stage they were put into public operation via the ritual of baptism and the promise of divine forgiveness of sins. More than likely, Jesus couldn’t find many people who could accept the experience in its pure form, but could take it as an offshoot of the Jewish faith; much like the reformers couldn’t just dump the idea of a Church.

“Now, this is speculation, but I think Jesus faced a choice. Whether to keep his discoveries pure, and with no one understanding them; or to mix them with religion as little as possible, and to have them exist in some form, rather than not at all.”

“And what do you think Jesus would say his original message was?”

“Transcending fear and guilt to reactivate the self.”

The conversation stopped. They each ate their meals, while Steve tried to take Phillip’s ideas into his mind, and Phillip worried that he had said too much.

After a few minutes Steve looked ready to continue.

“Phillip, I think I understand what you mean by reactivating the self, but let me be sure. You’d say that children are born into a difficult and confusing world, and seek to find safety in one way or another. That they learn to play roles, and that their true self is sacrificed along the way. Correct?”

“Well, that’s certainly part of it, Steve. It usually starts that way. The critical thing is that people learn to live someone else’s life, not their own. They live the life that their parents want them to, or that some other person or group wants them to, and they leave their own life behind, being constantly taught that self is bad. They lose their facility of self-reference.”

Phillip was now comfortable again, he was eating and talking at the same time and his enthusiasm was coming back. Somehow, that made Steve comfortable as well.

“I can’t tell you how big an issue this is. Very few of us are really ourselves. Rather, we do what others expect of us, and then we feel deeply unfulfilled. What I want to teach… and what I think Jesus was really teaching, is to revalue our selves. When this happens, the intellect begins to function as intended, long forgotten parts begin to come back on-line, and the true self begins to emerge.”

Phillip now became very animated. He leaned forward, looking like a boy discussing his cool new bicycle. “And get this Steve… the personas that begin fading away are positively monochrome compared to the new personas that begin to shine through. The old personas were not necessarily bad, but they limited the vast authentic self to only one role, one wavelength – one color. The true personas are curious, inquisitive, relaxed, energetic, and have wildly varied interests.”

“And you think this was what Jesus really taught?”

"Yeah, I really do. I've gone through this all more times than I can tell you and tried to see if I was just reading my own desires into the story, but I don't think I am. I have no way of proving this, but I'm pretty sure it's true."

Steve turned the thoughts over in his mind, making sure that he understood them. Somehow he knew that he was dealing with gigantic ideas… ideas that would take time to really sink in. Without really thinking in words, or rather, alternating between words and concepts, he knew what he needed to do – to make sure that he understood Phillip's ideas as concretely as possible, and then move onto the next batch. There was not time to analyze them fully. It wasn't that Phillip was going overly fast, but that each of his major ideas really required several days to work through.

They finished their meals, paid the bill, and began walking back to the hotel. Again, they simply walked and discussed minor matters for a long while; the architecture of Vancouver, travels overseas, and so on.

Steve decided that it was about time for him to get back to Seattle. He had checked with his boss that morning, and he knew that they needed him back at the office. And beside, Phillip was turning his theological world upside down; if his financial and personal lives were turned upside down as well, it would be an unhealthy situation for him.

Phillip had been thinking about where he wanted to go after Vancouver. As yet, he hadn't made any firm plans. He really just wanted to get some rest, a few days with nothing to think about.

"So, Phillip, now that you've dynamited my theology, how about filling in a few of the blanks you've left?"

"Dynamited you, huh?" Phillip thought to himself, "Which you've withstood incredibly well."

"Sure, Steve. What did I leave out?"

"What happened to the Jews?"

"Uh… you mean coming out of the 1st Century?"

"Yeah, give me the short story on what happened to Judaism."

Phillip smiled. "As you wish… Coming out of the 1st Century was Rabbinic Judaism, the Judean Christians, and a group usually known as the Zealots. I might add that there was overlap between these groups, and that these were just the major groups. There were many small groups.

"To make a long story short, most of the Zealots were killed in battles with the Romans, and all of the other groups agreed to work together, except the Christians. But this group of Christians didn't last long. As I say, I can't find any evidence of them past the early 2nd Century. That left Rabbinic Judaism, which you probably don't understand very well, do you?"

“No, not really.”

“Well then, let’s start with this – Judaism is not about what the Bible says, it is about what the Rabbis say the Bible says.”

“So, they’re not really sola scriptura.”

“Not really. They honor the scriptures, but also what they call the ‘oral torah’ – the old rabbinic writings and the oral tradition they are supposedly based upon. It took me a long time to understand this. As a kid I understood Jewish culture, but not the theology.

