

LIBERATING LIBERATORS

By

MJ Politis, Ph.D.

mjpolitis@yahoo.com

copyrighted, Oct 15, 2020

all rights reserved

CHAPTER 1

“The Universe never gives you a problem without a solution.” “You can always do SOMETHING to soar up to the stars from anywhere in the abyss.” “Every effort to make things better results in something getting better, or less worse, in the end.” “Open your eyes up wide enough so the light coming in sets fire to the brain.” “You can only find rest in motion itself.” Yes these speculations and for the most part proven hypothesis Larwenz Schaumberg recalled from the books he wrote, the lectures he improvised and coaching he gave thousands of students in his career as perhaps the only professor in New Amsterdam College who could be trusted to teach all subjects in the arts and sciences with full authority of knowledge, experience and wisdom. Except for economics, as he was an expert at losing money, especially when he worked methodically to get it. And of course, accounting and sales, as the below calculus applied arithmetic always baffled Schaumberg’s multi tracked and non linear mind. A mind that was about to collapse on itself. One which was...putting up walls to new expansions so it could still survive. And building self-inhibiting reflexes to new ideas, so it seemed. Or, more accurately, blocks between whatever parts of the brain spread Passion to any of the other portions of that intra-auricular muscle which was the only one he ever wanted to use.

“So, what is your most significant and beloved book, Professor Schaumberg?” the radio interviewer inquired after a usually unforgivable 4 second delay, this time not looking at his notes, breaking the deadly yet sustaining Silence in the white-walled, sterile-smelling and, according to the masked guards outside anyway, covid-free recording studio. “The one book of so many you wrote that you love the most, and are most passionate about.”

“A universally unanswerable question asked of so many,” Lawrence replied, after several strokes of his still more brown-grey than white chin whiskers. “As for any writer, or artist working in any canvas, the correct answer to what is your favorite work. The one where Passion and wisdom, fire and form, yin and yang, and the two eternal big bangs or positivity and negativity. It should be the book, film or painting of your ex-lover that looks better than he or she ever did in person which you are working on right now.”

“And that current Opus of yours is...what?” the Media Arts/Political Science major whose hands on courses were now ALL on line interviewer asked, requesting an answer for himself and the reel he was making so he could get a job in REAL rather than community radio. A job where he would be paid in money he could rather than merely compliments to treat his sometimes growing, but always fragile, self-esteem. And of course, asked on behalf of humanity. Which meant whoever was listening in their car, home or work-office at home. Which, as long as it was someone, even one person, was enough for the DJ, and Schaumberg.

“It’s a...hmmm” Lawrenz answered, lingering on the latter sound so as to allow another thought to materialize. One that would still connect him to the world as it is, if he used a universal perspective, opening up all circuits of the mind so it could come up with an

answer which would be relevant and true. “It’s a work in progress,” Lawrence finally said, hiding of course the real subject of his new book. One that had no defined setting yet. No character sketches intrinsic to a fluid structural idea or ideal. No Life big L to it. All of course based in the fact that the once Passionate writer who could be passionate about so much was finally...too tired, or perhaps dead inside, to really get passionate about anything. The best the double Ph.D.’d and tenured to death Professor in the Cerebral Arts and Neurological Sciences could do was to ‘assertively do his Spiritual and Humanistic Duty’ to insert ideals into factual accounts with his scientific writings, or real life facts into his fiction. Of course, so far, restricting fiction to non-medical writing and research reports, though inserting as much wit as the journals allowed, wanting above all to insert that element which he and the world needed most---humor.

But all of that was discourse in Lawrenz’s head. That overlapping dialog between his mind, brain and soul now felt the bottom of the well in the theoretically infinite underground stream of new ideas in the arts and science. It, along with Lawrenz’s sense of ‘humor’, was now bone dry. So, as all over-published and under-inspired academics do, he dug into his student. This time, the interviewer. “Let’s talk about what YOUR most recent opus is,” he asked the host. “What you value most, hate most, and fear most. And how it is calling you to offer some solutions to a world filled with a whole lot more problems than a virus that kills people’s bodies, and political repercussions that are doing a lot more to deaden and control their spirit.”

Tempted to extrapolate, rather than innovate, Lawrenz held his dry, salty and foul tasting tongue, allowing the interviewer, whose name he had forgotten, to talk about his own opinions about life, the world and, of course, the virus. And its effects on people, biologically and otherwise. The interviewer filled the microphone with passionate opinions, most obtained by reading on the internet rather than living them. Such resulted in the phone board lighting up. And this time it was NOT from the technical staff telling the DJ that the mic was off. It filled up the rest of the time slot, allowing Lawrenz to leave the radio station still perceived as a sort of genius-in-the-trenches in his time. But feeling more like a well preserved 60 year old corpse than a re-inspired leader for the revival of past Revolutions he had lived through as a Passionate but generally ineffective participant who never chose his battles carefully, nor really won. But, as least it was in those golden days of his youth and silver era into middle age, Passion.

But to regain Passion, Fire and Creativity, big C, Lawrenz was told on many occasions by people on both sides of the academic podium that required ‘dis-inhibition’ could be reinserted by various means. A big swig of scotch, a triple sized peyote subway token a places beyond normal imagination, a Herclean-sized snort of cocaine-flavored snow, a large toke of weed or a boink in the hay with a woman with queen sized breasts as well as an experimental LGBT affair with a queen were amongst the suggestions. But, such tricks worked, theoertcally anyway, for earthlings. Not Martians like Lawrenz who knew all too well the hard but honest truth that without pain, no creative gain.

In the meantime, Lawrenz took the bus home, keeping his covid mask on of course. And more than social distanced from the other passengers. Existing rather than living.

Experiencing fewer and fewer moments of being Alive between the bridges of procedure, lifelessness, passivity and comfort conferring but challenge-less samo-samo between life and death, those bridges getting longer and longer, with no exit ramp in sight.

CHAPTER 2

The Universe worked against its better interests and, presumably, Spirit-endowed efforts to improve itself when it put the overactive mind and inquisitive soul of ‘Martian’ Dan Ivanowitch into the body of a baby born to small-minded parents whose perspective were limited by the small town in the still more wooded than populated or prosperous Adorondacks. Indeed, as soon as Dan could read, 3 years earlier than any other child in Pleasantown, New York, and two years before his ‘smart enough to fit into the system rather than to fight it’ very ‘sensible’ earthling sister, he started writing his own books in his head.

His first reading of Superman comics, and at a later age, ‘Of Lions and Lambs’, opened up the possibility that indeed, he was from a different planet far far away. Dropped off into the wrong yard by a spaceship that lost its way once its radar was screwed up by broadcasts of mind-numbing, toe-tapping and innovative-killing pop country music sent up into the stratosphere by the Christian Revival Radio network. His birthday wish each year was to find the planet which his Enlightened ET maternal and fraternal unit had intended to send him to. His second choice hope and prayer to something a lot more believable than the picture of Jesus his presumably biological parents placed in his room to ‘look after him’ was that he would be adopted by parents who were connected to the distribution network through which musicians, writers and performers so what he had to offer the world actually be heard by the masses. And heard by more than just a few other isolated internet prescribers to his website, the local yokals in Pleasantown or his most avid listener and most trusted friend, the family dog, ‘Buddy’. He postulated that the hound was probably incarnated from another displaced hyper-intelligent and therefore crucified or misunderstood humanoid alien, worthy of a far classier name as well as species to take care of him.

As for the why the currently 22 year old self-taught genius who taught himself modern technology and historical visionaries outside of every classroom, whose IQ was well above anyone who tested it, was not successful in finding a way to get out of Pleasantown, the best explanation lay in perhaps in a past lifetime his having been an Atlantian based ‘god’ who neglected to use his powers of intellect to help mere mortals, or to give a shit about them. Karmic payback, with more debts to still pay, with interest accrued as a result of getting involved with the wrong earthlings.

But for the present moment in the time-space continuum, it was about the smell of used body parts no one wanted, recycled for human consumption with spice to make the desire for that carnivorous process strong, necessary and irresistible. “You see these hot dogs?” Dan’s uncle Lev said to him from behind his 20 year old portable Slavic Delight Sausage stand just north of 59th street in Central Park. “The best hotdogs in the big Crab Apple!” the wrinkle-faced, finally-balding old fart with a muscular body below the neck that refused to acknowledge its having defiantly done battle with 60 winters boasted of the sausages which were his pride and joy. “Made with meat from sources which I will never tell you nor the New York City health inspectors about, and with special spices from the Old Country that allowed some of us Cossacks able to sell meat to the

Bolsheviks who stole all of our food in 1930. Made those Communist bastards eat their own kind and think it was Ukrainian chicken! Better to serve the Red Army its own slain men than our horses! Horses that we used to flee our beloved village when they figured out what we did to turn the tables against them!” the only member of the Ivanowitch clan to remain in an urban location after coming to Ellis Island told his nephew.

Uncle Lev went on and on about how his colorfully dysfunctional father and grandfather survived the Stalinist Holocaust in the Ukraine that few Ukrainians talked about, even in the 21st century. And were immortalized in the presumably fictional account of their turning the tables on their captors while still remaining moral Christians in the 21st century novel entitled ‘The Telenkopian Experiment’. It was a presumably fictional account about how morally innovative nearly starved to death Ukrainian villagers turned the tables on their Red Army masters by using the town gypsy-whore to determine which of them was worthy of living after a roll in the hay and who deserved to be converted into stew to be fed to keep their children alive. As well as the dreams of the Ukrainian Cossacks keeping their bold, self-ruling ancient horse culture Alive for any generation who chose to establish it again in the world of forms rather than merely in their hearts. A largely un-recognized for thinking readers only convoluted tale of humanity, horror, hard earned-humor and human resilience of the human that was clandestinely read to Dan in his childhood by Uncle Lev as if both he and Dan was there themselves!

But no matter how colorful Uncle Lev and his tales of heroism of past ages on the Steppes were, the colorfully dysfunctional souls Dan was most interested in were the humanoid life forms in Central Park. On this, Dan’s first time in New York CITY population 10 million, which felt so different than stranded in ‘can’t find any road that doesn’t bring you back home’ Upstate New York, population dwindling. The sight of so many people, each walking with a different stride! The smell of so many fumes of the city which on first whiff made your mouth cough and your eyes water, but then opened up circuits in the brain behind the olfactory nerves leading to it! Even with a covid mask on! And the sight of small meetings in the Park evolving into demonstrations. Each of them gathering more and more people of Passion and commitment. Dan could even feel the vibrations of the earth speaking to him here, stronger than any underground river or fast flowing waterfall in the Spring melt down upstate.

“It’s the subway train,” Uncle Lev said to Dan, knocking his shoulder so that the rest of his body would also feel the call back to ‘reality’. Then motioned for the only other colorfully-expressive, non-money making member of the Ivanowitch family to tend to putting relish, mustard and a sprinkle of beans onto a hot dog for rich customers. This time I was for a stunning blonde woman in a low cut designer dress and a fine looking older gentleman in a black leather jacket. “And spit on it for good luck,” Lev whispered to Dan behind the Russian couple’s back. After which, Lev turned around with a big smile and overcharged them for the delicacies.

Dan of course obeyed Lev. He heurled out a toothbrush sized wad of sputum on the hot dog for the immaculately and expensively dressed Moscoviste gentleman who looked at him like he was a servant. Then led loose with an even bigger wad of spit on the

Ukrainian sausage sandwich for the gentleman's arm candy supermodel young woman, who stared down at the Upstate 'hick' smelling of horse and cow like he was a piece of excrement from their ass. Spitting on the food the rich sell to the poor for prices that will enable you to pay the rent but never be able to buy a house was a form of rebellion Dan agreed with. Indeed, he was a fan of rebellion, particularly when it became Revolution by being associated with a noble Cause.

How lucky Dan felt himself to be for Uncle Lev to insist that he spend some time with him in the Big Crab Apple, even during Covid Season. For reasons that Dan didn't know. Yes, he did sense that there was something wrong with Uncle Lev when he was coughing up blood, insisting that it was not covid, but an allergy to being around too many rich, snobby people his own age, and entitled lazy humans who had not reached the 'final life decision' age of 25. And Dan did see a ripped unpaid bill from the May- something or Clinic at Lev's apartment tossed into the garbage. Still, after serving two more couples, working class stiff who got extra toppings and at a reduced cost, Dan had to know what was going on with his always expressive yet highly secretive uncle.

"Why did you bring me here?" Dan finally inquired after taking in deep breath of city air, feeling three different kinds of new courage in his lungs as well as no doubt twice as many lung-killing toxins.

"Your grandfather would have wanted you to have a solid profession. A Calling," prompt reply from the hard working Uncle, with averted eyes, who was always too busy to come Upstate for American or Ukrainian Christmas, as he scraped off the grill behind him, sweat pouring down his temples.

"As a hot dog salesman?" Dan asked.

"It's a living," the reply from Lev, with a quiet satisfaction in his life tired but still somehow bright eyes, a smile cracking into his overly wrinkled face.

"Or an existence," Dan pointed out. "You stayed here as a writer. A musician. A filmmaker."

"Which I am," Lev asserted with an arched back, raising a defiant finger up the sky, as if declaring to any snooty New York literary agent, Russian oligarch back home or 'don't work too hard, Sir' clerks at Starfucks that he would never surrender his Passion nor accept the limitations the world or 'sound reason' required of him. "But so it seems now, I am a writer, musician and filmmaker in the service of generations to come, I suppose," the old Cossack continued with an even deeper commitment. The old man then looked at the young one with yearning in his heart speaking words that echoed into Dan louder than any of the boom boxes in the park, or speeches made by now opposing factions of demonstrators being kept from each other by Police and Army Reservists. "But my job is to put wisdom that transcends politics into words, music and images. Where they are heard, and put into practice, that is up to a higher wisdom. And..."

Dan could feel Lev's two biological portholes as well his third eye on penetrate into him, diving deeper and deeper into secrets about Dan's present. With a fire that was about to re-write every agenda and known for certain doctrine in his mind. But just before that flame was about to set fire to the first of Dan's "I'm sure I can do this with no problem and know I'm not going to fuck it up" list, he could smell then see another customer came up to the stand, asking for a hot dog. "I haven't eaten for three days," a young man with a wrinkleless face covered with slime, smelling of low tide, said as he hobbled in with a 6 string guitar reduced to 4 functional ones. "But I collected this for busking outside of the UN. Singing songs about peace, and love, and peace and love in a beautiful musical voice, before I got robbed," the raggedy clad homeless musician said with a hoarse voice. He handed Dan a collection of coins of various denominations. Dan put the coins back into the busker's guitar picking blister-covered paw, then reached into his own pocket, putting ten dollars into Uncle Lev's unlabelled collection cash box. Meanwhile, Lev retrieved two of the largest sausages of uncertain origin from the grill, laid them into two large beds of his freshest two day old bread, then dipped deep into each of the pans of toppings, then lovingly placed the overload hot dogs into the musician's other hand.

"Thank you, honorable Sir," the homeless young man said the never to leave home other one, after which the former bowed and made a quick exit into a crowd of tourists.

Dan felt proud of himself. He had felt and done something. "Yes, I've helped out in the War against Homelessness," he thought to himself as his hands did what the mouths of so many Upstate and Downstate New Yorkers would call 'enabling the already helpless' or 'overfed lazy losers who don't need any more feeding at everyone else's expense'. "But I have to help ALL of the homeless. Not just one," Dan whispered to himself, looking with envy at the leaders of a walking, sometimes socially distanced, but still masked protests carrying signs showing pics of homeless camps in the Big Crab Apple which never reached the news broadcasts.

"Sometimes helping just one at a time is all we can do for any Cause," Lev interjected, with defeat and remorse in his voice. "Political banter is about facts, not wisdom. And is ultimately ineffective. When did you ever hear anyone WIN a political argument?" he continued as he tended to serve an Asian family of six pointing to what they wanted. Then ordered, with his eyes and ever pointing index finger, for Dan to assist him in the 9 to 5 day job he had, in less ways than he originally intended, integrated with his life-time Calling.

"But I want to do something important!" Dan barked out. "Like you did!"

"And do," Lev replied. Noting that the Asians were talking amongst themselves, he continued, apparently thinking he was not being heard by them. "But which side am I on? It's always the wrong side. If I say Black Lives Matter, I'm are discriminating against well meaning White people and the large number of well meaning, white Cops out there. If I say ALL lives matter, then the Blacks say I'm are a racist. If I say Covid is a plague that will kill everyone in the world next week, you are a leftist Commie Socialist. If I say that we all have to live with and develop a natural immunity to the

virus, I'm a Make America Great fascist Trump supporting Capitalist who puts profit before health lives. If I say Global Warming is the biggest danger to the planet, I'm shutting down every industry that feeds humanity, including cows that shit methane into the atmosphere. If I Global Warming is a hoax, they say I have a stockpiled Ark somewhere in Nevada that I'll go to live in next week when the oceans overflow all but the highest peaks in the Rockies. If you fought against Fascism in World War Two on the Eastern Front, you were fighting for that bastard Stalin who starved a third of the Ukraine into death ten years before that war. If you joined the Red Army to fight Hitler, you were a hero who, if you dared to surrender if captured, were to be shot for cowardice on Stalin's special order number... ”

Dan listened to every argument about being Passionate about every political issue he knew about, and many he didn't, and couldn't. But there was one issue that was clearly about right and wrong that Uncle Lev didn't say anything about, and couldn't. Dan's eyes were caught a young woman's face on a protester's sign as he passed from the East side of the Park to the West. 'Free Lorena', read the blood red inscription under the blown up photo of the beautiful girl whose hands were bound. Her back was slashed with a whip. Around her neck was a dog collar, pulled by men in black hoods.

The leader of the mobile demonstration was a woman with a pronounced limp in her step, scars on her cheeks, a ring of burn tissue around her neck, and very determined eyes, one of which could not open completely. "Free Lorena!" she declared with unbridled rage and self determination.

"One of thirty million woman in modern day slavery" the next protestor's sign said, put into sound by a young man who resembled Dan himself, save for his unripped jeans and jacket that actually fit his muscular physique. "They could all be your daughters," said the third protestor, proudly displaying a sign showing the faces of women of all races, and ages, in a collage that revealed the suffering in their collective soul. The carrier of that sign was an unblemished beautiful 19 year old girl with long, red hair down to her waist, strode up to the charismatic young man in front of her, taking him by the arm.

"Free all sex slaves, now!" the 19 year old groupie and the 20 something super-stud shouted to the watchers of the impromptu march. Three beats later, they were joined by the rest of the people holding signs. Then ten times the number of observers who held up pamphlets regarding the Cause that had been given to them en route. They shouted out to the heavens, and whatever humanity was till listening. And then to the disinterested spectators who were not listening. Then to a group of brown skinned Semitic looking men gathered around just shooting the breeze, speaking Arabic to each other, who they accused of being the enslavers. Then to the Police who tried to stop them from ramming their Free Sex Slave posters into the chests of the angry Arabs. The woman carrying Lorena's picture fell to the ground, her banner collapsing with her.

"Free all the Lorenas now!" Dan self observed himself saying, and committed to. Feeling drawn to a Cause that couldn't be ignored, he allowed his feet to carry his body to the middle of the protest. Defying Uncle Lev's orders, commandments and pleas, Dan

lifted the scarred and now scarred lead woman off the ground, feeling like a knight in shining armour. Then, like a Cossack fighting the Imperial Czarist Army back in the days of the Pugachev revolt of 1774. He lifted up the sign, shouting out to all who can hear him, particularly his Uncle Lev, 'Free ALL the Lorena's Now!' ripping off his covid mask.

A crowd gathered around Dan, this Dan being the center of the crowd. All ripped off their covid masks. Indeed, he felt like a real life hero. He then heard his zealously apolitical Uncle calling out to him, as if to order him back home after doing something stupid, destructive and embarssaing. Taking the commitment further Dan defiantly looked at Uncle Lev, awaiting a look of extreme and paralytic disapproval. But for reasons Dan was not sure of, Lev was proud of him, giving him a wide smile and a bold thumbs up.

Dan then felt a thud in his chest. He looked at his assailant, contemplating what he would do to the largest bear sized Arab in the chauvinistic bunch of woman abusers. Dan found himself instantly trying to figure out how, as a five foot 6 humanoid with a body made for thinking and mind for artistic expression, would be able to stand up to brutish enslaver of women. Be it by letting himself get hit in the head, or finding a vulnerable place in this Semitic Goliath's anatomy that would bring him down. But certainly not running away. Such would make Dan unworthy to be in the company of the other demonstrators.

But running away was what the rest of the Anti-Slavers did. Dan was left alone, to face a large framed man in a green uniform this time, pointing his tazer gun at Dan's head. "Your' coming with us, son," he said with a New York City diction which felt like Redneck Mississippi Cop as he grabbed hold of Dan's long hair, pushing him to the ground. After which Dan felt cuffs go on his own wrists. And imagined himself in bondage.

Dan did not know what to do. Uncle Lev ran over with a bin full of money to bail him out, but another wall of green uniformed well armed soldiers and cops came between him and his nephew.

Dan felt both accomplished and scared. "You only know yourself after you've been in war or jail," he recalled reading somewhere. And even writing in the many songs he tried to have heard on community radio, then over youtube. Having been denied access to Life in lifeless Pleasantwon, Dan had never experienced either of these challenges and opportunities. But before anything could be decided...he heard from a real world voice that sounded like it came from somewhere far more enlightened than planet earth.

"He's with me, I'll take care of it," came into Dan's overloaded and hurting ears from a woman with a crisp, dignified yet not too pretentious English accent. She looked at the now torn picture of Lorena with pity, love and...guilt. Upon looking more closely at her face, she seemed old and young both at the same time, the wrinkles around her probably middle aged coral green eyes enhancing rather than diminishing her beauty, all framed by

a shoulder length mane of brown hair topping off a body that didn't have an ounce of excess fat on it. Such was made the more other worldly by a black leather cape she wore around her plain blue blouse and black skirt. Reaching into her knee-high boots, she retrieved a large sum of money and snuck it to the Head Goliath NYPD Cop, which was refused. Then, from the mysterious depths of her thinly covered ample cleavage she pulled out a business card. Upon reading the latter, the Cop decided to pocket the money, then comply with her request as an eagerly willing subordinate and a colleague, asking what he could do for her, in Spanish. Before he could say '00 what the fuck', Dan felt his hair released from the militarily uniformed civilian Cop 'peacekeeper's' bearlike paws. Then his wrists free of the cuffs. And away from the sight of the green and blue uniformed law enforcement officers as they scattered back into the sometimes social distancing, sometimes not so, crowds of pedestrians enjoying the first stage of 'reopening' of their beloved and hated city. Tending to their duties of giving summons to those not wearing masks in a town where everyone yearned to express themselves with their mouth, or not maintaining appropriate distancing in one of the densest populated cities in the world.

"I trust you're alright?" the English super-something asked Dan, as a lover, older sister and mother.

"I think so," Dan said, feeling all of his limbs once again connected to his body, though a bit more painful than before he jumped into the pool of being a participant in world events in the epicenter of where it was all happening after spending so much time behind an Upstate computer watching it.

"So, we carry on then," the British bombshell twice his age said with a welcoming smile that revealed even more of her alluring features. She extended her outstretched palm to his aching shoulder, easing the pain and electrifying it, both at the same time. "I have instructions to take good care of you."

Dan pondered exactly what she meant by 'good care' as she led him to a suddenly sparsely populated clearing in the Park at which there was a limo waiting. Many thoughts entered into his mind as to what was really going on. The first was that perhaps Uncle Lev had paid top dollar, or maybe his last dollar, for a high end experienced hooker to show him what the world was like outside of Pleasantown, New York. Perhaps as a reward for committing his body to a Cause in the real world rather than safely sending out posts calling for Empowerment, Enlightenment and Liberation of humanity on social media. Or, maybe it was just dumb luck. Or maybe this reincarnation of Emma Peel from the old Avenger series was real, and he was being transported into a realm of fantasy which was entirely possible, as Dan did sneak in a few mushrooms providing more than just flavor into the omelet he had for breakfast. In any case, he had to ask one question before being escorted into a Volkswagan with tinted glass that zoomed its way over a small lawn that felt like Strawberry Fields.

"Who are you?" Dan asked the woman.

“Someone sent by a mutual ally, friend and Comrade,” the reply. “Eto horosho?” she continued in perfectly accented Russian. “Who ya’ll will meet soon enough,” she assured him with an accent that was as pure Texan as he ever heard, or imagined.

