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GOLDPLAY

By

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CHAPTER 1

The more Ancient than old Prospector who would die in exile in New Mexico gazed yet again at the rocks in his pan as he lifted it up from the high country creek atop a plateau which no one had named yet, inviting the noonday late summer sun to illuminate the catch. “Behold what you have created for us,” he said, addressing God, the Devil, or perhaps the Beyond God which made creation, or perception, of the two former entities necessary for It’s, thus far anyway, most promising biological creation. “Gold. Which is converted to money. Then Capital. The ultimate source of evil, greed and defeat of Capitalism,” he continued in voice as well as thought. He pondered the books he had read, the books he had written when a ‘normal’ man down below, the ones he was behind on writing now, and the activities of other seekers of wealth, fame and comfort in the seven year old, already tired and increasingly volatile twentieth century.

He lifted up the brim on his weather-beaten but still not defeated by the elements hat, wiped the sweat which felt like blood emanating from his overheated yet chilled forehead, then pushed the glistening pellet through his tangled, white, beans and bacon stained behemoth sized mustache, then into his mouth, crunching his remaining teeth on it. “Yes, it is gold. A distinctive and palatable taste in the mouth. But no nutrition and a whole valley full of pain if you eat it.” He rubbed the pellet on his chest, which was more endowed with hair than the crown of his ever-thinking sun-baked head, then moved it South towards the anatomical parts the procreators of the human race and most popular perspectives called ‘his manhood’. “No...Can’t make love to it,” he noted, feeling nothing from the gold pellet or the memories of so many women whose lives he ruined or made more interesting in the pursuit of the metal.

“But,” he pondered, considering deeper and still unexplored aspects of those many relationships with women which, to his knowledge anyway, produced no children he knew about. And certainly none who wanted anything to do with him and his Life Mission anyway, thankfully. “Gold can give you satisfaction, without making others suspicious of your mental stability...I suppose, as long as you have enough of it coming out your ass,” the old man who had lived several lives, with more still to come, proposed to himself and the elements. “Can you stick it up your ass?” he asked the sun which made all life on earth possible. “Or feel something good, or stick it up someone else’s ass and make them feel...not so good?” he inquired of the earth, which always displayed a different color on the surface than it was hiding below the surface. “Perhaps,” he said to the flowing water which had come down from the snow-covered mountaintops and still had many stops to make before it found its way to the ocean, or back into the ground, or evaporated into the hot air the produced rainclouds which all too often dumped badly needed aqua somewhere else. “And,” he continued, standing up, looking to the East, where all of his teachers were now buried and fellow students were doing something more ‘respectfully purposeful and procedurally effective’ than trying to find solutions for an ailing collective humanity in a mountain desert so void of people. “Why should this above all other elements in the Periodic Table be so valuable? You can’t eat it. You can’t smoke it. But...”

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One of those strange but familiar thoughts yet again came to the Old Prospector, from perhaps his youth, or perhaps the person he would reincarnated as when the natural and welcomed delivery of death could finally find him. "Perhaps extra-terrestrials can use it as rocket fuel," he said to himself, as he felt vibrations come up to his mocassin'ed feet from the ground, and waves of electricity moving up and down his twisted but still upright spine. A whiff of 'real world' wind gained entry into his oversized his nostrils, bringing with it the stench of recently deposited manure, from some species he recognized, and some he didn't. "But," he said to himself, and all of the elements playing with his mind and consciousness. "Down below, unlike here," he informed the mostly hidden winged, four footed and leaf bearing companions around him, hoping they would listen to him this time. As well as to the sun, the earth, and the water. "He, or she, who has the gold makes the rules. And those rules are affecting us," he said as his ears were drawn from the Eternal Sustaining Blissful Silence of the Mountain into the ticking of the stopwatch in his breast pocket. Then came the pounding of his heart, which reminded him more than ever about how little time was really left for him. As well as for humanity, which had disappointed, betrayed, exhausted, banished and tortured him. Yet a humanity he cared so much about, for reasons that made no sense to his mind, brain or soul.

The Old Philosopher-turned-Prospector kept the rest of his thoughts to himself, thinking that the animals, plants and elements had other things in their past to be worried about, and to atone for. He recalled the many roles he played in the 1848 People's Revolutions against the tyrannical kings and slave-owning capitalists across his then native Europe which failed, for reasons none of the newspapers of the time and none of the respectfully published books of the twentieth century got right. Then the many faces of Imperialistic Tyranny, winner take all Capitalism and blissfully-embraced Ignorance of today. And the various experiments experiment that could have ended them two years earlier in 1905.

What a wondrous and important year that was, 1905! Albert Einstein, or some say his wife Mileva Einstein, tried to revolutionize the world of science with their Theory of Relativity. Women in America more than ever demanded the right to vote. Peasants and Indians in Mexico were preparing to rise up against their American-funded Federale masters and White 'pioneers' who moved into their land. And in the Wild East, Russia...a Workers Revolution was mounted against the Capitalist Imperialist Czar. All of them could have succeeded, and in this second 95 years of the 20th century, they could yield such humanistic shared by all fruit! But such heavenly Causes required weaponry only available from salesmen from hell, whose main currency was gold. Which, IF converted into something other than money, greed and a means of oppressing those who had it, could actually turn the world around. Such was the hope the Old Prospector had as allowed his eyes to pull his focus, and hopes, down to a lower plateau overlooking train tracks in a valley below it. To a campground inhabited by another deluded lunatic, or misunderstood Visionary, who called himself Ivan. Ivan the Terrible, perhaps. Ivan the Great, according to others. Ivan the Inevitable, according to the feeling in his gut. Which was not due to swallowing gold dust, so he thought, hoped, and prayed.

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CHAPTER 2

Leroy trudged his tight-fitting left black boot and his right foot, which was swimming in a brown one, through the thick windblown mountain pines towards the campground he and the other occupier of such had carved out a patch of rocky, more flat than vertical ground. A location where there was one way up with a firm and smart footed horse, and a back door exit which could (and according to tales the Injuns told trespassing Palefaces did) catapult anything animal, vegetable, mineral or carelessly drunk human down a steep cliff to the rock hard desert valley below. That once forested, game rich valley was now as different as the 'life' the roaming bands Indians were permitted to live on 'safe' reservations where the only hunting they had to do was to find the wagon where the Indian Agent stashed the best packaged beef from Missouri, processed flour from Kansas and canned beans from Pittsburg before any of the other members of the tribe could. Bringing such goods to 'smart' stone aged people who didn't refuse the offer to be brought into the Industrial Age of course was the railroad.

That Iron horse imprinted its tracks into the now treeless valley which was waiting to see if crops, houses or oil refineries would be planted into it. Still, Leroy was able to find game on the mountains hills surrounding the easily traversed flat land below.

"I gots us a rabbit fer dinner!" the middle-aged, slow in the head but big in the heart Mississippi born nearly white skinned man born to, according to his smart aunt, a black as coal-skinned mother, yelled out with pride as he approached the camp. 'A big rabbit that's gonna fill yer belly real good, Masser Ivan!' Leroy said with pride as he felt heard his stomach rumbling. 'And 'nough fer me too!' he said with a sense of personal satisfaction and Purpose that he shared with no white, black or for that matter any red-skinned soul either. But upon entering the campground which overlooked so much of the valley, and which was, so he thought, locatable to no one in it, Leroy found himself...alone. A scary situation for any man not born in and to these mountains, as there was no shortage of four legged creatures who would deprive you or life so they could eat, or two legged bandits of any color who would relieve you of your earthly possessions or scalp. An even more terrifying situation for, as Leroy now recalled, Black Slaves who had been relieved of having masters and being forced to accept the gift of freedom. Freedom to starve, freeze or be enslaved by even more vicious masters than the one you already had. Such as his most recent one, Masser Ivan, who now gave Leroy's life purpose, structure and a code of morality that kept you safe from the cruel uncertainties of life anywhere. And if you served the way God told you to, would lead you to and through the gates of Heaven. That Masser was gone now. His horse, saddle, rifle and full pack of wilderness travel belonging on the ground, footsteps from his boots leading towards but not into the brush.

Massar Ivan had disappeared, by accident or perhaps at the hands of the viscous elements or even more vicious 'people', one or two of the latter perhaps lingering in the bushes behind him as he heard so. Such put Leroy's mind into a deadly tailspin, as he looked up to the sky. "Sweet Jesus! The Apachies done in Ivan! And..." another thought came

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into his head, which he felt obligated to be expressed through his parched mouth. “What I gonna do with this here rabbit, Masser Ivan! My God! My...”

“Master and Slave are product of mankind’s ignorance, or God of arrogance they create to keep themselves from being human, or godlike,” Leroy heard from behind his kinky-haired head. “Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains,” Ivan went on in a thick Russian accent, as he wiped the dew off his Wild as West Handlebar mustache. Such matched his confident, freedom-loving, ‘I goes wherever I pleases as I pleases’ gait as well as matching his very authentic and weather-beaten American cowboy outfit, made more functional to his Cause by his Russian Cossack boots and red sash around his gunbelt. “You know what that means, Leroy?” the Slavic Wild West wilderness man asked the man who claimed to be a worthy, knowledgeable and eyes in the back as well as front of his head guide back in St Louis, Missouri. “Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains. Do you know what that means, Leroy?”

“No, Masser,” Leroy replied, averting his eyes, tending to the task of skinning then cooking the rabbit with as much attention to doing it right as Ivan Petrovitch had given to the words, hidden meaning and required mandate of ‘Das Capital’, his Bible, big and small b.

“I’m not I’m not your Master!” Ivan volleyed back like a fire breathing dragon, that flame surrounded by a layer of kindness, with a core of respect.

“If you says so, Boss,” Leroy replied through a crooked smile as he put the rabbit on a stake over the still not yet lit fire.

“I am not boss either!” Ivan reminded Leroy, after yet another sigh of privately felt frustration.

“If’n you says so, Sir,” Ivan’s Good Man Friday, who serviced him on every day of the week with undeserved civility and dedication, replied as he lit the fire. He then began singing a Spiritual Hymn to the rhythm of the flames searing up to turn cold rabbit flesh into delectable meat, fanning the smoke into a funnel leading into a hole in the ground so it would be diverted into the bush rather than up into the visibly seen sky.

“I do SAY so, and I am not Sir,” Ivan shot back, but this time with the bullet of kindness. He leaned in towards Leroy, putting his left arm around his shoulder while taking the smoke diverting fan from Leroy with his right. “I am...” he continued, while feeling the whites of his brown eyes burning bright red. “...We are Comrades,” he asserted, trying desperately to look at Leroy’s still averted ocular portholes. “In struggle to give back power to people. Each gives according to abilities, takes only according to needs. What Jesus, the man, tried to put on earth, despite God the Father’s constant attempts to stop it. Socialism. What do you say about this socialism?”

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Ivan waited for an answer. A second after Ivan gave up on getting one from Leroy, the white-skinned Negro opened his mouth, then his eyelids. "Ah...socialism," the always giving but never taking, by someone else's choice, underweight Leroy replied as he let the, by accident or intent, better fed Ivan take over gutting the rabbit. "I gets is..." Leroy delivered with a smile.

"Yes! Socialism!" Ivan proclaimed, feeling his entire sojourn in America, and many endeavors required to get her, finally vindicated.

"Socialism. That'd be fer folks ta be more social," Leroy replied. "Servin' and pleasin' them on top of them of the social ladder," he continued, gently putting his hands into the departed rabbit's intestines and easing them out with more skill and alacrity than 'cowboy Ivan' was doing with his authentically American, made in Germany, buffalo knife. "And bein' social with the folks who God put above us when it pleases them, and the Lord of course."

"No!" Ivan blasted out with his mouth, and two now freed hands yelling up to the sky, and to the sadistic old man, or junior god, who everyone in the Old Country seemed to need to worship rather than the Spirit in every man in every country. "Socialism...about everyone GIVING according abilities and..."

"---Me doin' the doin' and you doin' the watchin' and eatin'..." Leroy replied, as Ivan noticed again how thin this all too willing servant's chest and belly were relative to his oversized shirt, and tired, probably aching bones. "But, ya know, Masser Comrade Ivan, I cooked lots of rabbit for social folk on the railroad. Gots paid a dime a day..."