“As I began to learn the scriptures, the rabbinic commentaries began to bother me. Their scriptural interpretation is really questionable, sometimes just wrong. At first, I decided that Jewish theology was simply screwed-up, but when I was older, I got to meet some of the better rabbis, and it was obvious that these guys were much too smart to make such silly interpretations. And then I found truth.”

“Which is what?”

“The truth is that the rabbis, certainly since the 1st Century, and probably back as far as Ezra and Nehemiah, have used what they call the ‘oral Torah’ to address the community’s needs, and to read necessary ideas back into the written Torah as an interpretation. A few of the better rabbis will even admit that what was needed, historically, and what is needed still, are men sensitive enough to see what is needed, and clever enough to find ways to read it back into the original text. All this, while keeping the original Torah untouched. Anything less would have fractured the community.

“So, Judaism is not about what the Bible says, it is about what the rabbis say. And that is not a bad thing. These rabbis were responsible for the development, maintenance, and growth of a self-ruling community, under very difficult circumstances. This takes hundreds of trials and fixes, over long periods of time. That is why you see endless commentaries; the Talmudic reasonings. These are couched in terms of scripture, but they really aren’t about scripture. They’re about community… about creating better people. The important work was in creating an environment – a community – that is capable of producing good people.

“The genius of this arrangement was, first, that the most innovative and thoughtful people were steered into the rabbinate. And second, that the entire system was flexible enough to change and improve. The result was a community seeking to create good people. A community guided by men insightful enough to see needs, find solutions, and read them back into an ancient text; all with the help of a fictional oral torah.

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CONTENTS

Legal Disclaimer
Publisher's Preface
1 How It Worked in 1890
2 Get Your Head Straight!
3 Starting from Flat Broke
4 Once You Hit The Ground
5 Import/Export
6 Event Promotion
7 Locating Missing Heirs
8 Digital Money-Changing
9 Micro-Fabrication
10 The Marc Rich Story
11 Offices and Employees
12 How To Create Deals
13 How To Survive Your Mistakes
14 Dangerous Places
15 Financial Tools
16 The New Tools
17 Use Your Jurisdictions!
18 The PT Life
19 Preserving Your Assets
Appendix A Why The West Leads The Rest
Appendix B Freedom In An Unfree World
Appendix C Your Personal Inventory
Appendix D Setting Up Encryption

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down.
-- Dr. Thomas Dorman

As full as my reading schedule is, I plan to make time to return to *A Lodging of Wayfaring Men* in order to glean the most from this interesting, thought-provoking tale.
-- Sunni Maravillosa, Free-Market.net

Of the twenty five or so people I worked with last fall, all of them revered *A Lodging of Wayfaring Men* as a bible. They referred to the house and their community effort as a Lodge. We all felt it was modeled on the Free Souls.
-- HW, underground programmer

One of the most thought-provoking books to hit the information highway in recent times.
-- David MacGregor, Sovereign Living

God Wants You Dead

What if ideas evolved like organisms? Which would be huge and dangerous, like dinosaurs? Which would be useful, like horses? And where would man fit in?

This book is about the past, present and future evolution of human ideas. Its primary emphasis is on parasitic ideologies. It examines where they come from, how they harm us and how we can remove them from our own minds and from the culture around us.

Finally, it tells us the amazing things that will become possible for humanity when they are gone. Not only religions, but also nation states, racial groups, corporations and other collectives are targeted for clear minded observation and criticism.
(350 Pages) $26.95

CONTENTS

Sean's Introduction – Judging By The Cover
Paul's Introduction – Owning Your Mind
0.0 Executive Summary

0.1 Faith
0.2 Higher Powers
0.3 Self Sacrifice
0.4 Picking On God
0.5 God Wants You Dead
1.0 Evolution Of Higher Powers
1.1 Biological Evolution
1.2 Ideological Evolution
1.3 Identities And Icons
1.4 The Higher Powers
1.5 Take A Breath
2.0 A Brief History Of Crime
2.1 Down From The Trees
2.2 Hunter Gatherers
2.3 Farmers, Warriors, And God Kings
2.4 Democracy And Empire
2.5 Church And State
2.6 Exit From Darkness
2.7 Interesting Times
3.0 Your Money Or Your Life
3.1 Killing The Goose
3.2 Controlling The Market
3.3 Good Enough For Government Work
3.4 How Bad Laws Happen To Good People
3.5 Praxeology And Other Big Words
4.0 Finding Yourself
4.1 Genetic And Memetic
4.2 The Ultimate Question
4.3 The Question Of Identity
4.4 Your Ideal Self
5.0 The Art Of Thought
5.1 Free Your Mind
5.2 Cleaning House
5.3 Logical Thought
5.4 Fallacies
5.5 Bias Of Our Culture
6.0 Beheading Leviathan
6.1 Who Should I Vote For?
6.2 Fighting For A Free Market
6.3 Engineering Freedom
6.4 Rolling Back
6.5 New Frontiers
7.0 Playing God
7.1 Suspended Animation
7.2 Nanotechnology
7.3 Augmented Or Artificial?
7.4 Life Extension
7.5 Where Is My Flying Car?
8.0 Final Thoughts
8.1 The Last Generation
8.2 Rethinking Atheism And Anarchy
8.3 Spreading The Word
8.4 The Hero/Coward Choice
Credits , Contributors, Pictures, Reading List

