

BROTHERZ

by

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CHAPTER 1

What you called the Grey Bar hotel with windows that were only opened within the imaginations of inhabitants inside it depended on who you were in the social hierarchy that built it. For the so-called 'law abiding' citizens who had not yet been prosecuted for the multiple offenses of moral and civil law they had to commit to stay alive, sane and purposeful, it was an unseen place where you could send those who threatened the common good. For the operators and especially owners of privately operated and government sanctioned 'Correctional Facility 128', every new prisoner who was 'checked in' resulted in healthy profits for themselves, and their law-abiding families. For the country, it was an opportunity to use free, 'morally liberated' and/or well-under minimum wage labor in a variety of new emerging industries to maintain itself without the burden of having to pay anyone, and to be competitive in a world where only the strongest of nations were allowed the God-given right to stay alive, particularly with the most recent 'America First, Fuck everybody else' President that had been elected to the White House. For the priests who came to visit the inmates, it was a place to put into practice the 'morality readjustment' theories they had learned in Seminary School or the college courses in humanistic psychology they took on line. For the inmates, it was a chance to have their heads shaved for purposes of 'hygiene', their bodies 'conditioned' by labor, and their brains medicated by drugs as well as sensory-deprivation routine so they could experience 'new insights' that could find their way into their defective and misled minds. But for one priest and inmate, it was a very personal reunion that was fated to happen for nearly half a century.

"So, after all these years of schooling and all my years of trying to make that schooling count, it comes to this," Father John said to the prisoner after the door slammed behind him and the guards finally went back to their card game, in a country where gambling outside the walls was illegal. "What do you have to say about all of this Mister Petrakis?" the old man in the long beard and thinning long main on top of his century old year old head demanded to know.

"Happy almost birthday?" Inmate Petrakis replied with a sly grin revealing three recently forfeited teeth, and sorrowful 40 year old eyes that he knew would not see a cake with forty candles on it.

"Or maybe so," Father John said, placing a Bible he had brought into the maximal security cell on the 'table' provided to the chained inmate whose body was covered with purulent bruises that went down to the bone. "Saint Basili," he continued, handing over an icon from his left pocket, then opening it up, revealing a piece of baklava inside. "It's

not the usual cake one gets on one's birthday, but imagine it is a yellow cake with chocolate icing and walnuts on top. Your favorite, as I and you fondly remember."

"Which I don't deserve to eat, but, do deserve to imagine that I can't have," Petrakis said, smelling the pastry which had gone stale, and was crushed into more of a wafer than a cake in the process of being smuggled in to him. "For the sin of envy."

"For which you got those beatings?" Father John asked. "Which, the guards, warden and the lawyer you refused to access the services of said were mostly self-inflicted?"

"And if Jesus had gone to the cross with unblemished skin, his crucifixion would have not been that effective," Petrakis countered, stroking his bloody hand over the head shave done himself that indeed went below the scalp on a once handsome, plentifully follicled heartthrob. "But I heard Lorena thinks bald martyrs are sexy, and their photographs make their movements more long lasting. Yet in these advanced civilized times, I do know that the duration the public will be moved by a crisis of injustice has dwindled from four months to two weeks. Which doesn't give you much time, Father."

"Time for what?" Father John demanded, pounding the icon of the pacifist Saint on the table, blasting fire and brimstone into the condemned criminal who he volunteered with giving last rights to. "Time for me to try to get your sentence reduced? You know what you did. It nearly destroyed the entire financial system of this country! And will cause irreparable damage to the carefully constructed American economy for the rest of this century and the next. Jesus told his followers that they should pay their taxes to the Romans while on earth, and accept the fact that there will always be some who have earthly wealth and some who don't!"

"And He kind of lost it when He went into the Temple and asked the money lenders there in a very loud and assertive voice, with fists instead of flowers, to take their ungodly business elsewhere, Father," Petrakis replied, calmly. "And that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to get into heaven."

"It was my job to tell you those things, then," Father John answered, apparently recalling simpler, though not necessarily kinder, long ago. He took in a deep breath, smelling the sweat that had accumulated on the overgrown hairs on his shaking upper lip, than let it out again, smelling the putridness of his churning stomach and inflated gut. "And it's my job to encourage you to repent for your extreme, immoral, stupid, ineffective and destructive attempts to re-distribute America's wealth. And self-destructive to your Soul as well," the Orthodox Priest said with firm, yet desperate, resolution.

"As it will be, despite what you get paid to do now, your job to tell Lorena why I did it, and why I have to be punished for much more than what I am convicted of doing, and actually did do," Petrakis affirmed, with an even more intense calmness, seeing into the emotionally desperate Old Priest's soul with Ancient eyes which were about to be soon closed by the executioner's needle. "A story which starts when you were still a young

priest working for a corrupt clergy, government and Arch Bishop, and I was a young boy who thought you were just a good, moral, nice, and caring man who smelled like incense and couldn't afford anything other than a single plain, black robe and scuffed black shoe-boots. As did, maybe, my brother. Who---

“---Was your best friend, Mister Petrakis, way back before....the world separated you from each other,” he replied, procedural compassion and theological reason tempering his primal rage.

“We separated ourselves, for committing the sins and civil crimes of---“

“---Theft, fraud, embezzlement!” blasted out of the Orthodox Priest's parched mouth through his overgrown beard, accompanied by a wagging finger attached to a shaking hand. “And murder, and---“

“---Envy!” Petrakis countered into Father John's accusatory face. “Envy for what the other one was, and what the other one has...or rather had.” The beet red rage in Petrakis' cheeks became flooded with tears streaming down from his glassy eyes. Reason overtook Petrakis, pulling the tears back into his oculars and making him see another pathology that had afflicted so many, and still was. “And the sin of selective compassion. Caring for my family, friends and fellow citizens of my own country so much more than other people's family, friends, and citizens of foreign countries that the latter become irrelevant, then expandable. What harm am I doing by killing, starving or mutilating a thousand strangers' spawned brats and underfed rug-rats if it will get my kids into Oxford. Making my family more happy does justify making everyone else's miserable. Right, Father?” Mad laughter now overtook his parched throat. “Family and country first, everybody else last! Glory to us, and no one else, except of course the Heavenly Father who's will is for US to be on top and everyone else on the bottom. Just like you taught us.”

Before Father John could have yet another arrow shot into the many Achillies heels in his non-intentionally corrupted soul and, finally, guilt ridden heart, he pulled out a notebook, and a pen, from his briefcase. He handed them to the prisoner he had known ever since he was a free-wheeling child, blessed with so many gifts from the heavenly Father as well as his earthly one. “For your final confession,” he said, firmly and now coldly. “Which I will not infect my ears by hearing! And I have no legal or moral obligation to absolve you of your guilt. And if you commit suicide before your execution, or decide to draw satirical pictures of me, the judge, or your accusers in this notebook, I will personally see that you go to hell!”

“I'm already there,” Petrakis related, picking up the pen and commencing to put into print how the most bizarre, unexpected and destructive re-distribution of wealth and power in his still beloved country was implemented. “And you will hear exactly what I'm writing, with your eyes and ears.”

CHAPTER 2

Despite the fact that several years earlier man, according to the images on TV in 1969, had figured out how to get to the moon, what happened between the ground on earth and in the clouds hovering around in the heavens was still dictated by Mother Nature. The wishes of the mortals dwelling in Suburban Westchester County for a White Christmas went unheeded by Mama Nature, the Good Lord and the experimental, colorfully-clandestine 'climate modification' branch of the US Air Force that year. Santa's sleds had to adopt wheels and be sure to not scrape up the green, grass covered, muddy lawns that housed the few kids who still hadn't figured out that the generous, giving without expectation of reward, jolly old fart from the North Pole didn't really exist.

Two nearly identical nine year brothers who had shared lodging in Athena Petrakis' womb a decade earlier for nine months, boldly dug their way out of their parent's house. After having decided to make something positive out of the 4 feet of snow that had 'graced' their neighborhood on a cold but surprisingly not-too-windy January 5th they commenced yet another conversation to keep their minds off their freezing fingertips. And their focus on what lay beyond living the uneventfully comfortable lives their 'came to this country with five cents in my pocket' immigrant grandparents had made possible for their middle caste 'what would people think?' overly socially-integrated American born parents.

"So, Santa, who you still say can exists, sent you a golden opportunity this year," Nick Petrakis said to his twin brother George.

"Yeah," George replied. "A brother who tests my belief in him. A brother who may be right about him not existing in the real world, but will test my believe that Santa lives on in our hearts," the 'philosophical' Petrakis son said to the pragmatic one.

"No," Nick countered. "I was talking about that!" He pointed his brother's attention to an ambulance stuck in the snow on the still unplowed street, being pulled deeper into the pristine white powder the more the apparently inexperienced-to-cold Asian driver rammed on the accelerator. "And that," Nick continued pointing to a five foot snow drift in front of the door across the street, an elderly lady trying to push her way out the door in order to let her cat inside. "And all those other people who are stuck, and need to get unstuck. Who will pay big money for us using this!" he affirmed, lifting up his snow shovel. "If we work fast, we can beat out the competition, and get top dollar for it."

"Or if we work fast, we can be of service to more people faster, and---" George suggested.

"---Or even faster if we..." Nick interjected, pointing to a window that was very openable across the street, a red machine on the other side which was as new to the neighborhood as its still-away-on-business he never talked about owner. "Maybe burrow Mister Johnston's snow blower, before someone else does?"

“Without his permission, again!” George replied with a guilty frown. “You know what he called us the last time YOU broke into his place and burrowed his snow blower. He called us assholes!”

“Yeah, he did call us that. But when I offered that I’d paint his house for him---“

“----For US to paint his house, which a job where I did 90 percent of the work, Nick.”

“Because you felt guiltier than I did, George. And you seemed to need to paint faster than I did.”

“With paint from our father’s store, that he was going to throw away. That you told Mr. Johnston you bought from Dad at retail price.”

“Which got us paid for doing the painting, didn’t it? With money you used to buy those philosophy and biology books, right George?”

“Yeah, Nick, but...” said the Petrakis twin with the larger nose that couldn’t sniff out a deal if it were put directly in front of his king sized nostrils. “It felt so...competitive. And manipulative. And...”

The conversation was halted by the Asian driver ranting loud enough for the patient in the ambulance behind him to hear. Then by the cat screeching out, pawing at the frozen window, begging his elderly human caretaker with shrugged shoulders to find a way to open the snow-blocked door of his house. “We have to help those people,” George insisted. “We were lucky enough to be able to get out of our house because our room is on the second floor. These people...we have to help them, Nick.” He trudged over to the ambulance, motioned for the driver to cease spinning his wheels, then proceeded to remove piles of snow half of his own height away from the burning tire.

“You mean you WANT to help them, George. Because it makes you feel good,” Nick advanced as he made his way easily to the ambulance, using the path made by his brother. “Helping’ people who should be helping themselves makes some ‘feel good’ chemical in your blood get into your brain. A brain that’s not brave enough to be an assertive asshole, and not clever enough to be manipulative.”

“But smart enough to know that compassion is the inevitable result of expansive intelligence, and that the ‘what goes around comes around’ rule applies for everyone,” George asserted though heavy breathing while lifting piles of snow almost as heavy as he was, making his lungs hurt, almost as much as his aching muscles and overstretched tendons. “And that one day I may be stuck in the snow and need to get to a hospital. Or you will. Or---“

“We’re ready to give you a push,” Nick, who had far shoveled less snow than his brother but in more important areas, said to the driver. “And get you to hospital licked split,” he

assured the patient in the back of the ambulance, a middle aged woman in an expensive dress, adorned with a large rock on her wedding ring finger, shiny gold earrings and a large strand of pearls around the tracheal hole in her neck. She pointed to a bag next to her, mouthing the words Nick already anticipated as he opened the door and retrieved it. “Yes, newspaper. I know.” He turned to his brother, effortlessly, placing the newspaper under the tires. “The best use for printed material other than burning it,” he boasted.

George had never thought to put newspaper under the tires of a car stuck in the snow, most particularly because someone took a lot of effort to be sure it had words written on it. But, as the under-muscled Nick was the brains and George was the reluctantly muscle rich brawn of their duo, he accepted his role. Nick took the job of directing the driver’s wheels while George did the pushing from behind. Three ‘we almost got it’s’ and five mouthfuls of snow-covered gravel and newsprint later, George was able to push the ambulance out of the ditch. Before going in its way, the woman behind knocked on the window, offering a pile of money, to Nick that is.

Nick took the money, then sent the vehicle on its way. After pulling himself out of the muddy snow, George joined him. “We did a good thing there. But it’s time for us to get Mrs. Lazinski’s cat inside, do her walkway, and get to the other walkways and driveways here.”

“Not before this,” Nick said, handing George a quarter of the pile of money. “Which, if you count it is half of what I got paid.”

“You’re giving me half of it this time?” George noted, without bothering to count the greenbacks. “Why?”

“Because you’re family, for now...And, for now, we split the profits on this street. You taking the right side, me the left,” the reply, after which Nick trudged his way through the snow to Mr. Johnston’s snow blower, then pried open the large window, pulling it out. “I’ll get your cat in and you able to get out, Mrs. Lazinski,” he pledged to the old woman. Not three minutes later, he delivered on his promise, going to the door with an open cap which she overfilled with money. Nick then proceeded to the other houses, armed with a burrowed snow blower as well as a lovable smile.

George went on his way with a manual shovel to remove the thick covering of white powder and ice from walkways and driveways on his side of the street, then disappeared before anyone would appear at the door. Wondering if when Jesus said ‘the meek shall inherit the earth’ learning how to be a Good Christian, or a more enthusiastic workaholic masochist. And coming to the realization that being a ‘good’ person is was a last pick life methodology after you discovered that you were an ineffective asshole and horrible manipulator.

CHAPTER 3

The Tenth Grade marked for most students of Fort Wilson High School the opportunity to further the development of their reproductive organs, minds and, theoretically anyway, life plans to be effective adults. The latter was the agenda behind a new course in the curriculum, Pragmatic Life Business Skills, theoretically anyway. In practice, it was taught by Mister Linquist, whose overpaid for used cars were always at the repair shop, whose bank balance was chronically a negative figure and who never quite figured out that the stock market was a gambling institution where the house always wins, particularly when the player is an expert in self-sabotage. Nick Petrakis suspected all of this about Mister Linquist. He studied his teacher daily each day, accumulating in his ever calculating and constructing mind a psychological profile he'd use to get an easy A for the thesis he would have to submit to be admitted into the college placement Human Behavior class to be given the next year. But it was the anatomy and psychology of economics that fascinated Nick more than the inner workings of people who were the economy's operators and victims.

When looking at a field of abandoned wild grass and overgrown weeds, Nick saw the opportunity to build a park with green lawns that would bring in revenue for the developer as well as the town. When looking at hip, cool, clothing stores that were in the last stages of their going-out-of-business sale, he smelled a new future for the clothes he could buy for them today at rock bottom prices, with the idea of selling them for twenty times what he had paid for them once they became fashionable again to an always present demographic of status seeking dullards who felt transformed into feeling alive again by their new wardrobe. And when, like everyone else, realizing that the sandwiches in the school cafeteria and vending machines were made with stale bread and out-dated fillings, and observing that his fellow students learned better on full stomachs supplemented every two hours rather than only during lunch break, Nick came up with an official service that even Mister Linquist not only supported, but used as a model of 'give the people what they want and you'll have everything you'll ever need'.

"Great sandwich," Mr. Linquist said as he bit into the sandwich Nick had snuck out his backpack after start of class bell rang, and the Vice Principle in charge of seeing that EVERYONE followed the 'no eating outside of the cafeteria' rule, was well on the way to his office down the hall. "Egg salad. From where?"

"The Super Store down the street. On sale to seniors and anyone else before 11 AM. Double the price after high noon," Nick replied proudly. "But fresher than anything else because...well, I said it was for an educational event."

"Which it is!" Linquist said, reaching for his wallet as the rest of the students filtered into class. "How much do I owe you?" the forty year old adult asked the 16 year old adolescent.

"The chance to make this a more productive learning environment, and a happier place," Nick answered. "But to cover my expenses..."

“...You should get paid something,” Linquist replied, offering Nick two dollars, of which he gave back one. “Take it, please. You deserve it, and well, it’s my investment in the future. Please.”

Nick accepted the extra dollar which would make him a 100% profit for having snuck out to get the Egg Salad and other fixings. For many reasons. First, because if he didn’t he’d lose money, like his brother George did every time he tried his hand at business, and a business that loses money can’t do business. Second, Nick was taking a risk going to the grocery store doing something productive rather than lingering in study hall for an hour where most everyone, including the teacher supervising it, did nothing. And, Mr. Linquist was genuinely proud of him, and wanted to give him that extra dollar, and it would be an insult to him to not take it.

While Linquist wrote the lesson for the day on the board, then closed the curtains on the window to insure privacy, every one of Nick’s classmates took a sandwich from the backpack, putting a dollar, or two, or three into the collection pouch. The guys thanked him with thumbs up. The gals did so with a wink of the eye, the wiggling of their ass and/or a ‘yeah, I really like you and think I can love you’ smile which they met.