"Leroy," Ivan pleaded, kneeling down next to the underfed and underappreciated cook who deserved to be a treated like a chef, who set about to yet again convert brilliantly hunted wild game over a campfire a delicacy worthy of Russian nobles at the estates they still owned. "You, Comrade Chef Leroy, are worth at least---"

"---Smart folks who is boss over me got a dollar a day, so I's told," Leroy interjected with a sense of urgency and respectful tone. "Bosses on top of them, they got..." As the rabbit was securely on the stake over the fire, and the special spices only he could find in the bush inside its now empty belly, Leroy tried to do the calculations of what the masters' Masters were being paid with his stubby, recently blistered again fingers and number mumbling mouth. "As I best cypher and reckon it, the bosses on top of the bosses gets---"

"---Too many dollars a day," Ivan interjected. "While you gut rabbit, they take guts out of you!"

"But I gots what they don't," Leroy replied, with a civil bow and satisfied tone. "A dime a day, and someone to serves rabbit to. What us Darkies is supposed to be doin' fer you White folks who---"

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“---Leroy! You are white, not black!” Ivan dipped his spare bandana into his canteen and washed the black dirt off of Leroy’s hands. Then put his own next to it. “You are whiter than me!”

“Hmm...Suppose so,” Leroy conceded after what to Ivan seemed like a pensive delay. “And ifn’ you says so too, suppose it’s true. But.... ”

“Leroy, you take Black Slave’s name, act like peasant, call anyone else king!” Ivan blasted angrily into Leroy’s smiling face. “That called---”

“Mastery in servitude, my mama used to say,” Leroy replied with the same smile that so many of the peasants who in all but name still serfs back in the old country. . “Or the woman who I thought was my mama told me,” the master chef who considered himself little more than a field hand short order cook. His poker face, no doubt hid three deck loads of pain behind his averted eyes.

“Mastery in servitude only if EVERYbody serves each other, Comrade Leroy!” Ivan pleaded, looking to the North, South, West and finally beyond the horizon to the East. That direction where the sun rose each morning reminded Ivan of the hard life and disappointed people he was forced to leave behind, and so yearned to go back to. What he imagined on the other side of the mountains, continent and ocean kept his consciousness hostage for what felt like an eternity. “You enslave everyone if don’t take your freedom, fight for your dignity and...” he gave voice to. Suddenly, a whiff of something of the New World found its way into Leroy’s nostrils, again.

“Good rabbit...ain’t it?” Leroy replied, putting into Ivan’s face a plate with the first layer of cooked meat and ‘wild vegetable trimmin’s’. “Tells me the truth.”

Ivan put the meat cooked with special herbs and naively amplified love into his mouth, preparing to break into an exaggerated and partially faked smile of gustatory delight. But the real sensation of that meat forced his face and mind into an even happier place. “Yes....is good rabbit,” Ivan replied with astonishment after the first Socialist nibble. “GREAT rabbit,” he proclaimed after the second King sized bite. “Thank you,”

“You be the boss. No need to be thanking me fer doing my job,” Leroy volleyed back in a musical voice that still was connected to a tune that somehow kept the white Black man sustained, functional and...yes, happy. But still under-rewarded, as Ivan noticed that Leroy had taken barely a tenth of the meat from the rabbit onto his plate, next to his small sized bedroll and nearly empty knapsack.

“And as your Comrade boss,” Ivan said, hoping that the contradictory combination of Comrade and Boss, with which he found himself very comfortable, would not find its way into any new Revolution, back home or here, “I am giving you different job,” he said, handing Leroy the overloaded plate of campground grub turned into world class cuisine. “You...enjoy rabbit.”

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“Only after you’s done first, Masser Ivan,” the reply with bowed head, and growling stomach.

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“COMRADE IVAN!!!!” Ivan commanded.

“Whatever you says, Masser Comrade Ivan.”

“No! Not whatever I say or says! Whatever YOU say or says. Whatever WE say. Whatever the Collective say....says”

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“Collective?” Leroy inquired, breaking the one way tennis game where every ball Ivan struggled to put over the net was returned with an easily hit ball that he had to use all of his strength and skill to return. “What be the Collective?”

Ivan took in a deep breath, and tried to find the words to explain ‘Collective’ to Leroy yet one more time. A term Leroy had said, several times, that ‘he gots’. But this time, the words didn’t come no matter how many deep breaths and dives into his perhaps overly literary and, he hoped, multicultural mind. The former aristocrat who claimed that a thinking revolutionary is the only effective one lost his head, and sense of time and place. Breaking his own rule about travelling in country that didn’t like his kind, he screamed out expletives in Russian to the deaf American sky. That transgression against his own commandment resulted in three arrows hitting a tree next to him, then another into the ground in front of his feet. He whipped out his multi-round Winchester rifle, aiming it at the shooter, or shooters hiding, according to the trajectory of the arrows, in the bush.

“Come out and face me!” Ivan yelled out as he let the business end of his rifle seek out the uninvited visitors to what he thought was a secret campground. “Fucking cowardly Tartars! Turncoat Cossacks! Savage Stone Age Devils! Imperialist Army Fascists!” he screamed out, recalling the assailants he had to deal with both in the European portion of the Russian Empire fighting White skinned scoundrels wearing official uniforms as well as in Siberia, where bandits and tribal lords of Asiatic extraction loved nothing more than to feed their dogs, and families, on the meat of White Russian intruders, explorers and Christian crusaders.

“Injuns,” Leroy calmly replied, looking at the arrows. “Yaqui...Peaceable ifn’ you don’t wake ‘em up when they’s sleeping...givin’ you a warnin’ shot so’s you...ya know.”

“Leave this overlook of the railroad below that I, no WE, staked out?” Ivan volleyed back, seeing that, thankfully, the ‘ant hills’ of dynamite next to the tracks below were intact, and the getaway horses had not been stolen, but were spooked. He looked at his watch. “A special train loaded with Capitalist gold that was stolen from the workers. That is ours for the taking, and redistributing to right parties. And to whoever is hiding behind those bushes,” he said as he advanced towards them with a bold stride he aspired to not break in old country, and was determined to keep going here. “I say...and says”

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“Good rabbit,” Ivan heard, from behind him. “Great rabbit,” the uninvited single dinner guest said as he emerging from the bushes in very understandable yet strangely accented English. The 20-something, handsome, Yaqui Indian half breed was armed to the teeth with a bow, knife as well no less than two repeater rifles, three revolvers and a satchel filled with dynamite. Ivan noticed a baseball shirt underneath his buckskin coat, as the only moderately long haired Redskin helped himself to the overloaded plate Ivan had left for Leroy.

“Yes, good rabbit,” Ivan said to the overly armed battalion-of-one Brown skinned warrior, inviting him to sit by the fire to share the chairless dinner table, and whatever else Leroy had prepared. “Good rabbit. For good Yaqui Comrade? Who help us in exploration of these mountains for Geographical Society?”

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CHAPTER 3

Juan Fernandez learned a lot about the culture of his Yaqui mother and adventurer, 'gone Native until he found out he had children back in El Paso' father while growing up in his mother's village. He learned to embrace the former, and despise the latter, as well as his disposed of American name of 'John Smith'. Though, in truth, he was more skillful as a White man than an Indian. Particularly when it came to dealing with a Slavic European who dressed like a Texas Cowboy who seemed all too eager to be friendly, saying, "Me and Black Friend here on mountain here to observe different animals that fly in sky, run on ground, swim in water and---"

"---Two legged wildlife like me who speak English better than you do?" Fernandez shot back through the side of a mouth still eating rabbit meat, in a mock imitation of the overly friendly Slav. "And who can teach Paleface much about use of prepositions and simple verbs" replied the very unmarried Yaqui Indian who was the best baseball player, most skilled hunter, top rate expert in armaments, most accomplished linguist and lease invited guest at a meal over a campfire in his mother's village, or a dinner with Yaqui owning White Mexicans in their haciendas, or banquet table at his father's cattle and oil-rich ranch in Texas. "What White tribe you from?" the overly literate half-breed inquired of the Slavic 'geographical society biologist', slipping back into the guise of a dumbshit Injun more interested in filling his belly with rabbit meat than his mind with knowledge.

"Russia," the Paleface who rolled his r's so expressively said as he looked with anger and yearning towards the East. "Big land. Bold land. Motherland."

"A mother who tossed out its most disappointing or most undesirable child?" Fernandez advanced, trying to fish out whether the rage building up in his progressively distanced stare was at himself, or others.

"I left. Choice my of own," asserted the Russian 'academic explorer' who was trespassing on the land promised to Fernandez people and specially chosen. "I leave because I want to!" he continued, staring at and into Fernandez' still calm poker face.

"If you say so," calmly replied the half-breed Yaqui 'super warrior' who had evaded capture by the Mexican Federales for daring to insist that his mother's people struggle for a living on their own land on their own terms than starve, or be overfed, at Hacienda's which would promote them from slaves to servants, then subservient Mexican citizens, if they obeyed the rules of the 'civilized' world and the Catholic Father in Heaven. He took another small bit of rabbit meat, both to honor his uninvited 'host' and to stretch out the dinner conversation for practical and personal reasons. Indeed, Fernandez knew all too well that the best of intentions and the most effective of actions so often made you an exile to your own people who had to, as he read in about the Spartans of old, 'come back home victorious behind your shield or dead over it'. "You left because you wanted to, Ivan," he continued, taking another gamble.

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“ But I go back soon someday,” the Slavic Cowboy, perhaps bandit-trespasser, replied, indicating to Fernandez that he either accepted the fact that all North Americans considered all Russians ‘Ivans’. Or, perhaps something in Fernandez’ intuitive brain was right when it said ‘talks like an Ivan, rants like an Ivan, so probably is in reality an Ivan.’

“Yes,” Fernandez said, putting down the plate of meat, then taking out his canteen. “To all of us going back home, bigger than when we left, someday soon,” he advanced as a toast, with his leather wrapped water-sac.

“Yes,” Ivan replied, lifting his metal canteen of water to his parched mouth. “To going home, bigger than when we left, someday soon.”

Fernandez watched Ivan’s eyes as he drank his firewater, or perhaps real water, hoping to gleam something more about what this coincidentally arrived ‘geographical society’ was really doing here. While of course Ivan snuck glances at and into Fernandez of course. Until the Russian ‘nobleman’s’ servant Leroy interrupted the exchange.

“Masser Comrade Ivan,” the white skinned man with the black slave’s demeanor said to the ‘biologist’. “It’s ‘someday soon’, as I recalls it... You said ‘somedayS soon.’”

“Don’t tell me what I said or what to say!” Ivan, whose name was now confirmed, his first name anyway, barked back. “I go back to Russian soon someday. Soon someday...SOON SOMEDAY. With more of what I got here! Much more!”

Ivan ranted in what was perhaps Russian, to Leroy, then to ghosts in the Eastern sky, Fernandez got up to take a piss. At the moment of opportunity, the Yaqui warrior snuck a look, then a feel at what was in a half opened box near Ivan’s saddlebag. While Leroy was trying to calm his Slavic Masser down, Fernandez prepared himself for the worst as he saw tufts of hair sticking out. He edged in his way in to see how many Indian scalps Ivan had taken, so he could calculate how many slashes of skin he would tear off, slowly, in retribution. But the tufts of hair in the top portion of the crate were horse tail, adorning lockets of what seemed to be a loving wife, a beloved, happy toddler and a young, angry adolescent who was in the photograph because he had to be. And the gold nuggets that Fernandez saw, then smelled, in the mostly empty crate were not nuggets at all, but bars of gold. Gold stolen no doubt from trains, banks or fellow bandits, rather than Mother earth.

Feeling a collaboration in the works rather than a scalping party where one party would emerge hairless, and the other rich, Fernandez advanced to Ivan, holding onto one of the three gold bars in the large crate. “You got home, bigger than you were, after you get more of this?”

“That is People’s Gold!” Ivan barked back, snatching it into his hands and putting it into the crate. Then closing the latch that had ‘accidently’ opened. “I bring it back to my people! Working people!”