Bye Bye Big Brother

The Bible of "Perpetual Traveler" theory and practice, backed by decades of experience.

Sometimes there is no substitute for proven, practical knowledge. This book contains practical instructions for living free on planet Earth. Some of the finest financial minds and most successful entrepreneurs in the world have contributed to this book; and all focused entirely on their most

effective methods to live freer, escape the idiocies of bureaucrats, and to live a healthier, happier, wealthier life.

This is the official, abridged version of the original 3 volume leather-bound collector's edition, which sold for $500.

This book offers up the meat of PT (Perpetual Traveler) theory and practice that Grandpa - and many like minded associates - developed over many decades of trial and error. Even "pruned down" to a single large (8.5 x 11) book, it still contains a massive amount of useful information. It explains the PT lifestyle in precise detail and should you bravely choose to follow where it leads, you will find yourself on an exciting road much less traveled. (324 pages) $99.95

CONTENTS

1 PT – What's It All About?
2 Can You Break Free?
3 How Three Friends Became PTs
4 Your Six Flags Unfurled
5 Hoisting Your Six Flags High
6 The PT Credo
7 Governments As Service Providers
8 Avoiding Litigation
9 The Fugitive Doberman
10 The Patriot Act
11 The Evil of Government
12 How Much Money Do You Need?
13 How Many PTs Are There?
14 The PT Philosophy
15 Part-Time Tee-Pee Or Permanent Treehouse?
16 The Paper PT
17 How Jason Brady Became A PT
18 But What About My Stuff?
19 All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray?
20 The First Step
21 If The Law Comes Knocking
22 When A Government Profile Is Good
23 The 90-Day Method
24 Should You Use A PT Consultant?
25 Advice A PT Lawyer Would Give
26 Secure Internet Communications
27 Successful Secret Banking
28 Big Brother's Number One Target
29 How To Avoid Banking Problems
30 Choosing Your Offshore Banks
31 Elite Private Banking Explained
32 Estate Planning
33 Don't Let Your Offshore Account Become Dormant

34 Circumventing The Banking System
35 Staying Clear of Scams
36 Rich PT, Poor PT?
37 Seven Days To A PT Lifestyle
38 What's Really Important To You?
39 Real Estate Investing
40 Employment Options
41 Cruising The World
42 Small Corrupt Countries
43 Fixers And Facilitators
44 Whom Can You Trust?
45 The End Of The Trail

Aristotle In English – The Nicomachean Ethics

Aristotle's work led Europe to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment almost 2000 years after he wrote it! That alone makes him worth your time. But until now, translations of Aristotle have been done only by academic specialists with a focus on linguistic accuracy rather than readability. This paraphrase edition of the Nicomachean Ethics is an effort to put Aristotle's thoughts into easy to read, modern day English. It remains faithful to the meaning of Aristotle's words but with a focus on readability rather than strict translation - making Aristotle's ideas more accessible to everyone, as he would have wished. (100 Pages) $14.95

Survive!

Since the dawn of time, when man first picked up a stone to defend his family and tribe, survival required men to face violence. (And history has a nasty habit of repeating itself.)

Like it or not, we live in a violent world; we will always feel a general discomfort if we lack confidence in our ability to face it. Ignore this and feel vaguely vulnerable all your life. Conquer this and you can walk with the gods.

Learn how to get through a road block; to judge the distance between yourself and a shooter. Find out how to survive in a war zone, how to do business in a war-torn country, how to survive alone in the wild, and much, much more.

Everything in this book was taken from real experiences in the worst situations this world has to offer. (Which is why one of our authors had to adopt a pen name.)

You see the flash of a gunshot in the dark of night – can you tell if they are shooting at you? Do you know how to recognize a suicide bomber? Do you know what to do if you are being followed on the street? You will after you read this book.