CHAPTER 3

“So, my name really is Emma,” the mystery-caped dominatrix heroine, now clad in a Canadian Maple Leaf bearing tee shirt and skinny jeans, said as she brought a pot to the two guests at her kitchen table with mismatched chairs in her sparsely-decorated Soho apartment, in a generically plain Canadian accent, allowing no trace of any distinctive Province in the country which America liked, needed and knew so little about. “And you are, or so you say you are...who again?” she asked her guests.

“Someone who thought you dropped out of the system for good, following the advice that I gave and were too scared to do myself,” Lawrenz Schamburg said to his favorite former graduate student.

“And someone who wants to know what, or who, this meat in this stew came from,” Dan Ivanowitch added as he smelled the amply helping of stew being put into his plate, feeling the hunger in his belly. “And maybe someone who knows why my phone went dead on me!” the Millennial barked out as he tried so desperately to get the main tool he used to communicate with the world to work again.

“It must have broken when the Cops pulled you to the ground,” Emma explained, calmly.

“I don’t know,” Dan protested. “Everything else on my phone works except the wifi and satellite feed. I feel...feel so...”

“...Isolated? Cut off from the world?” Lawrenz replied in a Professorial manner. In that same all knowing way he used to ‘allow’ Emma to learn on her own and discover her own universes by maneuvering her into thinking just like he did. While eating the stew that Emma recalled he liked more than having a lecture hall filled with woman laugh at his jokes or swoon after his ass, the burnt out cynical Old Professor said, baiting the young still passionate idealist into ‘a life or death encounter death truth, “You feel stranded on a strange island you have no control of and can’t find your way out of?”

“Like she does,” Emma interjected, pointing to the only item on the wall. A portrait of Lorena in bondage, painted by her own hand with as much accuracy as any photograph and as much pathos as any envisioned image of what that 21 young women now in the hands of the slave traders passing around to dirty old men was going through. Emma observed Dan’s dedication to saving her, and all the Lorena’s. Something Emma had never seen in the Professor she in her ‘coming up the system’ years had learned to respect, like, love, hate, be indifferent to. Yes, Lawrence was feeling Passionate about something again. According to plan. A plan which Emma, and Life, coordinated to put into motion to serve many people’s agendas.

“I’m in this to liberate one person at a time,” asserted the University Prof who was finally pulled out of the library, and his own, of late, non-productive writing room.

“Your daughter, Lorena?” Emma said. “Whose picture you recognized on the news when the cameras were taking footage of the only protestors in the Park who were honoring social distancing and mask wearing. When you were watching...”

“...The comedic, satirical cooking show you managed to get on the air,” Lawrenz shot back. “An interesting coincidence.” He turned to Emma, gazing at, and into her.

“Yes, something Fate does those things,” she proposed, putting up a the first wall between her and Lawrenz so that he would not find out the real secrets she was hiding from him about her, Lorena and the 30 million other enslaved Lorenas, and kidnapped young Lawrenz’ around the world. “But maybe Fate is nothing more than thoughts carried by electricity between thinking minds that want to reach out to others, so they can better be and become themselves.”

Lawrenz put his hand on his chin, feeling secure in the adventure of philosophical ideas about the world rather than living in the material plane that constantly tested them. Dan decided to taste the stew, and liked it, thinking with his young mind as he filled his empty belly. For the moment, neither of the super high IQ men could figure out Emma’s real agenda. If they did, as the expression on the tube went, she indeed would have to kill them. Unless she got killed first of course. But there was one question she had to answer.

“What do you want us to do?” Dan asked, eager for an expansive answer.

“And what do you need us to do?” Lawrence inquired, afraid of the reply.

Emma took in a deep breath, then said something that frightened both of her assistants, as well as herself. “To go outside the box so far that you don’t know where your feet are. To reach and become something we have been seeking our whole lives, and are terrified by once we ‘achieve’ it. Something called...”

“..Freedom,” Lawrence offered, taking the words out of Emma’s mouth.

CHAPTER 4

Upon arriving home to the apartment he still had left after having being a multi-house owner for nearly two decades to pack for, as Emma promised and threatened, 'a long trip to place to places both terrifying and wondrous', Lawrenz found a birthday card slipped under the door. It was addressed in red ink to 'Professor IB Dumb, c/o the real name he used when dealing with fellow humanoids. The return address was 666 River Stykes Road, Helmira, New Jersey, 90210. Lawrenz understood all too well that anywhere in New Jersey to a die hard New Yorker or a down home Montanan was, in its own way, one of the many circles of Hell which mankind created even without the help of Satan and the other no-doubt real or, he hoped and silently prayed anyway, lesser Minions who maintained the perhaps necessary principality of 'evil' so that 'good' could have something to be compared to and sought. As for the zip code named after the zip code for the Hollywood based and originated show about the beautiful people who lived in such misery when things went well for them, and in soul killing emptiness when everything went right for them without a struggle, it arose the suspicion in Lawrence that indeed it was one of his own students who had made it to the big time, yet still knew what the Eternal Now was. Upon smelling the envelope, he noted that the bold calligraphy letters were written in natural blood rather than synthetic ink.

Eager to find out who was such a dedicated writer, scholar or administrator, he reached for a letter opener and cracked open the special delivery package. Inside he found something far worse than an invitation to lecture at the Underground Café' from Satan et al, or a 'worse book ever written' plaque from the ever growing number of Literary Critic societies founded by those who found it easier to use sarcastic wit to bring down humanistic authors than to actually put their own hearts and souls into write de novo works themselves. "Your spoiled, silver-spoon fed princess Daughter is with us, and will be returned it you.." it read, instructing Lawrence to turn flip the sheet to the second page. "...do not tell Emma or the Police about this and..." The third page read, "...pay us everything you stole from us in the amount of..." The fourth page laid out an amount of money that Lawrenz could have paid two decades ago but now was hard pressed to cough up with, even if it was in Monopoly Money currency. But there was a fifth page which read, 'we will be in touch', opening up not only Lawrenz's disbelieving eyes, but the skin on his blister free fingers when they ran across the small shards of glass glued to the sheet.

Panic ran through the usually calm Professor's brain, fear taking over his mind, causing his fingers to shake, his forehead to sweat, his head to feel faint. But somehow, anger, the only emotion he was able to feel during bouts of depression that lasted months on end now, pulled him through. He picked up the phone and called the only person who could give him the information he needed to get Lorena back from her sex-slaver Captors, and to find out where 666 Stykes Road really was.

He had not dialed that number since the first of his thankfully still relatively ample number of grey topknot hairs had stopped being brown. But the muscle memory in his

fingers, as well as numerous acts of good, evil and ‘moral experiments’ in between he had done with them in the past pressed the right keys on his phone.

“Hello?” he heard from a pleasant sounding, socially-comfortable woman’s voice at the other end, recalling a plethora of experiences he had, and hid, from her. “Hello!” she said three times while he let those experiences play out in his now aching head as the room started to spin around him. “Who is this!!!” she demanded.

“It’s ahh...me, Vivian,” Lawrenz replied. “Your ex---”

“—Albatros, cross to bear, burden, piss in my cornflakes, rain on my parade, lower class ten dollars an hour leach who thought he could get rich off my families hard earned millions, sterile in spirit parasite on my soul, bank account and over-caring heart...”

Lawrenz listened, holding his phone away from him, as his ex-wife threw insults at him which were more colorful than any he had written for his fictional characters and had some small, or maybe more than small, element of truth to them. He let her rant on, like the East Side blueblood snob he fell in love with as a public high school grad who had forced, clawed and when absolutely necessary, cheated, his way into the Ivy Towers. He absorbed the insults, out of accepting his due punishment or, perhaps, elevating himself to being a martyr with the Jesus complex he was accused of having on more than one occasion by Jews, Christians and even Buddhists. But when the accusations came around to being a sperm donor who abandoned his daughter at the time she needed him most, he interjected. “It was the JUDGE who gave you complete custody of Lorena, with no visitation rights for me! And it was YOU, according to research I did, who burnt every Christmas and birthday card I sent her before she could see them. And it was YOU who didn’t tell me that, well...”

Lawrenz’s voice broke up. His breath grew shallow and rapid as he recalled the picture of Lorena in captivity in the slave market. He felt the pain in her nostrils. Amelled the desperate fear on her sweat-soaked face and the ‘love juices’ of dirty old men soaking it. And saw in four dimensions the blood coming out of the slashes on her back and the skin under the electric dog collar that the White, Black, Brown and Yellow skinned “Masters” put at full strength if their bitches dared to disobey them.

“You’re upset with me because I didn’t tell you what, Lawrenz?” he heard his wife enquire.

“That Lorena went missing!” the usually calm, reason based seeker of harmony, creativity and knowledge yelled back at the wife who collected art but could not do any of it, and sought as her canvas, the quest of demoralizing anyone close to her who WAS actively creative. “Why didn’t you tell me she was missing! And is suffering now more than any of us can imagine”

“Because you didn’t ask,” Vivian countered, calmly and assertively. “And as for her suffering, she probably deserves it.”

“Do you know what kind of suffering Lorena is probably going through right now!” Lawrenz screamed into the phone. “She’s---”

“---An ungrateful drifter who, like her father, ‘experimented’ with different ‘constructs of morality’. A Bhuddist on Monday, a born again Moslem on Tuesday, a tree hugging Druid on Wednesday, an Atheist on Thursday, a Jews for Jesus on Friday. A ‘love seeking soul’, according to the shrink she manipulated, who is actually a whore. Who will do anything for attention, drugs or a schlep who treats her like a queen when she’s acting like an ungrateful bitch. Who went out in public in outfits that advertised herself as a whore. A Communist bitch whore to be exact who sees it as her responsibility to trick, steal from, then run away from her Capitalist carrying mother, and, yes, sometimes not so loving step father who---“

“---Loved her in the wrong ways?” Lawrenz said. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“You didn’t ask,” Vivian replied, as a school teacher. “And because, well, maybe because some of her genetics are yours, she did deserve. And---”

“—Vivian,” Lawrenz interjected, sitting down, feeling reality hit him in the ass. “I got a ransom note from some dangerous people. Probably in the sex slave trade. Who, according to everything I know...”

“Will return her safe and sound if you pay them large sums of money, and will ‘be in touch’ about the drop off points, right?” the reply. “Yes, I’ve seen that movie too, and—“

“How much money do you have?” he asked. “I need...”

“...They will demand more,” Vivian interjected, seeming to know all too well what the situation was about. “Particularly when they find out she is your daughter. And that you were, thankfully in the past, married to me.”

“So, can you find me some quick moving stock that will make some money?” Lawrenz said. “Maybe I can ransom her back, or maybe...buy her back,” he pondered. “As a sex slaver myself,” he considered, solutions and possible schemes working their way through the black fog of black walls of ‘that won’t work’ circling around his head. “Your family controls the economy.”

“Yes, my family does, but I don’t anymore.”

“Yes, but...” Vivian materialized in the flesh just as Lawrence turned the door, which he had latched from the inside. “I can only do so much from where I am now,” she said, as she walked around the room, more floating on her feet than strolling through the fast food debris wrappings decorating the floor with her \$500 heels with clicks that pounded into Lawrence’s aching ears. She flipped her silver-blonde \$600 hair so as to show off her

\$6,000 jewelry and \$60,000 facelift and custom Parisian face glitter which making Lawrence's bloodshot eyes feel like his pupils were just torched. His nostrils were nauseated by the perfume she left in her wake when sashaying effortlessly with minimal body movements from one place to another as the rich and, according to them anyway, blameless always did. The well and expensively preserved 60 year old socialite who, even in bright light, could appear to be an attractive 40 year old, examined the meager creature comfort possessions which Lawrence now had. And the large number of books, particularly the 'one day to be published somewhere' manuscripts in the arts and sciences which bore his name as bridge-of-those-two-Callings who was never allowed a home on either side of the divide, those Works took up most of the space in the tiny apartment. Vivian looked at the books like they were two for ten buck imitation finger-paintings amidst a collection of classic paintings valued at six figures. She avoiding any attempts for Lawrenz to push her away from his most precious, and secret containing, works, She thumbed through each of them at heart-breaking lightening speed, giving them all a condescending eyeroll as a review.

"Look!" Lawrenz said to the unexpected visitor. "I know you committed suicide. But why?"

"You didn't ask," she said with a witty, condescending smile. "And whatever guilt you have for it, and Lorena has, you both deserve it."

"I have three thousand and fourty eight dollars, in cash!" Lawrenz said, pulling out the stash from a Buddhist text extolling the virtues of poverty. One of the only books that had not been ransacked during two B and Es that yielded the no-goodnick robbers not much more than lunch money. "Give me a stock tip that will make me MAKE money. Not the ones that made me LOSE money like the recommendations you made after we broke up and you said you wanted to get together again!"

"You lost of that last fortune you will ever have yourself," she replied. "You are very good at losing money, particularly when you think with your heart, and not with a sharp blade about to be stabbed into the belly of the competition, or the back of a friend."

Yes, Vivian was right. On the 'living' side of the veil, it still was a might is right world. Perhaps on the other side of the wall that none cross back over from after the last breath, it was the other way around. But Lawrence was determined to save Lorena from that journey. Even if it cost him a trip to River Stykes, New Jersey and a long sebatical in Satanicus Univeritas. It was then that he heard a knock on the door.

"Hey, are you okay?" he heard, from Dan.

"Eh...yeah," a sweat-soaked, parched-mouth Lawrenz said, as he saw Vivian wave goodbye to him. She disappearing into a mist of that was more dirty air than angelic light. Sadness overcame her eyes as she vanished, that most painful suffering that the non-virtuous and non-thinking were possessed by, but didn't even know it.

“Emma is waiting outside, and we have to go, now,” Dan related.

“Yeah, to places outside our own box, or any other box,” Lawrence said, feeling to be, as Buckminster Fuller said, a powerful verb rather than a stagnant, self-inhibiting and comfortable noun. “To save our Lorena.”

“You mean ALL of the Lorenas,” Dan gently asserted.

Lawrenz resolved himself to deal with one perspective at a time. Perhaps he would have the luxury of putting into practice the Calling of Universal rather than selective Compassion. But, for the moment, it was one Noble deed at a time. In a world where even one noble deed could cost you your life, sanity, or both. For you, and most particularly, your trusted idealistic young Comrades in the Revolutions you created.

CHAPTER 5

Dan didn't mind the change of clothes that replaced his worn out comfortably fitting jeans and no-collar Zappa Rules tee shirt and hoody with designer black imitation leather skinny jeans that crushed his legs every time he moved, a shiny black shirt with a stiff collar that scratched his neck every time he turned his head and a black leather business jacket that made him feel like an underworld undertaker. Or even the precision slick back haircut with exposed skin around the ears that converted his reflection in the mirror into a high level coke dealer more vicious than any 18th century Cossack hero or 19th century turncoat Russian Imperial Army officer who were responsible for his being born. Or even the upper crust mobster tattoos on his arms in Russian and German, bearing no less than three swastikas within the design that Emma claimed would come off with the right kind of soap when the time came. But he did mind what Canadian super-agent Emma Lancaster, if indeed that was her name, wanted him to do with his temporary make believe make over.

"You see that specimen on the other side of the glass?" she said regarding a young woman, or older girl, on the opposite side of what he was told was a one way mirror.

"Yeah, I see her," Dan replied, noting a fellow humanoid of the opposite gender strapped to a chair, an electric dog collar around her neck connected to a wire. Gazing at the mirror at her end, and at him through the glass. A blank look in her eyes, surrounded by a face that was still beautiful despite the bruises on the left cheek and a number printed on her forehead, mostly covered by bangs. "What's her name?" he asked of the girl whose wrists bore slash marks, and whose arms were shivering out of fear, cold or something else he had never seen in another human being, in person anyway.

"You mean what's IT'S name?" Emma said as she leaned against the glass, gently moving Dan's head with a whip handle so that he would not look away from her. "And as she is our property, or more accurately, as you are my boss, your property," Emma continued, as she adjusted her freshly cut, blonde and perhaps real, or perhaps fake, chin length hair. "You can name it anything you want, Herr Ranselhoff," she said while sitting down on a chair next to the observation window, crossing her legs within a body-contour black business skirt, giving Dan a full view of what was under it. "Go ahead and name her something, or I'll name her..." She took hold of a converted tv remote control, upping the dial. "Electricuted Electra. Fried Freida. Or..."

"She's a human being." Dan protested regarding the emaciated young woman who seemed to be one breath away from death, and welcoming it more than taking another influx of air into her lungs. He grabbed hold of the remote from Emma's long finger-nailed hands with a clenched fist. "She's not, as you say, and claim, just a specimen who feels no pain because she's got drugs and toxins in her blood. Sure, she has cancer, and you stole her from a hospice, promising her that her suffering would be over, after the doc who tried to do her in was arrested for attempted murder. But does this give us the right to practice on her."

“YOU have the DUTY to practice on her!” Emma yelled back. “You cowardly, afraid to do the EFFECTIVE thing, passive, ‘I’m gonna tell the teacher if you hit me’, worthless piece of ‘nice’.”

“I’m not ‘nice’!” Dan screamed back. “I’m---”

“---Not ready to be an undercover slave trader so you can find Lorena and the other Lorena’s, and free them?” Emma shot back, folding her arms, with a calm voice, and disappointing tone. “I did have such high hopes for you,” she said, after which she took back the remote from Dan’s limp and shaking fingers. “But we can cancel this whole thing, and you can go back to being a watcher of suffering instead of an ender of it in your safe computer room upstate if you aren’t ready to---”.

“—I’m ready enough!” Dan grunted, snatching back the remote.

“Ready to be a necessary evil?” Emma asked, with an all knowing look in her eyes that said she knew exactly what that phrase entailed.

“I want to...end harm,” Dan related and confessed. “To do no harm. And at the same time, to liberate, empower and enlighten the world.”

Emma’s stern face broke into a playful smile, then gave way to a well enjoyed chuckle. “That’s like saying you’re a fan of dulled out Lawrence Welk and Alive big A Frank Zappa,” she said. “Or being a ‘Make America Great’ Donald Trump groupie with the hat and Klan hood in the middle of a Black Lives Matter rally. Or thinking that an all Wagner music concert would sell out the hall in Tel Aviv with an over 60 all Jewish audience.”

“Which IS possible!” Dan asserted. “The Wagner and Jewish audience thing anyway,” he conceded after thinking about the opposing agendas.

“True enough,” Emma said, with a nod to Dan saying that she approved of something inside of him, and was proud of it. Something he felt good and empowered about, but ashamed that he needed such vindication, or welcomed it. “But,” she said, continuing to power strut around the observation room while the ‘Lorena’ on the other side of the booth continued to stare into the mirror which her head was forced to look into. “I need you to be able to convince others, even me, that you can be a necessary evil when you have to be, in the cause of good of course. You have to LOOK like you enjoy seeing the Lorena on the other side of that glass suffer. That you get off on making the Lorenas beg for mercy, then become eager bitches who live to serve their masters and feel accomplished when they are so programmed that they never want to leave their masters, even when they are liberated. At which point...” the images in Emma’s mind that she was about to describe paralyzed her tongue. Grief and horror overtook her. Then tears flowed down her face. She sat on a chair, averting her blank stare.

Dan approached her, slowly. As he would, and did, mothers who lost daughters in a car accident back home. And grandmothers who lost mothers to the kind of overdoses that Dan knew enough to stay away from in an Upstate Community where unemployment led to despair amplified by emptying the bathroom medicine shelf, and too much short term money led to even more deadly recreational pharmaceuticals. As Dan heard her weep, he wondered if she needed space, or a hug. He had made miscalculations regarding such before. Indeed, his was as skillful at making miscalculations about what people wanted, as well as expected, of him as Lawrence Welk et al. were at making people happy in their mediocre lives, and Zappa, Beethoven and Wagner was in drawing, or forcing, listeners out of them.

But, Dan was feeling brave, allowing the bold outfit he was now assigned to grow into to permeate into his body, mind and spirit. “Hey, it’s going to be alright,” he said as he laid his extended hand, which now felt like it was a lightning rod, onto Emma’s shoulder, which felt like it was about to crumble into dust. “We’re going to do what we have to because we WILL do it.”

“You’re damn right we will!” Emma said, quickly turning around with more determination in her oculars than he had ever seen in her. “As you will, right now! Herr, no Lord Ranselhoff,” she declared with bowed head. “Make it look like you’re punishing this bitch for disobeying you and wanting to be who she was before she was put under your protective roof.” She flicked the switch on several cameras overhead around the room. “So that we can show it to the bosses, particularly, who you will be the boss and executioner of, very soon. While you, in reality, put this young woman out of her misery.”

“So we can free ALL the Lorena’s out of their misery,” Dan reasoned, and gave voice to. After which he elevated the remote to the highest level, recalling how when he had to put down his horse, and his friend’s dog, that he used a 22 caliber bullet and target gun rather than the 45 calibre revolver his father inherited from his no-nonsense Cossack Western outlaw grand-father. “One clean jolt and the suffering ends for you,” he said to the Lorena on the other side of the glass, noting that she was still too doped up to hear him, but hoping she could. Maybe even praying so as well. “A necessary end for you, and beginning for me.” He pressed the knob on the electricuting device leading to the dog collar around the soon to be super obedient ‘bitch’ on the other side of the one way see through mirror. Trying his best to act like he was enjoying it.

But in the middle of the performance, something went wrong. Most particularly with the prop the director assigned to him. “It’s not working!” he said regarding the ‘electro-master’ around the woman’s neck. “It’s not working!” he yelled to Emma. Then, with delight, he stared at Lorena number whatever, confessing ‘it’s not working’ with...relief.

Something in this Lorena was awakened, apparently by a small volt that caused the skin around her neck to tremble. Her eyes stopped staring behind the sockets and became...alive. “Shit!” she spat out from her thus far non-speaking mouth, looking at and into her anticipated executioner. “Shit!” she shot out again as she she lifted her

hands out of the restraints, slipping out of the rope around her ankles. She ripped the electric collar off her neck, throwing it onto the floor in a fit of rage, feeling a sore on her neck. “What’s going on out there!” she yelled at Dan, then turned to Emma, apparently being able to see them very well through the glass window that was only glass. “You said all of this was fake!” She picked up the dog collar with one hand, wiping the fake blood and tattoo off her face with the other.

“We had to make it look real, and we can do it again,” Emma assured her. “We’ll pay you double.”

“Triple!” the actress replied in Mafiaese New Yawk diction straight out of North Jersey. “Or, whoever you are at the other end of this one way mirror, I’ll have my agent, lawyer and for real gangsta boyfriend fry your asses till your friends call you charcoal Charlie and crispy Christine. Kapiche?”

“You got it,” Emma said to her. “But first I have to talk to the other actor here. OK?”

“Sure,” the actress replied, setting herself up again with the paste on scars and dog collar. “But I’m on the clock here. Tempus Fucking Fugit.”

“I can do it again,” Dan asserted, absorbing for the moment the rage he felt at Emma for deceiving him into giving a believable performance rather than asking him to. He took in a power breath, arched his back, and prepared to do what he had to, taking the remote into his hand. “I’m ready when you are.”

“No, you’re far from ready,” Emma countered, looking video playback. “The camera is a bullshit meter. It doesn’t lie.”

“But I can, as an actor,” Dan pleaded. “Just like I’m hiding the fact that because you made me think this is real, I want to put you in that chair and electrocute the smugness of out you!”

“Which you may have to do one day, but...not quite now,” Emma stated, with regretful certainty. “Maria,” she said over the mic to the actress. “I have to do some work with the other actors before we’re ready for you. How’s Tuesday afternoon, same time, same torture chamber. Ten times the same rate.”

“Sure,” the Jersey born and bred actress said, exiting out a back door of the chamber which materialized out of the featureless white wall when she knocked it.

“Your eyes showed that you care, Lord Ranselhoff,” Emma said to Dan by way of explanation. “We’ll have to work on that.”

“Yours do too, I think,” Dan replied, wondering about what secrets lay behind her averted eyes, which seemed to be scripting a movie in her troubled and no doubt tortured mind. Before she could come up with another plan, or another means by which to turn

him into Lord Ranselhoff with mind altering drugs, or electroshocking the part of the brain that made him human, caring and artistic, Dan worked his verbage into another suggestion. "You seem to have money and---..."

"No, I don't, have that kind of money," Emma replied, honestly this time.

"Then you are connected to people who have money, Mastress Emma."

"Maybe, maybe not, Comrade Daniel."

"Me thinks that you do," Dan said, stroking the hair growing in on the 'devil like' goutee which was part of his new cool to be cruel image. "Enough to pay the ransom for Professor Lawrence's Lorena."

"So he can get her back, as long as, or course, Lawrence deals with 'Colonel Rodney' on his own without telling me," Emma replied as she pressed the delete buttons on all the cameras. "Getting back of course, a body part here and there, with more ransom demands till he gets a corpse back. One that's filled with semen, piss and shit from dirty old men. And cum from fucked up women who well..."