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“After they, their ‘lucky prospector’ friends or bosses, took the gold from my people’s land!” Fernandez asserted.

“This gold buys workers freedom. Worker guns. Worker power, for worker people,” the retort from the Russian Revolutionary to the Yaqui Indian self-proclaimed liberator.

“From the Southern Pacific railroad,” Fernandez pointed out recalling what his quick reading eyes saw on the bar of gold before it was taken away and locked into the crate. “Which, by the decal on his trousers, and the way he shuffles instead of walks, your ‘Comrade’ over there, Leroy, works for...”

“Worked for,” Ivan pointed out.

“Not for a gold bar a day, or year, or decade, in that crate.”

“It...they...fall of train when it stop.”

“Because you couldn’t make the whole train stop long enough to get all of it?” Fernandez answered into Ivan’s face, then the business end of his biggest handgun, a two double barrel wonder with ornamental Slavic engravings as beautiful as the shots coming out of it. Terrified, perhaps more than an accidental burst of gunfire, or something else, Leroy hid behind Ivan like a weakling child would to a warrior mother.

“You are Commissar!” Ivan yelled out, accusationally. “You give me your name, now.”

“‘Juan Fernandez’ is my Mexican name,” the stunned and curious Yaqui liberator in exile said, accurately and with some degree of shame, pointing to the name on his baseball shirt. My ‘Mexican’ name. He diverted his eyes, so that Ivan or Leroy could not read the deepest secrets behind them. “But my Yaqui name is...well, someone else who---”

“---Which Capitalist you work for?” Ivan demanded, imprinting the barrel of his handgun into the, yes now fear-sweat covered forehead of Fernandez.

“When I was playing baseball...the Vicom Eagles...,” Fernandez replied, noting that, thankfully, his leggings were not yet wet with urine or coated with feces.

“Think he askin’, Sir, ifin you is a lawman,” Leroy answered on behalf of his Master.

“A man of Yaqui Indian Law, and in my own way, Honor. But a lawman...?” Fernandez went on, with an sigh reeking of irony.

“You carry head like lawman,” Ivan noted with a ‘taking no prisoners even though I am afraid I’ll be taken as one by your Compadres behind the bushes’ sneer. Fear hiding

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determination, and determination hiding fear. An all too familiar emotional sandwich. “Armed like Czar’s Cossack. Redman working for White Capitalists.”

“Sure...of course...As sure as you’re the kind of man who has the courage, or conviction, to shoot anyone,” Fernandez replied, feeling a wave of intelligence or that elusive attribute of courage emanating up his shaking spine.. “Even it if is ‘for revolution of people’,” he continued mocking the Cowboy Slav’s accent. With more brains below his neck than between his ears, moved his head away from the barrel of the handgun, and worked his way to Ivan’s mobile library next to his saddle. “‘Das Capital’...Interesting political fiction,” he said, picking up the most prominently placed book, still noting and knowing that Ivan’s bullets could enter his mortal body and send him to the ‘happy hunting grounds’ or, as the Nuns who tried to break him of independent thought as a child and he still believed, the fires of hell. “Yes. Das Capital. Political fiction.”

“Political reality.” Ivan replied, lowering his weapon. “Workers all share in work and production from work.”

“A Capital idea,” Fernandez answered finding relief in humor, a gift that only the courageous get to really earn, and distribute.

“Land for as far as the eye can see, or the mind can imagine,” Ivan said as he put his handgun into its satchel, wandering around the campground, gazing at and into each of the four directions. “Land belonging to everyone, and no one, except Nature Itself.”

“Makes sense to my people too,” Fernandez added, allowing himself to be immersed in his own fantasy of an ideal world in North America, where all of the palefaces are experiencing their own Utopian societies on the Eastern side of the Great Pond.

“And everyone connected in circle,” Ivan went on, gathering rocks and placing them in a circle, resembling, ironically, a Native medicine wheel. “Connected to earth. Not like stack of domination and oppression with serfs on bottom, foremen on top of them, Commissars and Industrialists on top of them, and sadistic old bastard up in sky who has everyone by balls,” he continued, placing another set of rocks on each other which fell as soon as he blew on it. The Russian idealist, or Slavic dreamer, let his gaze become held captive by the circle of rocks again, leaning down next to it. “A circle no one more or less important than anyone else...” Leroy approached the circle, terrified and confused of what ever his ‘Master’, or perhaps only temporary teacher, saw within it.

“Each giving according to their abilities, taking according to their needs,” Fernandez added to Ivan’s idealistic rant and translating it for the pitiable ‘slave’ who was afraid of his ultimate and inevitable liberation.

“So, Juan Fernandez, you have read Marx and Engels?” Ivan surmised.

“They read US, Paleface,” the self-taught warrior-scholar who could have been a comfortable academic pointed out.

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“Yes, I forget,” Ivan conceded. “Your Evolution here happened before it was our Revolution.”

“Which, I heard, you Russians screwed up, again. You lose your Navy fighting yellow skinned Japanese,” Fernandez noted.

“A political accident,” Ivan grunted back.

“Then you try to win back your country for the Workers by demonstrating in Moscow, Ivan.”

“Brave souls with naked hands and books against Cossacks with swords and rifles, Juan,”

“And a lot of less than brave souls who watched, ran or...maybe turned in their fellow revolutionaries when offered a chance to---“

“---You were not there!” Ivan shot back, ending the history lesson he knew all too well, and, as Fernandez noted, shamefully. “You were not there when things get rough!”

“Of maybe you weren’t there either?” the so far lucky ‘mind reader’ Yaqui rebel bandit who wanted to be taken seriously as a revolutionary hero put out.

Ivan’s downturned head and glassy eyes revealed the hypothesis was correct.

“You gotta be a little stupid to be a hero,” Fernandez assured Ivan after a small sigh of relief, and a big amount of self reflection. “Or consider yourself dead. You don’t look stupid, and you’re hanging on to life too much to grab it by the throat. Like...” the rest of the words got stuck in Fernandez’ throat.

“Like what?” Fernandez heard, from Leroy. “Like what?” Leroy asked again, in the way a boy who is about to become man asks his father to tell him the real story about how lifeworks so that he doesn’t believe lies that his popular and socially savy ‘friends’ would tell him.

Fernandez contemplated the matter. To be honest about his vulnerability as his mother would advise and be loved by his Comrades ,or keep faking it like his father would, and did, and inspire cooperation through fear? That was the question as Juan was offered, and took an empty tin cup, and accepted Leroy’s offer to pour him a cup of what smelled like coffee. As for the answer he provided, “Juan Rodreguez...Played great short stop when we were teammates for the Vicom Eagles. Played like he was a brother to me when we raised a stink with the stinkin’ motherfuckin’ Federales who killed our fathers, raped our mothers and ‘adopted’ our sisters,” Fernandez informed the Gringo trespassers who had made a home of their own at his designated overlook, caught in the dream that had become a nightmare. “Played his hand as a ‘good Mexican’ when he got offered a deal to turn his friends in to save his own family, or his own ass when the Federales

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asked if he wanted to..." he continued, with shaking hands, the words stopped by something other than the burning rage of his own memories but something hotter than that, this time.

Ivan moved Fernandez' cup within the trajectory of the stream of hot coffee so that the drops that 'accidently' fell upon Fernandez shooting hand didn't disable that all important tool to establish peace for his People.

"I's sorry, Masser Comrade," Leroy said to Ivan. "Ya's can pour the rest of the coffee on both of my hands and whip me fer not bein' steady with them if ya likes to," he told Fernandez.

"Master Comrade?" Fernandez said.

"Another... misunderstanding," Ivan related, hiding the rest of what he wanted to say and was really thinking behind a cup lifted up to his lips.

"Leroy, did this man buy you?" the defiantly free Indian asked the self enslaved more-White-than-Black man.

"I liberated him from his job at the railroad," Ivan replied, with somber determination.

"Cause I makes great rabbit stew," Leroy proudly proclaimed with a smile so wide it pitied anyone who could really see it.

"And because you just 'happens ta know' where to find railroad cars with gold on them?" Fernandez surmised, and stated. "Maybe the big motherload express worth two and a half million dollars that not even my DEAD friend Rodregez knew about?" He slowly reached for his revolver, then whipped it out of his belt as quickly as Ivan did with his.

"Two and a half millions," Leroy gleefully said, apparently unaware of what he was in the middle of, and what he was about to screw up, for everyone involved. "That's a lot a dimes. That's comin' through on---"

"----Leroy!" Ivan interjected. "Go cook more rabbit. Make soup with the bones. Now."

Leroy bowed his head, and tended to the task, singing a hymn praising Jesus for the opportunity to be a servant to his 'betters'. While Fernandez recalled that according to Yaqui legend, Jesus appeared to his people two thousand winters ago, received with open arms and eagerly listening ears rather than a cross to be crucified on. As for Ivan, he seemed to be 'caught' by Leroy having spilt the beans regarding his real reason for being at the overlook, unrescueable by any Deity except perhaps Lady Luck.

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The annoying music of Leroy's off key voice, and the deafening silence of the bush escalated in Fernandez' aching head, until it was rudely, and appropriately, interrupted by a cackle from above.

"What dat?" Leroy gasped, holding onto his chest and, thus far anyway, urine and feces.

"A hawk," Fernandez replied, with a grin of satisfaction, and finally realized Purpose. "Know what he's saying?"

"That he wants to eat some of OUR rabbit," Ivan asserted regarding the avian intruder above who was speaking a language Fernandez could feel but not yet completely understand. He allowed himself to believe it was a Spirit Messenger, which opened up his inner ear to decipher at least half of the words he was saying.

"I's can cook him some rabbit too, Massers," Leroy said to his fellow human mortals who were blessed, or cursed, with having their Souls incorporated into what some called the agile and advanced body in creation. "Asks that flyin' guest up there how he likes his rabbit," he asked Fernandez, to the consternation of course of Ivan.

Fernandez thought about what he would say to the bird which, to the inner eye and, if he let his human oculars be unrestrained by his logical brain, seemed to take on the shape of a flying bear, horse, a rabbit, then a man...or perhaps a woman. But when he opened his mouth, the bird flew away, as a hawk. Nothing more, nothing less.

Leroy, having heard 'Spirit Messenger' talk perhaps for the first time, seemed confused and, as it was not in his secure framework of understanding, said a prayer to HIS Jesus asking for protection. Comrade Ivan felt something drop onto his most probably atheistic Party Line Communist, head, and wiped it off, throwing the 'message' from above onto the ground. "Hawk shit!" Ivan sneered, bitterly and fearfully.

"Which fits on head of bullshitter," Fernandez offered with a smile in Slavically accented English. "Who thinks he knows everything about the wheres, whens and hows to rob that train," he continued, recalling the futility his mystical Yaqui mother had when trying to share her belief in the unseen with his religiously non-Spiritual Texan father.

"My business regarding train, not your business," Ivan admonished Fernandez with nodding of his index finger, in the same way that seemingly benevolent and protective White School teachers in his past kept trying to convince him that they would always be smarter and wiser than he would ever be.

"On the contrary," Fernandez countered to the member of the 'born more intelligent' race, this time with his mouth, rather than fist or knife blade. "We are both in the same business, so it seems."

"My train. My business,. My revolution! Gold for my people!" Ivan protested with a clenched fist raised to the sky.

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“That gold came out of OUR mountains! It belongs to my people!” Fernandez asserted, so loudly that he didn’t recognize his voice. “Who just want to be left alone by ALL of YOU people!”

Ivan pulled back into himself, putting his hand over his mouth in the manner that all ‘civilized’ White Mexicans and overeducated, under-experienced Gringos did just before coming up with something ‘profound’. “We leave you alone when WE are freed,” Ivan finally replied with a calm voice. “When we win OUR Revolution!” he exclaimed with assurance and glee. “Which has same goal as your Revolution! Which.---“.

“---Can only happen if we both work together, Comrade,” Fernandez interjected, having been overcome with an unexpected dose of reason, perhaps offered by the Hawk Spirit Messenger, or the loud Silence from the Huya Aniya in the brush that it left behind in its wake along with the real world shit he dropped on Ivan’s head.