CONTENTS

First Words
Welcome To Reality
The Provenance Of This Information
1 AM I TOUGH ENOUGH?
Afraid Of Instinct?
Instinct In Action
Bullies And Their Great Weapon
The Two Classes
The Bully In The Bar
Courage And Acting Alone
The Anti-Violence Scam
"I Don't Care If I Die"
Doing What You Must
Overcoming Our Nature
2 DANGEROUS PLACES
War Zones
If You Make Contact
The Use Of Guides
Troop Movements
Communication
War Zone Finance
Suicide Bombers: A Guide
Artillery
Bullets
Minefields
Dog Evasion
Civil Disorder
The Shepherd Boys
3 KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE SURVIVAL
How Kidnappings Work
How To Avoid Becoming A Target
If You Are Ambushed
Preparation
How To Respond To A Kidnapping
The Process
Release
How To Survive A Kidnapping
Types Of Hostage Takers
How You Will Be Treated
The Kidnapped College Girl
4 BOMBS AND WMDS
IED Devices And Booby Traps
Nuclear, Biological, And Chemical (NBC)
Chemical And Biological
Nuclear Weapons
NBC Kits
5 SURVIVAL IN THE STREET
Using The Street
Precautions
If You Are Approached Or Followed
How Criminals Close In
When All Goes Wrong
Mass Shootings

Counter Surveillance
Bits & Pieces
Always Trust Your Instincts
6 SECURITY WHILE TRAVELING
On The Road
Use Of Taxis
Hotel Security
Precautions Pay
7 DRIVING AND DANGER
Being Followed
Road Blocks And Ramming: A Guide
Ambushes
Route Planning
Evasive Driving
How Badly Do You Want To Live?
8 INSPECTING A CAR
When To Inspect The Vehicle
What You Are Looking For
Detecting Tampering Or Intrusion
Prevention
The Search, Step By Step
If You Find Something
Complacency Kills
9 HOME SECURITY
Layers Of Protection
When Away From Home
A Note On Dogs
Alarm Systems
A New Life, A Mobile Phone, And A Flashlight
10 OFFICE AND BUSINESS SECURITY
Commercial Espionage
Electronic Safety
Preventing Hacking And Snooping
Low-Tech Protection
Risky Business
When The Pieces Don't Fit
11 VIP/EXECUTIVE SELF-PROTECTION
Assessing The Threat
Personal Security
Surveillance
Even The Best Security
12 WILDERNESS SURVIVAL
Exposure To Heat
Exposure To Cold
Your Survival Kit
Navigation
Obtaining Food
Shelter
Water
Precaution Pays, #2
13 EMERGENCY MEDICINE
The Primary Survey
Airway Clearance
Major Bleeding
Fractures
Burns
Shock
Chest Wounds
Abdominal Wounds
Heat Stroke
Exposure
Snakebites
Spider Bites
Scorpion Stings
Simple, Direct Action

Mindless Slogans

101 of the non-think slogans you hear every day - examined, analyzed and debunked. (Actually 107 - we threw in some bonus slogans.)

Take a look at the table of contents and see how many of them you hear on a regular basis. It's actually a bit distressing to see how many mindless slogans people use in the place of actual thoughts… and never notice!
(150 Pages) $19.95

CONTENTS

1: The Pen is Mightier Than The Sword
2: All Wars Are Caused by Religion
3: The Almighty Dollar
4: One Man's Terrorist is Another Man's Freedom Fighter
5: You Can't Legislate Morality
6: A Selfless Act
7: Nature
8: Family Values
9: Everything is Relative
10: That's Offensive!
11: It's Time for Change!
12: The Wild West
13: Positive Energy
14: Conflict of Interest
15: Wage Slavery
16: Validation
17: There Are Only So Many Pieces Of Pie
18: All Men Are Equal
19: This Is a Free Country
20: We're Paving The Planet
21: Illegal Immigrants Don't Pay Taxes
22: Speak Truth to Power
23: That's Good In Theory, But Not In Reality
24: What People Deserve
25: Why Do You Care If You Have Nothing To Hide?
26: Thou Shalt Not Judge
27: Good And Evil Go Together
28: The Legacy Of Slavery
29: War Doesn't Solve Anything
30: It's The Law!
31: The Voice of The People
32: Taxes Are The Price We Pay For A Civilized Society
33: They Need Democratic Institutions
34: We Need To Bring People Together
35: The US Health Care System
36: Perceptions Are Reality
37: The Crusades