"How did you know about the ransom note?" Dan asked.

"I didn't," her reply. "Until you told me. Which explains why Lawrence didn't join us today, like I asked, ordered finally pleaded with him to. But, you didn't know...you just probably, I'm guessing, overheard him ranting on to----"

"---his wife," Dan said. "Yeah. Who..."

"---is GONE, thankfully," Emma replied, with relief. "but who...for him...still lingers," she continued. "And whose rich family doesn't give a shit about anyone but themselves. Lorena."

"Or any of the other Lorena's," Dan said. "Who we are going to save, for real, right, Mistress and Mastress Emma?" he continued to his new teacher in this new Calling, with an arch in his back, and an arrogant coolness in his voice.

"Empress Olivia" Emma replied, with what seemed to be a Scandinavian accent, and another persona coming out of her. "Now, where did you say Lawrence say he was going today?"

"I didn't SAY anything," Dan replied, taking pen in hand. Writing down 5:45 pm 'Starfucks' with the address in firm handwriting, where he was to privately meet Lawrence where the two of them would devise and carry out a parallel plan. Which Dan intuited could be to be integrated with Emma's, and Olivia's. Sort of.

“Good lad,” Emma said to Dan, pleased to have won him over to her side of the argument that was no doubt going on between Lawrence and herself that had started many carnal secrets ago, laying her palm on his shoulder in congratulatory manner.

“Better MAN,” Dan thought to himself, choosing his own side in this ongoing conflict between Comrades in the Cause. Having not related in voice, writing or tone where he would be just after lunch. Feeling accomplished in the fact that he had finally learned to lie convincingly. One of those adult skills that all outlaws who lived outside the bounds of morality or protection from a God who always, according to the contract with mankind anyway, rewarded people with. A God that Dan had figured out a long while ago was still on a very long lunch break, or perhaps had sold out man and woman kind to the highest bidder so He could concentrate on ministering to a more worthy no doubt four legged species.

CHAPTER 6

Lawrenz Schaumberg hated all of the lies around and behind the Covid 19 crisis as well as the ‘protection’ measures in 2020 as much as his distant cousin Albert Einstein had despised Adolf Hitler and his cronies a hundred years earlier. Someone was making big money off of the virus that no one could see, and gaining more power and influence over with measures required for it to not spread. Those people no doubt would be unseeable by the news cameras as well as any investigative journalist. But no doubt, the known inhabitants of the empty house behind the gate of the beautiful garden where he was tending the garden on under the hot July fourth noon-day sun were no doubt going to come out of this pandemic as rich winners, just as they had flourished after the economic crisis of 2008, and graduated from well off immigrants to secretly rich Americans during and after the stock market crash of 1929. Covid for Lawrenz’ ex-wife Vivian’s family was just another justification to manipulate the New York City stock market from their Upstate New York 600 acre vacation home, or their ‘cottage’ in Ontario, to which they could no doubt easily travel to and from without having to self-isolate like working class schleps, truck drivers and body bruised sport stars for whom international travel was essential to feed their kids back home.

There were some things about the Covid 19 ‘hiccup’ that interfered with the collective and individual plans of the species that was most affected by it that Lawrence did think, privately of course, as positive. For a little while, when the factories making non-essential shit were shut down, urban skies were more blue than smoggy grey. For many, being confined at home, self examination of what they had done and could do with their lives happened, as they were disallowed the distractions of shutting their minds off at work, small w and the distractions of group partying afterwards that discouraged any individual thinking or inner reflection. And there was a surge of technology, people finding new ways to communicate over long distance with the help of the thankfully still operating, yet no doubt government monitored, satellites orbiting the planet. After pretending to prune another weed from the garden, his back to another Police Cars that passed by the compound in the Scarsdale neighborhood that had to be protected at all costs from the starving and possibly looting peons from Yonkers, Lawrenz noted the cameras mounted on the gate of the multi-mansion complex . I was the domicile of Vivian, and now the new Patriarch of the family, her brother Eric Schwartz, and his associates, sister no-talent but high profile actress Kyra and construction mogul Rex whose hands had never held a hammer of course. “So, you don’t recognize me,” Lawrenz said to the camera from behind the mask he was required to wear by law, which he was now using to break the law as a poorly disguised Mexican gardener. “But after I do what I have to do on the other side of those gates,” he continued to the cameras. “You and me have a score to settle. You being of course ‘technology.’”

“Technology is just a way to make life easier for us,” Lawrenz’s assistant gardener “Pedro” said, as he pretended to adjust the knob on the lawn mower, hiding, from the cameras and the Cops, the devise he had just used to trick the microphones attached to the cameras into hearing the sounds of low level suburban holiday traffic rather than conversation between real people. “And it helps us communicate easier, and faster,”

Dan continued as he leaned down, adjusting more gadgets under the second hand broken down lawn mower bought with his lunch money from the back of the local hardware store that he was pretending to fix.

“Easy and fast is not effective. And seeing someone on screen is not the same as looking into their eyes, and soul, so that your minds and souls can connect. In the faculty lounge, the lecture hall, or the fountain outside the University Commons where real ideas get tossed around, and converted to ideals that change the world!” Lawrence grumbled back with a hunched back as he pruned a rose bush, not caring whether his anger-induced movements caused his fingers to bleed, leaving traces of blood behind which could link him to the robbery he was about to commit. Indeed, part of him WANTED Eric, Kyra and Rex to know it was him who came to steal back what he deserved to get back the family lawyers cleaned him out after the divorce from ‘dear sister’ Vivian after her suicide. Which of course, they blamed, legally anyway, on Lawrenz. “But you!” Lawrenz blasted into the cameras. “Sure, my younger and technologically more savvy ‘colleagues’ could figure out how to maneuver your pixels, electrical wiring and flow chart decision lists on the operating manual. And they understand Fortan and the other computer languages I couldn’t figure out. But that doesn’t justify them keeping me out of meetings deciding who gets to run the University. Who gets to get hired and fired. And who gets tossed out of a job TEACHING. Particularly when they know the difference between real teaching that responds to the changing needs of every interactive moment in person and slick instructing that’s preplanned, pre-programmed and delivered with a calm, steady, cool voice reading an overhead and....” Sweat poured down Lawrenz’s forehead as he recalled the good old days at the University he had built from the ground up. The kind of sweat of Passion that he felt and emitted every time he lectured a room filled with students, even if only one of them was really listening, communicating and co-creating with him through thought waves and third brain that always emerges between two expansively and intensively thinking souls. Allowing Lawrenz to come up with, yes, three new ideas about the topic at hand or something else each half hour, relating such on the spot, despite the walls of ‘do we have to know this for the exam?’ students who no doubt would say that he ‘went off topic’ in their reviews that found their way to the dean’s office. Until the day that those walls were everywhere around him, with no one listening or hearing what he had to say. Resulting in the loss of Passion and innovation, at least to students in the real world. Which led to Lawrenz putting whatever Passion he still had into Spirit Duty, that he put into print in the hope that someone would read them in the next generation. Without the help of a Third Brain, as the students were becoming more concerned with gathering data than knowledge, or Wisdom, in a marketplace and world where ‘what do we have to do to pass the exam’ trumped ‘I need to make a difference before I die.’ And since no one was listening, Lawrenz soon had nothing more to say. And nothing more to be Passionate about. His life indeed now, until this moment anyway, was about going through the motions to destinations that maybe were worth caring about, and living in.

Other memories of the encroachment of technology into Lawrenz’s Renaissance Man world and aspirations came to mind. Like his pleas to send him a techy or even a first year computer student to help him figure out how to operate the cameras from home so

he could tape his lectures while in lock down during Covid 19, as well as before then as the Higher Ups in the University found out that distance learning was cheaper to do than face to face teaching. And how his requests, then demands, to attend faculty meetings by phone rather than zoom were ignored, as he with frustration tried to make sense of the manual the masked driver reeking of antiseptic hand cleaner delivered to his door. Yes, his despondency now turned into anger. At the world for passing him by before his time was done serving it. And at himself for not being able to figure out how to speak to the camera as if it was a real person, or the persona of history. "But," he said, finally reaching a point of satisfaction. "Finally I have you to work with," he said to Dan. "Someone who understands technology, and the need to work with me, confidentially, as well as with Emma who...I sense has an agenda which at some point will be different than ours."

"Yeah, I sensed that too," Dan said as he finally turned the cameras off. With equipment that looked far more sophisticated than an Upstate self-made Computer Geek-Genius would have. Perhaps. In any case, when Dan opened the gate, and no sirens came on, and two more Police cars passed by, without stopping, Lawrence felt that he was in good hands.

"So, now where do we go?" Dan said, in his best Spanish, carting the gardening equipment past the gates he closed, but didn't lock, behind himself and his Old Fart Old School Compadre.

"Vivian's bedroom," Lawrenz said, pointing to a ground floor window in the fourth smallest mansion. "Which looks exactly as she left it. And which she demanded be kept exactly as she left it in her Will."

Still posing as well masked obedient gardeners, then as renovation carpenters, Lawrenz led Dan into Vivian's bedroom in the deserted Mansion complex, where Dan did his techno-magic to detect and inactivate any metallic guards. Indeed the only inhabitants Lawrenz could hear, or see, were ghosts. One of them lay on the bed, sprawled out, half naked under an \$800 see through negligee that made her wrinkled 60 year old body seem like that of that of a 30 year old goddess. "No, it's not Emma, it's me," Vivian said to Lawrenz. "Do you want me to include your young friend in this conversation? Or maybe he wants to watch while we, ya know..." she continued, perking her lips, running her fingers between her newly implanted breasts, and shaking her big haired head in the manner that converted his small penis into a big woody, even though the neural circuits above his neck screamed out 'do not enter'. "Come on, he needs some excitement in his life," she said of the lad who pretended to do touch up work on the walls with one hand, while detecting bugs with a device hidden in the other. She extended her arm towards Dan, pointing her index finger towards him, the beginnings of a lightening rod emerging from it.

"Stop that!" Lawrenz self observed himself saying, in an audible voice this time as he put himself between Vivian and Dan. Absorbing the painful jolt in his underfed belly.

“Not yet,” Dan said. “There’s still one more scan I have to do and…” Dan turned around, having proudly zapping something behind the wall. “Now, we can get back to doing what we came for.”

“Indeed,” Lawrenz replied, looking at drawers whose locks had been opened, but not activated. He reached into them, pulling out fistfuls of jewels, inserting them into hidden pockets of his grass and paint stained extra large sized overalls. He instructed Dan to help him in the task, making the young outlaw in the Cause of good, pocket the goods quickly rather than treat himself to glances of fascination with their admittedly eye-drawing glitter and artistry.

“Yes, you’re right,” Vivian said of the shimmering and very much NON-imitation collection of diamonds, pearls and other rear gems incorporated into jewelry that would make even the ugliest woman look not only rich, but appealing. “Emma would look better in these than I did. Unless you or your friend want to play dress up,” she smirked. “If that’s the case, please help yourself to anything in my wardrobe closet. I won’t tell anyone it was you who were here, or course..” Vivian colorfully whipped the negligee off her, revealing a body that was...Emma’s. “If you want the money hidden in this mattress that, well, I did take from the stock account I set up for you, while we were together that is, you’ll have to fuck us both.”

“No!” Lawrenz protested, with a silent grunt, after which he pulled back his hand, and violently pulled Vivian off the bed. Meeting every ‘don’t you dare hit me or I will call a lawyer’ look from the bitch who was so good at slicing and dicing him with her tongue THIS time with a fist into her belly. Then a real world knife from his work belt into her belly when she tried to kick him in the groin. Then several punches into her face, till her self-assured smirk on the ghost’s mug dissolved into a remorseful and painful smile, then...into a fog of dust that blew away in a burst of wind that somehow entered the room though the closed window. With very real world knife in hand, Lawrenz cut open the mattress, discretely, and pulled out stacks of money. He and Dan loaded them into their carpentry and gardening gear, then opened the door. Behind it were three large framed Police, from the real world. And behind them, a small framed woman with an smirk on her rose colored lips.

“So, you guys have a choice,” Emma said with a voice as dispassionate as any Lawrenz had delivered at the podium in his dwindling days as a once highly valued teacher, and to the distance learning camera when he was told to just read the overhead so that he could get badly needed food money. “You can come with me, or with them. Your choice, no one else’s.”

Lawrenz gazed into Emma’s eyes, trying to find who she was once, seeing someone else instead. Whiz tech Dan broke the tense, heartbreaking and heartfelt silence with a question.

“Before we answer that question,” he said, becoming a protector as well as ally to Lawrenz in the Cause of liberating his Lorena and the other Lorena’s from sex slavery

overseas, with justifiably-stolen money that would be needed for the former, and perhaps useful for the latter. “How did you find us?” he asked, feeling the back of his neck for an implant that perhaps had been put there during the time he snoozed out while consenting to a make-over.

“Your phone, Einstein,” Emma shot back with a wise assed eye-roll.

“He was doing what he felt was right,” Lawrence said in the deflated lad’s defense.
“Trying to do his best.”

Emma took in a deep breath, that insertion of stagnant air reeking of Vivian’s perfume turning her into dragon fire which blasted into Lawrence’s third eye as she said, “Trying isn’t enough. Results, not excuses. And there are consequences for every choice we make. And both of you ‘we tried really hard but lost in a Noble Cause’ have to make a decision right now.”

“All charges will be dropped if you come with us, and not her,” the Senior Cop offered.

“And leave how much of the money and jewels with you?” Dan shot back, with Passionate rebellion in his voice. “So you can keep the oppression machinery that inhibits true expression well funded and well oiled.”

“A machine we need, sometimes,” Lawrenz added, calmly, directed by reason. But still feeling Passionless. Having grown, or pushed into, being a man of balance rather than excesses, Lawrence put a hefty but not excessive portion of the money which visible in his pocket into the belts of each of the policemen. Then he turned to Emma. “We are in this together now, not one step backwards?” he said to her, in Russian.

“Yes, Comrade,” she replied in Russian, correcting the grammatical mistakes in Lawrence’s inquiry to the credo that was shared and followed through with by infighting Russians when Hitler invaded and was about to completely destroy Stalingrad, and the rest of the Motherland that brought them so much suffering during the day under Stalin’s rule, and a few glimmers of hope during Golden Moments at night when they were left alone.

CHAPTER 7

Crossing International Borders during normal times with fabricated identification was easy if you had the right forgers. There were rules of procedure that everyone followed. Present yourself to Customs. Be cordial but not too friendly with the Inspector. Answer extensively verbal question with 'yes' or 'no', with of course a slight bowing of the head and an obedient 'all is well but not really swell' smile. Take your documents after the Inspector puts it through the machine that picks up the cyber-connections to the persona you are supposed to be. Then move on, pretending to hate travel as much as the Inspector hates having to put on an authoritative frown that never comes off and his or her sense of humor safely locked up at home, or in portion of the soul that the working brain cannot access.

During War of course, the rules go out the window, as borders are crossed by armed combatants and refugees as quickly as they are re-carved into different regions of the countryside. During a pandemic when everyone is supposed to be at war with a common enemy too small to see, but felt everywhere by minds oriented to fear rather than optimism, rules come back. But, those rules depend on who is administrating them, which Emma discovered all too well when getting off a chartered jet carrying doctors, nurses and paid off reporters courtesy of Pfizer Pharmaceutical in Athens. She carried with her an Irish passport and an expertly forged Ph.D in virology from McGill University, backtracked to a full history and record of convincing numerous publications with Dan's cyberskills. Such allowing her passage to all EU countries, without the need to quarantine, in preparation to charter a Greek smuggler's fishing boat to sneak her into undisclosed destinations in Turkey and, if necessary, other countries that obeyed no international law or human rights laid out by the European Union. Along with her epidemiologist German-Canadian 'Hans' husband, along with their Toronto-born and raised son 'Dimitri' who just awarded a medical degree before completing all of his fourth year courses.

The masked custom inspector armed with a revolver and the right to quarantine anyone who coughed, sneezed or showed elevated temperature during the hottest July in recorded European history seemed convinced that Lawrence's German was authentic, and that his urge to return his soul, and his son's perspectives, to the Hellenic homeland was genuine. And that the multiple times Dan said 'I'm sorry' for not being able to understand Greek or moving fast enough to open his luggage for a thankfully only cursory inspection meant that he had to be a Canadian, in keeping with his ID and the red maple leaf on his backpack. Both passed through to the other side of 'no man's land' where no judge can on either side of the border can rescue you, with blessings from the Inspector, and the most sincerest wishes that they find a cure for the epidemic, return to their cultural roots for good this time, and figure out a way to, like Hippocrates did, advance medical knowledge while at the same time make the benefits of such available to all free of charge, and on the basis of need only.

Emma breathed a sigh of relief at seeing Lawrence and Dan whiz through Customs so easily, particularly because they insisted on going through as a pair rather than with

Emma. Perhaps to show off their newly found and by necessity created skills of deception. Or for other reasons, as they both seemed to have plans of their own regarding liberating Lorena and the other Lorenas in some non-European Union east of Athens, or perhaps Turkey. Whether those plans were individual or collective, she didn't know. But Emma knew that the die-hard Downstate Old Professor who thought he could reason cooperation with unreasonable shithead assholes and the cyber-whiz self-made super solo music composer from Upstate New York needed her know-how, resources and bravado to get anything done...very much including making a safe retreat from this expedition with their necks, honor and testicles intact. So, as always, she put on her best lying face, prepared her lips to emit an authentic Dublin non-overdone Irish borough she had practiced for the last 6 hours on the plane, and presented her papers to the Inspector.

The Inspector looked at her, the picture, then at her, several times. First with official indifference, then with skepticism, then with the kind of distrust that he hid behind a poker face. "So, what business do you have in Greece, Professor Doctor Kathleen Brady?" he asked, in English. "Besides break up families that are working hard to stay together," he continued, in Greek-accented Russian. In full hearing range of Lawrenz, who fully understood what he said, and meant. "And with this new family that you are going to put into the gutter and the grave, like you did to mine," he continued, adjusting his face mask so as to give Emma a quick but intense look at what was behind it.

Emma recognized the overgrown mustache and the slight facial paralysis on the right side of the Nikos' face, but not the slashes on his cheek that made him seem more like a badly made up extra on 'The Living Dead' than one of the top art dealers in Greece who, while he was on top, owned armies of Customs Inspectors rather than having to be one to earn a living. He held the forged passport in his hand, smirking at it, the anticipation of revenge infusing new vitality into his life-tired eyes. "I'm with them," Emma said, pointing to Lawrenz and Dan, trying her best to not stutter while keeping an authentic accent. "And don't understand Russian. Or Greek."

"HMMMMM,," Nikos said, in English putting the documents Emma would need down on the counter separated by bullet proof glass. "What do you understand about the regulations required to cross international borders during a time of International Crisis?"

"That...well, there's a crisis of body, mind and spirit. That I think I can do something about, Sir, if I pass through," she said, after which she thumbed through her over-loaded purse, and pulled out a picture of a girl inside her purse. "To save people like her from death, or worse," she continued, handing over the photograph to her former lover and partner in international crime which was for the good of the people, the preservation of historical culture, and of, course, for handsome profits of those committing it.

Nikos recognized the picture of a jaundiced teen-aged girl dying of malnutrition, madness and despair. Maybe because it reminded him of his own daughter. Or the real life picture of a once beautiful girl enslaved by vicious men who would never allow her to grow up to be a fulfilled, or even merely older, woman reminded him of every girl. Perhaps someone smuggled or tricked into slavery by the Albanian mafia, Turkish

upscale resort owners or Hollywood talent agents. Or his own co-workers in the Customs Agency who took money from the slavers so they could send their own girls to college in America to become Doctors, Lawyers or Engineers instead of husbands in Athens to become baby making machines.

In any case, he became official again, gave Emma back her passport and with a nod, sent her to her husband and son, wishing her a good day with no eye contact. Then, said with as much indifference as Emma had for her when their alliance broke up, "Next, please."

CHAPTER 8

Lawrenz always used his head to solve problems of the heart, as he intuited, then told himself that he felt, that it was the most effective way to make things better. He held as gospel truth the hypothesis of Socrates that wisdom, knowledge and intelligence always created goodness in people, and that evil was created only by ignorance. But as he entered into the 'dog kennel' containing girls, women and a few boys, who were to be sold to the highest bidder, guided by their present owners and caretakers, something else hit him that he felt, and seldom anticipated. Pain. Communicable agony in the souls of the captives who had lost all of their worldly affiliations. As well as a wave of addictive evil permeating from their multiracial captors who were bright enough to be on top of their 'game'. A special kind of pain in the latter, he felt and noted. "Maybe pain turns converts even the most intelligent person into someone who thinks only about themselves out of some kind of morally justified survival reflex," Lawrenz thought as he did his best pose as a morally and financially comfortable buyer while being led along the rows of windows 'broken or trainable bitches in the window', a role he, seemed to find interesting, and, in a perverse yet logical way, enjoyable. Not unlike the time he played Stalin or Hitler in re-enactments for his students when teaching the political, economic and moral history of WWII, his 'favorite' war to study as a model for what could happen yet again.

"So, Herr Professor Doctor Steiner," Lawrenz heard in a South Afrikaner accent from the very White Manager of the mostly-Colored 'pen' containing super thin but still beautiful human samples to be used for pleasure and not so beautiful ones to be used for labor until they dropped dead, or provided their owners with rifle target practice. "You are looking for volunteers in your medical experiments to obtain information that will provide information to make our race health, happy and strong? And us richer. Like your father and grand-father back in the Fatherland, who shared their extensive human experiment knowledge with American pharmaceutical companies after the war, yes?"

"Indeed," Lawrenz said with an affirmative nod, clicking his heels slightly in the manner that a good grandson of a highly educated SS doctor would do. "It's in keeping with my persona," thought the humanistic Professor who never hit another soul and seldom raised his voice in uncontrolled anger said as he felt himself fall into the role assigned to him. One that he knew he had to play convincingly if he was to buy back, or rescue, his captive daughter Lorena. And, if possible, as he now was thinking and feeling, as many of her 'roommates' as possible IF possible. He looked closely yet again at the captives, edging towards the one with the fairest and whitest skin, whose head was down, a bloody blindfold over her eyes. Like the others, she was bound by a dog collar with more noticeable 'punishment' burn marks around her neck than the others, perhaps because she was paler in complexion than the others, or perhaps because she was more defiant, or still Alive somewhere inside. "I'd like to see this one," he said, recognizing something familiar about the not yet bruised or scarred facial structure, and the still-long four stripped red stripped curly hair that resembled that of his daughter. "Yes, I'll take this one," Lawrenz repeated as an arched back, pencil moustached SS officer, while

clandestinely saying a ‘thank you, I’ll believe in rather than deny or defy You now’ to God inside his tight lipped mouth.

“And we’ll these four!” Dan barked out regarding three girls Lorena’s age with darker skin, and an effeminately clad boy resembling himself. In an over-exaggerated White Supremacists tone and a German accent so over the top that anyone as deaf as Beethoven could tell he was from somewhere other than the Fatherland.

“My son’s accent is...odd, and highly Americanized,” Lawrenz said to the suit and tie, small framed, well-manicured, immaculately shaved, pale skinned South African Manager as the latter furled his eyebrows suspiciously, the paramilitary-garbed armed most probably Arabs or Turks behind him laying their bear-sized front claws on the handle of their revolvers. “Too much living with non-Aryans, with his mother, without my permission,” he whispered to the very White Manager. “Who put bad ideas into people’s heads and their mouths, but it is up to educate and employ them for their purposes that serve them, and us.”

The Manager nodded a quiet ‘yes’, his eyes thinking about the ‘good old days’ no doubt in his homeland where Blacks knew their place so that they could be educated to become happy obedient citizens rather than rebellious morally troubled ones. Meanwhile, Dan went to the other cages, informing the olive skinned guard which samples he will take with an expressive ‘We’ll take this one too!’ in even more over the top German accent that Lawrenz, being nearly fluent in that tongue, knew was reeking with Americanizations and mispronouncing of every other vowel.

“My accidently son is overly expressive,” Lawrenz said in slightly accented English to the, thankfully, non-German speaking Manager to short circuit being found out as Americans. Dan heeded the advice, toning down his Germanic v’s, and military bearing. Still, he went on his way to more cages, ordering from the ‘waiter’ more samples from the glass enclosures.

“And he is also overestimating the numbers of n values, volunteers that is, who we will be needing for our very much needed research studies, in coming up with, of course a COVID vaccine that works for all of us,” Lawrenz continued. “For now,” he said, directing his inner thoughts to Dan regarding the conflicting agendas of freeing his Lorena and all of them.