Mister Linquist cleared his throat, then pointed the well satiated and attentive class to the first line on the chalkboard, which he gave voice to with a well satisfied palate. “Popularity yields wealth, wealth yields popularity, and win-win is not only possible but inevitable if you give people what they want.”

Meanwhile, George was trying to figure out another unifying theory of the universe, beyond the scope of economics, and for that matter, anything that money could buy. “So, is love an illusion of the mind, which is itself an illusion of the brain, or is it the basis for all life, a necessity for rather than the outcome of advanced intelligence?,” he mumbled to himself while treating himself to a last glimpse of Socrates’ dialogs in Plato’s Republic while walking down the hallway to the still obligatory class in gym, the most dreaded class imaginable, particularly as the new teacher was an ex-Drill Sergeant who enjoyed making you sweat your brains out, and insisted that everyone ‘think as a unit’, except of course the top dog who won the games that were always about competing against the other guy and never yourself.

As usual, no one listened to George’s philosophical mumbling, or openly shared discourses, which George had gotten used to. But there was still one girl who he had not yet been laughed at by. She leaned against her locker, in the center of a mostly male crowd of the ‘bound for Harvard, Yale and Stanford and beyond’ kids. Renata was the hippest of the ‘philosophy’ girls, who maybe was smarter than everyone else because she had grown up in Amsterdam, Stockholm and Berlin. There were other girls who were a lot thinner and hotter than Renata, but her accent, the alluring way she put a dash through her sevens, and the occasional inversion of words intermingled into her sexy but not disgustingly slutty voice made her sound more exotic than the other female ‘future writers’ of America. All of the male and female American born social climbers in the AP

English and Literature class (who in reality read more cliff-notes than real books) quoted the hippest authors in Manhattan whenever they were asked to come up with an idea of their own. And they, with the usual exception of Renata, were even better at writing scathing critiques of fellow writers, most particularly colorful digs at George, than putting into print anything on their own. In any case, Renata was surrounded by a towering and selected committee of the coolest of the cool male 'intellectuals', who were most likely thinking with the tissue between their legs than the gray matter between their ears, her fluorescent green eyes looking at everyone around her except George.

How George yearned to be liked by her, or loved by her. Or even better, respected by the biological European 7 who somehow felt like a ten when you looked into her eyes, whose sexy but not slutty way of doing everything made you feel...culturally connected and cool. Respected for the mind that he was trying to develop, and the heart that always instructed it. Such resulted so often in coming up with ideas and ideals which were truthful rather than popular, maybe because they were misunderstood or maybe because he hadn't dived deep enough to formulate them well enough.

But discourse turned into disorder when Vinny Bellinese, a hard core right wing greaser whose Italian mobster father (or perhaps wannabe mobster father) taught him to 'cull da hoyd' of 'pervoyts, weakings and moronz'. "Hey, philosopher, Commie, fairy, time to teach yas ta not pollute America with this Commie, pinky, queer perverted literature," he said, flapping around a copy of George's most recent self published book, at his own expense, about 'The Science and Reality of Applied Global Humanity'. George had brought copies of it to the lunch room and placed on display. The contribution box for payment 'if it feels right and is affordable' having been empty for the third day in a row, "Here's America's answer to yer sayin' cut throat competition is barbaric, cruel and destructive," the greaser redneck doing a very authentic imitation of an all American Mafa mobster blasted into George's face. With that Vinny grabbed hold of the 'hippie queer' cowboy bandana around George's definitely non-gay neck, and started to belt him in the flank and face. It was completely unexpected as George's brother Nick somehow had created an environment where George didn't have to fight to get what he needed. It was more profitable socially and financially for potential enemies of George to leave him alone, as he was 'always living in his own world that doesn't disturb anyone else's anyway', so he had heard on several occasions from Nick, and others

The books George had been reading said that there were two primal responses to being attacked. Attack back with more deadly force, or run as fast as you can. Defend yourself like a bear, or flee like a horse. The third was shell shock, going catatonic and letting life happen to you. But somehow, George found himself in a fourth category response to the inevitable threat of human aggression. Activated by a reflex he never knew existed, George just kept walking towards the dreaded door to gym class, thinking of Plato and Socrates, reading the book in front of his eyes between punches to them, paying as much mind to the fists of the toughest goon in school as one would a mosquito with a gag on its mouth.

By the time George had reached the doors to the Gym, Vinny was gone. It was now tough guy Vinny who was running like a rabbit, down the now crowded hallway. Past girls who were laughing at him, and guys who made like they didn't know who he was. No one in the small gatherings of kids who collectively made a crowd seemed to notice or care about George. But one person did. It was girl with long, brown hair with bangs down to her big blue eyes, carrying a stack of books which rested on her enlarged breasts. "I guess you did a Ghandi on him," the girl who George didn't recognize commented, as a matter of truthful fact rather than praise, or adoration.

"Yeah, I suppose I did," George noted. Just as he was about to open the gym door with an arm that he just realized had been beaten nearly to a pulp, the new girl extended her hand out to him, appended with a genuinely warm smile.

"I'm Lorena. And you?"

"George," he replied.

"The guy who I heard sells sandwiches in class?" she said.

"His...longer haired twin brother," George added, running his fingers through his chin long locks. How he wanted to say more about how he and Nick were different, yet complimentary, and in the end, very connected, to this girl. This new girl in the school and maybe his life who seemed more like a woman, and one with a mind that was most probably a lot bigger than her breasts. A mind which he felt he would be worthy of connecting to once he became a man, according to the sperm-bearing humans around him who served the organ between their legs rather than the one between their so often closed ears anyway.

Besides, connecting with the mind of any woman was always more important to George than connecting with her body. Particularly for a 'man' who defined manhood as something between the ears rather than legs who so desperately was looking for a way to serve two contradictory mandates. The Teslian Revolutionary innovator in George required that he make a big impact in the world for the Cause of Good. The Hippocratic Socratic heare mandated that he 'above all, do no harm' to anyone. "Once I figure that out, Lorena will be mine, and I'll be hers, in a mutually agreed flexibly connected liberating modality that is," he postulated and pledged as she gave him a congratulatory smile for his 'doing a Ghandi', then walked away. With an ass she didn't have to wiggle to make irresistibly appealing.

CHAPTER 4

There were many things that made Nick Petrakis popular, for the right reasons, in the realm where competition often trumped cooperation as a virtue. His gift for the mathematics of economic income translated into sound, most particularly sound that was perceived by most around him as music. But as for what to sing, that was another matter. “Hey, I’m an interpreter, not a composer or a lyricist, Maestro George,” he said his even more longer haired brother, stroking the spiked crown of gelled hair on his head after having gotten a slick Punk haircut for the ‘last Dance before the Hall gets repossessed’ (aka, the Senior Prom) in the bedroom they still shared more or less equally on the second floor of their parent’s house. “Yeah, I got pipes that can sing real good, and fingers that know how to turn a simple chord progression on the guitar into something that makes egghead classical music geeks who don’t even know how to breed get a hard on, and, I’m told, make country music fans use their heads for something other than a hat rack. But you’re the one who can write the notes and the words that make my fellow humanoids feel really....Alive.”

“And makes me feel dead, or like I’m spreading deadly contagion of dull out disease every time I play or sing them,” George answered in painfully plain, clinical English, while proofreading his latest and still unpublished novel, being sure that its being rejected from the hip and cool publishers across the Hudson THIS time was NOT due to typos. Then having his stare held hostage by the mirror when he looked up. That reflection displayed his now shoulder length haired head, which was in constant search of the kind of love incubating in his heart for Lorena. It was a romance thus far in his mind, with moving picture images where he and Lorena could play any experimental game imaginable. From switching roles, to exchanging genders, to melding thoughts into something beyond, but perhaps even including, sexuality. But first, dull out disease had to be overcome. That death force which made George, who loved music, say to Nick, “If my fingers touch this guitar, it may result in notes but not music, and those notes will be infected with....lifelessness.”

“You never know until you try,” Nick replied, throwing the six-string lady who fit into his torso so easily into his brother’s lap. “Go ahead, play me something. And this time, let your body move with the music. It helps.”

With trembling arms, George pressed the tips of his clammy fingers on frets with his left hand. He then grasped the fret between his thumb and middle finger. Taking in a deep breath, and moving his body to the rhythm of Nick conducting, George braved the first chords of Beethoven’s Ninth, the choral music that when played with feeling convey the most liberating Energy imaginable for a species whose future depends on Visionary, bold and compassionate imagination.

“Now, what do you hear?” Doctor Nick asked dull out disease infected patient George.

“Notes, that are, lifeless, boring, simplistic, and...hoaky,” the reply, after which George put the guitar down as if it was a baby who he was about to crush to send the rest of the

way to the grave with his anti-Midas-touch fingers. “When I was trying to make something with edge, intelligence, depth intensity, warmth if possible, and if I’m really doing my job right, humor.”

“Then try it with this,” Nick suggested, handing George a microphone. “The human, or in your case, Martian-human voice which, as you wrote with words more poetic than I could ever come up with, is ‘most original, transcendent and metaphysically moving instrument born to mortals, immortals and any schlep who finds their way in between those two und extremes’”

George was surprised that Nick had quoted him so accurately. But more moved by the way his hip, cool, in-crowd brother had made those words come alive, and perhaps palatable to ‘less complicated’ souls who would imbibe them before knowing what they were eating. George tried again, pushing whatever words he could from his closed off throat to the stale air he felt he was creating, to the accompaniment of his latest formulated variation of Beethoven’s 9th, then retreated back into himself, putting down the guitar on the bed, hearing sterile quiet this time with his ears, not Silence.

“Okay, enough theory, now practice. With, say, something that you’re composing fresh, not what your Uncle Ludwig passed on to you, and is probably tired of repeating himself wherever he is,” Doctor Nick suggested to his patient.

“Hmmm...” George said. “If you give me an idea, or an ideal, to write about, maybe I can...” he grabbed hold of his notebook and pen, his most trusted friends, comrades and lovers. “Write you something.”

“Okay then,” Nick said. “What I really want, and need, is a love song. You do know what love it, theoretically anyway.”

“Yeah, I do,” George said, the image of Lorena’s eyes and the glow of her mind, and the allure of her flesh as a way into that mind echoing through his head like a multi-modality thunderbolt of hot and warm lightening. “More importantly, I feel it.”

A musical idea formulated in his head, the loud silence between his ears giving way to a flash of what felt like warmth and fire, both at the same time yet again. But he held it back. “Maybe I can play it on a keyboard,” he said to George. “Or better, write it down on paper. I KNOW you can read music.”

“Yeah, I can, if I want to,” Nick replied with a playfully cunning smile.

“For this one, you’ll have to,” passing on Nick’s invitation to join him in brotherly humor, as the music and lyrics poured out of his fingers with lightening speed onto the page. “Just one thing that I ask when you play this on stage at what the retro kids and their behind all the times parents still call the Prom.”

“Anything for you,” Nick pledged.

“The first author on it goes to, the Universal Soul,” George insisted.

“And the second to your imaginary friend Ludwig, who’s probably getting laid by ten groupies a night wherever he is?” Nick offered. “Musical heaven for those who denied themselves the happy pleasures in life they felt they had to deny themselves to make their Art work.”

George felt his lips curve into a smile cracking open on his tight cheeks, then heard a chuckle coming from the sides of his still closed mouth. But from the inside, he felt, for real, a song of songs coming out. A love song that would open the most closed minds, and melt the hardest hearts. Something that felt so powerful, and warm, that it should be entrusted only to Nick.

Tears of tenderness flowed down Nick’s cheeks as he read the lyrics and they flashed onto the paper, had fallen for a girl who he knew, and believed, he wanted and needed to spend the rest of his life with. “Yeah, this is my gift to you, and my new sister in law,” George felt, but didn’t give voice to. For reasons that felt right at the time, and appropriate.

“Thank you,” Nick said after being handed the entire composition, after which he hugged his brother with gratitude. For not only opening up his heart, but for not pressing to know who this very special girl, or perhaps boy, in Nick’s life was.

Some more time passed, a little by measurement of the calendar, a lot if measured by life altering experience and 180 degree turnarounds in perspective. Enough time for George to finally get up his GPA up to the requirements for a REAL college that would give him a shot at getting into Med School and Ph.D. research, perhaps in the biological sciences but hopefully in psychological humanistic investigations. He also finally figured out how the preparers of the SATs thought, which enabled him to obtain the correct answers rather than see the right ones that were not offered as choices on the multiple choice sheet. Such was possible by George making compromises. Not with his long hair but with what he did with what was under it. He vowed to concentrate on getting recognized by the system rather than trying to understand, or cure it, for a brief time anyway. And to hold off on making any moves towards turning his always given respect for Lorena into fully expressed love. He envisioned that period of enforced stoicism would be two or three years. It lasted two weeks, not by closing the door to opportunity but by having it opened for him. The sudden death of both Petrakis parents in a car crash a week before the Graduation Prom put an end to that vow had made, not due to sorrow, but due to a large inheritance he was to get upon graduation.

Nick was also in line to inherit the fortune that the insurance company paid out after the death of his overly paranoid father and ‘save everything for a rainy day, even if you dry up on the sunny ones’ mother. Aside from feeling sorrow for the loss of the two humans who raised him and, so he was told, loved him, life for Nick continued to be business as

usual. While growing up, Nick had kept his real romantic feelings and dreams about a perfect life mate private. But now there was no father at home to say ‘if you bring home a boy you like more than a buddy, or if I find you, or your brother, rummaging around in your mother’s closet again, I’ll kill you both!’”. And no conservative ‘what would people think?’ Greek-American mother who would put a knife into her own heart for raising a boy who wanted to become a girl. Yet Father John, who didn’t dispel the idea that the boys would go to hell for such transgressions, and others, did offer the brothers absolution if they asked Jesus for forgiveness, along with demonstrating their sincerity with a contribution to his Church’s “Greek Children and Orphans” fund.

As for that fund, Nick claimed that now that he and George were parentless, they were not only entitled to the entire pay out from the insurance company, but that he should be able to dip into the coffers of that elusive charity for himself. George, on the other hand, vowed to give two years of public service to humanity, some of it in Greece, after he became a Doctor who could take care of patients, a scientist who could halt the progress of a few diseases, and a writer whose word would bring his readers closer to God, and each other.

But, as Father John was a priest who Nick and George pitied more than feared, they did invite him to the prom where George’s new lyrics and music would be played on stage by Nick and his new band. The only provision was that the Good Father, from whom they never heard a laugh, pledged to NOT infer, say or relate in any way that ‘to be expressive artistically without restraint is one the most evil of all sins’ and ‘to look the Lord God in the eye and dare to talk with him directly is blasphemy.’ He didn’t show up.

As for those who did show up, it was everyone else. Mister Linquist, the economics teacher who, after being coached by his star student Nick, finally did get himself out of debt and was able to drive not only himself but many carless kids to the affair. Also present were Nick’s faithful sandwich buyers bought him and his band a new set of speakers with the money he had saved them over the last three years. In active attendance was also Vinny, the all American redneck greaser mafia-goon in training who had attacked George for being a commie, pinko, hippie fag, who had recently enlisted in the Army to become a chaplain and medic. Renata and the cool kids showed up fashionably late, clad in fashion name pre-ripped clothing which no one could, or was allowed to, take their eyes away from. And of course, there was Lorena, who came alone.

Nick’s band was a hit, not only for the audience, but for Renata’s uncle, who was rumored to have several businesses on both sides of the pond. All of them were connected one way or another to the recording industry, the other with some kind of Dutch, German, Polish run CIA she mentioned when drunk, but never talked about when sober. “Great music,” Uncle Wilhelm’ commented to George after the fourth composition was concluded with a wide smile, the fifth and final song in the medley underway. “Who is responsible for this?” the hipply dressed with overgrow sideburns international mogul, whispered to George with a stern, disapproving, threatening face that

seemed more actively anti-life than Father John, or the images of the constipated, finger waving, fun-hating saints on the murals behind him at Church.

“All of us!” George replied, with pride. “We’re all responsible for that music,” George replied. “And proud of it!”

“Yes, indeed,” Uncle Wilhelm said, the cracks in his tightly worn face breaking into a warm smile upon hearing the lyrics and notes George had written, transformed into poetry and song by Nick. “It seems to be written for someone special. Like Beethoven’s Immortal Beloved. Without whom, well, Ludwig would not have been able to write it.”

“Yes, indeed,” George noted, a wide smile overcoming his face. As he saw Nick turn away from the band, the crowd and the cameras which were going to make him famous. Nick’s eyes filled with love and yearning as their bearer pursued the adoring and emotionally moved crowd, finally ending on the face of the beloved that had made Nick’s ability to turn notes into music possible. And his inevitable success as a popular capitalistic business man richer than anyone in the Forbes magazines he had read cover to cover.

“I think we’re about to feel a proposal of marriage happening here,” Uncle Wilhelm said as the third verse merged into the fourth, the gently emerging finale about to blossom into magnificence of the soul and the heart.