“You are Yaqui medicine man?” Ivan asked Fernandez.

It was an honest question which required an honest answer. This time, Fernandez put his hand over his mouth, took in a deep breath, and dived down as deeply and bravely as he could. “I am a man, who...hmmm,” he related, and confessed, feeling that the rest of what he would relate would not be understood. And, as legends said of Jesus when he visited the Yaqui Indian valley so long ago, and Plato in the Allegory of the Cave, a smart, naive man who reveals too much of his inner Visions to the blind is crucified, or worse, before he can do some good. An experienced Seeker and finder of Wisdom, knows what not to reveal until the world is ready for it. Particularly in a rapidly Christianized and Industrialized North America where Indian Spirituality, even if it incorporates Jesus into it, was outlawed, its practitioners jailed, killed or worse. And as Yaqui spirituality was more intense and, to those with open eyes anyway, real than most other First Nations ‘metaphysical believe constructs’, best to not share too much of it too early. But if you explained the message in a language the listener could understand, it would find its way to the Truth seeker rather than the Wisdom persecutor in any man, even a Russian Gringo. “Yes, I am a man,” Fernandez said, this time with his hands on his side, his eyes looking directly at Ivan, and Leroy. “... who knows that more of that firewater in your canteens, coffee and water pouches is just going to make you die slow, painful and confused.” Fernandez pulled out the medicine bag hidden under his shirt, offering a pinch of it to the nostrils of two potential fellow partners in necessary crime, then their half open mouths, then placed the cactus derived potion blessed by the Spirit Messengers into their open hands.

“Interestin’ smell,” Leroy noted, voluntarily sniffing the pellet.

“What you call this?” Ivan asked, with genuine curiosity, the place where real investigation of the metaphysical starts, for some anyway.

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“It loses everything when I translate it into Paleface talk. But part of a survival kit for all they call ‘bronco’ Yaqui, which I am,” he explained as a teacher, and friend.. “Do not let the baseball shirt fool you. I played the white man’s game, won a few innings, some on the ball-field in Mexico City, some on Haciendas in El Paso...Some in institutions of higher education and institutionalized stupidity...then, one day, when I was afflicted with an expected bout of Sanity...I left. Came back to the desert, found who I was in the huya aniya,,the Spirit World, where the cactus speak to you. Then realized that to bring Spirit into this world, one still does need...gold.”

“You know how make gold from...this...” Ivan said, after which he finally took a small taste of the peyote into his tongue. Then spit it out. “This cactus powder? That gives you Visions that blind you from truth about world as it is. And strength so you climb highest gold mountain and jump over it, thinking you are bird.” Ivan chuckled, then laughed. Then, just as Fernandez was about to send him to ‘heaven’ with a totally hairless head with the carving end of his knife, Ivan turned cordial, and caring, placing his hand atop of Fernandez’ shaking shoulder. “My friend. And fellow Revolutionary for YOUR people. Religion is the opiate of the masses. Makes smart people made stupid decisions. And obey deluded priests who are idiots, assholes or both. While the priests get the gold. And people who give it to them suffer needlessly.”

For reasons he didn’t understand, or recognize, Fernandez considered the hypothesis from the Russian Revolutionary ‘geographical society’ scientist. Much of it was true, according to the way of the world. The ‘do the right thing and the right thing will happen for you and your loved ones’ which was said by the Yaqui Elders still hiding in the hills, and Fernandez’ mother on her deathbed, was more false than true. But still, Fernandez couldn’t make sense of a world which was not created by, or worked in the service of, The Great Spirit and the Yaqui Jesus. Numerous places he had visited in his mind, and in the dream realm, with, and without the help of ‘cactus extract’ convinced him that Spirit was real, and required Revolutionaries to serve it. Or, perhaps awaken it from the slumber It was in. But, as heaven watches, and earth works, the rules and tools of the latter had to be acknowledged, and used. Along with Gringos who were delivered by an Energy that needed no power to be expressed, who the army of one (rather than the many, or some, who he had under his command not long ago) Fernandez could and, to be effective, should, work with.

“I know how to find the trains and stagecoaches that carry gold, real gold, and more than you two were able to get so far,” Fernandez asserted, knowing that coordinated self interest always makes everyone a winner in an everyone gives according to their abilities and takes according to their needs’ world. He worked his way over to the overlook, deciding to share the information it was so hard for him to obtain.

“And I know which car the train over the hill will be carrying the gold...And how to get it to where it can be cashed in for whatever you, me and your cook REALLY need. Which will be much easier if we have...” Fernandez pulled a large bag out of the brush, uncovering its contents slowly. The ace up his sleeve that had to be played, and now. “This is to help us,” he declared.

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“A sewing machine?” Ivan replied with mocking laughter as Fernandez discovered that parts were more disrupted than together. “Or plow... Which is---“

“---Somethin’ that looks a might more than something that can put stitches into thread, Masser Comrades,” Leroy said as more of the device appeared to the Gringos’ disbelieving eyes.

“Something that can put bullets into flesh faster than any sewing machine can put stitches into torn shirts, or motorized plow that slices a hole into the earth and make it bleed,” Fernandez said regarding the Gatling gun he had stolen from the Oil Company’s ‘Special Forces’ Army detachment containing equal number of American and Mexican soldiers, at the price of the platoon of fellow Yaquis who were slain in the attempt to steal it, while Fernandez, by accident or intent, came out of the raid without a scratch. “Something that’s...”damn!” he shouted, discovering that the re-assembled weapon didn’t work. “Will work, Great Spirit willing,” he bashed out of his mouth with as much intensity as his hands bashed out the dirt from the firing apparatus, which, finally gave way. Resulting in a barrage of bullets fired into the bush, in a direction that the machine gun decided on. Which resulted two definitive shots coming from the bush after the round were spent. And yet another visitor to the campground neither Ivan nor Fernandez expected to see. A woman clad in black, to those who saw things with biological eyes. A ‘bride of Christ’ with a Mission as elusive as her Father in Law’s real agenda to those whose inner oculars were opened more wide than the seer was able to handle.

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CHAPTER 4

As defined by the eyes of suitors who were at the top of every social class, there was no more beautiful woman in Seneca County, New York, than Thelma Brady-Schmitt. The twenty-five year old daughter of a rags to riches legitimate beer manufacturer and preacher from Hamburg and an Irish-born Abolitionist mother who tried so desperately to make liquor sales in the state as illegal as buying and selling of slave could have been the happy, secure and sexually satisfied wife of the head of the Steel Workers Union, the nephew of Steel Mogul Andrew Carnegie, as well as the chairman of the board the Carnegie Hall took a deeper look at and into the three men who arrived at the location she had thought was staked out for herself. The Slav, Indian and White-skinned Negro servant seemed to welcome her, particularly as she presented herself as a Bride of Christ clad in black, with a very white face. But the company of men who were so passionate about making her comfortable made her feel uneasy. Perhaps because it was a man who, when sober, did whatever he could to make Thelma's mother comfortable and 'happy' with a loving hand. Her husband derived so much pleasure in making her feel helpless with a fist when drunk, blaming her suicide on her then absent daughter's 'godless' spirit being possessed by the devil.

While Thelma's father preached that women should, according to Saint Paul, dedicate themselves to taking care of their husbands and children at home, she was was, to be honest, away on 'revolutionary business'. Hiding from her father's private detectives, the law and the wrath of God. Particularly when she donned the guise of a Nun in the service of the Real Jesus and his fellow Revolutionary, the brains and balls behind His movement, Mary Magdalin. Such required the use of weapons that neither Jesus nor Mary M didn't use, but perhaps should have.

Thelma showed the men in the campground which was rightfully hers the business end of a shotgun after quickly reloading it. "Quiet. I will have quiet here!" she admonished the three men who towered her in height and weight, but could so easily be turned into obedient little boys if she pulled off the 'Mother Superior' act well enough. "This land belongs to the Mission, and the Mission belongs to God," she said, while looking at the Gatling gun that they seemed to have so little control of. "Let us take this opportunity to pray," she said, kneeling down on the ground, crossing herself. "In the service of God the Father."

"Who never taught you about making the sign of the cross over your chest left to and right, rather than right to left, 'Sister'?" the large framed Pagan Indian said, in perfect English. He demonstrated the correct way for a Nun to cross herself in the manner of the Roman Catholic Church, appended with a prayer that sounded like accurate Latin. "Unless you are..."

"An Easter Orthodox Nun?" his cowboy companion said, with an Eastern European accent. "Pravda?"

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“Yes...eh da, the truth,” Thelma said, in English, recognizing the Russian word for Truth from her ‘Communist Anarchist’ friends in Chicago, who were as different from Communists as she was from Benedictine Nuns. “But we should continue with our prayer,” she said to ‘the boys’ as a Mother Superior who still held power over them until they figured out what she was packing under her skirt, and between her ears. Thus far, the fear of God or the appearance of a gun toting Nun, forced their big heads to flex at the neck, their hands clamped in prayer. Having been present for longer than it was known, she knew their names, but not their real agenda, or agendas.

“Lord have mercy,” Leroy offered the Lord above who he couldn’t or dared not see.

“And forgive us our trespasses,” Fernandez said in English, then, apparently, and with more sincerity, in his own Native tongue.

“As we SEE those who trespass against US,” the Slavic Cowboy, who seemed to be the most devout, said, after which he ripped off Thelma’s headdress habit, revealing a long mane of blonde hair under it, something no Nun in any order would be allowed. He then loosened her blouse with his ‘cross making’ hand, then lifted her skirt with a stick, revealing a gun-belt holding bullets and sticks of dynamite, two spare hand rifles and a very sharp knife. As well as a full set of alluring light clothing worn by women who pleased powerful and influential married men after hours so they could endure going back home to their wives and more often than not accidentally conceived children at home. But there was one weapon the ‘gentlemen’ had not discovered.

“I’ll shoot the balls off all of you!” Sister of the Movement rather than Church Thelma said as she pulled a derringer from inside her snatch, aiming it at the groin of each of the men. “I’ll shoot them right off!”

“This from woman who knows not right from left, or right from wrong when making the sign of the Cross,” Ivan said, with a kind, God loving voice, which she recalled from her preacher father before he discovered the joys and solace of drinking sacrificial wine, and stronger spirits. “Sign of cross is like this, for Old Believers who stood up to the Czar with the Cossacks back in the Pugachev Revolution, not revolt,” he continued, spouting out a Russian prayer, demonstrating the correct way the fingers are held and the directions they go into, with the kind of reverence no Priest or Preacher Thelma had ever met, ridiculed or converted from serving the sadistic old bastard in the sky to a servant of the people He created.

Meanwhile, Fernandez and Leroy edged their way in towards Thelma, out flanking him as she focused her gun and angry eyes at Ivan, as Ivan moved in on her, one somber and sacred step at a time.

“Get away from me with that Devil gibberish,” Thelma blasted out, fearing punishment from God the Father as well as the Devil for having dedicated herself to serving women instead of the men who championed those, theoretically anyway, imaginary ‘men’ of ultimate power.

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“Yes, probably is Devil gibberish,” Ivan conceded. “If devil exists, best trick he has to make people fear God instead of love Him.” He resumed crossing himself and chanting in Russian.

“You get back...Devil worshipper. Crazy Heathen.” Thelma blasted out her mouth, realizing that fear had taken over her mind, soul and brain. “Yellow bellied eh...Pollack!”

“I am not Pollack,” Ivan informed her calmly, “And not a coward!” he continued, escalating in rage as quickly as an eagle soars to the top of a mountain, or a colorfully tipsy perspective hubby turns into turns into a punch throwing drunk. Ivan grabbed hold of Thelma’s hand held derringer, then ripped off the rest of the available weaponry from her person. Meanwhile, Fernandez eased his way in towards her, pulling out a loose piece of paper from her loosened corset. While Leroy gawked at her exposed breasts, Fernandez helped himself to a careful examination of the map written on that paper.