“A disease which will weed out the weak,” the South African Manager noted. “And make those of us who are strong and...hmm.”

“Richer!’ Dan declared.

“Indeed yes,” the reply from the Manager.

“But as to this specimen here,” Lawrenz asked regarding the Lorena would could be the real one. “I want to see her eyes, full facial structure and naso-laryngeal openings, to see if she is right for the study.”

“And recreational activities around it, I trust,” the Manager added as he motioned for one of his assistants to remove the blindfold over the young woman with the four streaks of red curly hair. Whose oculars belonged to someone else. And whose red streaks were dyed with blood emanating from her scalp rather than \$600 a session dye that Lorena accessed when she had money, or stole it. But who, when she looked at Lawrenz said ‘save me’. Even though those eyes could barely see the black fog and ghosts in front of her.

“How much?” Dan asked.

The Manager called out a price, then lowered it by 25% as a ‘medical discount’.

Logic said to Lawrenz that it would eat into the allocated amount that Emma, with her funds from still unnamed sources, could provide. And be a smaller drain on the undeclared booty that he had extracted from the robbery at his ex-wives house he still kept from Emma, along with still many other secrets. But, this time, he consented to the price.

“And the others?” Dan interjected regarding the captives who feared their now owners, and the two that somehow didn’t, due to blind obedience or, perhaps, having seen who and what Dan really was.

“We’ll be back for them,” Lawrenz heard from behind him. “On our way back from making the rounds,” Emma continued in an Irish accent, entering the sample room from the adjoining office, watched in admiration by three large framed executives in Russian mobster leather jackets eyeing her ass, and their smaller Putin-like boss thinking about how to cut open her throat, their faces not recognizable. “Which we have to proceed to immediately,” she said as she marched into the windowless chamber, a new briefcase under her arm, more determination and fear in her eyes than Lawrenz had ever seen, or imagined possible given the ‘golden past’ decade he knew, or thought, he knew her.

CHAPTER 9

Though Dan could locate transfer of electrons from one part of a circuit board to another, through to a satellite and to the receiver at the other end of the world, his knowledge of geography didn't quite connect to the real world. The only thing he was sure of was that the country he was in after three private jet flights to very small and marginally, as well as generically, populated airports was one of the 'stans'. Turkistan, Uzbekistan, or even Afganistan for all he knew. But the people he, Lawrenz and Emma were meeting with certainly did not obey the laws of any country. Indeed, the more 'distribution' houses the trio went to, or war taken to, the more Dan intuited that they were run by and services upper ups who controlled countries. Such was the feeling he got when escorted as a VIP into a three table restaurant that made the fanciest eatery in Albany, New York, look like a pot luck supper at a community barn raising before the barn was erected. The waiter, immaculately clad in a red suit lacking any wrinkles or spill stains approached the table, receiving hand signals from the dinners there as they pointed to the menu written in French. "And what would you having for dinner, Sir?" the waiter asked Dan with a dignified upper-crust accent he could not place as Dan gazed over the menu, which included not only choices in food but entertainers on the large stage servicing three tables in the windowless eatery.

"Spagettios with extra hot dogs and a super large bottle of coke, and a microdose of magic mushrooms in the tomato sauce," Dan thought, but dared not say. "Whatever my colleagues and hosts are having, of course," he replied, as his new persona, his overgrown nose smelling something interesting in the kitchen that he could not define as to whether it was edible or not. "And for desert," he continued, taking in a deep big Aryan air, as if he owned all of the oxygen in the room, perusing the other side of the laminated, gold lettered menu. "Her, her and her," he said regarding the head and body shots of the 'dancers'. "Numbers 2, 5 and 9, please," he said as he handed the waiter back the menu with minimal body motions this time, as the more money you were supposed to have, the less exertion of muscular activity was expected of you.

"A good choice," replied his host, a middle aged man of well proportioned but not excessive musculature with a neatly trimmed mustache, slightly balding Napoleonic hairdo, steel blue eyes and an unrecognizable military uniform overloaded with medals in an British-tinged Russian accent. "And a cultured, economically sound and practical choice. And a bold and interesting one as well," Colonel Rodney continued with a proud smile directed at Dan, which he accepted with real rather than fake pride this time. "Your new protégée, Emma?" he asked Dan's boss, the first time anyone outside of New York had addressed her by that name in mixed company. "Where did you find him?" he inquired, leaning back on his chair, snapping his fingers. Within seconds, fully and tastefully closed dancer number 2 was led onto the stage, her blindfold removed. Music from Tschaiakovsky's Swan Lake emerged in sense around stereo, better than any Dan had devised for any gig in Upstate New York, as the blindfold was released from her head, along with the restraints on her hands. She looked out at the audience, her eyes blinded by the spotlight intended to, as so many after hours dingy hotel or low budget comedy gigs Dan had been a techy at, allow her to be seen but not enable her to see who

was watching her. Ten seconds and two zaps of her electric dog collar later, the slender Euroasian woman with long, straight black hair down to her ass moved her body in a dance that made her look more like a marionette manipulated by puppet master above her. The smile seemed as authentic as any ballerina on a PBS broadcast from the Siberian Ballet Company, as long as she was moving and your attention was on her legs, arms and bouncing breasts rather than her face.

Colonel Rodney described 'Tanya 127's' current measurements as a model, her age, her special talents under the sheets, her education in the world before she was trained by him, her ability to endure various kinds of pleasure torture, and the amount of weight she could carry in the event that she could be used as a beast of burden. Lawrenz pretended to take notes. Emma got straight down to business. "How much?"

"I bought her from for \$20 from a frustrated and foolish jailor in Siberia who didn't see her full potential. Put a lot of money and time into training and rehabilitating her to be more useful than merely a laborer." Colonel Rodney boasted in a Russian accent. "Or to be extra ingredient in stew that I feed my bitches when they are obedient and deserve a culinary reward," he smirked. "So, I am offering her to you, and only you, for \$2000 dollars. For your 'medical studies' of course."

"Yes, of course," Lawrenz replied in an understated White Supremacy 'let's bring back the good old days in the Fatherland' German accent. "My assistant here, who is smarter than most other members of her gender, will add her to my list," he said of Emma in a condescending tone.

"No!" Emma blasted back.

All eyes were directed at Emma for being defiant. Particularly in a world where men do most of the buying and women are most of the bought. "It is OUR list," she insisted before the men shut her down with colorful insults or dismissed her, as so many did in previous rooms like this, with 'gotta let the women think they are equal so we don't have to slap them around to get what they owe us as their protectors under the sheets and otherwise' eyerolls. "WE will take her, Colonel," she said to the 'protector' of 'Tanya number 127'. "But I am sure that Professor Doctor and his brilliant young researcher would like to see dancer number 3," she said, looking at the 'menu', her description in the Russian alphabet far more extensive than the one in English, French or German. "She has an interesting facial structure," she noted.

"And some other interesting features," Colonel Rodney replied, as if he was gaining an advantage. He snapped his fingers again, dismissing Tanya 2, then pointed to the shadow behind a lit curtain, motioning him with a finger across his throat to stop the music. "Taylor number one, and only," he said as the next woman came onto the stage, her back to the 'audience', a piano placed in front of her, a long mane of curly blonde hair flowing half way down her back, circumvented by a red evening gown that revealed tastefully muscled legs inserted into pointed black stilettos which seemed one or two sized larger than her body. "American born, and partially bred," the Colonel boasted of the next

item, who played a heartfelt version of the Appassionato by Beethoven, the first five measures the way the composer intended it to be played. The next with a Texas swing jazz improvisational tempo which had as much heart, and intensity, in it.

As the particulars about Taylor were being described to Herr Professor Lawrence and ‘talent agent but not producer or star’ Emma, Dan felt moved by the music. A piece which, he recalled, Vladimir Lenin forbade to be played in his presence while he was in charge of the Red Army during the Russian Revolution because it would make him feel with his heart into being dangerously kind to the shitheads and assholes who would do anything to destroy or pervert his Beloved Political Experiment in creating a society where everyone gives according to their abilities and takes according to their needs. And that it would disable Lenin from doing what he must to FORCE the disgustingly comfortably rich to give back what they had stolen from the suffering poor by whatever means necessary. Indeed, to become a necessary evil. Which, now Dan saw himself becoming.

“I want her!” Dan self observed himself screaming out. Particularly when the stage turned Taylor 1 around such that the light shone into her face. Revealing someone Dan knew once, and wanted as well as needed to know better. Every aspect of Taylor merged into a composite of Wendy McDougal, the first girl who Dan fell in love with when he was ten, who barely knew he existed. Then Lolla Schmitt, the first girl he kissed when he was 12, who actually did kiss him back. Vicci Cain, the first girl he went to bed with while wearing a functional condom who accused him of getting her pregnant. And, yes, his biological mother who, in his Oedipal dreams anyway, came back from the dead as a young woman to tell him that he was the only real love of her life. But there was something else about Taylor that said that this was ‘his Lorena’. The most important slave to be liberated from bondage. Even if it was at the cost of freeing less of her fellow slaves. Dan didn’t know what made him feel that way but he could not deny the feeling and attraction. “I want her,” he said again, noting his German accent diminishing to almost nothing “And we need her in our...eh...study. MY special study,” he continued in slightly accented English, giving the r’s and a’s the definition that a true European born Aryan would, that a lazy American redneck yahoo who dropped his gs’ wouldn’t.

“No!” Emma insisted. “There is something off with her,” after looking at Taylor’s face, comparing it to the profile and pitch. “Next.”

“Yes, we have to move on,” Lawrenz added. “We are here to do business, not pleasure or passion,” he reminded Dan as he saw a woody emerge in his groin.

Dan tried to hide his stand at attention penis, doing his best to adjust his seating posture. Trying to do so as a man rather than a girl hiding her ‘cherry’ so it wouldn’t be popped before SHE was ready.

“Let the man have his fun!” Colonel Rodney said with a voice as deceptive as his rank and name. “I’ll give her to him and you at a bargain price!” he bellowed out more like a Santa than a snakehead.

“A deal that seems too good to be true,” Emma said.

“But which is useful to us,” Lawrenz said in English. “To get information about...the others?” he continued, in German, which Colonel Rodney didn’t understand a word of. At least according to what Emma had told Dan and Lawrenz. Confirmed by Lawrenz giving the Colonel compliments on his uniform that actually meant ‘a shithead Fascist uniform that is appropriate for a shithead wanna be asshole and idiot.’

“Are you part of this organization or just a lucky?” the Colonel asked Dan, after which he looked down at his third leg sprouting up from his crotch. “What do you have in your pocket right now, besides indication that you love and lust after this woman who you can not only be with, but legally own and sell if she doesn’t love you back?”

As Taylor continued to play Beethoven with a brilliant blues variation on a theme that the Old Master no doubt would have added if he were reincarnated into a musician who had to endure and transform the 21st century, Dan reached into his pocket. The back one. He pulled out the money in it. “Tell me when to stop,” he said as he laid on the table currency with pictures he didn’t recognize and worth that was theoretical, in the same manner that he used with sellers who he wanted to keep as friends back home. Thankfully, before he got through half of his stack, Colonel Rodney stopped him.

“You are a terrible negotiator,” he said, after which he gave Dan back half of the money he put down. “But you are an interesting judge of character and merchandise. Who...should know that all sales are final. Taylor is yours now.”

“Yes,” Dan said, feeling accomplished.

“You are not responsible for her,” the Colonel said to the Upstate New York loner who didn’t fit into any army, or generation.

“I know that,” Dan replied as the Colonel took the papers out of his briefcase, handing them over to him to sign.

Dan signed the ownership papers, and then gave them to his fellow liberators for their fake John HandCOCK. Yes, Dan did see and acknowledge Lawrenz’s praise for valuing a special slave over the others. And Dan did note Emma’s disapproval of something she was forced to go along with. And yes, Dan did note the Colonel giving hand signals and instructions in a tongue he didn’t know to the man behind the curtain to rotate Taylor backstage, so that the next dancers would come in.

In the meantime, the waiter brought in the first appetizers. They smelled like chicken. As did everything else, from roadkill squirrel meat, roast snake and human flesh. Which, thankfully, Taylor was not to become and no more tricked into imbibing while thanking the cook.

CHAPTER 10

“There are three sides to every story. Yours, mind and the truth.” Such was what Emma recalled as she found herself to be mediator between Dan and Taylor after their first date at a private resort for oil execs in a country where they officially did not exist.

“I said we should go for dinner then a walk along the river, so we could just, ya know, like, talk, discourse about life, and, ya know, like, exchange artistic perspectives creative mind to creative mind,” Dan related in Emma’s presidential suite that provided everything complimentary to the guests of all tastes and fetishes except hard liquor, tv news from anywhere other than the National television network. And, of course, un-listened to private conversation, unless one was able to program the microphones hidden in the ornate lamps, well cushioned mattress and ultra comfortable toilet seat to record cyber generated snoring, phone calls to imaginary lovers and top ten pop American song hits that would drive any over-paid, unofficial eavesdropper to abandon all plans to ever visit Disneyworld in Florida or Rockefeller Center in New York. “But Taylor wanted to do more than just talk, discourse or deal with anything artistic!” the man who tricked the listening devises protested. “And showed me more than I wanted to know, or thought was there!”

“Dan opened up to me, so it was only fair that I opened up to him,” Taylor replied, leaning back on the sofa, staying within the parameters of the ‘no see’ zones of the cameras that the under appreciated cyber-whiz from meat and potatoes Upstate New York had created in the middle of the living room. “I thought being free is about opening up to people, and them accepting you. And themselves,” the enslaved property who now belonged to no one, according to what Dan had said anyway, replied. “All I did was put a mirror in his face to show him that the view is not as bad as he things.”

“After you made me face what was between your legs!” Dan protested. “A...ya know...”

“Penis,” the transgender former captive said to her liberator. “That I didn’t have time or money to cut off, but---“

“---sold yourself as a clothed dancer and blow job provider to get the money to do?” Emma surmised, correctly, yet again according to the self hatred, regret and shame that overcame Taylor’s downturned eyes under her perfectly sculpted brows. “Then got in too deep with the wrong kind of people who had the right kind of money,” she asserted

“I thought you knew,” Taylor said to Dan, with loving desperation. “And was certain that you would appreciate a fellow two spirited being who---“

“---A fellow what?” Dan blasted out, pulling his extended arms away from the only zone in the suite not currently taking footage, for security reasons of course. “What the fuck do you mean by calling me two spirited? Is that like two faced?”

Emma looked at Taylor as a colleague, feeling common ground with, as he now wished and deserved to be called, 'her'. As someone who understands so much that she (or he) can never be really understood by others. Emma suspected that Taylor was born a man, and that he was enslaved in body soon after his soul was liberated into a beautiful, sellable and, with the right kind of surgery, fuckable as a woman. Indeed, aside from the residual penis still remaining, Taylor's new body made her more attractive to men, and experimental women, than any that Emma had seen, with her eyes in her various carries and calling, as well as the view of the stranger who faced her every time she looked in the mirror from when she was a bombshell 18 year old. From Taylor's long, curly hair, down to her sized perfect breasts, and to her slender toes and fingers, which were only one size larger than they would have been on a five foot six biologically-born woman, she was in every way now a woman. Though, Emma should have realized something when Colonel Rodney noted her 'unique facial structure' with pride, which upon closer examination showed more of a chiseled than rounded chin, and a forehead more sloped than horizontal. But, there was something else Emma noted about Taylor. Her ability to look into and assess others more deeply and accurately than herself. And the pledge that she would help Emma, and her assistants, whoever they really were, find the boss above Colonel Rodney. Perhaps the boss of all bosses in the sex slave trade. The Osama Bin Laden in a war that had to be stopped, so that Lorena and all the other Lorena's would own their lives again. Or at least have a shot at doing so, with the right therapy and new class of rehab, 'find yourself again' drugs Emma had been researching, of course. But for the moment, it was Dan who offered the major stumbling block and opportunity for advancement.

"What the fuck are you talking about with your eyes?" Emma could hear Dan sneer as the silent conversation with Taylor was about to open up into spoken or written words as to who she really was, and what she really knew. "And what the fuck do you mean by calling me two spirited?"

"It's a compliment," Emma related, turning to the sensitive, caring crusader who tried so hard to come off as hard-edged, macho homo-hating redneck. "It means you see and feel the world from at least two perspectives," she continued, turning her head to Dan, about to name those perspectives as 'male' and 'female'.

"If you open your eyes, heart, and mind," Taylor replied, as she removed her blouse, then skirt, then bra, then laid them onto Dan's shoulders.

Dan shook. He tossed off the clothing as if they were the most contagious items in a store overloaded with COVID virus. Emma threw them back into his lap. Ripped open his shirt, then grabbed hold of his trousers, ripping down past his hips. While still holding him hostage with his own macho male outfit, Emma whipped off her wig, and tossed it to Taylor, instructing her to place it around Dan's head.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Dan yelled back. "What are you bitches doing?"

“An experiment,” Emma explained as she pulled down his trousers, then slapped him, then whipped off his shirt before he could say another. Taylor, without touching his now hard penis, pulled off his underwear. “To see who you could pass yourself off as for the next buyer who we will find, and expose, and inactivate,” she pledged. “As your present identity has been compromised.”

It was a lie, but it could have been true. Colonel Rodney wasn't the first buyer to see Dan as an amateur dealer in the sex trade, or perhaps a crusader trying to act like one. But there was another reason why the feminization of Dan was necessary. As was sneaking in a Ruffie under Dan's angry tongue to put him into a limp slumber.

“If he does what you ask him to do, and told me you wanted him to try out,” Emma asked Taylor. “Will you still deliver on the promise you made to us?”

“Of course,” Taylor replied as a captive who had been enslaved by the most powerful Masters on the planet, grateful to her misfit liberators, and able to deliver the goods on them. To the best of Emma's perceptions never wrong anyway. “We are all in this together. A comrade-hood.”

“Or sisterhood,” Emma said, looking at a slumbering Dan, stroking her chin as she envisioned what he would say, or think, when he woke up, converted into being rather than being with the woman of his dreams. A part of a plan which was now necessary to end the nightmare of slavery for so many young women, young men and maybe a few caught in between those strict definitions of behavior and social expectations.

CHAPTER 11

It seemed to Lawrenz to be just another day at the mobile office. Another referral, another private jet, another visit with a higher up seller of human flesh which had been connected to an Alive human soul before the owner of which had been broken in spirit and to some extent body. Another day of applying clever psychology to dig up one more secret about Emma's past, only to discover three more secrets about her present that even her ghost would not reveal three days after her death, no matter how much painful electric current you sapped into it. But there were a few differences, perhaps improvements in this five star exotic trip to dark places where the hotels were usually top rate and, if you could put out of your mind what you saw during the day, you could get a good, comfortable sleep at night.

As for the previous night, Doctor Dan, or rather Nurse Danielle as he mentally prepared to be presented to the Customs Inspectors at yet another necessary checkpoint with a fresh new passport. After being allowed by the armed 'ground crew' at edge of yet another airport bearing no name, this time with nine rather than five overly armed military personnel to every one civilian on the tar-mack.

Lawrenz and the others waiting to exit the rented crop duster and nameless pilot who spoke was now outside under the baking sun smiling and laughing with two military guard, this time longer than usual. He noted Dan yawning, yet again. The boy who became a man who now was expected to be a woman did not get a whole lot of sleep as he was busy yet again the night before. As Dan looked out of the window, Lawrenz recalled the last customs station where his picture as Dan on the most wanted list for sabotage and terrorism. And Dan's shaking hands when he checked in with the American Embassy with a throw away, hopefully non-traceable, phone. And was told that there was a price on his head, a comfortable computer-less, yet safe, jail cell awaiting him at home should he choose to go back. Something seemingly fellow fugitive from official law in the service of real justice Emma promised would be 'cleared up and expunged forever' when the time to go home was appropriate, and possible. Indeed, he had been busy yet again doing what he was hired to do, and best at--- cyber-fraud.

"That's it," Dan said as he put in the last entry into the computer just as the temperature in the landing craft elevated past what felt like at least 100 hot, dry, body baking degrees. He flipped off the circuits on his custom made lap-top, his most reliable friend who he considered naming but, as it was too hokey and self-revealing, didn't. "The best website, e mails, blogs and tweets I could compose, in as many convincing voices I could come up with, to inform the official rulers of these shithead countries who are sheltering the fuck-head sex slavers that keeping them around is not only embarrassing internationally, but dangerous leaks for secrets those motherfucking leaders can't let be known otherwise they'd be fucked over by everyone they've been fucking around with."

"Fucking A!" Lawrenz said to the 22 year old once sheltered small town introvert who knew how to write like most anyone who overused the f word, as well as those who thought they would go to hell for even thinking about it. An artistic genius who, due to

either writing his own novels with too much humanity, or due to the Universe requiring him to not know how wise he really was, could sneak anything he put on the web into any address on that superhighway, was unable to get any of his books or musical compositions into catalogs of legitimate and paying distributors. “You did great work,” Lawrenz continued as he looked at the handwritten list of slavers prepared by Emma who were soon to about to be enslaved or killed by men with bigger and more guns than they had. Who, hopefully, made their illicit money selling drugs, made in China kid’s toys, corporate stock tips or ‘missing’ military surplus weapons rather than people. “Yes indeed, fucking great work.”

“With the information that I provided for y’all,” Taylor replied, adjusting Dan’s boobs so that they were even, so that Emma wouldn’t have to explain that the A-team’s mute secretary got a botched breast transplant job by a doc who thought that half of a good job was good enough. “We’re gonna nail them all this time,” the self-taught musician who had been sold through several networks, as a man and a woman said with vengeance from a make-up caked face that were still in the process of healing from beatings inflicted by others, and him/herself. “And after we’re done with all of this, we’re going on tour as musicians, Danielle. Your lyrics, my music, Danielle.”

“MY music, with, maybe, you playing it. Using MY score with improvisations we BOTH do, and I initiate!” Dan grunted out as his still intact and defiant, yet smothered, male persona, which edged into his shaved arms and polish covered fingernails, pushing Taylor back into her own seat. “And stop calling me Danielle!”

“Alright then, Olivia,” Taylor mused, looking at Dan’s latest passport. Which would enable him to slither behind the scenes of the bosses of the next ‘slave-super-store’ as a meek female assistant if those operators were male, or a ‘younger sister’ on her way up to being a boss if the proprietor was a woman. “Or maybe you prefer Electra, Uma, or...”

“---Lorena!” Dan barked back, turning to Lawrenz. “The one woman we still haven’t been able to find.”

“And I came here to bring home,” Lawrenz interjected, looking accusingly at Emma.

“I’m doing the best I can,” she replied, after a long, pensive pause, averting her eyes. “And WE’RE doing the best we can,” Emma reminded her former lover, friend, professor and confident, referring to the herself and the other two members of the ‘A plus Team’ as she now called them.

“Well, WE have to do better,” Lawrenz grunted back at Emma, Dan and Taylor, who he had come to trust more than the aforementioned two colleagues. “And if any of you Three Stooges have any suggestions as to what I can be doing better, you tell me!”

The three ‘ladies’ looked at each other, contemplating yet another plan. Lawrenz could sense a third brain emerging between them, and allowed that Mystical Entity time to

speak. But before it could send its ideas to Emma, Dan/Danielle or Taylor, the door of the plane opened up.

“All clear,” the Pakistani or East Indian pilot said with a wide smile, revealing teeth so white that they blinded the viewer. “All complications taken care of,” he continued like a customer service rep at a tv cable company call center. “Except for...” he continued, motioning his fingers in that international symbol which means ‘no money, honey.’

Emma reached into her pocketbook, handing him a fist-fill of mixed currency. The pilot smirked with dis-satisfaction, giving her that ‘you have a lot, me and my family have a little’ look so many East Indian cabbies intended to guilt White American customers who carried themselves off with dignity and class into forking over some more money of their easily earned money. Emma gave in to the pilot who refused to ask any questions about her real business, or perhaps knew more about it than he was letting on.

In any case, the pilot counted the money, pocketed some of it, then pointed to two more heavily armed soldiers with mean looking, and brown, faces approaching the plane. He shrugged his shoulders, then put out his really NEEDED to be greased better palm, asking for more denaro.

“I’ll pick up lunch if any of you can pay for breakfast,” Emma offered the group.

“All of my money was in my wallet, I have nothing in my purse,” Dan offered in as much of a Danielle voice as he could.

“And a real lady doesn’t carry around a lot of cash,” Taylor offered. “Not that I had any cash to carry around even in the best of times,” she offered, sincerely and, to Lawrenz’s perception, accurately.