“Yes, the kind that the world will have no choice but to recognize,” George noted, anticipating that his brother’s affections for Calvin Wilson were about to be made public to the world, finally. On a night when George, very soon afterwards, would end the ban on restraining the Philos, Eros and Agape, love of fellowship, body and spirit, he felt Lorena, which she no doubt felt for him as well. “A mating of souls that is both real and beyond definable reality, unbreakable and yet ever changing and evolving,” George observed coming out of his mouth, channeled through his heart as he feasted his eyes on a side view of Lorena. A young woman who was more fully transformed by the words and music he had written than anyone else in the room, where no doubt a double proposal would happen before the night was out, with well funded and attended reception. “A merging of souls into a third brain, soul and mind which----” George’s jaw dropped, his voice silenced by what his disbelieving eyes were forced to behold.

“Those two will share forever,” Uncle Wilhelm said to George, as he also beheld Lorena ‘the library gal’ transformed into a young woman liberated from her black rimmed glasses and all ‘proper’ Father John-sanctioned inhibitions on bended knee, as NICK proposed the question of questions to her.

“Will you?” Nick asked, taking a ring out of his pocket, gently offering to put it on her finger. “Will you please say...”

“Yes” emerged from the girls who vicariously yearned to be Lorena for that magical moment. Another chorus of “yes” came from the cool kids, and their baby sitter and

muse, Renata, in harmony with Mr, Linquest. From the flute section, a high voiced Uncle Wilhelm added his 'yes' vote to the proposition at hand. But it had to be unanimous. Lorena turned her head to George, saying with her glassy, overjoyed tearful eyes, 'is this alright with you, because it feels right for me and your brother'.

George pondered the matter for a few discrete moments that felt like years, his heart in conflict with his head, his lofty ideals about love being liberating rather than possessive finally being put to the acid test, his belief in goodness clashing head on with his yearning for happiness. Finally, out of nobility, necessity or weakness, or maybe all of such, George nodded yes, delivering that message with his eyes to Lorena, then with his voice to the crowd.

Lorena then turned to Nick, who had never even bothered to notice George, and said 'yes' with her voice, then with a kiss. Then soon afterwards with an encore performance of the lyrics and music written by George, given new life by Nick, his band, and their new member, the liberated Library Girl.

George gave Lorena and Nick a thumbs up from the back of the crowd with as wide a heartbroken smile as he could muster, then slipped out into the men's room, faining having to take a leak. But such was not what was the first split between the Petrakis brothers who shared womb, room and common genetics. It was...

CHAPTER 5

“Ideas and ideals, or more accurately, ideology,” Prisoner Petrakis said the confused and confounded Priest in front of him.

“I...I didn’t know any of this!” Father John asserted. “But if I did...”

“—Neither you, nor God, nor even the silent partners in your ‘Greek Orphans and Children’s’ fund could have done anything about it. Because what happened to and for the Petrakis brothers was determined by Fate.”

“Brothers who you talk about in the third person, because---“

“---I’m not who I used to be, and you aren’t either, Pappa Johnny” the condemned prisoner said, after which he broke out into mad laughter that scared the white haired priest more than the devil, the IRS and the Italo-Russo-Greek Mafia he had been enlisted in which didn’t accept resignations from anyone. “And as for the Petrakis brothers, the big difference between them was one dedicated himself to giving the people what they wanted, the other what they needed. And you, who they intentionally lost contact with, delivered neither one to anyone.”

The Priest felt the nail that was intended for Jesus’ heart on the cross go through every portion of his being. Yes, he was a carrier of the Devil’s most powerful tool....dull out disease. A contagion that he indeed had carried to every parishioner he tried to save. And now was echoing in intensity, drawing him into a more lifeless grave than he ever imagined, while of course still breathing in good air and putting out stagnant vapors. Gazing at and feeling the blackness of his trousers, shirt and shoes, he considered what the prisoner was telling him, preparing himself for the next step in the story which he was highly instrumental in making possible, for better or worse.

CHAPTER 6

“So, why is your brother, who’s religious about his atheism, getting married in a Greek Orthodox Church in that macho regulation flattop haircut, with the king of drabness and formality doing the officiating?” Calvin Wilson, Nick’s still in the closet, now ex, lover, whispered to his best man, as they both stood shoulder to shoulder in the wedding party pew while Father John droned on in a tone that required everyone in the congregation to have to take an energy drink, cup of coffee or extra hit of cocaine to stay awake.

“He made a promise,” the painfully comprehensive reply from George, as he felt the pinch of the rented tuxedo strangling his shoulders, thighs and crotch.

“A promise to Lorena’s family? Who’s Catholic!?” Calvin spat back in an angry hush. “All the Catholics I know would rather have their balls and breasts torn off than desecrate their faith by even walking into a Greek Orthodox Church.”

“It was a promise Nick made to my mother, Cal,” George pointed out, yet again.

“Like never even thinking about exploring the way a man can love another man, in ways that a straight couple could never understand, or feel?” Cal wiped off the first stream of tears falling down his grief-stricken cheeks. He then took in a deep breath, no doubt a prelude to ‘sucking up’ his sorrow like George did when he found out about the accident that left him an orphan. “Who did Nick make a promise to that he betrayed me to keep?”

“Our mother,” George replied, in a half truth he tried to convert into full one.

“Whose main concern was always ‘what would people think?’ instead of what they really did, or didn’t do. What about love?”

“Something that as far as I know, Lorena feels for him, and Nick feels for her,” George replied, not sure if he was lying, but regretting that he wasn’t.

“And which you, being Nick’s brother, you can feel for me?” Calvin asked with a voice reeking of vulnerability. Sneaking his way closer, Calvin laid his shaking, sweaty and hot palm on George’s thigh, seeking and needing an answer.

After carefully choosing his words, George said “I’m not that kind of ‘alternative’ person.”

But Calvin kept his hand on George’s leg. Hoping to comfort him in his second heartbreak, and inevitable suicide after the ceremony, George put his firm palm over Calvin’s wrist. Naively, and desperately, George hoped that his offering of Phillos, Comradhood irrespective of gender, would not be confused with Eros, love of and with the body one had. But even if it were, George began incubating several stories in his head as for why a romance between his twin brother’s ex lover and himself would not work out. All seemed sellable, then believable, as George contemplated what he would

do with his life after he toasted his newly married brother and new sister in law at the reception. What horse he would ride alone into the sunset, and where he would ride to before having done anything worthy of being written down in any dime novel or immortalized a campfire cowboy song?

As for Nick, he knew exactly where he was going, and had planned his steps to get there as a 'real man' in the image of his once ridiculed as well as pitied, but now emulated father. The first was to be sure he sexually satisfied his new bride, in ways that he hadn't done before the nuptials. Lorena's natural beauty helped. From her long brown hair that flowed downward like a windblown waterfall into the small of her back, to her oversized blue eyes which now bore contact lenses rather than big, black rim glasses to her size perfect, tailor shaped, hour-glass figure that fit so well within him when spooning, to her slender fingers which now were embellished with fingernail polish rather than ink from freshly-written spec newspaper articles on her bargain basement printer written for unappreciative editors.

The second was to give Lorena and the next generation of Petrakis' the best medical care possible, with a top rate insurance package, so that top rate priority would be given to a paper-cut on her thumb of any of his valuable and valued family members over any scalp or face laceration on anyone else who was not smart, wise or long planning enough. The insurance policy did include George as well, Nick's idealistic 'whatever happens to me is destined to happen anyway' socialist brother. An undeserving sibling who had 'invested' his inheritance into producing his most unmarketable 'intelligence-driven-and-applied-compassion is all you need' scripts as art films, charities to feed the homeless, and tuition to obtain a medical-media degree which would be used to 'cure the world of its physical and metaphysical pathologies'. Nick kept his brother's name on the premium supreme medical policy despite numerous requests and demands George made to have it taken off.

The third thing Nick did to assert his all American manhood, and bury everything else that could interfere with its full expression, was to buy his way into the Free Market Capitalist system that he so admired, and sought to be a top member in. Not so much because it made him feel accomplished to do so, but because by rising to the top of the totem pole, Nick could help the deluded socialist idealists on the bottom who kept sinking into the muck because they didn't have the balls, brains or moral fiber to figure out how to better themselves. Towards this end, Nick applied his instinctive ability to predict the market, which at times did incorporate standard calculus invented by broke mathematicians from the past. Success in his early investments was something he was grateful for, then proud of. It led to him buying controlling shares in the medical insurance company who kept his family safe, the majority of stock in the newspaper Lorena wrote for and a fledgling distribution company that he 'assertively persuaded' to acquire some on his brother's films and books with the provision that they try to 'guide' George's writing to something 'less international, less socialist and less poetically idealistic'.

Conversations between George and Nick progressively became arguments, be they over the phone or in person. They seemed to never be about what they were really angry

about. But the last conversation, at the baptism of Nick's first child, who was dubbed Yannis, a name he hated, after his departed father, who he also hated more than loved, got the guts of the matter out, ideologically anyway.

"You know what your problem is, George?" Nick challenged his brother, who, by tradition and expected social norms, was Yannis' godfather during a smoke break outside the Church back door, a location where they both would sneak out and gorge themselves on the communion bread, boxed cereals and a glass or two of sacrificial wine after ducking out of Sunday School lectures upstairs. "You still don't realize that to make it in the world, or even be listened to in it, you have to give the people what they want, not what you THINK they need."

"But if you see them drowning, you have to offer them a lifeboat, not more water," George pointed out.

"A line from a movie you wrote that never will sell because, 'Philosopher King Doctor George', it's only YOU who seems to think they are drowning, when they're actually dancing in a sea of mindless, effortless happiness," Nick replied through breaths filled with smoke made even more foggy by the briskness of the early winter afternoon. "A movie that very few people saw, but certain investors you don't know about, and will never be told about, funded. And lost money on."

"If you don't spend your money trying to save the world, and to fund those who are committed to saving it, what is the money for?" George challenged. "I'm great at doing the work, you're great at making the money. And..." he continued, pointing to the crucifix atop the Church dome. "...Didn't Jesus say that each should give according to his or her abilities and take according to his or her needs?"

"That was Vladimir Lenin and Karl Marx," Nick pointed out. "Not John or Groucho."

"And what do you really know about John Lenin?" George challenged.

"That his popularity was largely manufactured, at least in the beginning," the mercilessly-truthful reply regarding the social activist Beatle George thought should be sainted as well as knighted. "Thanks to Brian Epstein who paid 50 screaming adoring crazy teen-aged girls to infiltrate the crowd and yell out 'John! We love you!'"

"Which, maybe you did in the crowds your band played to in the early days, which kept you popular enough to get played on the radio, then rise up the ranks as a record producer who—"

"---Can still play music!" Nick blasted into his brother's face. "Any time I want to. Real music laced with..."

“----Nothing original in it, and, according to people I know in the Real avante guard, no life in it either,” George pointed out. “But it’s not your fault you’re afflicted with dull out disease.”

“A made up condition that---“

“You see every time you look into a mirror during piss breaks at those very important board meetings you head up,” George fired into Nick’s face with a benevolently pointed finger. “And which I fight every time I face the empty page,” he continued, staring into himself. “And which Groucho probably does, or did, as well. And which, when I talked to Lorena about how she’s really doing after three ‘how are ya’s’ that she answers ‘fine’ to...”

The conversation ended when George looked up towards Nick, seeming that he was gone. Replying with a clenched fist, appended by an upturned third digit.

Ten more years, and as many non-visits between the Petrakis brothers at Christmas later, Nick found himself with a family of three children to take care of, and the Mission to take care of hundreds of other families whose husbands, wives, sons and/or daughters worked for the five companies he now controlled. But as for the lives he felt most directly responsible for, Yannis, being the first born, named after his departed Grandfather, and NOT the priest who baptized him, was a spitting image of Nick when he was growing up.

Yannis learned how to talk in half the time the charts for ‘normal’ kids showed, with the diction and rhythm of his father, often completing Nick’s sentences and saying with every glance into his father’s ocular portholes, ‘you are the smartest, wisest and most needed man I will ever know, and I want to grow up to not only be like you, but better than you because we’re a team.’ Athena had the face of a goddess, with legs that danced from one room to another rather than merely walked. Once in those rooms, she stole whatever social show was doing on, often by changing that show to something she liked better, and which, after taking it into consideration, everyone else did too. Athena was a natural provider of ‘fun’, thus creating the most effective environment to do any business. Ilias was a work horse, having outgrown his brother nearly two fold at every stage of life with a body that was destined to be the most athletic, as well as handsome, in whatever endeavor he did. There wasn’t any sport he didn’t have a natural proclivity to try, as well as a natural desire to be the best at.

But Nick knew, and conveyed to his children as early as they could determine the difference between a penny, nickel, dime and quarter, that one of their God-assigned mandates was to make money, the ‘root of all evil’ that was necessary to fund anything Good. And to make as many people under and around them as happy as possible. And to provide them with secure, stress-less lives.

George's situation was...a bit different. His primary inability to keep a lover, find a wife, or maintain a family, was his aversion to, and lack of ability to experience fun, or what others around him called happiness. His ability to grasp information and turn them into ideas, ideals and innovations made him the youngest graduate in the Metro area (on the West side of the Hudson anyway) to hold a Ph.D. in physiology, a Master's in Fine Arts, an MD and the one he gave himself, H.B.A.R.P, Human being aspiring Renaissance person. But for all of his research papers that found their way into the journals, and a few other misfit Martian students who he picked up along the way while providing them with Insights they didn't bargain for when they signed up for his 'Multi-Modality, Multi-Discipline, Multi-Perspective' courses that tried to bridge the ever widening gap between the Arts and Science, he always over-emphasized the HBARP, Most particularly in 'influential' company that kept him out of the various literary and scientific loops the more innovative he got. But, as Groucho said, and George, on a good day anyway, believed, 'I would not want to be a part of any club that would have me as a member'. There was one place where that joke was not only appreciated, but lived with pride, defiance and Bliss. And where admission to the temple where assertive Promethian negotiations with the Fates was not only encouraged but required, starting with one question.

"How did you cast vote against cutthroat competition out in the real world today?" George asked Deanna Jackson-Cortez, the latest graduate student who asked questions in his courses that went well beyond 'do we have to know this for the exam?' as she entered the archway of his university laboratory bearing pictures of Einstein, Telsa, Groucho AND Karl Marx besides it. "And what did you do to promote the Cause of Enlightenment of the common man, woman and anyone in between?"

Deanna pulled out two drawings dated that morning, one portraying satirizing the most recent 'greed is great' candidate for President portraying every aspect of his handsome features as ugly, the other rendition of a pristine rain forest reeking with beauty that jumped out of the page at you done in pain-staking detail with a hastily-scribbled drab sign in front jammed onto it reading 'Soon to be closed for business, pleasure and passion.'

"Great Work, large W. Exceptional both between the ears and awakening to all chakra levels in the spine. On which we WILL locate and channel the energy from to promote health for everyone, irrespective of how much money or knowledge about chakras they have," George said to Deanna as he posted the paintings on the wall next to the most recent literary and scientific articles his other still-idealistic grad students had done. "Worthy of yet another 'Lorena'," he continued, handing her a chocolate bar fashioned in the likeness of a woman, inviting her to enter the lab, a facility where half of the space was cluttered with overused every piece of bargain basement and surplus assess biomedical equipment to find cures for deadly and debilitating diseases of the flesh, the other half a make shift with a recording studio, video production set and painting/sculpting cave.

Deanna put down her backpack, then smelled the chocolate bar fashioned as an Oscar, caught by the likeness of a smiling yet tired woman's head at its cranial pole. "Why do you call these things Lorena's?"

"First, you tell me what you've discovered today about science, medicine, biology, art, life, politics, human psychology, spirituality or yourself," George said.

Deanna pulled out the pocket notepad all of 'Comrade not Doctor George's' special students were required to have with them, and fill up every day. "The required quota of six of them," she said with confidence in herself and humility. "And a seventh new idea about...you?" she advanced.

"Ah, more analysis of what makes my head tick, and hmmm..." George hesitated when reading that self analysis.

"You call these 'awards' you give us Lorena's because this goddess is someone who either got away, or who abdicated her throne on Mount Olympus as the protector of the idealistic workaholic masochists who still believe in the goodness of the gods?" Deanna advanced.

"Something like that, I suppose," George admitted, and verified. He was forced into diving into himself deeper than he anticipated when getting up that morning, after having dreamt about the now 'settled in with children and respectable society' Lorena. During most of his 'awake' time George was plagued by the 'what could have beens' that he couldn't remember when he woke up, no matter how hard he tried to maintain his dream journal. "Yeah, but...we have to move on, fellow 1848er," Comrade George, who himself could still come up with at least three new Truth and humanity serving ideas every half hour while lecturing, said proudly to the latest student who he was sure would become someone who could come up with twice as many once he maneuvered her through the thesis approval committee.

"I know," Deanna replied. She confidently strolled to her assigned bench in the lab, preparing to test her, and George's, combined most recent hypothesis about why cancer cells misbehaved, with a plan to whip the tumors implanted into the rats into obedience ASAP. "But there's one thing I never could figure out about the 1848 people's revolutions that sweep across Europe," she stated having arrived at her station.