“I am Russian!” Ivan blasted at Thelma, yet again. “And not yellow bellied!” he proclaimed, with fear and regret in his bloodshot eyes. Seeing the opportunity to fight back with the only weapons available in this battle of wits and wills, Thelma slapped Leroy in the face, turning his head to the left, as his stare remained on the breasts, then looked into her eyes. She slapped him, and he turned the other cheek. The revolving head of the naïve, yet somehow dangerously innocent pale-skinned ‘Nigger’ continued three times, evoking on his face...smiling.

“The more I slap him the more he likes it!:)” Thelma surmised, and said. “Dummy. Stop looking at me, you retarded piece of shit,” she, as ‘mastress’, yelled at her very willing punching bag. Finally, having been given the command to do so, Leroy averted his stare, bowing his head to ‘the Domina’

“No,” Ivan interjected. “Hold your head up, Comrade Leroy”

Leroy obeyed the command, as it was given by a man, or course. But still retained the disturbing, yet harmless grin on his face. Killing with kindness perhaps. Or, as Thelma surmised, actually being kind. And weak. And...yes, harmless, to everyone except himself of course.

“A White... Nigger,” Thelma said. “The most interestin’ accident of Nature I’ve seen in a long time,” she reflected, taking the luxury of sizing him up from his mismatched boots to his curly, closely cropped, top knot. “He come trained like that or did you have to beat the brains and balls out of him first, Comrade Ivan?” .

“Look at bitch in face,” Ivan commanded Leroy.. “Growl into her eyes.”

Like a dog wanting to serve, but pathologically too eager to please, Leroy obeyed the command. Such terrified Thelma.

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“And ask her to tell us what she’s doing with these railroad maps, and trains schedules,” Fernandez said of the documents Thelma had been hiding under her undergarments, all of which had now fallen from their secured place. The Herclean sized Indian passed to documents to the overly muscled and somewhat corpulent Cowboy Cossack.

“They were...left in my room,” Thelma replied. “From a client. I don’t know shit about anything on them...ahhh” The rest of the carefully worded confession, which was real, was stopped by. escalation of Leroy’s growling at her, matched by the kind of anger in his eyes that made ever well trained police dog set out on Feminist Rights demonstrations look like loving pussycats.

“Maybe you can remember what was accidently burned on these papers before this iron accidently burns your face,” Fernandez added, noting the dark edges on the maps, schedules and particulars about the train robbery that would make Thelma famous and the Woman’s Movement rich. “Or tongue,” he smirked as he put a metal rod into the campfire.

“Or eyes?” Ivan proposed.

“Or other places,” Fernandez proposed, taking the hot iron from the fire, moving its smoking and hotter than hell tip to Thelma’s left calf edging it up to the origin of that shaking and limb. “

“But first,” Ivan added, gazing with anger and male condescension at the habit he tore off of Thelma’s head. “I want know why bitch lying to us, and (habit in hand) to God, if he still exists out here. For what she acting like a fool?”

“For my girls, you assholes!” Thelma blasted back, knowing enough to not call them moral and mental idiots, which of course would make them assholes. “For my girls!!! My sisters.”

“You have children?” ‘Comrade’ Ivan demanded to know, in the manner of every Inspector with a penis who considered every human who didn’t have one someone who needed protection from the world and their own emotional excesses.

“Girls who coulda been such,” Thelma replied, feeling more maternal to the young women and older girls who she radicalized in the open aired rallies she spoke at and the sewing circles she infiltrated. “Women by the time they’ve seen a first winter of men like you. Sisters who---”

“---Your girls, your ‘sisters’, ‘Sister’,” ‘Father’ Ivan pressed. “They believe in God, the devil, or humanity?”

Thelma took in a deep breath, thankful for a real question that, Goddess (if she still was around) willing, she would respond to with a truthful AND effective answer. “They

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believe in themselves. Just like all of you do, after the shit hits the pan. And the right to be guided into doing the Right and Effective thing, in all things.”

“By you? ‘Brother’ Fernandez inquired, reminding Thelma of her older brother who looked at women as inferiors to be protected, and men who adopted any female traits as defect meat that should be burnt at the stake or, like her younger brother, be allowed and encouraged to take their own perverted life. “Guided by you?” the ‘all man’ Indian pressed.

“Guided by anyone except the asshole who thinks he owns them,” Thelma shot back recalling that though Black men were not allowed to be owned anymore, such didn’t apply to desperate, poor or legally ignorant white women. “Like ‘Lord Jack Johnson’, owner over at the Circle T Saloon. Limey bastard shithead from Liverpool who---”

“---My people burnt that place down,” the Yaqui warrior interjected. “Bad medicine there. For Red women and white ones.”

“Well, Jack Johnson called up the good ole boys who wore badges and those who had wanted posters on them, and built that cat house up again,” Thelma informed the perhaps well meaning Indian. “Added a ‘Reformatory’ to it too.”

“Does he still get fifty dollars from the Injun agents for any ‘squwa’ he turns into a God fearing Christian, or a whore who’s afraid of nothing except him?” Fernandez asked, this time as a Comrade in a partially shared Cause.

“Business has never been better,” Thelma informed him, shooting the truth of the matter into Fernandez’s angry eyes, Ivan’s investigative ones and of Leroy’s ‘surprised that such a thang could really happen’ oculars. While the three men digested the moral and political lesson in what it was like to be a woman in still male dominated frontier, she walked over to the two gold bars. “Of course, with enough of this from Big Jacks jerk-off bosses who own the railroad...I could buy him out. Then hire you gentlemen to burn him out of wherever that fucking snake crawls into next. An arrangement I am sure would be profitable for both of you, if you let supervise the robbery of that special train that’s scheduled to roll in down there, in---.”

“---And how much would it cost you to hire us?” Fernandez asked, as a collaborator.

“What percentage of take goes to us, and what to you?” Comrade Ivan inquired as a bargain hunting capitalist.

“Ten percent of...say...if we go to the right cars and compartments, and the smaller train behind it, two and a half million dollars is...” Thelma replied, turning her head but not her field of vision. Indeed, these members of the ‘knows anythings better than any skirt wearer’ gender could locate a train, guards and rich passengers, but were not privy to the real information about where the safe containing the motherload was. The information she was given in a ‘love letter’ by the masked ‘secret admirer’ client who she sexually

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satisfied was as correct as everything else he told her about him. He was a giver who needed to make amends before he died, which he did according to every reliable source Thelma trusted.

Meanwhile, the ‘we are not in this for the money, as money is the source of all evil’ Revolutionaries, while counting dollars, pesos and rubbles in their heads from this bigger than imagined score. “Yes, two and a half million,” Thelma repeated. “A number that would take you a really long time to calculate on your fingers, a slide-rule or abacus into the currency of most relevancy to you,” she smirked.

Fernandez was moved his digits rapidly doing complex math, Ivan scribbling down the number of dollars and conversion to rubbles in the margins of Das Capital, while Leroy put ones into the sand, counting by fives. “And don’t forget to calculate in the invaluable satisfaction that with me getting on the train first,” Thelma continued, easing into the diction and mannerisms of a seductive Southern Belle as she set out to charming the pants, pesos and power out of each of the men, knowing somehow exactly what they wanted between their legs. “Imagine how effective the James and Younger gang would have been if they had a woman, stranded on the side of the tracks after surviving an attack by Indians, desperados or money grubbing Yankee Anarchists, working the robberies from the inside, so as to make it safer for you brave gentlemen to extract everything and everyone of value from the train, and making a safe getaway. Cause ya’ll should know that powerful men will always tell a powerless woman what she wants to know.” The emerging of hard and long woodies in the groin of each of the men, even Leroy, confirmed such to Thelma, and to them. And, yes, once activated appropriately, they had more muscle than she and a gang of her fellow ‘sisters’ had with regard to the use of brute force to obtain the gold, and physical strength to cart it away quickly. And, of course, a caught woman outlaw could always say she was obeying a dominant and smarter man, or raging hormones that required medical treatment.

“Huh?” Leroy let slur from his mouth as the first response to Thelma’s theatrical dance with her alluring finger, the ‘discourse’ with her irresistible musical voice and the ‘you’re the one I really trust, like and love most’ message delivered with her coral green eyes to each of her associates. “She say something impotent?” he asked his Comrade Master Ivan.

“Nothing about her is ‘impotent’, Ivan replied.

“A woman could be useful to us,” Fernandez added. Even if she’s a dumbass whore.”

“I ain’t no goddamn fucking whore!” self observed herself saying, with a clenched fist holding a knife out at her three allies, in the Bavarian-Gaelic diction and crude mannerisms of her rags to riches yet still ruffian German father, and Irish mother. She took in a deep breath, slipped her back into a dignified arch then looked at Leroy, as he re-invented self. “I’m...whatever you, and this Mission, needs me to be,” she related and confessed. “Just like you have-to-prove- something-to-yourself-and-your-ancestors, useless pieces of shit.”

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Ivan was 'done found out where he was hiding out', according to the idioms of Thelma's less educated but more colorful than she ever was childhood playmates. Fernandez ridiculed her with a wry grin, introspective laugh and uplifted chin. Which came gradually as soon as he opened his mouth. "Yes, yes,...I am a piece of shit," he related and confessed. "An asshole and worse to Yankee Bluecoats, Mexican Federales or 'civilized' Mansos Injuns....and sometimes to myself. But useless?" It's you who wants to be useful....to us."

"Or," Ivan countered, affection and pity edging its way to love in his voice, face and soul, as Thelma read it, or wanted to read it anyway. "We could be useful to her." Thelma felt and let his stare embrace her. She let her heart tell her usually thinking by itself arm to lower the knife.

"Because she reminds you of someone back in the Motherland?" Fernandez offered by way of explanation, to Ivan and, more so, to Thelma.

"Because she can get us all what we want and need. Each gives according to their abilities. And takes according to their needs," Ivan said to Fernandez, gazing and into Thelma.

"A man's needs," Thelma replied, brought back to reality, as it was for her female ancestors but she vowed not for her future daughters. "Yes," she continued as she clearly saw in Ivan's left face something different than what he was sending out from the right one. Then put her secular under-clothes back on, the garments which when buttoned made her look like a lady, and when unbuttoned, a whore. Then let her tongue rather than the blade of her knife do the slicing and dicing of Ivan's oversized ego and defective mind. "Bolshevik bullshit cowboy who speak like peasant and carry ass around like king," she said in a mocking Slavic accent, noting that, as usual, her worst instinct about people turned out to be the correct one. "Something that I do understand, gentleman," she continued in the diction and educated mannerism to which she self-educated herself. But I assure you that the pleasure will be all yours, and not mine. Unless you pay me extra to pretend to actually like it."

Fernandez called her bluff in the poker game that someone had set up between the three self-tortured train robbers. He threw a coin Thelma's way, hitting the ground below her feet. Interested in seeing how much she was worth on this 'open market' she looked at it, but refused to pick it up. Fernandez tossed another three coins in front of her feet, each bigger, more shiny and of more value than the previous ones. She pocketed them deep within her cleavage, feeling and hearing a painful growl in her empty stomach.

"So...you do have a price," Fernandez replied with a victorious grin, saying the same thing with both sides of his face. "And needs just like the rest of us mortals," he continued, throwing to her a piece of jerky, which she ate, as she knew all too well that a too long empty stomach does not lead to a strong, enlightened soul but a defectively thinking brain, that brain being the only defense against brawn. "So, what will that get

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me?” Fernandez inquired. “A smile, a laugh, a tender stroke on the cheek. You really liking it?”

“Yes. I want you to like it. If you can...Please,” Ivan added, this time showing sincerity with his left face, and longing to not live alone with his right. He reached down to the scrub-grass, pulling out a flower from amongst the ugly weeds.

“Then,” she said, opening the top button on her blouse, then the second. “It stands to reason and practicality,” she continued, edging her way to the third, as hungry for a beloved heart as a full stomach. “That,” she said, after which she fastened up all the buttons, covering such with a coat that went to the upper portion of her neck. “I guess, BOTH of you gentlemen will have to wait,” she said as herself. “Meantime,” she said as a Southern Belle again, to the most simple, and harmless of the sperm donors. “I’m so famished, Leroy. My fine Boy. Could you be so kind as to---”

“---Yes, ma’am,” Leroy proclaimed with glee as he snapped to attention. With renewed Purpose that was simple and seemingly enjoyed, he fetched a plate, and commenced filling it with rabbit stew, each spoonful containing more meat than vegetable filler.