“I got it,” Lawrenz said, stepping up to the plate, emptying his left pocket until the pilot noted ‘enough’ with thumbs up, a gesture he also gave to the gruff military soldiers outside who now put ‘welcome to my humble country’ smiles for the pale faced, over privileged ‘doctor-documentary-making-tourists’ inside.

With that, the pilot bowed, allowing the ladies to leave the crop duster first. Lawrenz followed, lingering on top the red carpeted stairway. He noted a luxury black sedan with tinted windows leaving a small broken down shack which looked like it had been repaired with the cheapest mismatched material available. Hoping that the eyes, especially Emma’s, that motioned him to proceed, didn’t see or know about the money he was still holding onto, or demanded to look at the suitcase of ‘private medical goods and records’ that he, as a Neo-Nazi experimental medicine doctor in search of the right human subjects, never let out of his sight.

“Remember who you stole that from,” Lawrenz heard from a familiar voice. “That cash and those jewels. It’s blood money,” the voice continued from an apparition of his ex wife Vivian standing at the foot of the staircase leading from the plane.

“That I will use only to get back OUR blood daughter!” Lawrenz mouthed, but this time, had the good sense not to say. “Now get out of my way!” he whispered through gritted teeth to Vivian.

“It’s your funeral,” she said with a smart assed smirk that would make even the most accomplished man feel like a loser piece of garbage. As was her trademark and, some say, ‘charm’. “Yes, it’s all your funeral,” she pledged, warned and promised. “Especially hers,” Vivian continued, pointing at Emma.

“Lawrenz boldly strode his way down the stairs, defiantly going to, then through, the ‘hologram’. Which, this time, made a painful thump in his chest that took away his breath. Perhaps because the heart underneath it, as a giver, was still in love with Vivian, a born taker. Or because his soul and mind had conspired to put his body through a dress rehearsal for the ending of his own life. An event that he scoffed off so often a liberating ‘part of a cycle that’s run its natural course’. Which he now feared rather than accepted or welcomed. Perhaps he had run out of courage, something which even the bravest of soldiers in the line of fire too long all too often experience. In a war where losing Lorena to death, or permanently to the hands of a slaver who would make her wish she was dead, was still, thankfully, not an acceptable option.

CHAPTER 12

The forested mountain road was as bumpy as it was dark, but as long as Dan kept his eyes on the pile of dirt separating deep ditch from drivable surface and listened to the GPS, the truck he was driving would make it to its destination. “Turn right in fifty meters, and don’t fuck it up like last time by cutting corners, you lazy piece of detritus,” the dominatrix voice programmed into the device said in crisply accented Upper Caste born to the Manor in London and the beach-house in Southampton English.

“That’s piece of shit!” Dan yelled back from the driver’s seat in his natural voice the 21st century device inserted into the supped up surplus military 1970 transport truck dashboard. “And if you’re English, why the fuck don’t you say fifty yards instead of meters.”

“Because,” Lucinda replied, “You have intentionally stumbled into being a workaholic masochist who requires the intervention of what those of lesser cerebral callings and inclinations call a ride you hard sadist to tell you that you suck such that your course of applied do good today...”

“...yeah and better tomorrow,” he shot back, in unison with the voice Emma put into the GSP, driven by a now corrupted and independently-thinking cultural transformation program Dan had wired into it which shifted from one vernacular to another according to what Lucinda read in his voice tone and verbal cadence. “And if you’re so smart, why can’t you tell me about the goddamn potholes in this fucking road.”

“And why can’t you realize that you will lose the valuable cargo you are entrusted with if you don’t turn right in five, four, three...”

“OK already,” Dan grunted, as he pulled into a hard right, into a black ‘worm hole’ in which the surface was actually flat, the wheels not sounding like they were about to fall off the axel. Staying on course, trusting his third eye rather than his two normal ocular portholes, he felt concrete under him. Then saw an actual yellow line in the middle of it. For the first time in 10 miles from the ‘hunting and fishing camp’ he snuck out of, there were two lanes in the road, allowing him to accelerated from a rocky 30 mph to 90. “But,” Dan, still clad as Danielle, asked Lucinda as a convoy of military vehicles approached from the horizon in front of him on what he was told would be a deserted highway. Wondering what would happen to him if was caught as a woman by macho men. In a country where the penalty for a woman driving was five years in jail. And the penalty for being a renegade elevated in status slave woman, owned by master Emma, who was on a shopping expedition for more slaves, would be a lot stiffer and painful for sexy serf and Mistress alike. But there was one question that emerged through Danielle’s shaking body that shot out of Dan’s quivering, lip-sticked lips, directed to the only entity, other than perhaps the still silent Great Goddess/Spirit, that he could trust. “Lucinda, as one girl to another, tell me for real. Are you supposed to drive on the right or left side of the road in this country?”

“Let’s try the right side,” Lucinda suggested. “And if we’re wrong…”

“All of our problems will be over,” silencing Lucinda this time. “And the girls and women I just rescued from that ‘holiday camp’ for horny, sadistic geezer shithead assholes will know they died free. Feeling good about going back home again.”

“In some cases yes,” Dan heard in a congratulatory tone from the dimly lit figure next to him. “And in most cases, no,” Taylor continued looking back to see how many of the gagged girls were still trying to call out for their slave masters. And who was still cursing their liberators for risking life and limb to save them from being sold to owners even further away from, in now confused dreams, they remembered as home. “Most of these girls will have to be re-introduced to themselves before we can let them go anywhere,” Taylor warned Dan. “And we don’t really know who knows their way home and who actively doesn’t want to go back there.”

“So, what do we do about them?” Dan asked.

“Good lad, or rather lass,” Lucinda replied after a deep breathed pause, switching to a Scottish borough “Der ye now kin why ye can’t be actin’ like a rabid bampot?”

“What the fuck is she talking about?” Dan asked Taylor.

“You being, unlike me, a two spirited soul,” Taylor replied, as a liberated trans-woman who was now empowered as a result of helping to liberate more of her sisters in PHYSICAL bondage. “Who is part man, and part woman and all---”

“---yeah, yeah, we’ve been through all of that,” Dan blasted back. “Tell her to talk ENGLISH. AMERICAN English. Or some other language we BOTH can understand, capiche?”

Taylor started a conversation with Lucinda in Italian. Taylor chuckled at what sounded like a joke Lucinda made. Dan could see Taylor smile, and feel Lucinda’s all knowing and perhaps condescending eyeroll.

“This is the last thing I fucking need!” Dan said.

“Sure,” Taylor replied. The South Carolinian cultured young man who became a renegade then enslaved street woman continued, imitating Dan’s gruff Upstate New York accent. “A half woman like me, and a cyber bitch telling jokes about you. Or maybe, saying good things about you, and your potential, behind your back that---“

“I mean the last thing I fucking need it THAT!” Dan said as he pulled over, nearly breaking the heel on his stiltoes while jamming on the break, and chipping a two nails while turning out the headlights. With fingers shivering from the cold and fear, he pointed to the previously dark horizon ahead, now brightly lit by truck spread out on both sides of the highway. Dimly lit figures in baggy pants and military boots emerged from

the backs of the trucks, their leader arranging them into various poorly lit zones along side of the roads and into the woods.

“Nay probs, laddie, lassies and everyone betwixt,” Lucinda replied. Then she said something in Italian.

“Which means fucking what, fellow Dixie Belle poison?” Dan asked Taylor, rehearsing his best still inadequate Danielle voice, propping up the fake cleavage that had fallen down towards his still present, and hopefully not urine emitting penis.

“They’re on military maneuvers,” Taylor translated, from Lucinda, in yet another language the trans-woman and former slave seemed to be fluent in. “And if they haven’t approached us, yet, they won’t,” she continued.

“So how do we get to the other side of these military maneuvers? And to the country on the other side of them which, so Emma says, is about to go to war with whatever country we’re in right now?” Dan asked. “I’ll take any answer from either of you,” he asked of the savy cyber woman who had been programmed by Emma as well as himself, as well as the ever secretive trans female who seemed, so far anyway, to know more about the international slave trade and the world it created than Emma did.

“A simple detour,” Lucinda replied as trucks engines turned off, even more soldiers and several quads emerging from the trucks, then disappearing into the woods. “Which is—“

“Straight through them,” Taylor added, boasting like a proud lion, with the tenacity of a dissed lioness. She ripped Lucinda’s legs out of the dashboard, silencing any reply to that change in plans. “Through that service road,” she said, putting on weird fashion sun glasses, pointing to something that Dan’s, admittedly average at best, when he wasn’t stoned anyway, eyes for night and distance vision couldn’t.

“Where?” Dan asked.

Taylor gave Dan the apparently night vision glasses that obviously she had not shared with him. Meanwhile, the girls in the back of the truck started to make loud noises, in many different languages. Some were screams of fear. Others were loud assurances from the few of them who were able to remove the shackles from their minds as well as their wrists, necks and ankles. But they were getting louder.

Dan finally saw the road ahead. And the slowly moving shadows around them on the nearly moonless night. “They can’t see us, but we can see them,” Taylor boasted, with pride.

“Not unless they have these ‘buy one now and get one free’ sunglasses they got from watching late night tv too,” Dan said. “Do you think we can pretend to be one of them?” he said, while glancing back at the surplus military truck bearing a quickly painted Medical Red Cross, nearly half of the paint having been washed off by a rain shower that

allowed for escape. A wet smoke screen delivered by a God who allowed the truck of liberated captives to leave camp unnoticed while their captors were being dined and wined with delicacies containing sleeping pills from hopefully escaped from other routes Emma and Lawernz.

“You were never good at making deadlines, were you?” Taylor asked Dan, reading his mind and soul, yet again, as the perhaps for real ‘two spirit’ small town New York geek pondered the options as to how to get the liberated women and himself to another ‘stan’ country which, he was told anyway, frowned upon human trafficking, officially anyway. “Well, we both have to become heroes now, again,” Taylor said, with the voice of a veteran. As she retrieved from what Dan would have called before this inner and outer adventure started, her snatch, an automatic assault revolver and a hand grenade. “You want to drive, or shoot?” Taylor asked. “If you want to shoot, beware, that my driver’s licence is expired,” she offered with an inviting smile.

It was the first Dan remembered laughing at a woman’s joke, considering that maybe men should let down the walls and accept a woman’s offering of humor. Even a trans-woman’s.

Dan decided to flip a coin, winning the toss. He took the gun and hand grenade, and gave the keys of the truck to Taylor. “I never took my driving test,” he said. “And if anything goes wrong as we drive through these military maneuvers as a military truck, I’ll get out and give you cover, while you get yourself and these other girls to the other side.”

Taylor hugged Dan, as soul to soul, irrespective of gender. Perhaps because they would meet soon on the other side of the life death line. Or, as Dan self observed, and noted...it was the first time since discovering Taylor’s trans status that Dan called her a her, acknowledging Taylor as a woman.

CHAPTER 13

Taylor tied back her hair, put on a ski cap, covered her face with black mascara and of course put on a COVID mask so as to look like the rest of the soldiers edging their way to a sneak attack from StanA on their rival country, StanB. She then edged the truck slowly towards the backs of the StanA soldiers wearing green and black combat jackets. On the other end of the horizon without warning stood, all of a sudden upstood Stan B combatants, clad in black and green combat coats. The StanA soldiers held their ground, ducking for cover as the first shots came from their opponents on the other side of the a field of dried brown grass that appeared to be beet red as the moon pulled away from its hiding place in the clouds. StanB soldiers positioned themselves to shoot whoever crossed a yellow line on the field which signified the border, shooting a line of fire at that line, yelling out something which had to mean 'do not cross'. The StanA's shot up another line of dirt just behind their side of the border. There was no fire at all, until one of the StanA's heard a woman scream from inside the locked supply truck.

Their commander, an ugly voiced and even uglier in appearance pig-like Sergeant who seemed to think himself a general, ordered his men to shoot open the door, while two quads pulled in front of the truck, halting its progress. He and his loyal squad of goons took notice of the liberated girls. Some were scared, holding on to their less terrified sisters or the railings. Some tried to rush out to be with the soldiers with smirks on their greedy for sex and recreation faces. Some held back those captives who wanted to be caught again. All of them were ordered to leave the truck by the Commander, the guns of his squad of 20 or more making it known that he meant business. And communicating with his greasy, grimy finger that taking care of his own pleasure at the expense of the most terrified, and beautiful, girl in the truck was the first order of that business. Olivia 124, once a 17 year old Chinese exchange-student a year away from graduating college with a double major in chemistry and drama who had just been told that if she didn't self abort the baby that appeared in her womb, she would suffer the most horrible death imaginable.

A single shot emerged from the top of the truck, hitting the Sergeant-General in the groin, The shooter, who was a dangerous and dedicated combination of Dan and Danielle, yin and yang, lion and lioness, leaped off the truck, shot two of the goons behind the crying like a baby Sergeant. Then the hero/heroine ran over to them in tumble roll which saved him/her from being shot and grabbed hold of their automatic weapons. Dan-Danielle took one into his/her hand, taking out the tires and driver on the quads in front of the truck. Then roll-ram through the tall grass towards the back of the truck and threw the other weapon to Tamara 13, a half-Apache half Latino from Juarez who trusted the wrong coyote to bring her across the border to be with her younger brother in Colorado. Remembering the defiance of her Indigenous genetics, which dated back to Geronimo himself, she blasted a line of fire between the soldiers and her fellow sisters released from bondage.

That line kept most of the soldiers away, but excited the others, particularly when Tamara's gun jammed. The enlisted soldiers edged ahead, eager to satisfy themselves, stepping over their abusive Sergeant, spitting on him and cursing him. But before those greasy, greedy overpowered small minded StanA soldiers could grab hold of any of the girls, Danielle stepped in between them. "Take me first, please! I'm the first course. Delivered to you by the Master himself," Dan announced, in his best StanA-ese, as a very convincing and alluring Danielle, unbuttoning her blouse, slowly. One of the men who spoke English translated for the others. The squad agreed, lowered their guns, then moved in for the first course. Just as the sex or love starved sad sack soldiers began to drool over what they would be enjoying as an appetizer, that dish pulled out a hand grenade and threw it into their quad, blowing it up as soon as it hit.

The pistol and submachine gun packing Mamma then opened fire on whatever men were still standing, forcing them back to the ground with those too wounded or terrified to get up. "Drive!" Dan yelled out as he shut the door to the truck, running as quick as he could in Danielle's heels to the cab. Danielle's ass in the passenger's seat, Dan's strong arms blasting away at the next line of StanA soldiers coming up on running feet and, so far anyway, slow moving armored mini-tanks.

The truck bashed through the disabled quads, made its way to the border, the line for which was being expanded by fire from both sides. Taylor yelled out to the StanB's, 'our rescued prisoners on their way home'. A hole was created in the line by the StanBs, allowing the truck and all of its human cargo to pass through.

"Unharmd and gloriously victorious," Dan continued as he concluded the first part of the story of his escape to Emma in her hospital room, glancing at himself in the mirror, still as Danielle, apparently liking the view. "But," he said, noting the bullet holes and other tears in the skirt and blouse. "At the expense of an outfit that...ya know..."

"Can be replaced, if you want it to be," Emma replied. "Or need it to be."

"So, where was I?" Dan said, turning around to Emma.

Emma listened as he went on about how he and Taylor deceived the Lieutenant in the StanB army that his truck was filled with prisoners that they, as their wives, had rescued from the horrific StanA prison cells. And the Major at the next checkpoint afterwards that they were on special assignment working with the UN as Canadian peacekeepers working with a Private Army hired by an oil company to get high level diplomats and oil execs out of StanA so they would not reveal secrets about StanB's oil fields and unofficial plutonium manufacturing plants to StanA's military. And how GPS dominatrix Lucinda had to be disobeyed after getting well behind the lines to get to the American owned hospital, due to having a PMS day, going bipolar with regard to who was friend or foe, or, the most likely explanation, shrapnel which affected her electrical circuits.

It was a colorful story hearing about Dan and Taylor's arguments with the device Emma had programmed for them. Both in terms of what the two young crusaders had learned about warfare, and themselves. But there was something about the former that Dan didn't seem to learn. And that Taylor, who remained silent about everything, still scared and remorseful, didn't as she stood behind him, staring into memories about what happened the night before, and even worse ones that occurred weeks and months earlier before she was rescued by an unanticipated purchase.

"You remind me of George Washington," Emma finally said, after a plethora of 'hmm', 'yeah' 'and so?' so as not to disturb Dan's well deserved victory over the bad guys, as well as the self-inhibiting male persona which now learned to work with rather than against his other Inner 'half'. "An interesting and charmed liberator," she said. "Who never got shot during the French and Indian War, or the War for American Independence."

"But who, after he saw enough other people get shot, stopped calling War and Liberation a glorious enterprise," Taylor replied. In spoken words.

"We won didn't we?" Dan volleyed back. "And those girls and women we rescued will be going home!"

"After the docs here, in this country that, so far, needs to look like they are not supporting human trafficking, insure they are healthy," Emma said.

"And the shrinks untangle the self destructive wiring that's still left between their ears," Taylor added. "With a whole lot of supportive care, lots of hours of talk therapy, and, according to what I've heard anyway, some magical drugs which might even be the cure for the pandemic of learned helplessness that, in one form or another, is more widespread and deadly than COVID."

"And our people check out who isn't a security risk to send home," Emma noted. "Some of them could be moles working for the Slave Masters."

"Or insecure souls who still think they want to serve the Slave Masters!" Taylor asserted.

Dan's mind considered that all of that could very well be true, but his Soul was reluctant to accept that the world was that... complicated. Even though he didn't believe in God, he believed in the power of goodness. According to Emma's assessment of him anyway.

Emma took in a deep breath, then prepared to inform Dan, and Taylor, about more of the Master Plan to disable the Slave Master and their Illuminati business partners. But biology interfered, in the form of a pain in her chest that drew all consciousness to her own fate rather than others, compounded by her re-attached left leg losing all feeling yet again.

“I’m sorry!” Dan said to Emma, looking at he busted ribs and noticing, for the first time since entering her room, her surgically reconstructed leg. “We’ll be sure that whoever crushed your chest and cut open your leg will pay with their fucking life!” he pledged. “What happened?” he asked.

“Nothing that talking about would do anything,” Emma replied, with downturned eyes, feeling and recalling other wounds to her body, and mind. “But, as your fathers told you, or should have told you,” she said to over-life tested Taylor and under-tested Dan as she struggled to push herself up out of the hospital bed, and walk on her one and a half-legged still alive and, all things considered, not too badly mutilated body. “If you start something, ya gotta finish it.” With that, she pulled out an envelope from her purse, pursing her lips so as to not let any auscultation of pain come from her mouth. “The new plan,” she said Taylor and Dan both opened it, like kids playing musical chairs with only one seat left. “To be coordinated by....”

Just as Taylor and Dan opened the envelope, Emma pulled as much strength as she could from her crushed but thankfully not severed arm and pointed to the door.

“Him?” Taylor protested as Lawrenz came into the room, his long, grey-brown hair replaced by a dark closely cut ‘Putin’ doo. “I know more about the human trafficking world from real life.”

“And he believes everything he reads in books, written by so called authorities,” Dan added.

“Like everyone else believes in fake facts they read on websites,” Taylor appended.

“Which is only one of the things you dudes and/or dudettes will be doing,” Lawrenz replied in a ‘cool’ contemporary Scandinavian-tinged accent, seeming to be a young master manipulator rather than an old, crabby fart. “Along with...” he said as he grabbed hold of the legal pad within the envelope. “I don’t fucking believe it,” he said in his own displaced-Professor-trying-to-find-his-way-back-to –the-podium voice. “You really think that the man behind the curtain is....him?”

“And that YOUR Lorena is there,” she said. “Recent intel I just got. Which I am entrusting to you three stooges on ONE condition!”

“Which is?” Dan asked.

“That you free as many other Lorenas as possible,” Emma asserted, blasting out commitment from her blood shot and still, mostly functioning, eyes. “We only get one shot at this Fat Cat. So don’t blow it! Or else I’ll....”

Emma’s threat to send them a ricin sandwich for lunch, have the Feds freeze their bank accounts, or send them a special secret prison in Utah where they will be tortured for life by having to listen to Mormon Missionaries and Lawrence Welk Champagne music was

halted by a Doctor with a friendly smile, dead soul and an uninformed mind entering the room with two darker-skinned nurses. The immaculately clad physician, who didn't seem to know the difference between clean and sterile, and who seemed to be overwhelmed with Dull Out Disease, looked at her chart while the nurses took her vitals.

"I'll be alright, as long as all of you remember the message in Fidelio," Emma said to the trio to whom she was now entrusting the Mission.

"Beethoven's only opera," the physician said, startling Emma with his knowledge of such. "In which the issue of selective compassion for loved ones is at odds with universal compassion for everyone," he continued, after which he hummed the Overture to the opera about a woman who went undercover as a man to liberate her husband from prison, then found herself dedicating herself to liberate every wife's imprisoned soul mate .

It wasn't the first time Emma was taken by surprise in a life where she had worked so hard to have everything work out according to her own plans. As she hoped that her real agenda would be served by the partial one she had, not according to plan, entrusted to Dan, Taylor, Lawrenz and the souls who they would inadvertently bring into a Liberation which could land them into painful bondage for life, or worse.

CHAPTER 14

“So, we’ve come a long way,” Lawrenz Schaumburg heard from an echoing voice emanating out of the rear windshield of the captured and supped up Canadian Armed Forces transport mini-truck, while sitting comfortably in the back seat, in front of him a bullet proof glass plate for which was officially so that there was no spread of COVID. “And ‘about’ what gone through. Many changes, not on SCHEDULE, aye?” it continued, from the blood stained and locked door panel next to him in a high pitched Ontario Canuk diction.

Lawrenz took in a deep breath, trying to not show the driver what he was hearing, thinking, and feeling. He hoped, and found himself praying, that the fully masked, from the forehead down to his, or her, chin driver was looking into the rear view mirror to check for any cars coming up from behind and not on the three passengers in the back seat. Or the ghosts of the dead Canadian Peacekeeping soldiers who had been put in charge of the supply truck who most probably paid for the good deed of delivering food to refugees in need of it by becoming breakfast for the Warlord’s pigs, or lunch meat for the buzzards hovering above, or dinner for the ‘pleasing to the eye’ young female and male captives who they were getting big bucks.

“Ya seems nervous, don’t ya know, bouy,” the second Canadian ghost-soldier said to Lawrenz, in a lilting Newfoundland accent, as the overly expressive souls, usually friendly and always musical souls who inhabited the province in Canada which was the source of most ridicule, but the essential spice in the Canadian culture soup saved it from becoming as exciting as sugarless, fruitless, generic porridge. “But, tells me true, ow’s she cutting, me cocky.?”

“I’d be doing better if you ghosts decide to stop talking to me,” Lawrenz replied, having understood the Newfy soldier-ghost’s diction better than any of his mainland Canadian comrades due his having written one novel about life on The Rock which actually did sell over thirty copies, and a play which was ‘too human to go anywhere’ according to the most honest and accurate literary agent in the Big Crab Apple. “But,” he continued, putting a COVID mask over his face so as to not be seen muttering to himself, again. “I would like it if you, and the ghosts of the sex slaves who died before being sold to the highest bidder, gave me some information that is USEFUL to save whoever is still on THIS side of the one way life-death corridor instead of----”

“Giving you motivation,” Lawrenz heard from another ghost, who appeared directly in front of him. “To, you know...”

“No, I don’t know, Viv!” the professor who became an expert on altered states, the physiology of metaphysics and organically-based schizophrenia before he became a carrier of such said to the apparition of his ex wife. “And that jewelry you are wearing,” he commented on the diamond studded, green and blue rare-gem over-studded earring-necklace combo which encircled a Canadian Forces combat Uniform. “It doesn’t match your outfit.”

“But it matches my eyes,” she said with an alluring ‘I got you again’ smile. “And caught YOUR eyes when we first met,” she continued, her combat gear turning into a Revolution Now vintage back to the land jean skirt, low cut peasant blouse and with knee-high fringed leather moccasins. Her chin length Hyannisport high society silver hair grew out before Lawrenz’ bloodshot eyes into a waist-long, curly, rainbow colored mane that brought back the day three decades and ten times as many political fads ago when he was mesmerized by her. Until years later when he found out that the ‘woman of the people’ outfit was actually an overpriced ensemble put together by a top level fashion designer from the East Side. And that her long ‘blowin’ in the wind’ mane was half extensions. And that her tales about being at the REAL Peace and Love music festivals that she shared at the Anti-War rally on the Campus with Lawrenz were based around her being a vendor selling tie-dye psychedelic tea shirts that cost a dollar to make for twenty bucks a shot, after being sent there by her father to learn how to milk idealistic Democratic Socialists and the rest of ‘the Revolution’ so she would be worthy enough to be privy to the secrets about how her family got wealthy, and the contacts which would make them even richer for generations to come. “And I wore this jewelry for a specific reason,” Vivian said as her younger, sexier and, perhaps in some ways, idealistic self as she fondled the blue green, diamond studded earrings and necklace.