38: He's Your Brother!
39: The Next Generation Is A Disaster
40: Technology Eliminates Jobs
41: We Need To Be Led
42: We're Ignoring The Poor
43: You're Playing God
44: Censorship!
45: There's A Reason For Everything
46: All Human Life Is Sacred
47: As Long As There's A Profit Motive, Someone Is Going To Come Up Short
48: The Constitution Is A Living Document
49: We Need To Send A Very Strong Message
50: This Is A Corrupt Administration
51: That's So Bourgeois
52: President (Whomever) Was Better For The Economy
53: Capital Punishment Is State-Sanctioned Murder
54: Live In The Present
55: We Must Hold Ourselves To A Higher Standard
56: If We Don't Control Our Borders, Nothing Else Matters
57: We Need To Get The Right People Into Office
58: Social Justice
59: That's Not Normal
60: All Men Are Innocent Till Proven Guilty!
61: We Need More Education
62: It's All About Power
63: We Have To Do Something!
64: An Enlightened Capitalist
65: We Should Respect Authority
66: Question Authority
67: Life Begins At Conception
68: Socialization
69: We Need To Make Government More Efficient
70: Do It For The Children
71: Empowerment
72: The Role Model
73: Society Has Failed Them
74: You Must Be Tolerant of Other People's Opinions
75: Don't Blame The Victim
76: They Mean Well
77: Tax Cuts For The Rich
78: The Appearance Of Impropriety
79: He's An Extremist
80: Cultural Symbols
81: If We Don't Know Where We Came From, We Don't Know Who We Are
82: That's Old News
83: That's A Privilege Not A Right
84: You Have A Debt To Society
85: Bringing Home The Bacon
86: Violence Begets Violence
87: Negotiation
88: Cop Killer
89: It Is Only With The Heart That One Can See Rightly
90: Who Are You To Judge?
91: Hope

92: The Government Is Supposed To Create Jobs
93: No Justice, No Peace
94: Pushing The Envelope
95: An Eye For An Eye
96: The Rich Get Richer And The Poor Get Poorer
97: Valuing Property Over Human Life
98: We Need Consensus
99: Zero Tolerance
100: Capitalism Rewards Greed
101: People Shouldn't Be Making Money On Education
102: A Proportional Response
103: And What About What _____ Did?
104: If You're Not With Us, You're Against Us
105: There Are Too Many Guns On The Street
106: That's Selfish!
107: You Can't Understand Unless You've Lived It

A Second Look At Eden

Let's be honest and admit that the "apple story" thrives only because it is easy to repeat to children. So… what if everything you were taught about the Garden of Eden was wrong? And what if the events of Eden shaped not only human destiny, but shaped human character? And what if the rest of the Bible is a record of God's efforts to fix what went wrong way back then? If you're a Christian (or a Jew), you need to read this little book.
(50 Pages) $9.95

Jesus – The New Testament

The New Testament for people who want to read the story of Jesus without the intrusions of interpreters, scholars and theologians. This modern translation is set in paragraph form (as it was originally written), rather than as numbered lines. It reads like a book, rather than as a religious text, and is for people who actually want to read what was written about Jesus rather than just have a bible on hand to look up numbered quotes. If you've ever thought about separating religion from belief, you owe it to yourself to read this story as it was originally written… before it was re-arranged by the religious authorities. It makes a great read for the most advanced biblical scholar - or a perfect book for someone who has never picked up a bible.

(380 Pages) $26.95

Production Versus Plunder

History opens itself to you in this book. By following the central conflict of human history (production versus plunder), the rise and fall of human civilizations become understandable. The truth is that the battles and names that most of us learn in school are never connected to their most basic causes, and because of that, they never fit together into an understandable whole. In this book, however, they do.

When history comes together into a coherent story, quite a few surprises can be seen, such as the fact that the Sumerians did not create the first culture. Instead, they destroyed it. Or, that Athens did not create the Golden Age of the Greeks. Rather, they ended it.

As you proceed through this engrossing narrative, you'll find some troubling facts about the modern world as well; such as the fact that the workers of the world have indeed been robbed, but not by capitalists, and that the Rule of Law actually ended two centuries ago. And then, the conclusion that Western Civilization is nearly doomed.

It was never too hard to understand – they just told you the wrong story.
(270 Pages) $24.95

CONTENTS
Preface
1 What Is Man?
2 Civilization Is Created and Overrun
3 Classical Civilization
4 Plato's Empire
5 The Turning Point
6 Western Civilization Forms
7 The Quickening Of The 17th Century
8 The American Revolution
9 The Industrial Surprise
10 The Decline Of Western Civilization
11 A Chance For Renewal
12 The Two Futures