“I was talking to you, Buck,” Thelma said, to Fernandez.. “Would you be so kind as to get me some more of that stew,” ‘Tallahassee Thelma’ said, flipping her hair in the air. Fernandez grabbed hold of that mane, then pulled out his knife, prepared to use it on her throat, or something more personal. Ivan held him back from taking Thelma’s scalp. Thelma smiled, knowing she had set the two leaders of the alliance against each other. “She can get us on train, and to car that contains most gold, but only with full head of hair,” Ivan said.

“Good thinkin’, Masser Ivan,” Leroy offered.

“Boy...you tell your Bolshevik Masser that he’s full of Borsch-shit,” Fernandez pushed out of a mouth clenched so hard with anger that his brown skin turned beet red.

“You cutting out a piece of my neck or a chunk of my scalp isn’t going to get your Yaqui friends back,” Thelma informed him, with a calm brain but terrified soul.

“But gold can,” Ivan informed his regained for the fiftieth time ally. “Indian and White involuntary servants, serfs and sex-slaves can go back home after we buy their freedom, and the guns to kill their masters. Think of...all of our Revolutions.”

After a few tense moments that felt like hours, Fernandez cursed in Yaqui, then threw Thelma into the arms of... Leroy, who held her with the affection her mother had always provided and her father once did before he started to drink the firewater that was making him rich. The frustrated Yaqui medicine man and half-breed Revolutionary leader who seemed to be able to coordinate conflicting events in the beyond world and the real one stormed into the woods. Leroy let loose with a lullaby to sooth Thelma’s fear that Fernandez’s escalating rant was a conversation with a Yaqui demon who would possess

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his soul, converting him into a raging lunatic. Still, she pushed herself away from Leroy's loving arms, while ordered him to stop singing the music which was opening up her heart, preventing her from becoming a necessary evil in the Cause of an overdue Revolution for Justice. But the harder she pushed Leroy away, the more he pursued her, refusing to take no for an answer for the many gifts he so wanted to give her.

"Get your hands off me! You pathetic piece of ignorant...stupidity." she said at the last 'assault' of kindness.

Finally, and tragically, Leroy pulled away, his head bowed, his spirit broken once again. He tended to his tasks of cooking the stew, cleaning the camp, then shoveling the droppings laid down onto the ground by the thankfully still present horses everyone rode into camp. No doubt feeling like the brown excrement he was disposing of.

"He means no harm," Ivan gently informed a remorseful, and morally shaken up Thelma.

"He's a dumb ass moron," she shot back, sensing that he was a mirror that made you look into yourself, not knowing how much of a service or dis-service such was to everyone else

."

"He makes it easier to have kind heart," Ivan continued.

."

"And his other talents for robbing trains and, as we know we have to do afterwards, banks?" Thelma challenged.

Ivan thought about the answer, pursing his lips so that his mouth could speak with his mind, brain and soul before putting his foot into it again. "He has cultural experiences in this land not my own," he finally said. "Like...maybe he knows what Yaqui Liberator saying in woods?" he mused.

"Nothin' I'd say in mixed company," Leroy replied.

"Of course," Thelma said as an un-marryable old Schoolteacher, showing off yet another presentation to the group as it pertains to her usefulness. And hiding of course the fear that she was in a school room now that was far different than anything for which she was educated. "We would not want to offend the delicate feminine sensibility with something so crude and vulgar as the truth."

Maybe it was what Thelma said, or how deep into her dark past and painful soul to find it, but she was rewarded with laughter. From Ivan, who, as a man, was laughing at her jokes and admiring her wit. a. Leroy imitated Ivan's laugh of course, not knowing what he is laughing at. Par for the course.

"And of course," Schoolmarm turned Professor Thema continued. 'Humor is something that is something only men have the intelligence to indulge in. Along with other rights assertively given by the Male Creator to the masculine members of His favorite race such

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as the right to work for a fair wage, the right to an education, the right to vote, the right to relieve himself of body fluids without removing five layers of garments that..."

Something inside Thelma realized that the act out had taken her into a theatre she did not recognize, for an audience who was now turning on her. "What are you laughing at?" she demanded to know of Ivan, who seemed to be laughing at a joke she didn't understand, or was.

"Your pain," the middle aged Communist Cowboy said as an old sage, and fellow 25 year old friend related with averted eyes. "And triumph over it," he continued with an assuring and congratulatory stare between what seemed like badly needed chuckles.

"And what the fuck is Comrade Leroy laughing at?" she demanded to know.

Ivan stopped laughing. But Leroy continued to do so, then went into a song. All the while keeping himself in service by cleaning everyone else's mess, considering himself servant to the man, woman and horse.

"What's he laughing at so...happily and with so much...peace of mind, and soul, Comrade Ivan?" Thelma asked her, for the moment, guide to Purpose and Truth..

"Nothing I am fortunate enough to know, or understand," Ivan noted. "God help, and bless him."

"God? Thought you Reds didn't believe in any God, fellow Justice seeker Ivan."

"We believe in what we have to in order to liberate men, and women, in Home Country. Just like you believe what you have to so that you can liberate...who is YOUR revolution supposed to liberate, Sister with big and small s, Comrade, Feminist, Revolutionist---?"

"---Thelma," she related, needing to give her first name, keeping of course the surname to herself in the event that this alliance would go South. "Who, well..."

"Is tryin' ta find out who she really is, and should be?" Leroy offered, looking straight at her.

Thelma pulled back from the two legged mirror.

"Sorry, Miss Thelma," he said with a bowing his head again, tending to his labours."I guess I oversteps my freedoms."

"No such thing as overstepping freedoms!!!" Ivan asserted. "So much freedom here in America and you all do so little with it!!!"

"But what to do with freedom?" Thelma challenged with a Russian accent, admiring somehow a language that didn't need articles or subjects in a sentence, yet still retained

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male or female identifications for two thirds of the objects in the world. “This is scary concept, Mister Ivan...”

“Comrade Ivan,” the Cowboy Communist Cossack who somehow was true to all of those, for most of the population that Thelma knew about anyway, contradictory descriptors replied, declining to give his surname. Perhaps because he was running away from his inherited past or because if the wrong authorities knew about that identification he would have no future in the land of the living. Two situations that Thelma respected and all too well understood. “Please....Comrade, Ivan,” he continued as a man and, perhaps a bit of a boy, so it seemed, as he invited her to take a seat in his sagebrush library, offering her the most comfortable rock to sit on and the largest cup for coffee’.

“‘Comrade’,” Thelma said, sipping the brew, finding its warmth was needed far more than its flavor. She considered the origin and possible new meaning for that term, ‘comrade’, which found its way into the still male dominated Russian Revolution that failed in 1905, most probably because it didn’t incorporate enough women in key positions. “No spice or grace in the title, but no dig or hook in it either.,” she noted.

“So...Comrade Thelma...”

“---Thelma...Just Comrade Thelma, for the moment,” she interjected. “Without any last name enforced on me by my shithead father, or granted to me by a too dumb to know he doesn’t even know what real love is husband. Though, in my dreams, which I heard the Indians here call a place where if you work hard enough, you can change reality, I have seen, chased and worked to connect to a man who excelled the usual expectations of his brawns is better than brains gender who....” Maybe it was something in the coffee, or the wind blowing in herbs from the bushes, or those ‘spirits’ that followed the religiously atheistic Thelma across a continent with the single agenda that she recognize their existence. But, yes, something magical happened when Thelma’s young, defiant, inexperienced eyes met Ivan’s old, tired, life-tired portholes to his soul.

The conversation between the culturally mismatched misfits became a dialog, about something far more profound than political banter and relieving than hours chit chat. Just as Thelma felt that she was able to translate Ivan’s internal language into a tongue she could understand, she was startled by a deep voice.

“You say somethin’ Masser Comrade Ivan?” Leroy offered, appearing in front of Thelma as a man but, seeming to be...something else.

“Was thinking something, Leroy,” Ivan replied, his gaze, stare and attention still on Thelma.

“Like...eh... we need more firewood?” she replied, feeling the necessity to process what had just happened, along with the chill of an unexpected North wind bringing in winter well in advance of its scheduled arrival. And prepare for what was going to happen. In the mystical ‘Huya Aniya’ dream world as well as what palefaces called ‘hard reality’.

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“Yes...a lot more firewood,” Ivan said, meaning a lot more, Thelma intuited, and hoped.
“Leroy...we need more firewood.”

“If y’all’s says so,” real world Leroy said as he went into the bushes to do the bidding of his protector. Or, Thelma found herself considering, trying to find what the presumably alone Fernandez was doing or saying after his voice had gone hoarse due to the loudly expressed expletives he had ranted about his fellow ‘comrades’, life, and himself. “I be close by ifn’ ya needs me.”

“He always is,” Ivan noted, as he poured more coffee, perhaps spiked with love potion, into Thelma’s cup. While the wood gathering Leroy sang the Internationale, somehow making the song about mankind’s defiance against religion supported Capitalists and Tyrants about a gentle, compliant, devotion to God the Father, and Mother.

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CHAPTER 5

It wasn't the place of the Old Prospector at his very private and still secret campground above the overlook to spy on the four intruders who came upon what he considered his mountain. But as his hearing was too good for his own good, and with the aid of binoculars he could decipher things from a distance better than an eagle, he was forced to look in on the visitors to the domain which life had assigned him to look after. And, as the underground spring which provided good drinking water for him and his horse now emerged within smelling distance of the Revolutionaries' Campground overlooking the train tracks below, who was he to disobey the orders of the Fates, the Spirits who controlled waterflow and Mother Earth herself?

"You look....tired, Ivan...I mean, Comrade Ivan," Thelma said to her weary coffee and biscuit dining companion as she seemed to feel a pain in her chest, holding onto it while wincing in, at the very least, severe discomfort.

"Your heart...it hurts? Ivan offered.

"No," Thelma replied, perhaps truthfully, or perhaps not. Loosening the tight garments around under her chest with a gentle, sincere smile. "This blouse and corset," she noted, as Ivan noted not what was underneath them, but more paper that dropped to the ground. "Crushes the lungs," she said of the corset after taking a much needed deep breath. "Cuts off blood from going to those places good women shouldn't have to worry about, like the brain. But making these lumps of fat the poets call breasts and the anatomists refer to as mammary glands look like...something else to men who have no brains. Did you ever look at a breast, cut up fresh?"

"By a turncoat Czar-serving Cossack's sword. Yes," Ivan replied, hiding the paper he had read with such intense interest, while pretending to have all of his interest on his dining companion.

"Must have been rough, Ivan. Who was she?" Thelma inquired, taking a lady-sized bite of a biscuit.

"To her child, a mother," the old before his time battle experienced veteran of Eastern Wars related to the young woman who sought more combative encounters than she actually most probably found.

"And to you?" Thelma replied, with, as Ivan perceived it anyway, a voice older than her current life experience had provided. "The woman whose breasts were cut off. By the Czar's Cossacks? To YOU she was?" she pressed, gently, laying her soft fingers on his dried out, scared and shaking forearm.

"A woman fighting for the rights of all children, and mothers," Ivan replied, averting his head as well as his eyes, pulling his arm away from her as well, after which he got up and turned his back on her, hiding what was now on his face.

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“Who you couldn’t protect,” Thelma noted, somehow seeing and feeling the tears streaming down both sides of Ivan’s face. “It hurts most when it happens to family and...”

“---We all part of one world family!” Ivan exclaimed to Thelma, while trying to rationalize what he had done, or not done, that day.

“Or someone who we want to be family,” Thelma said, as she approached Ivan with open arms. Which he pulled away from before they touched his flesh. Even though as a responsible veteran Revolutionary he was obliged to accept the heartfelt efforts of younger souls who embraced that Calling as well as the Calling of Love without political agendas.

“She must have hurt you bad,” Thelma proposed, with painful accuracy. “Or you wanted to treat her real good,” she advanced, hitting a bulls-eye with that second speculative arrow .