"That few people in Europe know about, and almost no one in America does," George interjected. He pulled the most recently cocktail of interleukins from the refrigerator shelves to be injected into the skin tumors on the still healthy rats so that the immune systems would obliterate the implanted cancerous lumps and leave the rodents to live long, and live as happy as possible. Lives with the limited vision, living space requirements and the ability to, according to George's best assessments anyway, experience heavenly Bliss eating as many food pellets as they wanted, sleeping off the meal in a pile of warm wood chips and on occasion copulating with a member of the opposite gender. "But what's really not known about the 1848 revolutions is---"

“---Why the Professor’s Revolutions, as they were called, anyway, were able to work with and not against the people to overthrow the Kings and Capitalists, and why the Professors and their Proletariat Comrades weren’t able to maintain governments that could keep the Kings and Capitalists from kicking their asses out of Parliament and into exile only six months after the Enlightened, who were more interested in wisdom and compassion than power, took power?” Deanna proposed.

“I think you just answered your own question, and mine,” George realized and gave voice to. He was about to call her Lorena, but halted when his gaze was caught by Deanna’s still young face. One that, yes, was of legal age, but which had not acquired the early worry lines that George had in his nearly thirty year old mug which he now hid under a beard, as in its raw form it seemed like it belonged to a forty year old. But there was something else that stopped George from deepening and expanding this very special relationship between defiant teacher and open-souled student. He recalled that Tesla, who gave humanity what it needed rather than what the screaming and easily manipulated masses wanted, yearned for a romantic connection with a woman in the manner of a common man. But he decided to hold back on such because he knew that his lover, mistress and wife would always be his Work. As was the case with Michelangelo and Beethoven. Still, he yearned to be a happy family man like ‘give the people what they want and take whatever profits you can grab’ Edison. Or JS Bach, who must have had a patient or low maintenance wife who allowed him the time, and space, to write more than any composer who ever lived, while at the same time taking care of the multitude of children she gave, and took care of, for him. Or, as George found himself giving in to the one of the lowest forms of mental disruption and moral defect, envy, his brother Nick, who was living the ‘effortless success is the best kind’ of life because he was clever rather than smart, manipulative rather than wise, and....lucky. Lucky to have be with Lorena as his own...for now that is. George, who had out produced any of his literary and scientific colleagues with hard work, at least on the ‘non hip, second rate’ West side of the Hudson River, and, truth be told, most of his ‘I’m well accomplished because I’m living in an accomplished place with other accomplished people’ Manhattanite arts and scientists, found himself caught in a vortex of ‘would haves and could haves’, lamenting his not being able to have Lorena by his side, and the comfortable non-revolutionary life his once and probably still beloved had surrendered to. He heard a voice offering him a lifeboat as he sank deeper and deeper, addressing him by many names, then finally as...

“George?” George finally identified as coming from Deanna, her firm yet gentle hand resting on his shaking shoulder. “Are you alright?”

Pulled back to reality, such as what it was, averted his eyes till he could find the right words, and subtext to reply. Finally, both materialized, after realizing that giving Deanna the independence to grow into being who she was supposed to be was a more special gift than to offer, and smother, her with his love. “We will be, alright, or better,” he said with a ‘dedicated’ smile to Deanna, purposely not addressing her by name. He then turned to the matter at paw for the moment which blinded him to Deanna’s real needs and wants,

for the moment anyway. “As will be these rodent Comrades of ours, assuming that whatever or whoever is in charge of the universe will allow us to cure its creation with our newest elixir. Allowing another Vision to materialize here on earth because two mortals, working with a third brain between them, defiantly refused to accept their socially and biologically imposed limitations,” he said looking at the tumor bearing rats. “Deal?” he asked, looking up to the sky. The answer felt like ‘you have my blessing, and I hope it’s enough.” Such was enough to continue with the experiment, and the others to follow.

CHAPTER 7

Nick came home from a long, hard day of manipulating egos, maneuvering agendas and translating such into more growth and security for his various companies to even better news. “Something I got in school today,” the youngest of the boys who would carry the Petrakis name into posterity said as seven year Ilias Petrakis sheepishly walked up to his father, presenting him with a ribbon and silver medallion for winning second place in the city wide pre-school ‘Young Olympians’ competition. “But next time, I’ll be sure to get the gold, any way I can. I promise!” the lad pledged his disappointed father.

“I’m sure you will, Ilias!” Nick assured his son. “And we’ll get you a better coach next time,” he pledged, conveying confidence into the lad with a firm hand on the boy’s shriveled up shoulder. “Because as we both know...”

“...’You’re number one or number nothing’”, a young Ilias said in unison with rapidly aging Nick, the former realizing that until you’ve had your first failure, you can never develop a strategy to get your first in a long series of successes.

“And my report card,” six year old Athena said, presenting her report card to her father with a shaking hand. “I did the best I could, but, maybe I am too young to be in the third grade. “The teacher gave me Bs and a...C in social studies,” she continued with shameful tears going down her eyes.

“A dumb teacher who should and will go back to school herself,” Nick said, while contemplating the ‘talk’ he would have with the newest member of the faculty at the private Catholic pre-prep school he personally bailed out of bankruptcy. “But, Athena, you are going to meet stupid people, mostly liberals, who will mark you down for being true to your political and moral convictions because they’re different than theirs.”

“So, what am I going to do for the next exam? Which Ms. Gonzales says I’ll fail if I answer the questions wrong again?” Athena asked Nick. “Should I tell her what she wants to hear, till I get what I want from her, like you do when you’re getting better and smarter?”

“No, not this time,” Nick said, after finalizing what to do with and about ‘Ms’ Gonzales, who maybe was one of those undocumented scholars who could be deported, or if not, a lesbian who had one too many pictures taken of her in public that could be presented to the homophobic Headmaster. “It’s time you stood up for our, and YOUR, convictions,” Nick finally advised Athena. He noted the disheveled mop on her head. “But in the meantime, go brush that beautiful long hair and put on something pretty. We want to look out best for some very influential dinner guests coming tonight, because---“

“‘What would people think?’” Athena joined Nick in saying, and believing.

Lorena was the next to bring news from the home-front to the bread winner who made their 3 million dollar mansion possible. She presented him with an opened envelope.

“And this, about Yannis,” she said with a face reeking with concern in ways Nick had not seen in a long time, or perhaps hadn’t noticed.

“Yannis, who is---?” Nick replied, taking the wrinkled paper out of the sweat-soaked envelope, noting that his son’s \$700 leather jacket was absent from the coat rack.

“---At his friend Theo’s house, for the night, until we figure out how to deal with---“

Nick’s consternation about the unapproved whereabouts of his prize son, the one who the world was giving awards to more than any of his other offspring, who he would show off to the politicians and execs that night, for Yannis’ good, as well as his own, turned into horror when he read the content of the envelope.

“Cancer. This new epidemic, that hits everybody, which is on its way to being bigger than AIDS ever was, according to what I was told and what the docs are keeping secret. That no one has a cure for yet,” Lorena related, holding back her grief, tears and hopes.

“Because the lazy idiots at the pharmaceutical company I overpay aren’t doing their fucking job!” Nick blasted out as he read the medicaleze, then the plain jane diagnosis at the end, reading ‘guarded’ for the diagnosis.

“But it’s at an ‘early to mid’ stage, so this new Doctor said. And he knows of a lab that’s getting some positive results in four patients anyway. It’s in medicaleze, but I believe what’s in it...” She presented Nick with a shiny covered research publication with impressive font.

“Or you maybe want to believe in the delusionary idiot whose name is on the byline here,” Nick grumbled, noting his brother’s name as the last author. “Who put his name on last instead of first.”

“The Doctor said it was custom for the senior investigator to put his name on last,” Lorena reminded Nick as a constellation of emotions he could not identify battled to take over his shattered mind and tormented soul. “And that he could get Yannis in on a clinical trial. It’s the only legal and, so the Doctor said, moral medical option.”

“Yeah, and Comrade Doctor George will put Yannis into a clinical trial, where he could get a placebo or the real ‘wonder drug’, at random, just like everyone else because his nephew, and godson, is ‘just as important as any stranger in need and medical need trumps family or social privilege, like his argument that everyone should go to public school to get an equal shot at the best education possible,” Nick grunted back, after which he blasted the rest of his volcanic fire at and into Lorena. “Where would YOU be if I didn’t make that contribution to Hudson University so could get into that creative writing and journalism program you wanted into, and your children could get into a pre-school that graduates smart kids so they can go into Kindergarten with a competitive edge against the rug-rats the beer drinking slobs call their ‘peers’?”

“Maybe me, and the kids would have gotten a better appreciation of who those rug-rats really were, and what they could teach us,” Lorena related, and confessed, her head bowed in both regret and shame.

That head was slapped back into an upright position by the back of Nick’s hand. “It’s a might is right world, Lorena,” before she had a chance to collect her thoughts, get in touch with ‘her feelings’ and pound her now-clenched fist into his face. He embraced her in a warm, loving embrace which she seemed to accept as such. “That and a whole lot more is what our socialist ‘globally conscious comrades’ on their way up to positions of power and influence will do to us if they get the chance. Egotistical, and privileged, spoiled political brats like the latest darling of the liberals presidential hopeful Emilia Cervantes-Cortez, who doesn’t even know how to be president of brown rice, tofu and yoga music festival, and that old fart, 78 year old, stuck in the 60s lunatic Socialist guru Bern Sandovski, and---“

“---George?” Lorena interjected, her emotions working with rather than against her self-tortured soul, having been in one too many one-sided heated political debates about ‘lefties’, ‘greenies’, ‘idealistic eggheads’, ‘cowardly elitists’, ‘pacifists who let others do their fighting’ and ‘overfunded welfare bums’. Rants in which Nick never mentioned his brother’s name. “George, your brother, who you shared a uterus with for 9 months,” she reminded him. “Who you were once close to in all the ways that really matter.”

“Like you maybe are now?” George demanded of Lorena, staring straight into her yet-again all seeing eyes. “I hope not,” he continued, turning his head, feeling vulnerable in ways he dared not show Lorena, or for that matter anyone else, in a world where showing any sign of weakness would result in your destruction. “Who, maybe you always...” Nick held his tongue, giving thought to things he should have noticed more in the past. Like the way Lorena, before the official break-up of the Petrakis brothers, looked to George for a final approval of questions ranging from ‘should we have chicken instead of stew for dinner?’ to what Plato really meant by when he said that music should empower rather than weaken the unassuming listener. Had Lorena always been more connected to George’s idealistic, and meek, mind than she was connected to Nick’s own soul and, to be accurate, still male-more-than-female loving body which he secretly wished had two large breasts than an oversized penis?

Putting practicality into practice, George looked at the medical report for Yannis again. In his painful mind’s eye he saw the image of his handsome, so far functionally healthy son, in a hospital bed, looking like a starved, bald Holocaust victim courtesy of chemotherapy, radiation treatments and death-promoting naturally occurring chemicals cancer cells produced on their own. Or worse, in a casket looking up to his father asked ‘why didn’t you save me?’

But there were now deep ideological differences between George which blocked the possible route to Yannis living past his 12th birthday. Those differences had become wider with each summer solstice. The political candidates Nick supported were the first ones George threw political commentary darts at on his radio show, and the featured

buffoons in his novels and indy films, strategists claiming afterwards that it was George's 'beyond political' artistic activities that swayed the critical 5% of the population that made Nick's free market capitalists champions lose. In matters of hard core biology, which affected and afflicted humans on the right, left and center of the political spectrum equally, George had beaten the biomedical investigators in Nick's three presumably 'competing' pharmaceutical companies to press with articles that redefined how basic biology worked, providing generic, often naturally occurring, sometimes completely curative treatments that were accessible to everyone without having to file for a patent. And in the ever-present court case of 'the people vs. corporate America', George was candid, and honest, with the press regarding what Nick did, and didn't do as a kid before becoming the most influential and rich young adult in American history. George pointed out flaws in his rich brother's construct of collective human psychology, and Nick's inability to appreciate how 'the unseen goodness' in all things can permeate and work within the all too easily visualized 'bad stuff'. But even when pressed to give an answer that would dethrone Nick, and raise himself up to top dawg Philosopher King of the Arts and Sciences, George didn't reveal anything about Nick's real sexual inclinations, or about his relationship with Lorena, thank God, or whoever still had close to a majority stockholders' vote in how the universe was run.

It was the latter than made Nick consider something that would be a win-win situation for everyone, theoretically anyway. "Maybe," he said to Lorena after careful consideration, having played the chess games in his head several times, which ended up with him checkmating his opponents each time. "You can go visit George, check out how effective this new cancer treatment is that he thinks he has, and find out---"

"---What he's planning to do to you and your buds?" Lorena interjected, with an agenda that maybe was what Nick implanted into her head, but most certainly something that could be turned around to match his win-win plan.

"You mean what he can do to US," Nick said, picking up the most recent photograph of him, Lorena and the kids taken during the ski trip to Aspen. "Or for us," he continued, pointing to ace-in-the-making skier Yannis, who was now in danger of losing both of his left leg as well as the ability to use any remaining appendages if his advancing cancer was not nipped in the butt. "And be as open with him as you need, or want to be," he added, after he removed the wedding ring from her left fourth digit, inserting it onto the finger next to it.

"Sure," Lorena replied with downturned eyes, and a distancing but still caring heart. One that, Nick speculated, could make him less appealing to her in bed, not so much because he had less hair on his legs, chest and arms but because, after having spawned the required number of children to maintain the family fortune and name, it was time for both of them to stop mistaking self-forced romantic affections for naturally occurring love.

CHAPTER 8

“So, you’re seeking admission to the Ph.D., M.D. AND my H.B.A.R.P. program?” George said as he leaned back on his second hand, surplus asset chair in the five by six foot, windowless converted janitor’s closet which he choose as his new office having been promoted to Head of the Physiology Department which now offered courses in creative as well as scientific writing, and visual arts as well as studies in advanced ophthalmology. “You seem a bit old to be seeking a program like this one,” he asked the candidate sitting in the chair opposite his desk in the dimly lit room.

“Age and time are measured in varying experience that test the survival and perspective of the soul, not by the hands of the clock,” Lorena replied with warm, inviting yet playful smile.

“Quoting the person you want something from is the oldest trick in the book,” the now fully and prematurely-gray bearded Professor shot back. “But it works,” George then admitted, feeling the outer edges of his own lips crack a face that had not experienced warmth or laughter in at least a week as he recognized his own lines coming out of Lorena’s mouth. Lines written in ‘Beyond Revolutionary Blueprints and Blues’ a manuscript he gave to Lorena back in High School with the idea making it a collaborative novel, and film, or opera, with her as the star of the latter. Overcome with emotions he could not identify, George self-observed his stare behind held captive by Lorena’s face, and eyes.

“What are you staring at?” replied the woman whose long, naturally ruled hair was now neatly cut in a symmetrical sexy that seemed slutty shoulder length bob, whose ratty oversized bell bottoms were replaced with fashion boot cut tight jeans that highlighted every feminine feature from her waist down, and whose signature black rimmed glasses had been forfeited for contact lens that made her blue eyes seem somehow fluorescently alluring. “Aside from a make-over that’s 80 % your perception and maybe 1% reality?”

It was a line that George wished he had written himself, but which he heard in his mind five seconds before Lorena voiced it. Or so it seemed, as he felt the third brain between them sitting on his weather-beaten imitation oak desk saying ‘yeah, she’s back! And tis time don’t play safe like you did last time, you coward and idiot!’ But there was one thing that George had to ask before pursuing this unexpected gift from the angels, or temptation from the demons, further. “I read some of your articles in the newspaper you wrote for,” George said, pulling out a stack from his most private drawer. “The ones that you wrote when you first were married. They’re a lot more philosophically responsible than the ones that bear your name now. As for your recent journalistic works, when they’re not passively supporting capitalistic competition based, nationalistic greed, and selective over universal compassion, they say nothing at all.” He looked up into Lorena, her heavily made up face which now reeked of ‘Soccer Mom’ rather than ‘Artistic Mama’. “I thought you were a liberal, globalist, democratic socialist who valued expansively –creative compassion and cooperation over competition, Lorena.” George lamented.

“Well, I hate to disappoint, but neither Nick nor you ever knew what I really believed, thought or...” Lorena said, a lump in her throat. “Or...felt,” she continued, having forced the words from her mouth, but unable to hold back the tears streaming down her face.

Still starved of love, an emotion he studied neuro-chemically and described so well in print, George, who avoided hugs whenever possible, pushed himself up onto his two prematurely arthritic feet, advancing slowly and respectfully to Lorena. She halted his advance with an outstretched left hand, her right wiping the tears off her face, revealing a black and blue mark on a swollen left cheekbone.

“I just wanted to maybe work in your lab, so I could...be a part of something important,” she said. “Someone that matters to ME!”

“You mean SOMETHING that matters to you?” George advanced, gently, self observing his feet planted firmly on the floor and not pulling back.