“Because you want to remind me that I stole it from you?” Lawrenz said. “You aren’t using them where you are,” he blasted at and into her. “Wherever that is,” he continued, wondering which realm of the afterlife she was really in. Considering that she indeed could have cheated the laws at the Pearly Gates with a desperate or commoner-born-in-need-of-approval—from-the-castle lawyer and get into heaven. Or that she was one of the devil’s minions, giving Lawrenz a taste of what was awaiting him in hell for the miscalculations and mistakes he made, and the effective, good things he didn’t do, out of ignorance as well as cowardice. “But for the moment, tell me something useful.”

“Like where Jimi Hendrix is reincarnated so you can latch him up and train him to be a money making musician?” she mused. “Or where Adolf Hitler is, so he can tell where he went after his suicide in 1945, so you can make a revealing documentary about how he sold data about medical experiments at the Concentration Camps to Pharmaceutical companies in New Jersey that made them rich by 1950, while Adolf lived comfortably in Argentina? A documentary that maybe you won’t fuck up or self sabotaged this time,” she said with that ‘warm assuring, it’s ok to be a loser because that’s your job in the universe’ grin. “Or where JFK is, and went to, so he could tell you who actually killed him. Which, of course if he did, whoever is still around---”

“---yeah, will have to kill me, I know,” Lawrenz replied, reading yet again the mind of the soul he wanted nothing to do with once he really got to know her. Or perhaps reading his own diseased mind. Perhaps now with these enhanced special abilities because of medication Emma had been sneaking into his morning mug of coffee, or evening shotglass of schnops. “But...our daughter’s life is at stake here,” Lawrenz grunted out, pretending to tuck in his shirt as he leaned in closer to the apparition, or real visitor from

beyond. “Can you tell me, so I know if I should keep looking, if Lorena is anywhere on the other side of the line?”

Vivian pulled back, pursing her lips. She put her hand over her mouth and finally after a long, pensive pause, averted her eyes and replied, “I can’t.”

“You mean you won’t!” Lawrenz grunted out, realizing that this time voice came out of his mouth.

“I won’t what, Sir?” the driver inquired behind the dark sunglasses, chauffeur’s hat, and black bandana covering his face.

“I mean I can’t tell you if she is here with ‘us’” Vivian replied, with honesty, fear and remorse. Elements in unison or individually which Lawrenz had never seen in her after figuring out what and who she really was. “But believe what you see, not what you are told,” she continued, as she ran her fingers through the necklace with her right hand, then tapped her left hand onto the dangly earrings, moving them in a pendulous action that merged into a grey fog summoning her back to where she dwelled now. Or perhaps to the recesses of Lawrenz’ foggy but more determined than ever mind.

A chorus of ghosts muttered non-understandable low level White Noise into Lawrenz’ head as his ‘real’ ears heard Dan, this time as his biological gender, assure the driver that his/her boss was just muttering the words to a song he was composing in his head that had to come out of his mouth. Dan provided a few more improvised lyrics to the soon to be hit on the charts ‘You mean you won’t’, adding ‘you won’t dis me, you won’t piss on me, you won’t deject, reject or define me’ to his Music Manager and Human Trafficking bosses intro in a Dylanese droning ‘tune. Taylor sung harmony that gave more definition to the tome which merged into a definable melody. A tune that even as the non-musical Lawrenz noted, was catchy. And which, thankfully, the driver started to bop his head to and hum. Until the next turn off and a quick pull off into a well camouflaged road behind a wall of easily penetrable bushes, containing barb wire pine needles connected to an electrical system, human skulls and bones scattered around the ‘gate’. Dead silence came from the driver, the new Folk-Punk duo, and the ghost in the musical key of the tone of finality.

CHAPTER 15

Dan recalled a documentary he had seen about B-movie producers in Hollywood who never went bankrupt and whose award-less films, unlike the festival-award winning flicks, somehow kept getting distributed decades after they were mad. The bottom line was economic efficiency for the Israeli-born producers who came to America to make their fortune. Non-nonsense business talk took place in an office, where coffee and a few cookies were offered to potential investors and creative participants on the project instead of lobster and brandy on a yacht, preceded by bullshit banter about what was trending on the internet today or pleasant chit chat. Indeed, this office seemed like a place where things were done directly, with no bullshit. The hallway to it was convoluted, well lit, decorated with nothing but plain paint, with, ironically, no sounds of human suffering or sexual delight coming from the other side of the walls.

“So, you came here to look for a specific girl, or maybe a few girls who may be specific enough for your purposes,” a small framed, pencil-mustached middle aged Chinese gentlemen in a blue shirt without accompanying CEO tie or Russian mobster black leather jacket asked within five seconds after Lawrenz, Dan, and Taylor were seated. The seats in the office for the visitors were, this time, at an equal height to that of the host, and seemed to be just as comfortable as the ‘boss’ behind the desk. “Emma speaks highly of you all,” he continued in American English tinged with a touch of Beacon Hill Blue Blood Bostonian diction as a young, very blonde, White secretary impeccably dressed for a power meeting on Wall Street in a grey business suit and black heels brought in tray of cups as plain as any would get at Walmart and still not out of the wrapper ‘Dad’s’ cookies, chocolate chip and oatmeal. She pointed to no-name tea bags and what seemed to be instant coffee, asking what her guests would like.

Noting that the Asian boss, who seemed to enjoy controlling rather than being controlled by Colonial White Eyes as his ancestors had been, was sipping, from the same cups, tea and munching on oatmeal raisin cookies, the , such is what Dan pointed to. As he, yes, self observed himself admiring both the young woman’s outfit, and the anatomy under it. All the while of course being aware that drugging the customer with ‘happy drugs’ that made the seller’s job of convincing the buyer to purchase what he didn’t want or need was an old trick. But as Dan noted with advanced olfactory sense of detecting happy weed or other consciousness altering substances, there seemed to be nothing in the cookies and tea other than corporate and government approved ‘preservatives’ which, by intent or ‘accident’, made the consumer of such more passive, lazy, dull, boring, lifeless and controllable by others. And even if it was the case, it was Mind over mind-altering medicinals that had to be employed here. Particularly when he observed Lawrenz’ over-rehearsed ‘calm and cool’ semi-closed eyelids open up so wide the fire coming in set fire to his brain when he was presented with the file for of the first specimen for sale.

“You know her?” the ‘real’ Colonel Rodney inquired as a question. “She seems to be exactly what and WHO you are looking for then.”

“Eh...yes, she, it, is,” Dan heard Lawrenz reply, unable to hide his stuttering, holding on only to a thin thread to his newly acquired Scandinavian accent. “Exactly what I, no, we, were eh...ya know...looking for,” his diction slipping dangerously towards his native, before he met Vivian, working class North Jersey diction. “She’s...eh..ya know....”

“--- has the perfect background from her pre-slave life, for what we need,” Dan intervened, taking the file from Lawrenz before his hands were about to shake and drop it onto the floor, along with any chances of coming out of there alive themselves. Dan pretended to look at the written description of the girl’s assets rather than the picture that drove Lawrenz into shock, anger, then terror. “She has some interesting talents,” he noted with a confident “I’m cool and so many aren’t” self satisfied grin.

“With a brain that got straight A’s in college, then dropped out when she figured out that real learning and creativity happens after you leave the classroom, laboratory and conservatory,” Taylor noted, no doubt referring to the route she took in her musical training that led her to street musicians who were more about street savvy sadism than sensitivity-fueled musical abilities. “The best student is the one who after all excels and goes beyond and more worthy of empowerment than many of her teachers.”

Dan read behind Taylors tastefully made up eyes not only what she was feeling as a liberated slave now dedicated to freeing so many others in bondage. But what she would do to this Harvard trained Chink ‘Papa Jack’ one day soon. Envisioning, no doubt, how he would look in a florescent barbed electric dog collar with matching restrains on his perhaps wrists and ankles while being slowly roasted and toasted over a bonfire at a liberation dance. A dance which Taylor, no doubt, would be playing piano at and singing. Accompanied by Dan of course.

But before Taylor, out of righteous indignation, gave away too much about what she wanted to do with this apparently General in the Army of Slavers, and Lawrenz, out of unrestrained anger and long-absent Passion, revealed too much about his real identity and moral nature, Dan stepped in. “How much do you want for her?” he asked, trying to hide his apprehension about the first ‘Lorena’ in the stable of multiracial Lorenas being most probably the Lorena that, and who, Lawrenz had been searching for ever since the beginning of this endeavor to liberate as many of the 30 million sex-slaves as possible.

“How much do you have?” Papa Jack smiled back at Dan.

Dan pulled out a wad of cash, then spread them out on the desk in the same manner that he did when learning how to play strip poker back home in Upstate New York, proudly displaying his ‘winning’ hand. That usually left him naked and ridiculed by people who changed the rules of the game on him constantly, or were far better at deception and counting cards than he was. But now, Dapper rather than Dumpster Dan was determined to stay well clothed. This time he did know the worth of the paper. No more than 50 percent of the amount Emma said to offer for the most savable, deserving and/or useful in the Cause young-never-to-grow-old woman, or man, they could find.

“Not enough,” Papa Jack replied. “Inflation and cost of doing business securely expenses,” he explained. “You understand. I do need to make a profit, as do you.”

“Of course,” Dan replied, pointing to Taylor. With the rhythm of a well crafted and rehearsed duet at ‘hopefully will open up soon to full audiences’ Carnegie Hall, Taylor reached into the recesses between her large, mostly naturally enhanced, breasts and seductively pulled out more money, waving it onto the plain, oak desk with her long, manicured fingers.

“Still not enough, I’m afraid, Sir,” he said to Dan, who now seemed to be in charge of the deal while his boss, ‘Lord Svenson’, still gazed at the photo of the desired property. “And Miss,” the classy-talking Chinamen who no doubt was a greedy pig in bed said.

“And...” Taylor smiled, as she fondled her breasts, after which she unfascened the top button on her already low cut dress. Diverting Papa John’s legendary ‘just for business’ eye away from the money and at what he envisioned was the complete female anatomy under Taylor’s dress.

Dan admired Taylor’s courage for wanting to lure the Chinese Flesh-selling Mogul into bed, and feared that his elimination by her knife bearing hands in the private moment of passion after he discovered the still male tissue between her shapely legs would cause more...problems. Logistically, it would create difficulty in getting out of there alive. And in the long term, there were other big fish to catch, and fry. As well as preventing smaller fish in the human trafficking trade who would slime their way up to the top in a Capitalist world where there is always someone on the top, always someone on the bottom, and inevitably someone beneath the bottom. But he feared more for the consequences of what Lawrenz was doing. Opening the briefcase which was, this time, not examined with entering the building, he pulled out a large pouch, emptying its contents on the desk.

“We’re taking this one,” he asserted to Papa John, pointing to the picture of Lorena. As Dan now confirmed with a good look at it comparing it to the photo Lawrenz kept in his wallet in a sealed compartment, and kissed goodnight every time he went to sleep in the two man occupancy rooms he had shared with him so many ‘Lorenas’ ago “That should cover all of your costs.”

“It does that,” Papa John check-listed, counting the money Lawrenz had stolen from Vivian’s bedroom, and hidden from fellow Comrade Emma. “Indeed it does,” the already rich Chinese CEO in the business no government talks about continued as he ran his fingers through the jewelry Dan had helped Lawrenz pilfered from his wife’s dresser and secretly kept away from Emma. “This one in particular,” Papa John smiled regarding a blue and green necklace and earring set, studded with what seemed to be stones and small rocks that seemed like they were valuable. “And for a tip?” he continued, looking at Taylor.

Dan closed the buttons on Taylor's dress, to the consternation of the vengeance seeking trans woman. "She's mine," he stated.

"And she is now mine," Lawrenz asserted with a controlled neo-Viking boast with matching arch in his back to Papa JACKoff, pointing to the picture of his beloved and finally to be reunited with estranged daughter. "While you--"

"Show us some other samples, please," Dan requested of his host. Holding back from bowing to a superior. As a superior who, it seemed, not had no superiors to be bossed around with. Or teachers to learn from other than life itself.

CHAPTER 16

This time Lawrenz was wise and, for the moment, lucrative enough to purchase a vehicle without a driver to get from the gate of the ‘holiday camp for runaway girls’ back to the hospital where Emma was organizing a mind, body and spirit check on forcibly rescued as well as ‘legally’ purchased slaves. Next to him was the most important purchase he had made, at least to him. Lawrenz rehearsed what he would say to Emma thanking her finally leading him to where his daughter Lorena was being prepared for permanent incognito relocation. He had already finished thanking God for delivering to him what he had made, thankfully undelivered, deals with the devil to get. Such included having cyber and now people savvy Dan in the front passenger seat using the internet to sic mobsters and government-paid upper ups who didn’t deal in the slave trade against the ones that did. Always coming up with a secret tip or skill when you needed it ‘Trans-Taylor’ in the driver’s seat. A vehicle that had fixable mechanical parts under the hood rather than a non-reparable computer in third world country where more things got moved by horse or human muscle power than mechanical transport. And of course, Lorena’s head, which still bore the multicolored long mane she had when a free woman, resting on his neck. Yes, she was still sleeping, a condition that soon to be Prisoner Jack rather than Papa John said was required for her ‘safe’ release, as a matter of his usual policy. But, as the expression goes, you can’t have you cake and eat it too. Unless of course you wait for the god who made that rule to leave the room, giving you a chance to wolf down the pastry on your own terms.

“Your nightmare’s over now, Lorena,” Lawrenz whispered to her. “You can wake up, any time now,” he said to her. “But if you need to work out more shit to turn into shinola in the huya aniya, please do so,” he continued, regarding the alternative ‘dream world’ from which, according to the Yaqui Indians, if you worked hard enough, you could change the course of events in the ‘real’ awake world . “By any means necessary. With my blessing, support and...yes...the L thing.”

“You mean love,” Taylor reminded Lawrenz, man to man, from the woman who he really was inside.

“Yes, with my love,” Lawrenz said to Lorena. “Agape, Phillos.”

“Love of Spirit and Love between Comrades,” Taylor translated. “But not Eros, love of body. And as for Eros.”

Lorena grumbled from whatever world she was still in.

“Love of ‘body’, sexual love, which has had more than enough of,” Lawrenz barked back at Taylor. “And doesn’t need to be reminded of!”

“But there is another expression of love of and with body that, you need to be reminded of, Professor,” Taylor replied. “Look at where your loving arms are.”

“And aren’t,” Dan added, his eyes still focused on his lap top.

Lawrenz noted that his arms indeed were stiff. On his side. In that body position that said ‘private’. ‘Sterile’. ‘Non-expressive’. ‘fearful’. And, when he saw it in actors he was coaching when pinch hitting for drama teachers who were dealing with dramatic shit off stage in their own lives, medically and psychologically, ‘Self-centered’.

“When was the last time you hugged Lorena, and not just an obligatory 4 seconds when she graduated high school and college?” Taylor challenged through the laser beam of the rear view mirror. “Hmmm?”

“She was always a thinker, not a hugger,” Lawrenz shot back in an assertive whisper as the Free Thinker Revolutionary 1848 Professor-Doctor whose sperm was responsible for him being conceived. “Expressive with thoughts, innovations, ideas, ideals and...doing. Embracing with things you do, and say, and emote without hugging. Like me. And our NON-Nazi German ancestors. Beethoven. Goethe. Bach. Einstein.”

“Maybe, or maybe not,” Dan added, from the side of his mouth amidst the clinking of the key board which had worn down the letters so much that barely half of them were discernable. “Only one way to find out.”

“Yes,” Lawrenz said as he forced his left arm out of strong, silent, rigid Frankenstein monster zombie extension, into an awkward flexing that edged its way around Lorena’s neck.

“Slowly!” Taylor warned, with intense affirmation.

“Sure,” Lawrenz, accepting that the advice was well founded in experience that Taylor would only reveal to a qualified therapist, if anyone as all.

Following Dan’s prodding, and Taylor’s suggestion as to how to proceed, Lawrenz let a force bigger than him, or even gravity, lower his arm over Lorena’s shoulder, He felt the cold, sweat soaked and shaking skin under it. The shaking stopped. The hard working expression on Lorena’s lips gave way to a joy-filled and carefree smile.

“Yeah, kill those demons, bastards and assholes,” Lawrenz said, allowing himself to feel as accomplished as Lorena seemed to be. “They told you were nothing, a loser, a slave, you tell them to be gone...And stay gone.” He felt transported FORWARD to his past, where he would send Lorena to sweet and effective dreams by telling stories about the Fatherland as it should be, and perhaps now that the Nazi nightmare was mostly over, would be again. “Wir alles ins diese zussamen,” Professor Lawrenz whispered to a smiling and still slumbering Lorena as Papa Larry.

“That means---“ Taylor said to the still uni-lingual Dan.

“We’re all in this together,” Dan asserted to the wise and, because of her youth, still a bit smart assed Taylor. “Right?” Dan asked Lawrenz.

“Yes,” came back as the answer. From Lawrenz’s heart, and Lorena’s lips.
“Yes,” she said as she seemed to wake up from her slumber, victorious about something she had done within and because of it. “Yes, yes, yes,” she continued with escalating volume, assurance and peace. Until she opened her eyes.

Her stare lingered on Lawrenz. She seemed puzzled, then shocked. Then terrified. She pulled away from Lawrenz’ embrace. But this time, he held her firmly. Taylor motioned for Lawrenz to pull back his embrace. He did, but still held onto her hand with both of his. His loose grasp seemed to take the shake out of hers.

“We’re going home, Lorena,” Lawrenz assured her. “You know who I am, don’t you? I know, with colored and shorter hair, and a tie. I have a hard time recognizing myself also. But I am...”

“...my father?” she said as she looked at and into every aspect of his face.

“Yes,” Lawrenz said with thanks and assurance, gazing lovingly at her. Averting his gaze to the space in front of his own tearing eyes, he continued, searching for the right words to bring back memories which needed to be remembered, corrected, and built upon. “The fellow Martian, misfit, moron who still believes in might FOR right, and admittedly long absent friend who--”

“---Took me away from my Master!” Lawrenz heard from a demonic voice, which came from Lorena’s mouth. It was appended by her fist into his belly that took the breath out of him. A terrifying few seconds later, Lawrenz felt something missing from his right waist. “Take me back to my Master or I’ll kill you!” the demon inside of Lorena growled as Lawrenz saw the ceremonial dagger given to him as a gift by Papa John which had been strapped to his waist in Lorena’s clenched fist. Its edge poking into the skin just over his throbbing heart.

“Put the knife down, Lorena,” Lawrenz pleaded.

“I’m not Lorena anymore!” the liberated in body only daughter next to Lawrenz screamed out as she pushed him onto the seat, putting the blade of the knife at his throat. “And if you call me that name again I’ll---“

Both the voice of the demon and Lorena were silenced by Dan jabbing the neck of the host body with a syringe, made safely possible by a swerve of the car towards the side of the road. Lorena, or who or whatever she was now, fell into Lawrenz’ lap. A lump of still breathing, and perhaps savable, flesh.

Lawrenz noted the whip marks on Lorena’s back, the dog collar burns around her neck and the slits on her wrists. As did Taylor with turn to the back seat.

“At least she put up a fight while she was who she was,” Taylor said.

“Who she still is, and will be again!” Lawrenz affirmed. “What we need is some medical help, fast!”

“After we get this vehicle going again,” Dan said, pointing Lawrenz’ attention to the smoke coming out of the hood.

“Which you will!” Lawrence commanded. “Schnell!”

“Yavol!” Dan saluted back, just as Lawrenz noted that indeed, like all kind, caring, pacifist and intelligent Germans, there was a Nazi inside of him that could be awakened, or transplanted, by the wrong demon. One who had to be removed from Lorena’s still awakenable soul ASAP, for her sake, his and, yes, all of the other Lorena’s who were still awakenable.

CHAPTER 17

“My cranky, dull out disease infected Upstate New York Old Man and my crazy Martian New York City Uncle always told me that there are three things you don’t trust when buying or leasing a car,” Dan said to the attending doc in the very private VIP treatment room after he limped his way in to the very private reception entrance of the hospital Emma’s still unnamed financial backers had paid big money to keep private. “The smile on the dealer. The thumbs up from a mechanic when you paid him to do the once over, with a tip that doesn’t match what the dealer probably slipped to him. And the oil, temperature and rpm indicators on the dash that decide to beat in time with the music you’re playing on the radio. And of course, tires made in China that decide to make an emergency exit into ditch do so at the cost of a broken axel.”

His throat dry as the miles of dust he had to walk through on the road, and through the woods, Dan took another sip of water. “But we were lucky enough to get rides along the way,” he continued to a higher level administrator behind the newbie Doc, an American who couldn’t get into real medical school no doubt, by the way he caused more pain doing the physical exam than the trek across three newly formed international borders from Papa Jack’s Emporium had caused. “One was a grain delivery truck operated by a horny macho overly mustached man who had the hots for Taylor. A renegade Nun transporting medical supplies who had the hots for me. And a crazy old grandmother driving a wagon pulled by horses as hairy on the legs as she was who knew ten phrases in Shakespeare that he kept saying, along with ‘I love you’ that she said many, many times to.---“

“---Herr Professor Schamburg, or Papa Lawrenz?” Emma asked, with an all knowing and eagerly shared chuckle regarding her past lover, academic mentor, psychological tormentor (aka challenger) and still long term friend for reasons Dan had figured out.

“Both, I think,” Dan replied, pulling his lips upward and backward in the manner of a wise old man who bypassed happy to attain Bliss rather than a young one who still was able to enjoy the thrills of simple, easily obtained pleasures of the flesh and lower mind. “But, speaking of which, where is Lawrenz and how is Lorena?” he inquired.

“Lawrenz is getting treatment for his body, which got stabbed multiple times during transport by Lorena, whose mind is being...hmm.”

“Reconnected to her soul? And heart? And---?” Dan asked. He snatched away the young physician’s reflex hammer, then banged it on his elbow so he could feel what it is doing to the patients.

“I heard a line in a really great movie, A Viking’s Carol, that nature, or life, never gives you a problem without a solution,” Emma replies with fond remembrance.

“And the success of the movie in the marketplace?” Dan inquired as he showed the physician the right way to use a reflex hammer. “Do people give you a problems that always have a solutions?”

“I suppose,” Emma said as an aging person surprised to be challenged and taught by a younger one. “People never give you a problem without a solution, but the trick is that we have to BECOME the solution in that case,” she concluded, feeling like a female Socrates. Or, even better, Aspasia, the female courtesan and underappreciated Ancient Greek revolutionary-philosopher who was the old fart’s friend, mentor and, by inference about what the well paid historians didn’t write, her lover. “But in the meantime, tell me more about how you got from the car breaking down to here, without being shot, captured or, God help you if I found out, followed!”

Emma listened to Dan’s road story about struggle, adversity, and finally accomplishment. Most importantly, the accomplishment that the telling of it was done with alternating humanistic humor heartfelt empathy for those suffering more than he was. But the facts seemed to indicated that all was well with him, and most importantly, the Mission Emma was still in charge of. A Mission that was going according to HER plans, and no one else’s. Until Lawrenz came into the room, completely unexpectedly. Looking at her new outfit, with a look that said he knew more than he was allowed to know.

“Interesting threats,” Lawrenz commented regarding the red body con low cut dress that slipped just over the knee. “An interesting shade of red.”

“Red blood on the inside, red dress on the outside, what you see is what you get, right?” she retorted with a grin inviting the usual witty comeback in the good old days which, she envisioned after her wound had been repaired, and the Common Cause they were both engaged in, were here again for good.

“Yeah,” Lawrenz added, as un-expressively as possible as his stare moved upstairs to her head. “And interesting hair doo,” he said regarding the a recently elongated black mane highlighted with tinges of blue.

“Extensions, dye and a whole lot of super strength Rogaine my science friends are developing,” she said. “The latter of which we will be using on girls who had their heads shaved in captivity, or weren’t scalped too badly. Along with of course, the most recent dopamine, serotonin and cholinergic agonist which, so far, can reverse learned helplessness in rats and girls who still think themselves to be less than rodents. And alpha 4 drugs that, first trials on the bastards who captured them, can even cure the ignorance of soul that causes people to be cruel, vicious, sadistic and---“

“---just pain mean,” Lawrenz added, reading Emma’s next words exactly, stated in the same ‘Alabami Redneck’ diction she was about to give voice to, as a wit sharing friend, and now comrade and, by the gleam in his eye, perhaps lover again. “And I also find those accessories interesting.”