Ivan took in a deep breath, so as to feel something. Even if it was cold air and the scent of North American bushes to which his Slavic lungs were allergic. “Sonia is none of your business,” he said letting a waving index finger rather than his face do the talking for him.

“So, she has a name,” Thelma replied, in the manner of the young Priest in Minsk who was a natural therapist, but donned the collar because he could serve clients with less complications. “That’s...good,” she continued, ironically, as Sister Nun Thelma.

“Nothing was good about that night,” Ivan related, as he self tortured himself by playing the events of that horrible time at the peaceful Political Rally that became a massacre because he let himself get fooled by three trusted Comrades Sergei, Petros and Vladmir, who were the Czar’s Secret Police. And held up the fallen Workers’ Rights banner once the Imperial Army bullets started to fly to continue the struggle, without first noting that Sonia was taken away to be interrogated, raped and mutilated by ‘Captain Sergei’. “They had too many guns that night, and the day after,” Ivan said regarding his attempts to revive the movement from retreating into oblivion again and retrieve Sonia from the kind of jails only self-sabotaging Russia can devise to inflict pain and humiliation on their fellow Slavs. “He who has the guns makes the rules.”

“And he, or she, who has the gold, can buy more guns, and people to use them,” Thelma said, putting a gold bar into Ivan’s field of tranced vision. Then pushing the bar containing biologically useless but economically valuable metal into his chest. “What if, in your country, and mine....for just ONE WEEK, the right army of women had the guns,” she proposed.

“And what man would teach them how to use them?” Ivan replied, recalling very real facts about what happened in the Old Country.

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Maybe it was because Ivan put a sardonic self-required chuckle into his remark, or that it was the truth. In any case, she stormed away, closing her heart and buttons on all of her tight fitting garments with her. “Think it just turned a lot colder out here, Comrade,” she said by way of explanation, this time her back turned to Ivan.

“It is joke!” Ivan said regarding the remark about women not being as natural marksmen or killers as men.

“Not one that we think is funny!” the retort as Thelma fumbled with her firearms, revealing, in fact, she had far better weaponry between her ears than on anything she could strap to her waist.

“And ‘we’ is army of women who want guns?” Ivan inquired.

“Who will HAVE guns!” Thelma blasted back, with her eyes directly at Ivan’s kind face. “As many guns, and as much money as they need!”

“For what purpose?” Ivan asked as a burnt out kind professor to a student with more passion than plan.

“To make a world where they aren’t any guns. And no need for money,” the reply as she turned her glance away from the gold, and laid down her, apparently, more in need of repair than ready to go stolen firearms.

“And everyone treated with respect and friendship,” Ivan stated, as much as a wish as a commitment.

“Guns and money first,” Thelma replied, after which she picked up the revolvers in need of repair, bashing metal against flesh to MAKE the machinery work, at the cost of injury to the latter of course. “Then respect, then,” she said after verifying that, indeed, when enough human will is pitted against human made machinery, the latter eventually obeys. “Whatever happens later,” she continued, glancing at her pocket-watch. “The Golden Express train is coming through here in 3 hours. High risk, but with you and that Yaqui Fred...” she put aside her revolver, then noticed something missing from her undergarments.

“Fernandez...His name is---“ Ivan interjected.

“Shit!!!! Shit!!! Those.....eh...letters and family photos from my fellow sisters and...” she said, obviously lying about the contents of the papers that fell out of her most secret compartments.

“Which we will both look for.” Ivan reached into his pocket and dropped them in her path, allowing her to follow his path to them.

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“Found it...Found it...” she proclaimed of the notes containing beautiful but uninterpretable scribbling that Ivan suspected were about something important to her, and everyone else around her.

“Your own Communist Manifesto?” Ivan proposed, seeing more of an author in her who would record history rather than someone who would, or should, be making it.

“My...eh...boss,” she went on about, this time her stutters hiding her fear rather than as a stall so that her mind could catch up with her fast talking mouth in formulating another lie. “Notes...and suggestions...from my boss. And client. Patron, actually.”

“Who told you to come out here, and find me?” Ivan asked in response to the carefully worded truth that had many lies within it.

“To find the train,” her reply, thinking as rapidly as she spoke again. “And work with whoever I can find. Who, conveniently has...” Thelma surveyed every element visible in the camp, and hidden in the bushes around it. “Extra horses, extra guns, and...” she marched to the Gatling gun, picking it up with a familiarity that scared and assured Ivan at the same time. “One gun that’s worth more than all the railroad’s guns,” she said with a satisfied smile, grateful to Fate and/or God the Mother for finally delivering what she needed. All except for one more tool needed for the task. “What experience do you have as a train robber?” the 120 pound five foot 4 under-muscled feminist asked the Cowboy Cossack Communist who was built like a bear.

“Enough to be out here, working ALONE!” Ivan asserted. “Less complications that way, for all Revolutions and Revolutionaries,” he said by way of respectful and multifaceted fact.

“With the tools of forces,” Thelma retorted. Rather than...hmmm... persuasion,” she continued as Tallahassee Thelma, fondling her breasts, her stride around camp converted into a seductive dance with a musicality that only a deaf man, or woman, could resist.

“Revolution won with deception is corrupt from start,” Ivan shot back from the protective emotional fortress which had become his life.

“Those with brains always use deception. Brawn is only for the stupid, and brawny. And you ain’t neither, ‘Comrade’,” Thelma replied. “Where’s Injun Fred?” she continued, looked at and into the bushes.

“ You mean Yaqui Fernandez,” Ivan asserted, recalling just how dangerous it was to underestimate the ability of ‘Pagan Yellow Savages’ in Siberia to mount attacks against ‘Civilized Educated Whites’ in summer, and how effective showing even a little respect for them could be for your survival once winter set in.

“He’s probably run off,” Thelma surmised having seen nor heard nor smelled nothing since he ran off into the brush. “Maybe on the other side of ‘reality’ if he really was a medicine man. A drunk someplace if he was a mortal. Ya know, there’s a reason why we

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Palefaces whipped their Red asses. Besides the fact these Red-skinned natives hadn't even invented the wheel yet."

Ivan, following the advice given to him long ago by his wise and independent Don Cossack grandfather who had survived numerous Moscow appointed talkative Military governors smiled and nodded as the Eastern born and bred Feminist ranted on. "We got better brains, better minds, better reflexes, better sensing of what's going on around us."

"Suppose you do," Fernandez said from behind Thelma, causing her to turn around, slip face first into the mud, then emerge from it to slip again, and fall into into the arms of a benevolently laughing Ivan rather than into the hard, merciless rocky valley 300 feet downward.

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CHAPTER 6

Fernandez emerged from the brush, showing off what he found, and what found him. “I was looking to see what two legged rat was spying on us, then this four legged beast found me,” he said, dumping the carcass of a slain wolf into the middle of the campground. “Or maybe the fourth uninvited visitor to my power spot here turned into this old four legged, mangy and lame beyond repair by any doc geezer” he explained. “Nice warrior mask,” he said regarding Thelma’s new ‘natural mud bath’ make up. “And interesting to see who and what you ‘accidently’ fell into, sleazing beauty,” he mused.

“Very amusing, ‘gentlemen’,” Thelma slurred out, after which she commenced to wipe off the caked mud from her face with the sleeves of her blouse, to the audience to whom she just provided some needed humorous entertainment. “Very amusing indeed.” She pushed herself away from Ivan, and declining the offer to wash her face with his sweat-soaked bandana.

“But instructive,” Ivan noted. “Fernandez knows the desert. I know about the trains.”

“Through your dumbass illiterate White nigger boy,” Thelma continued, scraping off what she felt was dirt that had penetrated into her skin.

“And you for certainty, know what to do with the safe-keeper and head security guard on the train, Sister Comrade Thelma,” Ivan advanced.

“Any man is a mouse with his pants down,” Thelma noted as she scrubbed of what she hoped was the last layer of grim in the mirror-lacking outdoor meeting room. “The best interrogator for even the most hard ass prisoner is a woman who’ll give him a hard on,” she continued, batting her eyes at Ivan.

“Is true,” the Cowboy Cossack Communist admitted, and confessed.

“Is bullshit,” Fernandez informed his Gringo cohorts with a Slavic Accent. As the only one in Camp who chose to acknowledge hard truth rather than embrace a soul sustaining and mind-relieving lie. “This whore just wants a free ride!” he informed Ivan before his fall into love caused him to hit rock hard ground. “The men do the hunting, killing and dying. The women do the eating. The crying when they’re paid to,” he said, recalling a past that he shared with few Indians and was determined would not be in the history books written by any White man, or woman. He gathered his weapons, then on the horse and his pack mule, with Leroy’s help, preparing to leave for good this time. The latter enraged Ivan, until Leroy winked at his Slavic protector, gave him a thumbs up, then pick pocketed a map the Yaqui warrior had put in his back pocket.

“It’s every revolutionary for himself now,” Fernandez said, envying the connection between Ivan and Thelma that he knew he shouldn’t have. “And every revolutionary should know the difference between mischief and revolution,” he directed at Ivan. “And

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the dangers of mischief as a diversion to revolution, and what happens if you start to love another person more than the collective.”

“Yes, I know,” Ivan conceded, turning his back and affections away from Thelma. ‘General Sophia’, as our Comrades in Custody called the prison matron, got coaxed more information from our men about our plans than any of the Czar’s Guards. The fools...putting mischief and pleasure in front of Revolution. But... I NEVER give up names of those revolutionaries.”

“You can tell ME their names. Now that we are...Comrades? Partners?” Thelma pleaded. “And...ya know.”

“Well, still alive and ready to go into action are Dimitri, Boris, Sasha and...”

“You stupid piece of shit!” Fernandez blasted at Ivan, pulling Thelma away from him. She landed into Leroy’s arms.

While doing so, Leroy dropped the paper he stole from Fernandez into Ivan’s pocket, as noticed by the Old Prospector from above, and the eagle flying above him.

“I told General Thelma first names of my Comrades only,” Ivan assured Fernandez.

“You want me to help you BOYS get the combination of the safe from the MAN who has it on the train, Ivan tells me the last names of his Red friends,” she insisted. “His secret revolutionaries from Old Country...Or maybe the new ones here?”

“Is secret,” Ivan replied, as he checked his watch. “I tell this secret not even to God,” he continued, while checking his ammo with his hands, and secretly reading the notes regarding the particulars about the train from Fernandez’s secret boss and/or informer.

“He never told me their names neither,” Leroy whispered to a betrayed, alone again and angry Thelma.

“You asked him, Leroy?” Thelma inquired.

“Respectfully, Ma’am. ‘Cause it felt like he wanted ta tell me but was afraid to.”

“Respectfully,” Thelma pondered with anger, a new plan emerging in her eye. “You, Fernandez!” she blasted at the Indian. “You would have asked him forcibly. But what about asking him...lovingly?” she proposed. “Ivan...the name of just ONE of your secret Comrades from Old Country...Please, my love?” she inquired with loving eyes that wouldn’t let go of Ivan’s, and fingertips on the buttons that would make this puppet talk.

Fernandez, who now chose to work with a man he hated than a woman he mistrusted, watched Ivan’s third leg sprout to attention.

“My tongue still is still,” Ivan assured Fernandez.

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“But, getting longer by the second peckered friend,” the bronco Yaqui said to the Revolutionary Slav. “Your eyes are sinking deeper into the sockets. Shoulders getting loose. Fire in the belly turning into---“

“---Warmth,” Thelma interjected, quite accurately. She pulled her fingers away from Ivan’s chest, but maintained a connection with her attentive stare and alluring smile that made her look ‘familiar’ to any man who came across them. “And trust between Comrades.”

“Yes,” Ivan conceded.

“She’s good,” Fernandez said regarding the young white woman who seemed to have the power of a Yaqui Shaman “Or maybe...hmmm...”

The Yaqui half-breed’s attempt to come up with a profound metaphysical descriptor that would get him acknowledged as a medicine man in the Bacetette mountains, or a clever quip that earn him nods around the saloon poker table in El Paso, Thelma silenced his mouth, then sense of reason with her stare.

“Or maybe I’m...irresistible?” she proposed as opened up his shirt. “You like it rough, and both ways. Bet half of those scars on that muscle bound body of yours came from fighting enemies of your revolution. Half of them from lovers of it in the bedroom.”