“Yeah, that too,” Lorena admitted. “Your cure for this new kind of cancer, that’s spreading like wild fire, everywhere now.”

“That, according to the suits on top, and the company your husband owns, can be treated with a very expensive drug, that only the rich can afford, a drug which, I and fellow HBARP scientists have proven...don’t work,” George reached into his other most secret drawer and pulled out a stack of articles, most of which were labeled ‘rejected for publication’ “All of it real, and not, one data point faked, adjusted or omitted, like my competitors, who I’d really like to COOPERATE with instead of compete against, claim.”

Lorena looked over the data. By her shocked eyes, she seemed to believe it. A transformation seemed to be taking place in her.

“But, making money researching drugs that don’t work does create jobs,” George said. “For companies who make a ton of money, and hire lots of people of course, to push drugs that make life ‘less uncomfortable’ for diseases that are more of an inconvenience than anything else. Like being able have skin that looks prettier and younger. Get an erection on command. Keep blood pressure within such a narrow range of ‘stress-less’ acceptable low values , ignoring the fact that blood pressure is supposed to go up above those normal values on those rare times when one is really Alive, big A. And pain medication that works so well that you feel nothing at all---”

“---Like I do now,” Lorena admitted, and confessed, looking at George. “And that you don’t either, unless we both...”

The rest of the conversation between Lorena and George took place without words, between eyes that got lost into each other. Which led to a hug pulled together by the

third brain, and now heart, that had emerged between them. That Spirit Entity smiled, laughed and patted itself on the back as workaholic masochist George allowed himself to feel warm, loved and even happy, in the arms of Lorena, and she let herself fall under the spell of his special brand of love, which not only said 'above all do no harm to your beloved' but 'don't be afraid of falling in love with her.'

CHAPTER 9

“So, Lorena discussed more than getting Yannis that special cancer treatment he needed, and deserves!” Nick said as he viewed the video footage of the rest of the ‘interview’ in George’s ‘People’s Chairman’ tiny office, thanks to the camera he had implanted into Lorena’s handbag. And the subsequent footage he got by paying MBA students to switch their majors to biomedical sciences, in search of an HBARP in George’s ‘closed to anyone except fellow Martian misfit comrades’ lab. Footage that showed how deeply Lorena felt about George, and how happy George was with her. A festival of joy that Nick felt envious of now. Indeed, the players in this chess game to get the goods on George’s research and the fruits of that work to his son Yannis first and foremost were playing their part all too well, inventing and innovating games of their own that Nick couldn’t predict, and were probably going to be excluded from.

“I’ll destroy them both, and them all!” Nick vowed while sitting behind his oversized desk in his oversized office in the oversized building overlooking the mass of his unassuming ‘dependents’ mulling around in Central Park during their lunch break. “I’ll destroy you all!”

“But, your son is getting the treatment he needs, ahead of everyone else, right?” Calvin Wilson pointed out as he worked his way behind Nick, running his fingers through his beloved’s hair, then stroking his cheek. “Just like you are getting who and what you want,” he continued, gently rubbing Nick’s thigh, in what told himself as a loving rather than lustful manner. “I can be very useful to you in many ways,” Calvin continued, edging his head towards Nick’s quivering lips.

Nick knew that Calvin was both right and accurate, and in his own way, well meaning. As such, Nick let Calvin have his romantic say, with a gentle kiss on the lips. “So, what else do you want, and need, me to do?”

“Aside from keeping the love that’s really between us secret until the world really DOES accept LGBT people as people?” Nick gave voice to rising up from his chair, boldly striding to the West window that provided a clear, bird’s eye view of the ‘colony’ of New Jersey on the other side of the Hudson. “Something I have to do. For what’s left of my family.”

“Which includes me?” Calvin asked, his red face begging for a positive answer, but willing to accept an honest one.

Nick elected for both, kissing his hopefully soon to be open relationship partner on the mouth, which was accepted with the utmost gratitude. “There’s one thing I have to know before we continue, Cal,” Nick asked his finally liberated from the closet friend. “How political are you?”

“I love people more that politics,” Calvin said. “And will be a better mother to your children than Lorena ever was, or could be. Unless, you want to be the Mom.”

“Hmmm,” Nick said, allowing himself to dream possibilities not even imaginable in his formative years. “Maybe we both could be the Moms,” he continued with playful grin, glancing into the mirror, seeing Mama Calvin and Mama Nick in matching bridal gowns. “But first...we have to create world that will be responsibly and morally sustainable for everyone else, and happy for us.” He went on, working his way to his desk, pulling out the appropriate paper in the still very locked office for the next stage in the inevitable.

CHAPTER 10

There were many things to George which seemed unbelievable. PBS broadcaster airing anti-corporate, pro-environment documentaries sponsored by Bank of America and Exxon Oil Company. Country line dancing lyrics which proclaimed ‘everyone in life’s gotta do their own steps and find their own way up the mountain’. And the document that was presented to him at the parking lot by a semi-literate skateboarder who wanted get George’s autograph on his latest underground, counter culture book, wearing \$300 sneakers, a designer shirt and a power to people henna tattoo that began to wash away as the sprinkle-mist air gave way to a downpour of water, or piss, from the gods above. “I’m accused of what?” George asked as he looked again at the summons, in front of his shocked face.

“Scientific fraud, Mister Petrakis,” the skateboarder stated with a generically official accent completely void of ‘like,’ ‘ya know,’ ‘awesome’ and ‘totally’ that were injected into his ‘vocabulary’ upon introducing himself to George. “And misappropriation of state and federal funds, Mister Petrakis,” the G-man in the oversized, pre-torn and authentically smelling baggy pants and hole-ridden ‘Anarchism Rules’ tee shirt continued.

“First, it’s Doctor, Professor or Comrade Schlep Petrakis,” George insisted. “And as for scientific fraud, I’m the only investigator in this university, or maybe state, who doesn’t fudge, fabricate or selectively omit data from the lab bench. But I suppose I should expect such accusations from competitors who are less lucky, less deserving and less-hard working than I am,” he stated clearly to the messenger as if he was addressing three auditoriums filled with well dressed, socially accepted and dead in the soul technicians who called themselves doctors, healers and/or scientists. “And as for misappropriation of funds, if I use ten thousand dollars to figure out how one disease works and don’t have to spend the other forty I got in the grant on that disease, I use those funds to cure the next malady afflicting the body, mind and spirit of humanity, the most important of which is dull out disease, which makes one dead, boring, lifeless, simplistic and procedural. Which is contagious...” George went on about his theories about the various carriers of dull out disease, including the tunes the ‘anarchist’ tunes ‘skateboarder messenger’ used as his audio cover. But his mouth was pressed into silence by the next charge, on page 2.

“Sexual assault?” George read, disbelieving it. “Against...who?” he said, thumbing through the page, fearing that he would see Lorena’s name. Thankfully there was someone else who had raised the charges. “Deanna?” he gasped. “Who—“

“Is right up there, confirming all of it, Mister Petrakis” the skateboarder interjected, pointing to a glass window. Deanna looked accusingly downward, nodding yes, wearing a ‘pussy’ hat. She was surrounded by fellow young and old feminists bearing the same headgear who seemed to be supporting her in a decision she seemed not completely sure about, but with raging anger directed at George.

“Why?” George yelled up to Deanna who he never even touched, for fear of something romantic from that happening, to her, and to him. Something he did so Deanna could become her own person before being his, coming to age OUTSIDE the library and the lab.

“Maybe when you proposed a ‘yes’, she said ‘no’,” the messenger offered in a voice that went deeper pitch, then broke into an sly smile. “Or maybe she proposed a ‘yes’ and you kept up the wall saying ‘no’?” he proposed. “While you were sharing with someone else, what Deanna wanted, needed and deserved?”

The latter two explanations seemed to fit the data, as George recalled how much time he was spending with Lorena. How he shared more of his mind with her every day, and his soul. Most of it behind closed doors that, maybe were opened or seem through as the relationship between himself and Lorena evolved from Philos and Agape, love of comradeship and Spirit, to Eros, love of the body. But there was little time to reflect, as the next group of fans to want an ‘author’s corner’ with George were black suited, closely cropped men with American flags on their lapels and sunglasses hiding their eyes. “You can come with us willingly,” the head suit said to George. “Or,” he continued, shaking a pair of handcuffs on his belt.

“Before they get here?” George said, noting camera crews from three TV s stations pulling into the parking lot, unloading their equipment. “Or,” he said, grabbing the cuffs, putting them on himself. “Take me in now!” he proclaimed loudly. “No such thing as bad publicity, and no good deed or noble accomplishment goes unpunished, right?” he yelled out loud enough for every student, faculty member, secretary and grounds maintenance staff to hear in the parking lot, and in the glass building above him. One in which, as he was being taken away, Lorena finally appeared, terror in her eyes as she saw George being taken away. And even more when she was cuffed, and taken into custody.

CHAPTER 11

“So, what happened to Lorena?” Father John asked the prisoner as the hour long visit he was allowed was extended to two, then three. “And what sin did she do which brought the law into it?” he inquired after finally relieving himself in the toilet provided to the condemned man which reeked of fresh blood and putrid flesh that overshadowed the stench of feces and urine.

“First, Papa Johnny, we have to come to the accurate definition of sin, from the Ancient Greek that is, that you tried so hard to teach us Petrakis brothers,” the prisoner pressed, eating the last of the baklava, expressing his delight with it with a sigh from his mouth, belch from his belly, and a contented fart from his intestinal track’s back door, an expression of delight that made the Priest’s upturned nose shrivel with disgust. “Sin is a miscalculation rather than something you intentionally did to piss off or defy God, your fellow man, or the priest who claims to be the intermediary party between the two aforementioned. Some sins are given gradations by lawyers and cops, such as misdemeanors and felonies with prescribed earthly penalties,” Prisoner Petrakis said, running his knobbed, blistered fingers through his blood-soaked prison smock then his hastily cropped head. “And some sins, aka miscalculations of practical moral codes and laws...linger, for a higher judge to deal with,” Petrakis concluded, his defiance of death turning into terror of that ultimate inevitable unknown. “And despite the best of toilet systems and drugs to prevent diarrhea and constipation, shit happens,” he provided by way of excuse and explanation. “While fate pisses down what it has to on us,” he concluded yet again, staring at the ceiling, then feeling a rainfall wash all over him. “Golden showers,” he exclaimed with closed eyes, accepting of his fate.

Father John was at a loss as to figuring out what happened to Petrakis after the arrest. And to Lorena, the Irish-Italian Catholic who though not converted to Greek Orthodoxy, seemed to live a life more exemplary of that faith than any of his parishioners. A woman who went beyond ‘what would people think’ with regard to doing something to disrupt the social-moral status quo or disappoint people who needed one, but who went one step further, asking ‘what would Jesus think, feel and DO’. God and everyone who professed to know Him or about Him knew that Lorena had tried to pass on that beyond religious behavior to her children, most of all, her first born. Perhaps, Father John pondered as a self and court appointed investigator as to why the ‘Petrakis troubles’ started and how they should be dealt with, getting to that first born would lead her to the truth about Lorena. And the truth about the brothers who had unwillingly became the most powerful representatives of the two opposing socio-political camps in America which had taken the ideological arguments out of the family dinner tables, the academic debate clubs and the serio-comedic political talk shows into the streets of most every small and large town in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Streets that now were stained in blood, and if the divide wasn’t resolved soon, even more dead bodies.

“So, this cancer that’s out there on the streets, and even inside this sheltered jail, Mister Petrakis,” Father John said, pressing for the topic and tone to become more about humanity saving itself rather than finding the right prayer so that the Holy Trinity could

be made more present. He pulled out a newspaper on which medical news of the day was plastered on nearly every portion of the front page, pushing such insignificant events as a hurricane washed Houston into the ocean again and the final results of the Presidential election onto page 3 and 4. "It seems to be attacking..."

"...Everyone now," Petrakis said. "Unless they were protected with vaccine, or treated with drugs, both of which are rare, and expensive, and--"

"---Which worked on Yannis, in the first clinical trials?" Father John advanced.

"According to the best data available," the prisoner replied, doing his best to hide even more secrets after providing that accurate revelation.

"Yannis, who's Lorena's favorite and most beloved son?" the Priest pressed.

"According to the best data available, and the most believed stories, for those who live by the code of 'what would people think' anyway," Petrakis advanced. "The lad was born with...interesting genetics, which---"

"---Have something to do with why he, according to the best data available, survived the first wave of this flesh-eating and mind destroying cancer epidemic?" Father John pressed. "A brain-infecting disease that turns saints into demons."

"Or," the prisoner offered, with a playfully upturned smile. "Demons into saints?"

"And populations of cooperative, civil, God fearing and God loving citizens into animals who kill each other!"

"Yes, there is that," Petrakis said, calmly, "But...God works to cull his herd of defective cattle in mysterious ways. And the Petrakis brothers were, despite themselves, master cattlemen. Who..." The prisoner turned silent again, requesting a pen, paper, and the remaining portion of blessed bread inside the Father John's pocket that the priest had reserved for deserving and savable prisoners. He had no choice but to consent to this demon turned into saint, or saint turned into a demon, fearful of both extremes. But even more fearful of what would happen if he was not able to figure out the core of the 'Petrakis troubles' so that he could offer the world a cure before it was too late, or perhaps, become the cure.

CHAPTER 12

Love being blind as well as pathologically naïve, Lorena's special compassion for Yannis prevented her from seeing that he had developed the most useful skill acquirable in the competition fest that had become North America. He was able to convince her, along with so many others, that he was a combination of Albert Einstein because of his advanced science skills and Saint Francis because of his taking on the care of wayward animals, when in reality he was the incarnation of Machevelli, intent on making more money for himself in biomedical science once he bought his Ph.D. and M.D., and secretly putting his 'incurably thin and shy' pets at home through the most sadistic mind games imaginable before he practiced them on people.

But many surprises happened to Yannis Petrakis. now twelve, while on the treatments his estranged godfather and still biological Uncle George put him on. The lumps in his leg muscles gave way to healthy, strong flesh, even more than he had before. The seizures that had originated in the boy's septum, reticular activating system and regions of the association cortex that George attributed in his most recent publications to foci for incubation of dull out disease and procedural business skills associated with selective compassion had stopped. And instead of seeking to have his name on the cover of Forbes when he reach manhood, Yannis now aspired to serve all of mankind as a doctor-psychologist-monk who accepted no fees except the opportunity to be of more service.

That new Calling, or as Nick ranted on to an unbelieving wife at home he had sprung from jail and eyebrow raising business partners he still needed at work, were the side effects of some extra biomedical herbs and/or voodoo that George had put into the 'maintanance' cocktail. Such started with Yannis spending all of his money on the best dog food and pet shrinks available for his menagerie of dogs, cats, horses and birds. The next day he turned down invitations to five of the top pre-prep schools for scientists and artists who had not yet sprouted pubic hair. Twenty four hours later he gave back three Top Ten Young Scientists awards for his non-soul requiring simulation models of the seven major body systems he had presumably developed while being mentored by scientists working in Nick's three Big Pharma companies. And before the sun rose again, he stepped aside from an offer to star in Spielberg's next film which was to be his first musical in response to an audition tape he was 'strongly encouraged' to send in by his prep school councilor. All of those mediocre at best or fabricated 'accomplishments' of course had been pushed to the top of the heap by under the table money, a fact that Yannis was now open enough to discover, and honest enough to expose. It exposed a network of payoffs from elite parents on behalf of mediocre and undeserving kids that led to a man with a thick head of handsome looking longish hair who Yannis saw being taken away in cuffs one day after returning home from a 'donating your hair for cancer victims' event in the Park.

"What the hell were you thinking?!" Nick Petrakis yelled back at his first born and, truth be told, most beloved son as he was being escorted into a Cop Car, with cameras looking on. "After all I did for you, you did this to me! And your family!"

Yannis could understand what his father was saying, and meaning, sort of. Or so it seemed to Lorena, his mother, who kissed the clammy and still shaving cream smelling skin on his exposed scalp. Who had been sprung from jail after being in detention for only an hour, with all of the charges against her dropped. A very long, hard hour where she learned enough about herself to know that the life she was living had to be changed, and by HER manipulating things behind the scenes rather than being a trophy that went to the winner in this war between George and Nick which, if not stopped, would cost the lives of her children, as well as the children of so many rich and poor women who had found themselves as pawns in a man's chess game.

Yet, Nick was still Lorena's husband, someone who cared for her the best way he could. And someone whose jealousy for her unexpected deepening relationship with George was a form of love which had to be honored. Until Nick issued his last Presidential Order from the police car, appended by his throwing a business card out of his front pocket towards Lorena. "Call my lawyer, Lorena! At this number! Before you do, or think about doing anything fucking else!" he barked out at her as if she was an ignorant servant girl rather than a rapidly aging wife who had surrendered her youth to him, yet still sought his betterment. After those last commands were issued, Nick's head was not so gently placed inside by Officer Kewlaski, whose incredibly talented, hard working daughter was denied the lead in the school play because Nick had clandestinely bought the role for her, truth be told, merely moderately skilled Athena who had not yet figured out that going from good to great required intensity of effort, and a few failures along the way to such. Said daughter ran out of the house, horrified as seeing her father being treated like a common criminal, rushing to his rescue, then being pulled into Lorena's arms.