“Oh these?” Emma said of the necklace and matching earrings that came in the mail from her that morning postmarked from ‘a grateful friend’. “The green and blue colors seem to match really well. And the diamonds or other stones in it...they seem to..”

“Look...familiar on you,” Lawrenz said with a smile that did not seem to have love, affection or admiration behind it. As he stared at the jewels with anger.

“If you don’t like it, I can take it off,” she said, as she reached behind her neck to take the ensemble of artistically-hippie jewels of value at a rock concert for the back to nature common people as well as on the Upper East Side for the CEOs who got rich off of selling concert tickets.

“No!” Lawrenz interjected, re-discovery of soul returning to his eyes. “Keep them on. It suits you. Makes me see you for who you really are.” He appended the compliment with a hug. Which Emma wanted, and needed.

Little did she know that Dan and Lawrenz shared another conversation behind her back.

CHAPTER 18

How and why Emma was wearing the jewels he had stolen from sadistic ex-wife Vivian, and paid to even more vicious slave dealer Papa John for purchasing Lorena, Lawrenz was not really sure of. But above all, especially when it would hurt him most, Lawrenz Schamberg was a seeker of Truth, just like his idealistic revolutionary German predecessors who the balls and brains behind the 1848 Revolutions against the Kings and Capitalists. Logic said that if you wanted to be good at finding out what was true, you had to detect what was false. A skill which Professor Lawrenz and his many imprisoned or refugee Free Thinker ancestors never really learned, and Crusader Larry was not much better at.

Clearly, finding out the Truth about Emma, big T, required figuring out when she was lying. As such, Lawrenz set up the first experiment on his own. With the help of technology. More specifically, an electrode he planted on Emma during a loving kiss and passionate hug of thanks for rescuing Lorena from Papa John, and himself from Vivian's ghost, particularly when. Which was connected to a hidden lie detector in his pocket designed by Dan.

"An impressive room," Emma said as she entered the chamber in the underground wing of the hospital that didn't officially exist. "The electric dog collars, the radiation guns which burn painful holes under the skin that leave no traces, and the collection of knives used to carve out fetuses from passion providers who are brave or careless enough to get pregnant is exactly what you would find in a 'round pen' used to break any mare or filly."

"So, you see possibilities for this experimental chamber were we'll put in sadistic slaver rats who we'll turn into scared mice?" Lawrenz asked regarding the stage he had set up for reality theatre. "Yes," she Emma said as she ran her fingers over the electrical equipment.

"Truth," Lawrenz heard from Dan over the ear bud hidden into his ear.

"Then, if we convert those broken and beat up slaver bastards into obedient lambs. And, with the right compassion-conferring drugs, developed by your outlaw scientists who have had it with the CEO crooks in the pharmaceutical industry and Generals in the Department of 'defense', we turn those human traffickers into sacrificial sheep as bait to find and kill vicious wolves?" Lawrenz inquired.

"Yes, indeed," Emma replied.

"Truth again," Dan replied. "But you should ask one question at a time. Like---"

"And did you enjoy the private magnificent evening we shared after a not-so-great meal at a not-so-private restaurant that everyone said was so great because the chef is the Prime Minister's son in law?" Lawrenz asked.

“Yes,” Emma whispered softly, in words, followed by a kiss on Lawrenz’s lips.

“Truth again,” Dan replied. “But to test this equipment, we need to hear her lie.”

“And you really liked the short story I wrote that I read to you after we...ya know...shared all of our most intimate thoughts,” Lawrenz inquired.

“Of course I did,” Emma smiled.

“A lie,” Dan answered as Emma inspected the rest of the windowless chamber. “She was lying if she says she liked that shit story you wrote. Intentionally as a shitty story, I hope. And as for sharing your most intimate thoughts, another lie. But you didn’t share your thoughts, agenda or real feelings with her either, right?”

Lawrenz could feel his own inner lie detector bussing ‘false answer’. But two things were true enough. First, the blood pressure and heart rate detection device could detect a difference between truth and lie. And second----

----“Two more questions, and we’re going to lose transmission because of some unexpected cyber traffic from inside this building, or be listened to by one of Emma’s cohorts, or Papa John’s new replacement,” Dan related, reading both the situation and Lawrenz’s mind. “Two more questions and...”

“Lorena,” Lawrenz shot out as Emma took the electric dog collar into her hands, with mixed memories blasting through her head. “She’s responding to the drugs that will make her remember who she was? And forget, or be able to work out, where she was taken, and what happened to her there?”

“Yes,” the reply.

“Truth again,” Dan related. “A real truth.”

“But it’s a slow process, still requiring isolation from you, and me,” Emma continued as she laid down the electric collar that which was around Lorena’s neck when she was released from Master John to ‘Master Lawrenz’ as one Master to another.

“A half truth,” Dan said. “Some of it true, some of it false. And for Buddha, Jesus’ and Lorena’s sake, ask her one fucking question at a goddamn time. And make it quick.”

“So, you know where Lorena is now,” Lawrenz asked.

“Yes,” the brisk reply, as Emma gazed into space.

“A truth, go for another one,” Dan said. “Fast!”

“And that jewelry that frames you so well,” Lawrenz inquired, edging his fingers around the necklace he had stolen from his thankfully dead but unfortunately still present dead ex-wife. “And so appropriately,” he smiled as he looked at and into Emma’s poker face. “It was a gift from Papa John?”

“Yes,” Emma replied, her stare still averted. “But in the line of duty,” she said, looking into Lawrenz’ eyes, mind and soul. “As part of a bigger plan. To catch bigger fish. In an ocean that---“

“---I’m not good enough to be able to swim in!” Lawrenz blasted back, while grabbing hold of the necklace. “You tell me where Lorena is!” he continued, possessed by rage, his clenched fist twisting around necklace more tightly around Emma’s throat than any dog collar he had seen or, according to his fake resume, designed. “Tell me who you’re working for!” he screamed into the face of the brilliant and beautiful woman he thought he had loved, admired respected, liked but apparently never really known. “And why you’re working for them!”

“Ask her a question and let her talk, so I can detect if it’s a true answer, you moronic idiot. Ask her...anything you need to. But make it quick!” Dan said, as his voice was being replaced by static.

“Are you working for them?” Lawrenz said as his tight grip broke open the necklace. After which he grabbed hold of the dog collar, sling it around Emma’s neck, and pressed the ‘first degree of training’ button on the remote. “Tell me, are you working for them? Yes or No.”

“No,” Emma replied after a blood curdling scream.

“And you will tell me where to find them, and Lorena. And if you answer no, it will be the last fucking thing you ever say out of that goddamn lying mouth of yours,” Lawrenz pressed, after which he upped the ‘training leash’ to the second degree of obedience.

“Yes, I’ll tell you where I think you can find them,” she pushed out after a screech of pain which made Lawrenz feel ‘satisfied’ with. “But I can’t----” she continued.

“Yes, you can and will,” he pressed, escalating the electric collar to maximal.

Emma reply came out in blood rather than words. The convulsions made her bite her tongue, rendering her unable to use it. As for any other method of relating the truth to Lawrenz about his Lorena’s whereabouts, and the other Lorenas who were still rescuable, they were still trapped inside her shaking head. Which went limp. But, she was still able to breathe.

“What the fuck are you doing in there?” Dan blasted out through static to Lawrenz.

“What we have to do, to become necessary evils,” he said to Dan, and Emma’s fear-infused eyes as they looked at him. Using her own words against her. “I have more friends in this ‘hospital’ than you do, Emma,” he informed her. “And you will talk. And tell me the truth.”

“Only if you get her out of that torture chamber, and the four of us to places where we have more friends than she does,” Dan informed Lawrenz. “Und schnell, meine Freund!”

“Or even faster,” Lawrenz replied, as he pushed his straight from the hip mind into hyper-manipulative gear, knowing that he would have to grow wings very quickly and learn how to use them fast if he was ever going to fly himself, Lorena and anyone else who was torn from their homeland back to where they belong and deserve to be.

CHAPTER 19

While Emma was a master as making alliances, Lawrenz was natural at making friends. Even when he was pretending to be a slave master who betrayed others. Though he now was well aware of how easy it was to be betrayed by others. But just as you had to sniff for the bread crumb of truth within every news broadcast, particularly with COVID and the most recent American Presidential elections, you had to trust somebody. For the moment, that list of people still included Dan and Taylor, perhaps because Lawrenz had to trust them, or he couldn't handle a world where no one trusted anyone else. But there were others who provisionally came onto that list. One of them was Doctor Sean Patel, an East Indian born physician who felt equally out of place in the birthplace of his Hindu neurologist father as well as he did in his feisty Gaelic-folksinger mother's home in the Newfoundland. But Doctor Patel, like Lawrenz, felt most at home anywhere where he was needed, and had a defined Purpose he could believe in

“So, you're sure that the girl we recently rescued from Papa John is doing well?” Lawrenz asked the dark skinned physician as he emerged from the locked ward with triple security, stripping off his surgical mask as quickly as a redneck COVID denier would do coming off an over-regulated airplane.

“Sure as every Newfy bridegroom in times past came to the alter experienced, and every bride came as a virgin, bouy,” he replied with a lilting unapologetically loud and musical voice as a nurse handed him three charts, pointing to as many other rescued semi-conscious patients who were being brought into the rehab center for liberated slaves. “Talk with ‘stead a talk-at therapy, experimental drugs that meet all of the statistical criteria for efficacy, and de-conditioning by her surrogate therapeutic master is all working faster than a laid off logger heading to the welfare office to...”

“Her surrogate therapeutic master?” Lawrence interjected into the mixed modality and multicultural verbal report.

“People conditioned to having masters are scared shitless of freedom,” Taylor reminded Lawrence.

“And do themselves in if they don't have someone to tell them what to do, yell at them every now and then, or order them not to off themselves, right Doc?” Dan added.

Patel nodded his head in the affirmative. “A sad fact that's as true as reviewers of yer most ground breaking research article you submit telling you to go back the to the bench while they have their mistress or boy toy graduate students copy the experiment to get to press first with it,” he related in accentless scientificeze to the battle-tested man who ten rescues ago was merely a computer geek lad. “And that shite always floats to the top, especially when the millionaire bullshitters on your home country turn every truth into a lie, and fib so much to the public that they don't know when they's lying to themselves.”

“Where is she?” Lawrenz pressed, impatient with the lessons middle aged Elder Patel felt Called to give to still wet behind their open ears Dan and Taylor. “My Lorena.” Lawrenz pulled out another wad of money, showing it to Patel.

Patel remained silent. Lawrenz pulled out his checkbook, scribbling down an amount. Not signing it yet of course.

“No, it isn’t that, my good friend,” he said. “It’s...”

“Policy, of course,” Lawrenz blasted back, flaying his hands around. “Bullshit baffles brains procedure. Psycho-medical fucking protocol.”

“Orders,” Patel replied, softly, pointing Lawrenz, Dan and Taylor to a small framed man in wire-framed glasses in a glistening Wall Street blue suit with white shirt and bright red tie, who was accompanied by three larger men in plainer black business with reflective shades hiding their eyes. All of them had American flags on their lapels of course.

“Doctor Patel, we’re looking for Emma Lancaster,” the well-rested, cologne scented and impeccably groomed boss said to the exhausted, in-need-of-shower-and-shave and functionally clad doc, flashing a badge in his face.

“She left, with no forwarding address,” Lawrenz said as he pretended to tie his shoe, to get a closer look at the badge. As quickly as he looked, confirming that the name on the generic looking badge did match the generic name Williamson gave Lawrenz. Lawrenz was denied a more full view of it by the high-pitched, clean-shaven professional who was perhaps her boss, or perhaps a lacky sent to fetch her. “And I’m afraid no one here knows where she is either,” Lawrenz advanced as the ‘G man’ looked to a scared Dan, and a defiant Taylor. “But if you tell ME who you are, and what you want...”

“I’m special agent Bill Williamson. We’re looking for Emma Lancaster, Mister Schaumberg,” the overpaid and probably underworked whimp with blisterless and, officially anyway, blood-less hands replied with as much condescension as anything Lawrenz recalled coming from his ex wife Vivian, her high caste blue blood family or even Emma herself. “But, Lawrenz, I would like to know who these people are with you.”

“Dan Ivanowitch,” Dan replied, with an arched back, his fear of losing life, liberty and the pursuit of any lifetime happiness replaced by a ‘nothing left to lose and everything to gain’ defiance that his backwoods Revolutionary War ancestors probably were overcome with when they confronted armed British Redcoats for the first time. “Who isn’t fucking guilty of anything that your goddamn mother fucking wanted posters say I did!” he asserted to the American lawman and/or perhaps highly placed Corporate Outlaw who, Lawrenz noticed, was wearing a very Christian cross on his other lapel. “And if I never see home again, that’s fine, because home for me now is.---!”

“---With his Creative musical partner,” Taylor interjected, gently putting her very female arm under his muscular male elbow, claiming him as his own.

“You seem to have a good and interesting woman to protect you,” the five foot nothing G-man said, sizing Taylor up and down for anything that was ‘not right’. “And maybe make you happy, for a little while anyway,” he planted by way of conclusion after his initial assessment. “But I’m more interested in this man in the wheelchair next to you, Slave Master Lawrenz, or should I say...”

While the G man listed off most but not all of the aliases Lawrenz had used with Emma’s guidance to infiltrate and break some of what he was told were the major human trafficking and slave trade rings in the ‘civilized’ world, Lawrenz looked at the unconscious but still breathing comfortably lump of human flesh in the wheelchair. Lawrenz’s first gaze was at the patient’s head, recalling how he had drugged Emma with a Ruffie used by slavers he had obtained from the evidence room, then gave her a wack job buzz cut to make her look like the man who had used it on so many innocent women and naïve girls, and enjoyed doing so with a sadistic pleasure he never knew was in him. Then at the henna tattoos he had put on her face to make it look haggard, old and macho male. Then at her neck, around which was an electric dog collar reading now ‘karma is a bitch, you male macho bastard!’ in English and Latin. Then at the tightly wrapped chest which still made flat her large but tastefully shaped booze. Then at her groin, enlarged to show not only testicles, but a penis on the left side which was about to be chopped off.

“And this is?” the G man asked Lawrenz.

“Someone who we are doing a study with,” he boasted. “With drugs, that you don’t have, that will loosen this slaver shithead bastard’s tongue, so he tells us where his real bosses are. Instead of the means of forced persuasion that studies show even in your hands lead to them telling us what we want them to say but not what we really need to know,” Lawrenz replied in his best anti-G man but still working for the good guys voice he had seen in so many movies which he now knew contained more fantasy than fact. “Then newer techniques that, so Doctor Patel et al, thinks, can turn shitheads into saints. By activating specific areas of the hippocampus, septum, amygdale and association areas of cerebral cortex, pharmacologically.”

“And surgically,” Patel interjected just as Lawrenz was running out of brain structures he knew the names of.

The short, Napoleonic G man, or whoever he really was, looked over Emma, then after assessing what he had heard, and seen, put his manicured fingers over his mouth. “So, after you academic eggheads find a cure for a cure for learned helplessness, and cruelty,” he said in officialeze. “Can you find a REAL cure for COVID?” he continued, with desperation. “Which is infecting most of my men, and women. And while you are at it, a drug that will encourage the heart push the brain into making the right choice in a life mate, instead of the wrong one?” He stroked his wedding ring, regret and anger overcoming his ‘all business’ lies. “If you do, it will be a big money maker and saver for

all of us,” he related, and shared, with a comradic smile, man to man. “But in the meantime...” he continued, very much back to the core of the business he had come to do.

A phone call interrupted the next question he was about to ask. He answered in a language Lawrenz didn’t recognize. This time, the boss was being told off by another boss. From the corner of his eye, Lawrenz could see Taylor speaking softly into her phone in that same tongue while Dan was monitoring some other kind of cyber slab in his hand.

“We have to go now,” the G man said by way of explanation and apology. “But we will be back. And if you find out anything about Emma’s whereabouts, let us know immediately,” he commanded, handing over his card to Lawrenz. Which was taken by Patel.

“We will,” Patel answered in upper caste British East Indian diction.

With that, the G men briskly walked out the door. Lawrenz breathed a sigh of relief as he reached into his pocket to check if the keys to the vehicle he had creatively commandeered were still there so as to take Emma to a more private facility of HIS making. And if they were wet with urine that may have left his bladder as he expended his last reserve of smarts and courage. Just as he confirmed that he had indeed not lost the keys, or his senses,, when----

“Professor Schaumburg,” Lawrenz heard from behind him as the G men who were no doubt connected to the most recent technology and political secrets of the modern world but who lagged so pathetically behind the people they were ‘protecting’ with regard to current fashion attire had left the building. “A prescription, for anxiety,” Patel said to Lawrenz as he handed him a pad, with the assurance of a soul dead psychiatrist to a still disruptively Alive big A patient.

On the front of the prescription was writing of a drug that was indecipherable to anyone except a trained pharmacist. On the back, a clearly written address for another facility, with Lorena’s room number. By way of the why of it, there was no answer, by voice from Patel, or his eyes, as he was called away to see more patients.

“Yes, that is the place, according to the medical cyber-files I just got into,” assured Lawrenz.

“Very conveniently and just in the nick of time,” Lawrenz replied, wondering if he, Dan and Taylor were being set up. Or if the former homophobic and trans crusaders were setting Lawrenz up for being a pawn in yet another game he never bargained to play in. Where the winner would take Lorena, and as many other Lorenas as now possible home. Or join them in ‘servitude’ to Masters who served only their own interests and sadistic fetishes.

CHAPTER 20

The billboards on the way to the so called, and more clandestine, 'Bigger Sister' hospital where special rehabilitation programs were taking place to free the spirits of liberated slaves and teach harsh lessons to the caught enslavers were not that different than the advertisements on any highway intended to encourage motorists to divert their journey to an eatery for their bellies, a repair shop for the damage done to their vehicle on the intentionally-inserted pot holes a few miles back, a two star hotel where they would pay four star prices and, of course, the reason to elect one candidate over another in a free election which everyone, including the schleps who put up the ads, knew were fixed.

"They don't look any different than the clowns and clones who say they'll give us better lives, better wages and better times in our country," Dan noted from the driver's seat of the vehicle which, this time, was manufactures in the 21st century as he noted the non-understandable writing under the faces he could. "But I hope that whoever casts their ballots, they do it for the benefit of others rather than just what's in it for themselves if shithead A or asshole B gets elected."

"While they still have a country where if Cop sees ME as a woman driving this car instead of you, they'll pull us over," Taylor added, bitterly. "But there are advantages being a woman seeing from the bottom what happens in a world still ruled by men. Including---"

"---Telling me how I should drive a stick shift, and when to change gears? Signaling when changing lanes too late or too early? Or going just under the speed limit instead of just over it?" Dan shot back, recalling afterwards that it was the same conversation he had heard from the back seat between his unhappily married, or perhaps in their own way, functionally 'hitched for life' parents. "But I'm doing the best I can because of the cargo we're carrying here."

Dan treated himself to a look at the two passengers in the back seat. Lawrenz, his heavy eyelids closed tight, drool coming out of the left side of his partially closed and snoring mouth, woke out of yet another ten minute slumber induced by exhaustion. Emma, or whoever she really was, seemed to be deep in sleep induced by drugs. Or Dan hoped she was.

"Are we there yet?" Lawrenz blurted out, as if waking up in another worm hole, hoping that this one led to a kinder, and more efficient universe than he had left ten minutes ago. "Where are we?"

"In a Twilight Zone where we're about to encounter yet another coincidence," Taylor said, pointing ahead to an accident between a 2019 Mercedes sedan and a vintage 1971 Ford truck which was pulling a still intact cattle trailer, the drivers of which were arguing with each other. The passenger in the thankfully not totaled sedan emerged from the passenger seat. On his head was an authentic Saudi head garb, with a gold headband and impeccably clean mini-sheets running down his back. Around his torso was a blue

collarless shirt resembling the latest fashion from Beijing Today magazine on line. Above his neck was an all too familiar face, bearing a few small bruises and two lines of suture on the forehead. In his hand, a large sum of money that he gave to the raggedy clad of the farm truck, who was more upset about the lame sheep who had gotten out of the back of his vehicle than himself.

“Papa John!” Dan exclaimed as the miraculously resurfaced Asian ‘human cargo’ importer and exporter paid off the farm truck driver with a large sum of money, quenching his anger sufficiently for him to hand over the keys to his hard earned truck to the Chinese sex slave mogul, releasing his sheep out into open grassland, and herding them forward alongside of the road with a partially lame mule that had been housed next to them. “Didn’t we plant three stories about him on the net. One to the government that would have put him in jail for at least ten years. And two to his competitors who would put him out of commission permanently.”

“We planted them but maybe they didn’t germinate in the right places,” Taylor noted. “And that toxic weed is...coming this way!” she noted, terror in her face escalating higher with each step he took closer to her car and every escalation of his big, friendly smile.

“Lord Svenson!” Papa John shouted out to Lawrenz, raising his hand up as if to an old friend. “A lucky event that I found you here!” he continued as he approached the open window, then pointed to the billboard of Presidential candidate with the bigger smile, smaller mustache and youngest face. “It seems that this dark horse asshole behind us is going to get elected,” he said of the sign advertizing the most recent ‘independent’ third world leader who was pre-elected to office by people of power and influence in Moscow, Washington and/or Beijing. “And he has an axe to grind against merchants like us. Maybe because his daughter was kidnapped a year ago, or maybe his wife came down with a bad case of self righteous born again Christianity or some other religion. But, as soon as my assistants can get this farm truck going, we’re headed to the other Stan which understands the need for business men like us and---.” Papa John’s smile turned into an angry frown when he spotted Emma’s trademark coral green eyes and face. Then an angry smile when he spotted the bruises on her inflicted by Lawrenz’ hand.

“So, it was you who caught the Interpol mole working for the UN whose been sabotaging our operations, and pretending to be one of us,” he sneared, after which he spit on her face. “Since it was you who fished her out, to you goes the honor of frying her self-righteous crusader ass. But I ask one thing of you.”

“Which is what?” Dan asked, taking the words out of Lawrenz’ mouth, as the ‘boss’ of the new team was speechless after noting the firepower of the goons emerging from the broken down Mercedes who got the farm truck engine operating again, and turned it around to their new destination. “What do you want us to do with her?”

“Give me a share of the ashes. Or her eyeballs. They have fooled enough people already,” he said by way of warning. “And be quick about it, as this bitch is a witch who can turn any man against his own kind, and himself.”

With that, Papa John went to join his new band of thugs, and drove off to other points of business, the engine of the old faithful truck repaired, the thrown off tire replaced by a spare, the exhaust kicking out a loud explosion as the pistons kicked all cylinders back into full operation. “What’s going on?” Dan heard from a terrified Emma as she woke up, grabbing hold of Lawrenz for dear life. “And what the fuck is...” she uttered from disbelieving lips as she felt her nearly hairless head, then nearly burnt off neck. “Where am I? What...happened?” she said, staring at Lawrenz, without a tinge of bitterness or anger, but a plethora of what seemed to be true love.

“I’ll explain later,” Lawrenz said, relieved at finding out that the memory of the torture and mutilation he inflicted on her had been electro-shocked out of her by the dog collar. And fearful above all else that such memories would come out. “But for now, we’ve been ordered to bring Lorena home. By YOUR bosses. Agent Williamson. If that’s okay with you.”

“Yeah, sure,” Emma blurted out. “But who the fuck cut off my hair!” She peeled what she could off her face then assessed the rest of her new attire. “Put these bruises and tattoos on me, and dressed me up as a...a...man?”

“A confused and ignorant soul,” Dan replied. “Who was because of that pathology, just as cruel as any of the assholes we did have locked up, or killed by their own kind.”

“Who is paying for his transgressions as we speak,” Taylor added.

“Yes, indeed,” Lawrenz said, welcoming Emma into his loving arms. Which he knew would have to torn off at the sockets by her soon enough, or by his own hand.

CHAPTER 21

Upon reaching the Bigger Sister Rehab Center it had looked more like an old warehouse buried in the bush of Upstate New York from which its farm equipment had been looted by Big Brother, its overgrown illegal stills stolen by Big Uncle and the even larger pockets of homegrown special formula weed and super strength meth confiscated for private resale by Papa Policemen from five neighboring compounds. Followed by Mama Nature delivering a tornado its way which twisted or turned every wall of the facility into all forms except a straight, flat surface. Not a single soul was visible in the compound buried deep into the recesses of the deepest valley Dan had seen since arrival in the Stans from the bush covered overlook.