"What's going on, Mom?" Athena asked Lorena.

"A... movie," Lorena quickly improvised, noting a clunker VW van and a rust bucket sedan coming in from opposite sides of the streets loaded with camera crews, most of the faces belonging to George's graduate students, including two or three who had been the notably absent Deanna's supporters. "An educational movie," she said to Yannis, who pensively stared at the raging American success story ranting into a closed window of the police car. "A movie that's---" Lorena advanced, so as to direct Yannis' attention to positive rather than guilty agendas.

"---A make believe comedy?" Athena asked, as her eyes spotted Lorena's outer lips turning upward.

"With twists and turns in it that are very educational, and...ironic," Lorena said with an unapologetic smile, as she walked towards the business card with Nick's lawyer's number on it, picking it up. "Cal Wilson, Esq" she read, not recognizing the name nor the photo on the card, which she crumbled up, and pushed into the recesses of her back pocket, to be dealt with very much later. Well after making a few calls of her own.

CHAPTER 13

Nick looked at the macaroni and sort of cheese, liquidy pudding and overcooked vegetables put the slot in his cell with disgust by an olive-skinned guard, whose tired eyes, triple chin and blistered fingers and imitation gold wedding ring indicated that this was his second or third job for his most probably immigrant family. Clad in the latest fashion Prison Jumpsuit, Nick considered sending the meal back, demanding real food, reminding the guard that his company was one of the major shareholders in the prison that gave the blue collar CO an income. But after three days, Nick's normally overfilled stomach was churning not so much out of hunger, but of something called fear, an emotion he saw so much in others and on occasion invoked when necessary, but which he seldom experienced himself. It had been three days after calling Lorena, and being assured by her she made the call to his lawyer, as instructed, and that said lawyer was informed about his situation, three times.

"Hey, Officer Kolioglu," Nick asked the guard, nicely this time, doing his best to not insult the probably Turkish Moslem with his Christian-trained Greek tongue. "You can see through this face, that can use a shave, who I am you probably know who I am, and what I can do for you, and your family, if you make a call for me."

"I'm not allowed to do that, Sir," the respectful yet distant reply, completely devoid of any Middle Eastern accent.

It had been three days since anyone called Nick 'sir', for which he felt thankful.

"But there is something I can do for you," he continued, pulling another plate of macaroni and something off his tray, placing it on the table in the middle of the cell, while pulling down the bed opposite Nick's.

"Join me in eating this...whatever it is?" Nick replied, sniffing the 'food' that smelled more like the cardboard box it came from. "I would be grateful for the company. We eat alone, but we have company, we dine, no matter what it is."

"Exactly the thoughts of the new Chaplin, who is assigning you a new roommate," the guard said as he placed the second dinner at a place setting opposite Nick.

"Another cockroach who darts in and out of the cracks on the walls, and looks after me while I sleep?" Nick offered, with a humorous yet defiant lilt in his voice.

"Someone more interesting, Mister Petrakis, according to the new Chaplin," the guard offered after a mischievous smile.

"And this new Chaplan you're actively thinking but not saying anything about?" Nick inquired.

“Father John,” Nick heard from a voice of another prisoner escorted towards him, released from cuffs after being placed inside the cell, the jovial guards closing the door behind them on their way out. “Who somehow found out about us through----“ George continued.

“—No one I know!” Nick shot back, trying to hold back the feelings of shock and anger at seeing his brother, in the flesh for the first time. “Or maybe someone I do?” he advanced, averting his eyes, considering the constellation of enemies he inadvertently and intentionally made on his way up to the top. “Or who maybe YOU know?” Nick blasted back into the face of his maybe most powerful and maybe beloved enemy.

“If I did, we’d be eating baklava and burritos on the beach instead of macaroni and something here,” George said, looking at his food.

“At least half of your culinary desires are still Greek,” Nick noted.

“Many ways of being Greek than being ultra Right Wing Conservatives, adopting the ‘what would people think’ motif with everything, being poster children for the benefits of dull out disease, and running diners that make more money for your mob money laundering partners than you,” George advanced.

Nick, for the moment, put countering the, admittedly not all that false, accusations George had made regarding the culture he had abandoned when he became an Internationalist Counter-Culture Scientist and Artist. Instead he focused on something else as he observed the equally hungry as he was George dig in to the macaroni and something yellow on the plastic plates.

“You look biblical,” Nick noted regarding his brother’s long beard which absorbed nearly as much overcooked elbow pasta than his mouth. “And old,” he noted regarding his two foot long mane of rapidly graying hair, complimented by a bald spot on the crown and receding hairline that could not be hidden by any comb-over.

“And your topknot still look dapper,” George countered gazing briefly yet intensely at his brother’s perfectly shaped, full head of still dark black executive early Trump hair which the bald-phobic Nick still wore proudly. “But that beard you seem to be growing...it doesn’t suit you.”

“Neither does someone locking you in here with me, like we were kids, so we’d settle out differences. Which---“

“---Did work out, half of the time when we were kids,” George pointed out.

“And didn’t the other half of the time,” Nick countered. “But, we have to make the best of it.”

“And settle some of our differences so, maybe we can both get out of here?” George offered while swallowing down needed nutrients so he wouldn’t barf up the putrid, pungent and somehow at the same time tasteless grub. “And get some decent food into ourselves and continuing being effective breadwinners for people we care about, or are responsible for?”

“Like Yannis?” Nick , putting aside matters of stomach, pushing away his food. “Who turned into, because of your medications---!”

“Someone who is alive,” George shot back. “Small a, and Big A...given that bought not earned scholarship he turned down and the network of elitist bribery scams he exposed, without knowing you were behind it, according to the best info I have anyway.”

“Info from Yannis?” Nick challenged.

“And if it was?” George shot back.

Nick thought long and hard before answering, in part because he knew all too well that fighting while under custody bought you the kind of single occupancy, windowless, in the nude, cell where the cockroaches ate better than you did, if you ate at all. “A medical question,” Nick offered, unlocking his fingers from a hard, about to do something very destructive fist. “Did curing his cancer, and stopping the seizures, have something to do with his going...soft in the head?”

“You mean compassionate? With a bigger and more functional anterior insular and cingulate cortex that, according to what I know anyway, are the seats of empathy?” George responded in a professorial manner. “If it did, it’s an extra benefit to the patients, I suppose.”

“And the part about him wanting to give to the world instead of doing right by his family!” Nick demanded. “And having no regard for his OWN safety, well being, or future in a dog EAT rather than dog ‘support compassionately your fellow international hound’ world?”

“I don’t know, scientifically anyway,” the reply from George, calmly and honestly, yet considering other possibilities. He looked at the food yet again, with the eyes of a life-tested Philosopher King rather than a prisoner about to spend most of the rest of his life behind bars. “But for the moment, maybe we should finish this meal. A fed stomach does make for a functional brain. Just like an empty stomach makes for someone who does irrational and destructive things, particularly to those who have overfilled stomachs.”

“So, now you’re telling me that if me, the hard working, and because of being hard working, rich, don’t feed the undeserving and non-working poor, they’ll go into full scale revolution and burn down every institution in this country,” Nick countered.

“And chop off the heads, balls and scalps of the rich,” George noted. “Particularly when the cost of being fed, and getting needed medications for this new cancer epidemic is going up for the poor, and what’s left of the shrinking middle class who are about to become poor, dead, or armed with weapons they WILL use against---“

“---The ‘rich capitalists’ like me, right,” Nick countered. “And the Enlightened overeducated liberals like you too!” he pointed out. “There were as many intellectual liberal goldbricking idealists who got their head lopped off in the French Revolution than capitalistic aristocrats who had kept the country from destroying itself.”

“Which is why you keep the masses minimally fed so they indulge in mischief rather than revolution? Give them a small piece of cake but take the lions share for yourself. And make them think they’re ‘sticking it to the man’ when they’re spending their hard earned, pathetically low wages on booze, dope and fun recreation when they should be spending it on books, placards for protest signs, bail out money for non-violent civil disobedience and, yes, if necessary, guns to break into the banks and take back what’s theirs! Or locked medical supply houses and hospitals that are still charging unaffordable prices for medicines that YOU set so that only the rich, privileged of selectively insured can afford!”

“Which keeps the mobs of undeserving undocumented immigrants, lazy liberals, welfare bums and, yes, maybe biologically inferior races, from tearing down the hospitals, banks and fucking libraries, and....!”

“Hey!” C.O. Kolioglu yelled into the cell. “Less yelling, more brotherly negotiating! Chaplin’s orders, goddamn it!”

CHAPTER 14

“That’s not exactly as I remember it,” Father John said to Prisoner Petrakis as the latter laid down to microphone to the voice recorder he had adopted after having ran out of ink on three pens regarding his initial all expense-paid stay in the Grey Bar Hotel. “But I found it interesting that the Arch Bishop assigned me to be head Chaplin at this Correctional Facility.”

“Lorena has more connections than she ever told you about, or told me about either,” Petrakis replied with a mixture of anger, betrayal and pride. “Which maybe led to you being the mortal who’s in charge of sentencing for the crimes I really DID commit, to the civil authorities here, the big Judge upstairs and of course, the jury I value most.”

“You mean the next generation of Petrakis?” the apolitical Priest who was now the chief advisor to the Prosecuting attorney, the Governor, and, most importantly, the press inquired. “Or Lorena who---“

“---You gave shelter to,” Petrakis blasted back into the ‘good’ father’s rapidly aging face. “In a place you told NO one about.”

“It was for her safety,” Father John asserted as gently as he could to Petrakis.

“Or your personal pleasure, as a man who needs a woman to take care of to feel like a man?” Petrakis shot back the mortal who was in charge of his mortality. “A sin every human being born with a penis has to and DOES commit one time or another, even if he by sexual inclination or divine orders is disallowed to use that organ for anything except voiding urine.”

Father John considered the hypothesis advanced regarding the portion of the human body that only the ancient Greeks, and oddball painters such as Michelangelo considered beautiful enough to display in public or portray on vases and statues. And what Jesus may have done, or wanted to do, with his very human male organ which was never portrayed on two or three images, even by Mel Gibson and Michelangelo. Yes, Father John did wish he had found Lorena before the Petrakis brothers did. And, yes, maybe if he as a young priest, he could have cloistered Lorena in a Nunnery until she became of legal marrying age, Father John would have been contented to leave the priesthood to become just citizen John. But Lorena was a lot smarter than that, he pondered when replaying the movie of his do-over life. And a lot more dangerous to the allies George and Nick had accumulated as life catapulted them up to the top of their very different, incompatible and diametrically opposed ideologies.

“So, you do remember what happened after we were released,” Prisoner Petrakis in the present admonished Father John, bringing him back to the painful present which would result in potentially one dead Petrakis brother in less than an hour, and many more outside the prison gates dead, or worse, very soon after, no matter what the final phone call from the Governor’s office would convey. A governor who could legally stop any

Executive Order in his state passed down by the newly President, whose election to public office would not have been possible without the Petrakis brothers' feud and of course Lorena. "You remember the truce we made in the cell you stuck us in?" the Prisoner pressed.

"Yes!" Father John blasted back, putting aside for the moment a lifetime of sins, throwing the blame for having to commit those transgressions back at the prisoner. "But we all know how the terms of that agreement worked out once all the charges on both of you were dropped, and you were free to do the right, or wrong, thing on the outside. But for the record, I want and need to hear your version of what happened, and what didn't happen," he continued, regaining his composure, sense of reason and whatever compassion he had left for the two boys who had become some of the most dangerous men America ever had to deal with.

CHAPTER 15

All charges against Professor George and Kingpin Nick were dropped. But though no judge wearing black robes dared prosecute either of the brothers, the same could not be said about the mere mortals who had to stand up when the 'your Honors' came into the courtroom. As for Nick, the value of stocks in 40 of the companies he owned took a nosedive in the market, but the worth of three went up, most particularly the ones that manufactured and distributed Anti-Can, the cancer fighting cocktail which halted the new epidemic of tumors that ate up tissue below the neck and wrecked havoc with grey as well as white matter between the ears. The price for this treatment was high, allowing easy access to the rich, the privileged and, as government agencies valued them anyway, the valuable. As for the individual controlling those agencies, the unexpected death of the President due to a heart attack, followed a day later by the Vice President going from pre-stage 1 to stage 4 of the flesh-brain eating cancer, then within 24 hours the organically-based insanity that overcame the always rational and colorlessly stable Speaker of the House resulted in the appointment to the Highest POLITICAL office of the land to Ned Klaussen who, it was rumored, had gotten that position due to the influence of Nick Petrakis and his ace team of lobbyists.

By executive order, the patent for Anti-Can was taken away from its inventor, Professor George, who lost his Professorship, his lab, his license to practice medicine, his money but not his freedom. Like Ramon y Cajal, the father of neuroscience who self-exiled himself into the hills of his backwater Spain to do his ground breaking work 130 years earlier, George embraced his exile from 'the Fourth Reich', a term he now used to refer to everyone who didn't join or support his personal Revolution against it. The headquarters for the 'New Bolshevik Revolution', which would not make the same moral miscalculations Stalin initiated and political mistakes Lenin committed by letting the 'Man of Steel' come to power before the right brain, heart and soul transplant was completed. did in Mother Russia, was the summer cabin his parents bought dirt cheap twenty years earlier Upstate which had become a 'swamp property' five years later due to abandoned construction of a lake for rich tourists.

After George and Nick's parents had given up on vacationing in, or selling, the worthless property, it was taken over by a squirrels, skunks, coyotes, then finally squatters on two legs who turned it into an international grow-op and meth lab until the operators of such reportedly tested too many of their samples and sent each other on a magic carpet ride to the realm beyond the veil. It was then said that ghosts of the self-slain dopers inhabited the establishment, protecting it from being torn apart by bulldozers, used as a haven for anything except spiders or a party cottage for teens who told their church-owning parents they were at 'the library'.

George lost no time in extracting the overgrown woods from the cabin which was unseeable from the air, and barely discernible from any road. With several Tesla coils, he stole as much electricity as he needed from the wires and cables of the Recreational Cottages on the 'rich' side of the lake. Accessibility to his make shift biomedical lab and hospital for special patients was physically possible for anyone who knew where the

underwater bridge the previous squatters made in the swamp surrounding the cabin, requiring a map. Accessibility to its 'branch clinics' and safe houses for fellow Revolutionaries who were now being jailed for saying anything in public that President Klausen didn't like was open to everybody. Even those suspected of being spies, informers or weak-willed 'looky-loos' who would give away said locations, though George believed that they would be converts to his Cause and the capital of the New International Camelot. But George knew that this hypothesis could be proven false by dangerous and un-detected outliers, eventually.

"I wasn't sure I should have come here, but...I had to, Uncle George," now almost 13 year old Yannis said sounding more like an adult as he emerged from very expensive skiff bearing a Maple Leaf into the dock of the cabin on the well hidden entrance at the South end of the lake.

"And who are your Canadian friends, who are maybe playing at being poor this week?" George, clad in camouflage gear head to toe, with a matching Castro beard, asked, noting three older kids with him in designer clothing, greeting them with a loaded shotgun. "How did you, Yannis, find these people?"

"They found me?" Yannis answered. "Or...hey...maybe we found each other?"

"That's a question, not an answer," George noted. "And before I led you to the cabin, which maybe your mother told you about, where the other Comrades are, I need to know your Comrades are."

"Kids who don't want to grow up to be like our parents," declared wannabe Revolutionary teen number one in a very American accent, a first growth peach-fuzz mustache above his quivering upper lip. He appeared to be the male leader of the group, as evidenced by his arched back, upturned chin, and 'Cures for the people not the cunts' button on his designer military style jacket.

"Who found out about your miracle cures for the body, mind and spirit," his perfectly proportioned size 4 beauty queen in the making girlfriend quickly added, with very fake Canadian diction.

"Cures we want to take home for our friends and family, Doctor George," pleaded a girl whose face was nearly identical to the aspiring beauty queens, but whose body below the neck was a very unattractive size 14.

"Some of whom are poor, some rich, but all of whom are...hurting," Yannis added.

George considered the options, risks and opportunities. He was well aware from Lorena's REAL answers to 'so how is my godson, really?' that Yannis had learned how to lie better than his father, and with more panache than President Klaussen, Nick's favorite candidate for that office. But George saw, using every sensor in his gut and brain, that Yannis had become a man now. One more honorable, 'give more than you

ever take from anyone' service rather than profit oriented stand up Mensch, even more than himself. A change that, George hoped anyway, was not a byproduct of the cancer cure which killed the tumor in his Septum that gave him seizures and promoted, somehow, enhanced function of anterior cingulate and insular cortex, areas of the brain which really did promote empathy, caring and effective universal (rather than selected) compassion. That latter activation of the 'caring gene' was not, according to George's best data obtained on animals, and selected patients, not one of the side effects of the Anti-Can formulation being distributed by Nick's three pharmaceutical companies, enabling selected patients to survive, live and, unfortunately, remain the same assholes they had been before they got sick at the hands of whatever virus caused this very contagious cancer.

But for the moment, George had to make a critical decision. Send Yannis back home to Lorena, and his American friends back home with false information to their rich, influential and perhaps very military parents? Or trust in the Vision of the Revolution? "What would Jesus do if Ceasar sent him a specially trained or biomodified Judas?" came into George's head. The answer, for many reasons which would involved several different outcomes, "Invite him to have dinner with you and the rest of the Comrades." And it came with one extra wrinkle in the neo-biblical tale.

"OK then," George said. "Tie that overpriced Canuk skiff you stole in with my harbor staff to the right, and follow me, to the left. While I walk on water, and teach you how to do the same. As long as you don't tell any of the bosses above you about it."

With that, George led the new congregation of potential converts to the underwater bridge to the main cabin, and adjoining healing facility, knowing that both he, and they, would have to violate many more laws than 'don't make jokes about the Big Guy upstairs' before he was done with him. For the sake of creation, as the Creator, as George saw it anyway, was still on a long lunch break, at Nick's favorite restaurant.

CHAPTER 16

Nick Petrakis was incensed when he read the newspaper articles that said in words what video images were so much better at portraying. Three more banks had been robbed by as many different bands of ‘Promethian Revolutionaries’, a term that emerged by a population of so called ‘have nots’ and ‘should haves’ who were now reading George’s novels on his no charge website. A paperless mobile bookstore that still evaded being shut down by State and Federal authorities who officially worked under President Klaussen but whose salaries were still being paid, indirectly anyway, by Nick and his web of private companies who were still able to maintain the myth that America was the strongest, richest, freest and safest country in the world. A country where the streets, parks and backyards of those lucky (as well as hardworking, deserving) souls who still could pay their mortgages were cleaned five times a day to collect any ‘Comrade George’ pamphlets, along with dead bodies of the now escalated number of victims of ‘Big C’, as the multisystem cancer caused by still unidentified causes raged on.

Food was in short supply, as was reason, particularly at heavily guarded gates to hospitals where ‘have nots’ with defective minds, putrid limbs and degenerate morals denied entry to patients in need of care who they deemed ‘rich and privileged’. Those now-Federally owned facilities dispensed to the ‘deserving, valuable and specially-insured’ treatments for Big C from Nick’s three still functional and, by private and public necessity, very well funded pharmaceutical companies. The three leading causes of death according to even the most patriotic American news agencies were ‘C’, wounds incurred during skirmishes between police and citizenry, and hunger.

But it was the fate of one C victim which concerned Nick most, as he read the most recent report sent to him by ‘Revolutionary Cell Number 137’ from behind the desk of his still-secure, heavily picketed yet even more guarded penthouse office. “No!” he yelled at the screen. “I won’t pay an extra three billion dollars, or surrender to the ‘people’ any of my hard built companies for the release of Yannis! My first born who the Almighty assigned me to raise right, which I did!”

“If you don’t give in to these latest demands, the ransom is going to go up even higher, and Yannis could lose another finger, both his hands or his head,” Cal, now Federal Attorney General, Wilson reminded his boss, friend and, as long as there were no bugs in the bedroom and well paid security outside of it, lover. “Maybe it’s time to call their bluff. Take your naïve but still rationale wife’s advise and---“

“---Give in to these terrorists!” Nick blasted back recalling the text messages Lorena was sending in from a location she still didn’t identify to him, at the advice of the new Chief Investigator of Family First Security, who was keeping what was left of his family safe and secure. “They’re animals!”

“And we, because we fight with state beyond the art tanks out in the open, and they have to fight with home-made pea shooters and knives from the shadows, we’re civilized?” Cal noted. “Comrade George and the ‘should haves’ working under his supervision, or

on their own, aren't doing anything different than the French Resistance did in World War II against the Nazi's. Or..." he continued, gently turning Nick's head to the Southern window to the asymmetrical streets build upon 300 year wagon roads in lower Manhattan. "The patriots who remained behind after the British took over this very city. Breaking into banks. Stealing roast beef, potatoes au gratin and Yorkshire pudding from General Howe's kitchen to keep George Washington's rag-tag troops alive in New Jersey. Blowing up the Queen's best ships in the harbor with innovative, hand built one man submarines. And---"

"--- Not this! Converting my son to their Cause, then kidnapping him!" blasted out the usually calm and collected Nick, who paid everyone else to sweat and, if they chose to, bleed for him.

"A son who, maybe doesn't want to get rescued?" Cal suggested, pulling his head and hands back from Nick in anticipation of getting them chewed or chopped off.

"Which is even worse," Nick said, sinking into a pit of even darker blackness rather than spitting out more indignant fire. "Which is why I want you to---" he continued, staring into space.

"---Do what's necessary, as I've always done," Cal replied with an assuring voice, a firm hand on his trembling shoulders and finally a kiss on Nick's parched lips. "And will do again, because, well, I..."

"Shhh!" Nick replied with an upturned index finger over his nose, on a hand which two fingers now was devoid of a wedding ring.

"And what of Lorena? Your wife who, you still have to stay married to, for the sake of your children and many careers," Cal pointed out. "She's still according to everything I've been told, still in danger."

"And according to what I don't seem to be told, potentially dangerous," George added, allowing his worse case scenarios about betrayal to play in deadly painful living color on the screen behind his reddening, bulging and tearful eyes. "Which means that I have to---"

"--Trust me, more than ever," Cal interjected with a deadly serious stare. "To do what's necessary for all of us. Including Lorena. Do I have your permission to do what's necessary?"

Though clad in the most impressive, inspiring and expensive suit obtainable North of Soho and East of the Hudson, Nick felt himself to be a little boy in short pants who needed taking care of by a big boy in long pants. A big boy who he now had to be again. After several more coded questions from Cal regarding escalating the war against George and his destructive as well as deluded 'People's Army', George nodded 'yes'.

Cal turned the outer margins of his lips up ever so slightly, bowed, then helped himself to another view of the documents in every one of Nick's drawers and commences making phone calls. Nick shuffled to the Westward window and gazed downward to the smoggy-haze covering what was still New Jersey, recalling key moments growing up in that second class state, and how he hard it was to emerge as a first class 'get done what has to get done' leader who his country, family, and even his alienated brother, needed him to be now The rest...became history very fast.

CHAPTER 17

The headquarters for George's 'hidden to all who are not of the same Vision' People's Laboratory for Healing of Mind, Body and Spirit had been changed three times in as many weeks. The first one was precautionary, at the advice of his hand-picked security staff. The second happened when he on his early morning solitary philosopher-strolls to say hello to the rising sun, discovering the most recent member of that carefully selected group decapitated at the perimeter of the facility, his head, still bearing the look of shock at the time of its liberation from the body, embedded onto the pole where he had placed electronic sensors and electricity gathering Tesla coils a few hours earlier. The third move further back into the still thick bush on the Canadian side of the line occurred after Yannis (now George's severely under-aged but far more mature than he should be for his age right hand man in matters dealing with that annoying yet necessary artifact referred to as the 'real world') saw the oldest and more resent member of the security staff in town, fraternizing very 'professionally' in the bar with the regional chief of the newly formed American Homeland Security Force at a time when said they were heading into the woods to do some overdue fishing.

But when George read the latest and according to the editor the greatest three part research paper in Neuroscience Research Journal on his still connected computer, he was worried about something more than if the Canadian Authorities government would give him sanctuary when found or a one way ticket back to the US of A, into their American handlers.

"What's wrong?" Yannis asked, schlepping in an oversized knapsack containing hospital equipment the overstocked New Brunswick Hospital would not miss, this time obtained legally along with gourmet delights liberated from dumpsters on the most prestigious eatery establishments in town, obtainable because the 12 going on 120 year old had acquired a body more nimble and fast than even his athletic brother Ilias.

"Art has become life," George muttered as he looked at the pages, yet again. "Finally, my fourth novel, Flagstaff Conspiracy, which after I submitted it to publishers on the right and the left got me blacklisted by everyone for every manuscript I sent in, Flagstaff Conspiracy, made it to press. In the real world."

"I remember reading that," Yannis said.

"How?" George asked, in even more horror. "I submitted that manuscript around before you were still getting free room and board in your mother's uterus? And though I'd like to think that what a mother might read to her child actually gets heard inside the womb, it's highly unlikely that you remember the story, or the title."

"Yeah, but I do," Yannis replied, helping himself to small dish of half-eaten apple pie and a chunk of cheddar that was more yellow cheese than green mold. "Along with its second version, which you called 'The Truth About Lying' in your 'Heart of the Healer' series. The one about the top level never left home scientist who got infected with a weird

brand of acid by no-goodnicks who wanted to get the goods on his superspy brother and parents who was able afterwards to read ANYone's mind, who was asked by an illegal international Enlightenment underground to find out why the most defiant, spiritual and self-isolated band of Apachies out West were dying from a weird brain killing disease. Who had to infiltrate a university of corrupt scientists as a woman, so he wouldn't get recognized, and got help pulling it off from a female spirit who found his way inside of him because she wanted to be returned to her home on the no-whites-allowed-inside Indian Reservation."

George listened as Yannis related the details about the book, putting aside for the moment, the young boy's fascination with a man becoming a woman, so he could expand his understanding of humanity. A fascination which perhaps was hereditary or perhaps not. But the key element here was the story behind the original draft of "Flagstaff Conspiracy", which George had given to Lorena for her professional opinion in hard copy for safekeeping as well as evaluation. That only surviving hard copy that got lost in a trailer fire, according to his Nick anyway, a week after a virus infected George's hard drive on his PC, and somehow every version of the work he has cyber-saved.

The Flagstaff Conspiracy made all other conspiracies seem harmless, as well as more feasible. In that theoretical yet, to George anyway, possible tale, a corrupt scientist in B-level Arizona University who was a master at stealing other people's ideas but not even a novice at coming up with his own needed to get back on top of the totem pole so he could maintain his position in his Blue Blood family back East, as well as to pay off some big time gambling debts to powerful people due in part to his having invested in a failing pharmaceutical company, Utrick-Manhhold. J. Nelson Smith, MBA, Ph.D., and most certainly NOT HBARP made a deal with an elite, white collar White Supremacist international organization working within the CIA and KGB to come up with a virus that causes a specific kind of cancer that's un-curable by any established protocol. Through a First Nations bakery run by the very White Italian mob, the virus was infused into the general population of the Apachies. The subsequent epidemic of brain tumors on the Rez blamed on ingestion of a well hidden strain of peyote used by a secret cult which had been banned in 1880, and was still disallowed to practice, as it corrupted several influential White wannabe 'mystics'. Various kinds of treatments were developed using the unassuming Indians as guinea pigs. Of course, some work was done with rodents in Smith's lab previous to all of this, but the data was held back.

Basically, the plan was to create a disease, release it to the world, then hold back on releasing the cure, and prevention for such, until the timing was just right. That timing would insure that Smith would be nominated for the Nobel Prize. Stockholders in the nearly broke pharmaceutical company would make a killing in the market after the miracle drug was released. And rich White Supremacists working within the CIA, and KBG, would have an epidemic they could release onto 'inferior' populations which decided to become rebellious to the status quo, of independent from it. Be those populations colored, poor, or the wrong kind of Socialists.

The research publications popping off the screen and penetrating into George's tired, red eyes described a new treatment for 'C' which showed, in rodent data anyway, a 98% cure rate, which beat the success rate of the treatments Nick's companies were doling out to selected, deserving patients. They came out of Stone Plains University, a grade B minus institution exiled to the East end of Long Island and Hellenic Pharmaceuticals, one of Nick's smaller, expendable the way out but still owned companies. Reference was made in the discussion section of 'encouraging preliminary human trials' in studies done in equatorial Africa, Chechnya and Mongolia. The part of blue-blood J. Nelson Smith was in this unauthorized real-life rendition of Flagstaff Conspiracy was R. Peter DeVeer, a White Rich Supremacist with Afrikaner roots who in real life made Smith's collaborators in the novel look like Nelson Mandela supporters. Given the special freedoms the FDA gave to Nick's companies so that the C epidemic and others which seemed to be on the rise, particularly in low income, non-white regions and countries, it would be only a few months till the virus that caused C, named in the research paper by a mere inversion of the letters used in the novel, was disseminated to undeserving, expendable and undesirable populations at home, and abroad. Populations who, of course, could be saved by Nick's miracle drug if they 'behaved', the reward of such being more money, power and, as he needed such more than ever, popularity for George's brother.

George knew a few more things that the applauded and well read research publication didn't mention. "We have to get to the storage location for the virus, and the miracle cures they THINK will stop it once it gets into more humans," he said to Yannis. Professor Comrade Schlep George leaned back on his three and a half-legged chair, gulping down a cup of coffee made with grounds that had been used ten times over in an attempt to stay awake, and alert. "Maybe you can ask the Almighty for help with this? Or so we can get a clearer answer to this all important question, ask your mother?"

"She doesn't know anything," Yannis replied, eyes turned downward, hiding yet another set of secrets. "But...maybe I do, or don't." The lad turned silent again, averting his eyes from George, then headed to the window, staring blankly into the woods.

George thought about pressing Yannis for an answer, considering telling Yannis everything about how much of an asshole his father was, and reminding the lad he had not only saved his life, but prevented him from growing up in his father's blood stained footsteps. One question could spare him all of that, if asked directly "Flagstaff Conspiracy. And The Truth About Lying. Who gave you access to reading them?" George inquired.

With shame, regret and the kind of courage unusual for a boy his age, Yannis pointed to DeVeer's name on the research papers. "Who has a very private lab here," he continued, writing down an address that George recognized all too well. "Where I...in the past...let him..." Yannis shut down again, hiding his face in shame.

"...Build those tissue culture, manican and computer simulations of the major body systems incorporating new biological mechanism that weren't in the textbooks yet for

you, so you could put your name on them to be the youngest geek in history to win a Top Ten American young research scientist award?" George advanced.

"Which he said I would be smart enough to come up with myself in a few years," Yannis said.

"Because 'the only people who are taken seriously are those who were pushed to the top before they became top rate,'" George added, imitating DeVeer's South African diction which displayed the most arrogant elements of British royalty and Boer Aristocracy.

"And as someone who needs to be top rate, in ways that matter, I should go back to Dr. DeVeer for a visit, and steal the virus, and the medicine, and scoop, and the papers, and--
_"

"----Get yourself killed!" George blasted back at Yannis. "Nick's my brother and my responsibility."

"And you'll be recognized instantly by the cameras, and the people," Yannis pointed out. "Unless you...hmmm. Infiltrate my father's organization as a woman, like the hero in Truth About Lying and Flagstaff, who could read minds."

"Or...as someone more convincing, and powerful," George replied, contemplating an idea, gazing into the reflective glass, formulating a plan around the image forming behind his bloodshot ocular portholes.

CHAPTER 18

Rumor had it that George was so connected to his beard and everything that ancient expression of rebellion stood for that if he took it off, the blood vessels that grew into it would bleed him dry. When complimented with a short haired black wig that matched his brother's current hair style, and a resurrected vintage now 'period fashion' suit, and some padding below the ribs to make his undernourished body seem overfed, George did not look all that different than his brother Nick. The security guards at the door to the repopulated university building across the street from where George had a lab of his own bowed to him like he was royalty, wishing him a good morning, to which he merely nodded slightly in kingly approval to them. The Barbie secretaries and Ken 'administrative assistants' in the lobby complimented him with variations on 'looking sharp today, Mister Petrakis' to which George grunted out a 'necessary weapons for battle these days'. The white-coated robot-like technicians in the king sized laboratory bearing DeVree's name moved aside as George confidently entered, allowing him to inspect their work. To each of those probably overpaid drones preparing more 'treatments 'for C, and carriers to attach to viruses and can create it at will, George gave them a silent thumbs up. With its bright blinding overhead lights, the overwhelming aroma of rubbing alcohol and ammonia, the clinking of test tubes it felt to all of the senses like a carbon copy of the laboratory George envisioned in Flagstaff Conspiracy.

As for its operator, DeVree exited his office, interrupting George as he was just about to read the most recent research report, the date of report upgraded from three years ago to today. "So what are you doing here, when Cal said he'd take care of all of these pedestrian details?"

"I was...in the neighborhood," George replied, unexpectedly testing his Nick voice for the first time, his gaze captured by a rat in a cage marked 'low dose' teetering on his unbalanced feet, about to go into a grand mal seizure. "And I wanted to check on the welfare and happiness of our employees," he continued, noting DeVree looking suspiciously at the thick hairpiece covering his thinly-haired head.

"You mean the two legged guinea pigs?" DeVree asked. "Who we got legal enough consent to obtain, from some of them anyway." The results of the clinical trials are...here," he continued, digging out a paper from the middle of the 'to be submitted for press' file. "Which of course, we'll publish as we have to according to your, I mean, Cal Wilson's time table, which I assume is the same."