“Looks like we’re too late, again,” Dan noted. He shuffled his feet in the underbrush, stubbing his toe on three large artillery shell cartridges, then on two blood stained shattered helmets, each with insignia from a different army. “Goddamn war! What the fuck are these Stan Armies fighting for anyway?”

“The better well being of their own families and countrymen at the expense of anyone else’s, of course,” Lawrenz advanced.

“Especially the innocent,” Taylor added, anger now replacing the tears of grief in her bloodshot eyes. “I hope that these girls, women, boys and everyone in between who were housed here experienced some freedom on the inside before they were killed.”

“Or kidnapped and taken somewhere else!” Dan flashed on, recalling the history books about how armies in the past centuries took everything they could as booty in place of, and now in the present, took in addition to, their regular pay. “We have to find them all!”

“And Lorena!” Lawrenz blasted back.

“Of course,” Taylor interjected, as the mandate between selective and universal compassion between the two men escalated, yet again. “But first, we have to check to see if there are any survivors down there. Who were lucky enough to hide. And want to be found.” She took the first step down towards the valley, followed by Dan, then Lawrenz.

“Not yet,” Emma warned them all, it being the first words Dan had heard from her since the private talk she had with Lawrenz thirty miles and five diverted checkpoints back. “We go this way,” she continued, diverting the trio of enraged and grief stricken crusaders down the steeper portion of the path. “Land mines,” she said pointing to the bright white rocks that were interspersed with the dulled hued black, brown and grey ones on the easier path down to the compound five defiant strides ahead of where Lawrenz was about to bolt into. Demonstrating her point, she threw a pebble its way.

Lawrenz emerged from the explosion with dried manure and dirt on his face, but no blood on his feet, hands or neck.

“Small warning explosions,” Emma said, a smirk of satisfaction on her face seeing Lawrenz wipe the shit off his mug. “A doorbell of sorts for a fascade that says...nothing and no one here left worth stealing,” she explained as she led the group down a steep slope covered with what smelled like more dung.

“This is bullshit,” two left footed Lawrenz sneered as he painfully tried to work his way like a mountain goat down a steep hill with as much difficulty as the flatlander Downstate New Yorker probably had edging his way down a expert ski slope he mistook as a bunny hill. “Bullshit!”

“No, horse shit,” Dan noted with his nose. And then confirmed with his ears as he heard a horse snortle a loud expression of blissful satisfaction down below behind the most broken down walls of the compound. The quarterhorse Arab was being ridden by a girl with long multicolored hair, singing ‘I’m Free’ from the vintage Tommy album by The Who, with English lyrics from that classic and hopefully not forgotten forever rock opera mixed in with some of her own, in familiar voice. A burn scar on her neck no doubt from a dog collar. Whip slashes below them on her back seeming to be in the process of healing somewhat. “Lorena?” he shouted out to her.

“Nein, meine Fruend, Lisa!” said, turning around, giving him a warm smile. Reminding Dan that all women or girls who open up his heard sound and look ‘familiar’. “Du willst meine Pferd ritten?” she continued, jumping off the horse, landing confidently on painful still very functional feet, offering Dan the reins.

“Thanks anyway, but, maybe later,” he yelled back, vicariously enjoying the young woman’s graduation into a free life as herself again. And finding himself wanting to share some of it with her. “Odor...”

Dan asked Taylor as she approached him. “Or...how do you say thanks anyway, but maybe later, in German?”

Begrudgingly, Taylor whispered the translation to Dan. He repeated it, to the best of his ability. Lisa bowed in appreciation, then got back on the horse. And looked at him, following the lead of her horse, whose big eyes were fixed on Dan and Taylor. “Wer bist du?” she asked.

“Which means,” Taylor offered.

“I know what that means, ‘who am I?’” Dan shot back. “Ich bin eine Mann who willst haben ...hmm...” Turning to Taylor, he said. “How do you say ‘I’d like share Visions with you and...ya know...”

“‘A baby or two?’” Taylor shot back with a condescending eyeroll, reading Dan’s mind and soul again. “IF you want to of course?”

“It’s not like you can have one, biologically, Taylor,” Dan said. “Besides, a band with two girls is always better than a band with one. Musically that is. And, it’s part of this Lorena’s therapy and the music we’d all made would be part of every Lorena’s therapy world wide, and stop more wars, and present more assholes from kidnapping more Lorenas and..”

“Alright,” Taylor conceded, after which she whispered the translation of what Dan wanted to say in German to him.

With a welcoming, but not paternal smile, Dan spoke the words in perfect diction.

Lisa looked downward, then upward at Dan, with pity in her eyes. “Bitte, es tut mir lied. Du wird bald besser. Aufviederzeuh.” she said as she rode away.

“Which means,” Taylor said.

“I’m moving on to someone who is available,” Dan interjected. “Especially after you told me you’re in therapy yourself. Have severe depression that’s under treatment now. A sexual identity issue to work out. And...what else did you tell her to make her give me the ‘good luck, maybe it will work out next lifetime’ send off? And...”

Taylor smothered the other speculations to Dan with a kiss on the lips, which he felt as a real man, coming from a real woman. Upon feeling past, present and future melt into one magic moment, he pulled back his lips, then held Taylor’s hand. “Ok, we can adapt.”

“Maybe one of babies from mother who didn’t make it?” Dan heard from behind him in a Russian accent. “Twins,” came from a man in denim shirt, jeans, cowboy boots and a bandana, a six gun strapped to both waists sporting a stetsen with two bullet holes in it. Turning his head to a graveyard, Dan noted a stethoscope underneath the cowboy attire. His stubble-bearded and overly mustached face was young, no more than 35, but his eyes seemed ancient, and burdened with an excess of life experience well before his time. Yet still, he seemed like a burnt out cynic who above all still defiantly held on to the hope and conviction that it WILL be a better world if even ONE man, or woman, is dedicated to making it so. “Maria, one of the women who was rescued, by, I am told, someone who looked like you. Who had complications in childbirth due to circumstances she encountered after her...hmmm.”

Before going into more details, the Russian cowboy took off his hat, revealing a mohawk identical to photos Dan recalled from his 18th century Cossack ancestors. He turned to Emma. “You rang on one of new doorbells?” he said to her, pointing to the small hole of dirt created by the mini blast. “And with friend, I see,” he continued, taking note of Lawrenz’s still not yet fully cleaned manure covered face.

Upon adopting a higher vantage point, Dan noted behind the broken down walls, young women helping each other in the kitchen, enjoying the preparation of the food as well as

the sampling of it. Then heard five girls representing as many ethnic races conversing with each other through their musical instruments in a 'talking circle' facilitated but not controlled by a therapist who herself had burns around her neck and residual ID numbered tattoo on her forehead and arm.

Meanwhile, Emma and Lawrenz had another one of those conversations with their eyes which involved a plethora of emotions ranging from extreme hate to the deepest possible love, in the universally understood language of silence. The Cossack cowboy doctor held back any curiosity about the particulars of the conversation, including why Emma, who swore she would never cut off her long mane, appeared now with less than an inch of hair atop her, still in some ways, beautiful head. "You came here for someone in particular?" he interjected at what seemed to be a reflective lull between the two visitors who seemed to be working out complications incurred during this, and most probably many past lifetimes.

Still keeping his stare on and perhaps into Emma, Lawrenz reached into his pocket and pulled out a photo of Lorena. Upon taking the photo into his blistered equine scented hands, the doctor-cowboy-cossack reflected intensely. "One of the few who looked like she was going to make it, but..."

"But what?" Emma asked, diverting her angry stare towards the Doctor.

"Yeah. What!" Lawrenz added.

The Doctor pulled in his lips, turned around and diverted the attention of his unexpected visitors to the plethora of girls about to be liberated back into the world, many of whom were assisting others who were at the first stage of recovery. He focused attention at the petting zoo where several of the latter who seemed terrified of puppies, cats, llamas and horses who no doubt seemed to them to remind them of ferocious beasts at former holding facilities who walked on four as well as two legs. "Freedom for most of the girls, and to tell truth, for us, is scary. The new drugs we developed and do not make money on, innovative talk therapy that has not made it into any psychology books yet, patience, persistence and passion...works in 94 percent of cases. Can show you evidence of it if you want see. But...there are outliers. Who respond to triggers we not aware of. And pre-existing drugs, perhaps released by hidden implants, which make them lapse unexpectedly...."

"... into being who their slave masters tell them to be?" Taylor offered, with a tone of knowing far more than she was willing, or able, to talk about. Not yet anyway. "Alpha Bs." she continued with downturned eyes, staring at world of pain and accomplishment behind them.

"Which means what?" Dan asked, inviting and begging Taylor to elaborate. "Which means what?" he pressed as Taylor turned away from him, absorbed into an un-openable silence.

“Smart girls whose intelligence can be turned around into cruelty,” Emma explained. “And the urge to be with, and serve, their master at any cost.”

“Cost being, this time, my motorcycle. Thankfully not one of the horses she would have killed here for spite, or stolen and ridden to death. To go to...’Relastovik’ she said.”

“Quarterly in person and skype meeting of the slave master cyndicates,” Taylor translated.

“Which we will find,” Emma added. She turned to the Cossack Doc with an authoritative fire worthy of Catherine the Great to her underling male ministers. “IF you were smart enough to put on her a----”

“The last tracking device I had, after someone, probably Lorena, stole the rest of them, Lordess Emma,” the Cossack cowboy shot back, ramming an mini-pad upon which there was a tracking code number into Emma’s hand. “Put under her left shoulder.”

“Not fare from the same location that ‘someone’ used to put something into me!” Emma blasted accusingly at Lawrenz, no doubt the prelude for another private internally and perhaps this time externally explosive ‘conversation’ between them.

“And the last available dose of antidote to what I think is circulating in Lorena’s veins to make her want to serve her slave masters, and slit the arteries in her wrist when they crack appropriate cyber whip,” he continued, handing the vial to Lawrenz. “But as for getting there...” he said, gazing at the car. “How many checkpoints were you able to avoid getting here?”

“Not enough?” Dan answered, in Russian.

“Correct,” the Doctor replied with a warm smile in his native tongue. “You can ride well?”

“Not badly,” the Upstate New York cyber geek replied in kind, feeling connected to his Cossack roots.

“And the others?” the Cossack-cowboy asked Dan in Russian. Followed by a some kind of private joke which Dan felt was a shared dig at ‘the only place that matters is New York CITY slicker’ Lawrenz and super-sleuth but farm-inexperienced Emma.

Taylor interjected with another joke in Russian, which evoked in the Doctor a no doubt well deserved and seldom experienced belly laugh. “You have a good woman there,” he finally said to Dan, in Russian, after purging himself of some of the pain incubating in his hard working soul. “And your friends will have the best horses I can spare!” he declared, in English. “Whose feet move faster, more safely and more undetected. Through a route that, I am sure, Lorena took herself, through the mountain trails.”

“That you let her take!” Emma blasted out.

“On a motorcycle that had a quarter of a tank of gas in it,” the Cossack replied. “And as for following her...someone put sugar in the gas tank of all of my other gas powered vehicles!” he asserted. “And I had NO idea she what Relastovik is! I’m not a policeman! I’m a Doctor, who----”

A scream of pain and a growl of anger from a young woman came from down below from the musical conversation circle, causing the rest of the music to escalate into frenetic dysannace, then abruptly stop. Then panic from human voices from terrified women running away. “Is being called now to another emergency. While you tend to yours,” he calmly said as he reluctantly pulled a syringe from the recesses of his pistol bearing holster then ran down the hill. “Another rare outlier,” he explained regarding the young woman slashing out at ghosts with a kitchen knife that had slashed open flesh in the therapist and another one of her ex-slave sisters. “Who will NOT kill herself or anyone else, this time if we give her space,” he yelled down to the staff. “So help me God!” he declared in Russian.

Those words, so help me God, echoed through Dan’s present mind and genetic memory, as he asked the Being who logic, reason and intuition said was a construct invented by man to survive the perils of nature for special favors. By natural necessity.

CHAPTER 22

The horses were sure footed, and easily could negotiate through the mountain trails which the map provided by the still unnamed Cossack Cowboy Doc, tracks of the motorcycle when it was evident, and the GPS still hopefully hooked onto Lorena led the posse of riders farther then they thought, as measured by time, distance and the aching ass of all concerned, even 'I have Cossack blood in me so I can handle any horse' Dan. And especially 'I can handle any obstacle because I'm the MAN on this rescue mission' Lawrenz. But for Emma is was a search and destroy agenda. For the first time in her life, she was scared. And didn't know who to trust. Especially with regard to trusting herself. She felt herself surrounded by idealistic idiots or subversive, secret-holding assholes, a situation she admittedly set up herself.

"Maybe it's because my hair got cut off, and my beauty, strength and smarts got chopped away from me," she pondered as they came upon yet another wind blown trail in pursuit of an escaped ex-slave who either found a way to get three times the millage than expected from a gas powered motorcycle, or met people along the way who gave her gas. "But I'm not my hair, or am I?" she thought, thinking about how many times she thought that giving wig to a defiant waif who got her mane chopped off by a sadistic slave master, street pimp, rapist or drunk girlfriend would solve the self esteem issue. "No!" the other side of Emma's brain blasted across the corpus collosum to the hemisphere on the right side of her aching, shaking and cold head. "We will find Lorena, which will keep Lawrenz with me, as a comrade in arms, and maybe more. And I will really do what I have to do when we get to the 'Rendevous' of slavers and human traffick moguls Lorena is heading to. She does know where it is. She has to! Because I don't anymore."

Indeed, such was what Emma was not privy to. Yet, Taylor was, the way she seemed to recall the memory of it. Indeed, maybe it was Taylor who should be in charge of this expedition. Unless, of course, the transgender woman could so easily switch sides in the slavers vs .liberators war which has saints and sinners on both sides.

The current 'real world', that always present yet least important in Internal Evolution factor, woke Emma out of her trance before it could go so deep into her past that she couldn't pull out of it. Her horse veered to the side, spooked at something ahead. As Emma hit the ground she rolled onto softer ground, her body having enough intelligence than her head. Upon opening up her ocular portholes, she saw another body beside her. Indeed it was Lorena, her two wheeled horse in shattered pieces next to her. A large cliff not two accidental steps away from her.

Emma crawled over to Lorena, seeing that she was still breathing, held in place by a knarled tree her blouse was entangled in, hand extended outward towards a knife just beyond reach. And that the empowered, yearn to be with her master possession in her face was replaced by something else as she looked down at the rocky ravine with a sense of wanting to merge with it. "Give me the knife," she begged Emma. "Or cut me loose so I can end all of this, now!"

“No, I won’t do that, and can’t,” Emma replied, taking the knife in hand. She looked above her to see that the rest of the expedition was riding ahead, her horse joining them in the unseeable rear. “Unless...”

“Unless what!” Lorena demanded to know.

“Unless you tell me, where the meeting of the slave Masters, and their bosses, is. I have some personal business with them,” Emma continued averting her eyes, and thoughts.

“I used to also, have business with them, but...I’m not worthy anymore. Especially after I....” the rest of Lorena’s deeds were related in tears of horror and remorse. Indeed, she was herself again, in full consciousness of what she had done when she wasn’t. “I deserve to die!”

“So do I!” Emma blasted back in a hushed whisper with double the fire power. “Maybe we all do. But that’s no reason to die on our own time table. Or terms. And what went down always comes up again.”

“Bullshit!” Lorena grunted out after which she looked up to the sky. “Help me, you self absorbed and delinquent bastard!!!!”

The call was indeed heard by the appropriate party. “I’m coming, Lor!” Lawrenz yelled out as he halted his horse. He ran, stumbled then finally fell down the steep hill, saved from falling into the rocky abyss below by none other than Emma’s arms, which moved without permission of her heart, or perhaps at the command of such.

“A unconscious reflex, Lar,” she said by way of apology and explanation.

“As is this,” Lawrenz continued, injecting the vial of ‘anti-cruelty’ antidote into Lorena’s arm.

“Let me die already!” she protested, again and again, until the drug finally kicked in. Upon that medical event, or perhaps placebo-induced miracle, happening, another line of cloth torn open on her blouse, releasing the wearer of such to succumb to the will of gravity and fall to her death. A death which she now feared rather than welcomed. And was saved from by the arms of her biological father, and the woman she during her pre-teen years wished was her legal mother.

“We’re going home,” Lawrenz said promised as a father.

“Or creating a new and better one,” Emma pledged as the understanding ‘maternal unit’ neither Lorena nor Emma never had.

“After we all take care of business here, ok?” Lorena said, waking up to what seemed to be her truest self. “There,” she continued, getting up onto her feet, stumbling onto a nearby overlook, and pointing downward.

“With this!” Lawrenz said, pulling a pack of dynamite from his backpack.

“And this,” Emma added, pointing to her, according to the men below flowing into the well guarded three story hunting and fishing lodge, snatch. “Especially delivered to one of the invited guests,” she continued, gazing down at none other than special agent Bill Williamson, who seemed to be getting more subservient bows and attentive ears than even Papa John. “Ancient Chinese and American proverb say ‘hell hath no fury more powerful than a woman scorned, or a power bitch who isn’t invited to a power meeting.’”

With that, Emma grabbed hold of the dynamite and strapped it between her legs. She grabbed hold of the remnants of Lorena’s blouse still on her, fashioned it in a turban, and sauntered down the hill. “Anyone who follows me is dead meat!” she warned as she pointed one of the pistols she had just taken out of Lawrenz’s holster, knowing that his not noticing such made him the worst choice of a cavalry charge against the minions of evil down below. “And I don’t want any of you Dudley Doo Right weekend crusaders to let loose with any of the other explosives till I give the signal,” she said as Dan and Taylor appeared on the scene, with all four horses intact.

“And the signal is what?” moving up the command ladder as discretely as she could Taylor, demanded to know.

Emma replied with an elevated third finger directed her way. And, in other ways, at herself as well. For reasons that she still shared with no body else, by choice and necessity. “On the count of ten dead Indians, Chinks, WASPs and FBI turncoats,” she sung by way of explanation

CHAPTER 23

Lawrenz, Taylor, Dan and now an awakened Lorena waited on top of the hill on a later morning that led to a cold late afternoon, looking downward at the lodge where the warm fire sent smoke up the custom built, million dollar chimney.

“OK, so none of use saw which door or window Emma went into,” Taylor noted as she dug further into the second coat around her shivering shoulders.

“Or IF she entered at all,” Dan said, his heart glad that he had placed his coat over Taylor’s cold torso, his body saying that it was a stupid idea.

“I can go find out,” Lorena volunteered as she rose to her feet. “I can pretend that I’m still under their control.”

“No! On both counts!” Lawrenz insisted as he halted her progress, pushing her back down in a squatting position so as not to be seen. A gesture which Lorena resented of course.

“Finally,” Lawrenz heard from behind him. “You saying ‘no’ to your daughter, for her own good instead of just yours,” the ghost of ex-wife Vivian said, clad this time in a designer desert hills combat outfit that no doubt came from the most expensive store in the afterlife she could find. “But there is one basic arithmetic fact that you are missing here.”

“And what’s that?” Lawrenz replied, between closed lips this time.

“Four horses, four riders, makes for an effective getaway,” Lawrenz replied.

“Yeah, with you as one of the riders, I suppose, ‘Viv’.”

“Of course, Larwenz of whatever fantasy world you think you want to save.” Vivian moved in front of Dan, Taylor and Lorena, looking straight at them, evoking, so far anyway, no acknowledgement of her presence. “Moe, Larry and Curly. Which of these three Stooges do you want to sacrifice so the others can live?”

“This one,” Lawrenz replied, pointing to himself. He snuck into the back bushes, pretending to water the plants, taking with him, thankfully, the ghost who could make the living wish they were dead once the ‘real world’ eyes of the former could see the latter.

“No...not allowable in the rules of this game,” Vivian replied.

“The living and really Alive big A make their own rules,” Lawrenz grunted to the ghost as he tried to aim the piss at her. Only to find that she jumped into a different spot a millisecond before the yellow Cool Aid was about to hit her.

“You could never aim straight in the bathroom, what makes you think you could do so now?” she laughed.

“Practice makes perfect, eventually,” he said, closing his fly. Then, when Vivian appeared in front of him, opening it again. This time, the fire hose between his leg found its mark.

“You’ll pay for that,” Vivian grunted in lower West Side street ‘dick-shan’, her anger this time putting her out of control rather than further connected to it, as she wiped off the urine washed make up on her face. “Even more than when Emma and you did when I arranged for that jewelry to you stole from me to be given to Papa John and for him to....” Vivian’s rage stopped as she finally saw how deep she had floored her way into the shit-swamp.

“So it was you who created that misunderstanding?” Lawrenz countered, finally feeling in charge of a conversation with his ex-wife. “Or maybe you want to take credit for it. But to do so, that requires that I believe in you. And that you have power over me. Which I don’t anymore. And your answer to that is...?”

Having thrown the lure out to the dead to see if they really had control over the living, Lawrenz waited to see what Vivian’s answer was. “You still need me,” she stated, with a facade of bravado.

“No. But unless you need me, for something other than a punching bag, or an excuse to blame me for your failures, I guess this is....” Lawrenz raised his hand up, elevating his third finger in a Bronx working class ‘fuck off’ farewell salute to the Manhattan blue blood. But in a moment of Enlightenment, overcome by the mystical power of forgiveness, and empathy for how badly every moment of Vivian’s challenge-less privileged life must have really been, he waved her goodbye. She vanished into a bluish fog, then, instead of lingering in the wind and or hopping around in a pile of dust, she seemed to be zoomed upward into a beam of light.

“Better luck next lifetime, Viv. Live better, and prosper by heartfelt struggle rather than wealth,” he said, after which he felt clean air going through his lungs. Then heard ‘shhh’ from behind him.

“It’s time,” Dan whispered to Lawrenz, handing the binoculars to him.

Lawrenz turned his attention to the lodge below. Indeed there was a hand came out of the window, giving him the finger. Thankfully without blood on it. “Indeed it is,” he said, feeling at least three meanings to those words.

Emma's index finger pointed towards a fuel truck parked next to building. Then she counted down from ten with her fingers, slowly. Lawrenz, Lorena and Dan positioned the guns they had been given by the Pacifist loving Cossack Cowboy Doc at the truck. Taylor held onto the horses, informing the most scared of them that fear was as contagious and deadly as depression.

Seconds were counted down like they were minutes, seeming like it was hours. Finally, the hand inside signaled outside 'three', with this time blood soaked fingers. That hand was pulled in, but before doing so, those fingers were pulled into a fist.

Well armed guards, in combat gear, and of course COVID masks, emerged from all three doors of the building, and opened fire on Lawrenz and his compatriots. From the fourth, back door, well dressed men in suits that never saw the blood the wearers had caused to be shed, rushed towards their vehicles.

"Now!" Lawrenz heard from somewhere down below, followed by an explosion at the back end of the building, blowing to small bits, nearly every power man and, it turns out, mogul woman, who were attending the meeting. Putting Mission before the men, or woman, Lawrenz opened fire at the fuel truck, setting it ablaze, then within seconds, the remaining inhabitants in the lodge. The detachment of soldiers in various uniforms, those who could anyway, fled, leaving their wounded comrades to the mercy of the indifferent fire or deluded humans who had the balls, or stupidity, to save them. Then, more trucks emerged from the woods, more soldiers emerging from them. All fired up at Lawrenz and Dan, then, when Taylor grabbed hold of a weapon. And finally, at Lorena, who, upon firing the first bullet that hit its mark, was wounded herself. In the soft tissue of the trigger arm, as well as her ego.

Dan and Lawrenz, thinking with their brains, took out the transport trucks so as to render pursuit difficult. Taylor, thinking with her damaged heart, took out the soldiers themselves, the first bullet into their testicals, the second into their non-feeling hearts.

The battle raged on for a period of time that the clock but not any of the combatants could accurately measure. When suddenly, the fire in the front portion of the lodge, reached the back end, taking out everyone in it with a massive explosion.

"Roast slaver meat," Lawrenz heard from behind him. "Bad for the digestion but good for the vengeance hungry heart," Emma continued, while mounted on of the horses. "Our work is done here, guys. Time to go."

Dan, Lorena, Taylor and finally Lawrenz agreed. With that, the four horsepersons of the New Apocalypse galloped away and never looked back. Unless it was in their dreams, or nightmares, which, in time would become resolved in this lifetime. Or if they didn't do their Calling while in their presently sort of controlled bodies and brains, next lifetime.