"As far as I know," George said, while reading the reports about populations of coded human patients from prisons, poverty stricken regions of 'shithole' countries in Africa, ultralow income regions of North America cities and psych facilities which were now being used to 'treat' delusional patients suffering from 'Societal and Self Destruction Disorder', some of which George recognized as Comrades who had disappeared without a trace. "Or as far as I...hmm...determine," George added in Nickese, an authoritative tongue that now, to his horror, came too easily to him.

“And Cal, I mean, Mister Petrakis, what are your new directives?” DeVree asked.
“What do you want?”

George hesitated before giving an answer to that question from such a powerful inquirer. He was tempted to say, “I want to go back in time to give Nick a heart transplant, or me a brain transplant so I could see what he would grow up to become.” Then there was “I want God to take a look at how masochistic and underachieving He is.” And of course, “I want a love potion to make Lorena, who still keeps not answering my calls, to tell me why she prefers to stay with Father John than me, Nick or herself.” But the words coming from his mouth were delivered with a warm, inviting and paternal smile. “I’d like to treat you and all of these two legged assistants here to have a king and queen’s banquet, on me. Here, now.” George presented a card to DeVree,

“I don’t recognize the address,” DeVree said.

“A new place in town, I picked out especially for you, Nobel Prize winner DeVree,” he said with a courtly bow, after which he turned to the busy beaver army of technicians. “And I insist that all of you accept my invitation to the best banquet you ever experienced, and the rest of the day off, in appreciation of everything you have done, are doing and will do, from tomorrow onward,” Comrade Schlep George proclaimed as King Nick regarding the yacht parked at little used pier, operated by Captain-Chef Vinny Bellinise, the redneck greaser bully who Nick did a Ghandi on decades ago in High School, who recently left his US Army Chaplin post and found his way to joining the Revolution so he could save rather than be instrumental in taking lives. A yacht which would take the diners outside of national waters where they would be asked gently about the scoop on C disease, and Nick, then requested in ways that were not so kind if they lied or decided to be close lipped.

After the technicians finished their immediate tasks, and, at George’s insistence, complete feeding the rodents in the lab lunch and dinner, he locked the door behind him, and looked over the facility. He took pictures of the appropriate documents, carefully placed C-inducing virus vials into his oversized briefcase, removed samples of the three new ‘cures’ and two vaccines that had been presumably developed, then noticed a safe in DeVree’s office. It was locked. George felt like kicking himself in the ass for neglecting to spot it, and request that it be open while he was still there.

“I can open it,” George heard from a voice behind him. A very angry female voice that he recognized all too well, followed by the distinctive footsteps of CEO stiletto heels. “But so far, I didn’t want to,” Deanna, a key victim as well as witness in the fabricated sexual assault and fraud case against George, continued. Her long straggly never been combed hair was now a neatly trimmed alluring shoulder length bob, her worn out jeans bargain basement teeshirt replaced by a low cut black bodycon faux leather dress, with Ph.D., M.D. and prestigious academic letters after her name that George didn’t recognize. “And you know why?” she continued, folding her arms and leaning back on the wall in full power pose.

“Because you don’t want to bite the hand that feeds and frees you?” George replied, trying his best to still portray himself as Nick.

Deanna pulled her lips back into her mouth, holding in her words long enough for George to get concerned, then worried then scared.

“Yeah, I thought you’d show up and try a robbery like this, Comrade George,” she finally said with an aristocratic aire, gazing at the booty George was about to leave with. “Which I can’t let us screw up,” she continued, looking up with eyes that turned watery, scared and thankful.

“How you...know? Bad wig? Bad bubbly belly? Badly fitting suit?” George inquired, doing a once over on his attire.

“Good, kind and defiant eyes,” Deanna replied. “That I hope have enough love in them to forgive me,” she begged.

“I’m horrible at being a manipulative asshole, so I have no choice but to be an honest...hmmm...schlep,” George replied, apologetically.

“Comrade Professor Philosopher King schlep who I should have listened to,” Deanna said, turning around, requesting that George unzip her dress.

“With hands that he tried to keep to himself as much as possible, the still fun-fearing and affection-avoiding George unzipped her dress, seeing, feeling and smelling whip marks on it.

“From Nick?” George demanded to know.

“His...associates,” she related. “And a few from myself for letting Nick pull me into all of this. But...”

Deanna seemed to hear something. Pulling away from George, turned off a nearly silent alarm behind a picture of Albert Einstein about to count down to zero, then opened the safe. Inside were vials which she replaced with identical other ones, probably fake cures and C inducing agents much like Erica in Flagstaff Conspiracy used to foil the bad guys. More research papers which she allowed George to take picture of. And stacks of money, which she placed into George’s briefcase, replacing it with counterfeit bills.

“Now, it’s your turn to get out of here, please,” Deanna said, zipping her dress up partially. “The back way,” she said.

“Both our turns to get out of here,” George insisted, taking Deanna by the hand, drawing her into his arms and looking into her eyes. “You know that I always wanted to love you,” he said. “But...”

“I know. Protocol prevented it.”

“Not anymore,” George proclaimed, after which he kissed Deanna, on the lips. He felt no resistance, and merged into Deanna with the kind of Light and Liberating oneness he had experienced with the still missing Lorena. After an intense four seconds that felt like forty thousand, he withdrew, trying to assess her response to that completely unexpected development of the day. “And now?” he asked her.

“We walk slowly out the back door of this soon to be shut down institute,” Deanna said, leading George out the office into the lab. Where she heard another alarm, one loud enough for George and even the most sedated rats to detect. Deanna froze.

“It’s a technical problem in my facility,” George said as Nick. “I own this place, and don’t have to hide from anyone.”

At Deanna’s insistence, the casual stroll out of the lab, down the staircase to fire exit turned into a brisk trot, then a dead out run. In which Deanna tripped on her heels, pulling George down with him to the final rung of stairs to a door that was openable. In a roll that threw off his Nick hairpiece, pushed out brother’s bubba belly and opened up the upscale looking suit revealing a large Salvation Army ‘marked down 80%’ tag. As for the goods he had taken, they were still intact. With eyes closed, but to a painful ankle and matching agonizing shoulder, he reached for the briefcase, only to have his good wrist crushed by the feet of the security guard he had given the proudest nod to on the way in.

“George Petrakis, you are under arrest,” George heard in a gruff voice, after which he felt a thump on the back of his neck that pulled him into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER 19

“So, I leave it to you as to what sentence I should get, and how history will remember me, which is more important to me now,” the Petrakis prisoner said to Father John as his final word on many and all matters, laying down the notebook, pen and microphone to the recording unit.

“But I think you are still leaving an important part of your defense and prosecution out, Nick,” Father John pointed out, stroking his beard in a very kind fatherly manner.

*“Maybe you’ve been smoking too much incense from the alter, Father,” the reply.
“Can’t you see that I’m George? In here for destructive crimes against the status quo which MUST be maintained? Crimes that included conspiracy to engage in guerilla biowarfare against the establishment, industrial terrorism, robbery, and why? Because I went mad! With an incurable socially-disruptive disease that is only stopped by being executed. But as in the 1848 revolutions, the kings and capitalists will win in the world as it is now, wealth and power being their reward, martyrdom and knowing I did the right thing at the time of transitioning to whatever is beyond this life my compensation?”*

“You would like for the world to think that, Nick, but I know you are not George.” Father John asserted, leaning inward to the accused who was already convicted by three courts, and about to have that fate sealed by a fourth.

“Because why?” the condemned prisoner spat back.

Father John moved his stare above the eyes of the accused. “Your head,” he said, pointing to the crown of his own head, then walked to the door, insuring that it was well locked from the inside. “That you purposely shaved...the stubs growing in are black, and everywhere. George’s hair turned grey and fell out on the crown....So do you want me to tell YOU the rest of the story?” He fell back into his chair, folding his arms, demanding a truthful answer.

“Sure, why not,” the prisoner blurted out, with a condescending eyeroll. “As Karl AND Groucho Marx said, I have nothing to lose but my chains,” he continued, clicking the metal bracelets still on his wrists.

Father John stroked his chin again, then glanced at the tape recorder. As he reached for it, the prisoner, with a violent movement he had not shown with voice or action, placed two clenched fists over it.

“Alright then,” the good father said to the maybe good or maybe bad prisoner whose soul and fate lay in his hands. He leaned back on his chair, in the manner he did when he was a 30 going on 75 year old priest lecturing to the Petrakis kids at Sunday School. “You, Nick Petrakis, met with your brother George in a very secret holding area within the Institute, after being called there by a security guard whose wife died from untreated

C disease and whose son, a rookie cop, was killed by a mob of 'have nots' storming a hospital that was selling the cure to the rich, deserving and/or selected."

Father John noted the no smoking sign on the wall, then turned to the smoke alarm next to it. With a quick, assertive and angry jolt, he ripped the cords off the base, checking inside to see how many microphones were in it. After dismantling both of them with a stomp of his boot-heel, Father John reached into his Cassock and pulled out two cigarettes, then lit it, offering one to the prisoner, who smoked it in the same three finger hold manner that Nick did when he was an alter boy behind the Church when he 'burrowed' a smoke from the good Father's secret stash. Such confirmed enough for him to keep going in his hypothesis. "George explained the details of what Cal and Devree was doing, suggesting that maybe you didn't know about it."

"Which was partially true, and partially not true," Nick related, and confessed.

"But, as George pointed out and as you probably knew, it was for the benefit of your old family with Lorena and the one you could have with him," Father John said between long, pensive puffs. "But as the captain of a ship that you thought was doing good for the world, you felt responsible for all the bad it had done, was doing and would continue to do, no matter what you wanted to do. The epidemic which would keep the rebellious 'have nots' submissive, and the 'have's' in control, was well underway. And the only way to stop it was to sneak George away to a safe, secure location where he could continue his work curing the disease that DeVree and Cal formulated, and, according to George, couldn't stop, because the long term side effects of your money making treatment would be unstoppable, and deadly."

"Which I believe is true," Nick said, now halfway through his cigarette. "But even if it wasn't, true," he said looking upward. "He knew that if he was convicted, and fried, by my courts, the people would rise up against me. ALL of them this time."

"With George taking your place in the world, to correct what you did? And what you set in motion with other industrial bosses, elitist demons and political tyrants?" Father John inquired with as understanding tone as he could for the repentant sinner whose penance had to be both effective, to save the world, and excessive, to insure Nick even a job as a spat on Colored Maid scrubbing toilets in the afterlife.

"I don't know what George will do," Nick said as he rose from his chair and looked at the outside world through a window he seemed to be imagining on the hard, steel wall. "But you can tell Lorena and her kids, wherever you have them hidden now, that they can find him here." With a firm hand, Nick wrote down the address and gave it to Father John.

Father John wondered if this was another trap, like Cal intentionally seeing that George got partially falsified research papers on his computer that drew him into committing the robbery that got him finally caught. Or it if was fate, Cal Wilson, Professor DeVree and still unidentified others seeing that the way the villains in George's Flagstaff Conspiracy

novel were about to control the world for the exclusive benefit of their friends and families could actually work. In any case, God was always in the business of delivering opportunity so humans could make decisions that could change the course of humanity, and serve the Almighty's Will which, theoretically anyway, was for good things to happen to and for His two legged, and perhaps even four legged, creations. But for the moment, art had become life, and life was very, very real, requiring Father John to be an active rather than passive instrument of God's Will.

"But there is one thing I do need to know," Father J asked, having finished the smoke, putting it out on his pre-burnt forearm, a form of penance he had adopted as part of his own method of moral bookkeeping with the Accountant upstairs for all the underworld dealings he had to accept, or make, to take care of his own Parish here in America and his family's village back in Greece. "Deanna?" he said, as the burning sensation on his arm reached its peak, then rapidly declined. "What happened to her? What role does she have to play in this?"

"Insurance," Nick replied, with the compassion and creative imagination of his pathologically idealist brother who based more decisions on worlds he couldn't see than those that were in front of his biological eyes. "Deanna is, and will be, his, yours, and, if I'm to be re-incarnated as anything human next lifetime, 'Erica.'"

Father John pursed his lips in confusion.

"The heroine in Flagstaff Conspiracy and The Truth About Lying, Father John." Nick explained to the Priest who still refused to read any book that had the f, s or mf word in it the last chapter of George's novel which, no doubt, would sell more copies after the martyred Revolutionary was officially dead than when he was alive. While doing so, Nick seemed to be more like George than himself by voice, the two finger technique he used to smoke his next cigarette, and the Professorial way he bowed his head and held his chin.

That explanation related that Erica, the protagonist's and secretive old flame, had put fake disease-inducing toxin into the vials that the White Supremacist Shitheads were going to use on unassuming populations who were 'disobedient', and had in her possession real toxin that she would unleash into said Shitheads' gated neighborhoods if any new incurable, or 'miraculously cured' epidemics occurred in lower income neighborhood, upstart third world countries or expendable Indigenous populations living in much needed isolation. Essentially, Mutual Assured Destruction with bioweapons rather than mushroom cloud creating rockets in the ongoing war between the haves and have nots.

"And Deanna, George's incarnation of Erica, is...where?" Father John inquired, seeking to find some solution to end the Mexican standoff with talking rather than threats.

“You just worry about seeing that George gets everything he needs to stop the, I HOPE, naturally occurring C epidemic that’s out there, and any permutations of that disease. Whoever he wants or needs to pass himself off as now, after I gave him a gift card to the best plastic surgeons, forgers and witness relocation people I could find, or buy, he gets,” Nick demanded, after which he took in a large and final puff of his cigarette. “Do you think you can handle that, Father?” Nick, or maybe George in absentia, or asked the Priest who had taken on the spiritual upbringing of the two lads in the past, and who now was a student in their Seminary.

“With God’s help... yes,” Father John answered, pledging what he was not sure he could deliver but determining that he would, one way or the other. “Yes,” he repeated again and again, until idealistic hopes became affirmed ‘no way this can ever fail’ conviction. He turned around, about to share that victory with his new two-souled teacher when said teacher dropped to floor, the still lit cigarette stuck to his frothing, blood-soaked mouth. “Smoking kills,” Nick mused. “As does strychnine,” he continued, opening up his yapper, allowing Father John to see the remnants of a capsule he had opened but not chewed down yet.

Father John fell to his knees attempting CPR, making every deal he could think of with the Almighty to keep Nick in the land of the living as life started to vanish from his eyes. He grabbed hold of the phone on the wall to call for help, but with his last ounce of strength, Nick tore it out of the wall.

“I knew would talk under pressure and give away the whereabouts of my fellow humanity serving Revolutionaries, and others who are just humanity serving people, so I did what was necessary, for humanity, right, Father?” Nick, with terror in his eyes that he tried to overcome with bouts of courage, whatever that was. “Right Comrade Father?” Nick continued, in a George voice, grabbing hold of the Priest for dear life, the ration of the latter he had somehow come up with fading away.

“Right, Comrade George,” Father John assured Nick.

“And suicide is not the coward’s way out. Sometime it’s necessary, right?” Nick blurted out as himself, through spouts of blood and putrid smelling breath. “Like Socrates who voluntarily took hemlock after he....” Nick’s throat closed off, his tongue undulating on its own terms like water pushed by hurricane winds coming from three different directions at once.

“Yes,” Father John assured Nick as he pulled him to his bosom with kind of love only a father, or mother, could have for a son. Even if that son wanted someday to be a mother. “Socrates was sentenced to die because he made too many people start thinking, and the best way for what he said to live beyond him was for him to die. To be immortalized in writing by his student...”

“Plato,” Nick somehow asserted. “A well funded Plato,” he said, pointing to a paper in his pocket. “Take it. Read it..now! And give me your answer...now.

The Seminary and lessons he had to pass on in Sunday school said that life was precious and to be fought for at all costs all of the time. But experience in too many hospices gave Father John another insight into the process of dying. Yes, Nick was ready. Somehow as he was taking in his last painful and final breaths, he was at resolved to face the music, accepting it on its own terms. Whatever dialog he was having with the Almighty while in the land of the living, it was resolved now, and somehow for the better. "Your answer, Comrade Plato?" Nick said, as what was now his last words. "It's an offer you, and my brother, can't refuse," he continued, pushing himself to enjoy a last laugh, and accomplishment.

The offer was something that no sane, ambitious nor altruistic man could refuse. A will bearing Nick's name that said Father John would be a well paid executor of a Will that would pass on control of all of his holdings to 'the people', with a living but only moderately comfortable wage for his family, as long as they 'worked for the people as much as for each other'. With two provisions in it. The first, that Father John will resign from being on the board of the mob owned but administratively necessary 'Greek Children's and Orphan's' fund. The second, that Father John testify that Nick died in a car crash two days hence.

"Yes?" Nick asked as his final words, grabbing hold of Father John's self-burnt forearm with his cold, trembling fingers. "Ne?" he pushed out to the Priest who tried so hard to get him to not only understand but speak Greek at home.

"Malista," Father John assured Nick using the formal respectful form of 'yes' as he prayed Nick's soul out of the land of the living, and hoped to hell that he would not rejoin the dying, or dead, still walking on the earth, a planet with such wondrous potential, as long as you allowed your eyes to see what only the soul, and not the brain, could envision.