“Spiritual rituals,” Fernandez answered, somehow pulled back towards but not completely to clear perspective. He tried to remind himself that it was he who was testing her witchlike abilities, and not the other way around.

“You want it Pagan, I can go there,” Thelma whispered in his ear, after which she began to sing. A familiar lullaby, in his Yaqui mother’s tongue.

“Hey...that’s MY language,” the once startled, and now scared Yaqui warrior thought, and gave voice to. “How the hell did YOU get to learn...”

“The goddess knows everything,” Thelma said as she began to sing again. A tune that perhaps she learned from a drunk Indian in Texas, or a dying one in Mexico.

Meanwhile, Ivan looked pensively at the paper Leroy had stolen from Fernandez. He compared it to the one given to him by his own informer. And the one that he had, by divine intervention, found on Thelma.

“When this concert, or test to see who has most powers of mystical or carnal persuasion is over, is over, something we all should know about each other,” he said, after which he handed all three notes to Leroy, looking with envy, anger as well as greed at Fernandez and Thelma. Recalling how he got his letter about the particulars of the Gold Train. Delivered in a rock hard piece of bread by a fellow prisoner from the cell next to his, who

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he had never seen, who had somehow escaped capture by the Capitalist Fascists in the Old Country. “Leroy, what do you see here, in these letters, from my secret admirer, Yaqui Fernandez’s and Sister Thelma’s?” he asked his now very valued assistant, and, due to his incapacity for intelligence, perhaps only real friend.

“I can’t understand a lot of the words, but the pictures...”

“...Were both written and drawn by the same hand,” Ivan pointed out as he placed them in front of Fernandez’s then Thelma’s eyes, breaking up the non-verbal proposals, propositions and power play which was going on between them. “Which means that...”

“All you got the same informan?” Leroy proposed.

“He means informer,” Ivan said as Fernandez and Thelma shared letters written to them by the other, and to him. “Who believes in what we all do.”

“Messenger Guide who knows that heaven watches, but earth works,” the life-trained Yaqui Warrior and self-taught Medicine man noted.

“Masked client, friend and, someone who I hope won’t go back to his undeserving wife,” Thelma added.

“Who,” Leroy interjected. “Broughts all of you’s together. A messenger of the Lord, Jesus be praised!” As usual when something ‘good’ happened, Leroy sang rather than voiced his gratitude to his Creator, losing himself even more from the real world in the music. Which this time, was as appealing as it was loud to all concerned.

“With a White Nigger who’ll sing the train guards into putting down their guns and giving us the money,” Fernandez proposed to his two colleagues.

“Leroy has worked for railroad and was abused by railroad,” Ivan offered. “Now, he help us, and me, rob railroad.

“With you helping himself to his share of the money?” the Red Indian sneered at the White Cossack.

“I look after it for him, like I look after him,” Ivan said. “Besides, when the Revolution comes in my country, he can come there. No one enslaves Black people in Russia.”

“Because they haven’t seen Black people in Russia,” Thelma proposed.

“And Leroy looks more white than black,” Fernandez added. “And...” he turned to Leroy. “Leroy! What do you say to getting a quarter of....two and a half million dollars?”

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“I says that it’s harder for a rich man ta enter the gates of heaven than fer a camel ta get through the eye of a needle,” Leroy said between verses of his latest Hymm.

“And what do you want? In THIS life?” Thelma asked.

“A clear path to salvation in the next, Mastress Thelma,” the reply, appended by more lyrics about the virtues of poverty.

“So,” Fernandez proposed, to Ivan. “A split between us.”

“Between the three of us. Our three Revolutions,” Thelma asserted, being sure that women were included in the economic banter that always seemed to involve men only. “Which are working for the same thing, but in different places, right?”

“Yes,” Fernandez said, after considering all of the possibilities in the future, considering no doubt the possibility that Native People freed from Palefaces in North America may want to invade Europe, and take what they can and deserve after the next World War which was inevitable there.

“Of course,” Ivan added, no doubt thinking that as Russia had more land than any country in the world, turning it into a Democratic Socialist Paradise would be a sure fire way to insure eventual power to ‘educate’, with force if necessary, Capitalist Europe, Imperialist Japan and Manifest Destiny America.

“But, as the future Enlightened Philosopher Queen of the entire world would say,” Thelma interjected. “A hundred percent divided by three makes for an uneven and negotiable 1 percent. And as for splitting command of the mission into thirds to get the gold to make our revolutions possible and effective is...well.”

“I read somewhere that there were three Comrade commanders of the Alamo,” Ivan said.

“Who got overrun by Mexicans,” Fernandez reminded him. “Like you palefaces say, no tribe can win any battle if there are too many chiefs and not enough Indians.”

The Prospector on top of the mountain was awakened from his nap by banter from the three ‘chiefs’ down below for the next two hours. But, as the clock ticked down, and the train came turned the corner, blowing its whistle so proudly and confidently, it was time for action. In a game that the Prospector knew, was for keeps. In which none of the players would emerge the same, for better or worse.

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CHAPTER 7

The Old Prospector heard the Golden Express train pull around the corner and saw it make an unscheduled stop. With his all seeing but still not all knowing eyes, he saw a stranded by White bandits and renegade Indians half naked Baroness Thelma being brought into the train by several working stiff guards who so needed to rescue a woman of stature and beauty to feel like real man.

He smelled the ever changing fumes of the locomotive as it raced, then crawled, then somehow lost all of its power to pull anything. He observed a medicine man Fernandez get in front of the train, cursing the machinery but blessing the mostly red, brown, black and yellow skinned 20th century serfs on board who were being taken to places they didn't want to go. He vicariously felt the terror of the mostly white and, relative to himself, rich 'respectable' folk who were on the train voluntarily. He heard then saw a masked Cossack riding in at full gallop, making the Yaqui Indian and himself disappear in a cloud of dust with a waving of his hand, and a promise to 'deliver the demons back to hell'. He felt with his feet three thunderous blasts of dynamite liberating the safes in as many empty cattle cars from their containers, then the thunder of thirty times that number of raggedy clad laborers from their chains, running, strolling, then dancing towards the woods. Then felt the pain of bullets from some of the guards sending the most joyous penniless dancers to, according to some anyway, a heavenly Paradise provided by a God who gave the poor 100 times the riches they ever could obtain on earth. Then he heard rapid and regular gunfire from a Gatling gun mounted on the buckboard of wagon coming through, ending the gunfire from the army of military and plain clothes guards and, perhaps, the ability to breathe the black, smoky air. Followed by the wagon being loaded with gold bars, paper money and jewelry as it moved from one car to another between patches of black, sulfurous stench fog. Followed by Thelma jumping onto the wagon, taking over the reins from the driver. Who did what and exactly how, the Old Prospector didn't know and knew he was not entitled to know. But he did know that three train robbers got away with a wagon loaded so high with a goldbar Bonanza, with no one pursuing them. But with the loss of something none of them realized they valued.

"Leroy," Ivan said as he dipped into the celebratory banquet in their still undiscovered and unseeable campground. "He could make sick rabbit, rotted wild onion and stale beans and week old banuck taste like banquet. Far better than this stew of prime rib, pilfered 150 year old brandy and commandered French biscuits."

"I miss his singing," Thelma noted. "Even though it opened up my heart. And, for a moment, made me feel too much compassion for my enemies and almost made me unable to do what I know I had to do to them."

"Which you did so effectively on the train," Fernandez said.

"And you two assistants did so effectively outside the train," Thelma offered as a compliment.

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“Associates!” Ivan asserted as he helped himself to a third helping of the stew. “Who, perhaps, gave according to their abilities.”

“And took beyond their needs?” Fernandez said, pointing to the Russian Cowboy Cossack’s oversized belly.

“I have to keep up strength!” he shot back, after which he patted his belly that shook like jelly. “Is fuel I can use when times get hard. And when weather gets cold, keeps me warm.”

“And comfortable?” Fernandez sneered.

“We all can be comfortable now,” Thelma interjected, pointing to the wealth around them. “And effective for our Causes. Which are the same Cause, right?”

“Yes, they are,” Fernandez admitted.

“And always will be,” Ivan added. He sifted through the stolen crate containing bottles of luxury firewater which, even at the lowest price auction, were each worth more than a thousand prime condition horses on his Native Steppes, ten haciendas owned by Mexican aristocrats who had taken over virtually of the Yaqui’s ancestral valleys, and twenty top rate brothels in Thelma’s home state which could be converted into colleges. “A toast, to, the Revolutions!” Ivan said after uncorking the bottle.

“And Evolutions,” Thelma added, taking hold of three brandy glasses, placing them on an emptied safe which served as their table for Ivan to fill them to the brim.

“And not overdosing on too much happiness with this firewater,” Fernandez said, pouring half of the expensively aged wine onto the ground, as an offering to the Spirits. “Or letting this gold make us too comfortable.”

“Indeed,” Ivan said, pouring out half of his glass onto the dried ground. “An offering to...well.”

“Someone or something who we are Instrument for,” Thelma said, refusing to make an offering to the Heavenly Mother. “And who, we won’t have to confront for a long time.”

“Or hire someone else to be our lawyers at the Pearly Gates when we do meet Saint Peter,” Ivan mused.

“A good Jewish Lawyer,” Fernandez offered. “To negotiate with someone who was once a fellow Jew?”

“Lacheim!” Thelma said from a smile so wide it hurt her mouth.

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“Yes, to Life!” Ivan proclaimed. “And...to Leroy. Our student who became our teacher, and friend. Wherever he is in this life, or the afterlife! After he sacrificed himself for us at the very necessary robbery, for no Cause but...for us.”

The three revolutionaries who had, by the Old Prospector’s standards anyway, evolved beyond their ideological expectations shared a needed toast and a mutually shared discovery, treated themselves to a well deserved bolus of wine. Then lowered their glasses for another toast. But before the fourth brain between them inserted the words into the appropriate revolutionary’s mouth, another voice intervened.

“You’re all under arrest,” a tall, slender gentleman with a deep voice and badge on his vest proclaimed through his thick goatee, and the business end of his revolver.

“And all sentenced to serve out your sentence under the ground,” his short, stout deputy Pinkerton appended, his face as ugly as his soul. With ten minions of evil behind him.

“Hmmm,” Ivan said, calmly then took another sip of wine. “It is said that no good deed goes unpunished.”

“And it is known that if earth works hard enough, heaven intervenes and changes the rules,” Fernandez added.

“And it is customary for even MEN to give condemned men and women a last meal, or toast, before being...neutralized,” Thelma said to the Sheriff, lifting her glass up.

“A last drink,” he conceded. “But not a toast.”

“Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s,” Emily stated, turning around to take in another swallow of wine, unbuttoning her blouse in the process. Inviting her two comrades to do the same. “And render unto asshole Capitalists” she whispered, noting that they lowered their guns, and shifted their gaze towards her well endowed mammary glands. “What they deserve,” she yelled out.

Ivan and Fernandez were able to grab hold of their weapons Leroy had hidden in the camp at the privately hired lawmen, as a ‘just in case’ scenario such as this. Their aim was accurate. But none of the bullets hit the mark.

“Blanks,” the head Pinkerton said by way of explanation. “Unlike what we got in our shooting irons.” With that, the Pinkertons made mince meat of the three Revolutionaries. “Your job is finished, gentlemen,” the head lawman said to his underlings, paying them with cash from his pocket. When they were gone, the head Pinkerton perused the gold, jewels and money. He fondled them all, looked around, then when he put the third stash into his saddlebag, abruptly stopped at the arrival of an unexpected and expected intruder.

“We and my associates, your bosses, agreed that I take fifty percent of this, before you take yours,” Leroy said, with an English accent. Strolling into the campground with an

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upright spine, an upwardly held chin and no weapons other than his superior attitude. After shooting down the Chief Pinkerton's self respect with his eyes, Leroy looked downward at the three 'masters' he was so good at pleasing.

"And as for them," he said to the Pinkerton. "They aren't losers. They're just...miscalculators Who wanted to change things, but didn't know how yet. And attempted their social experiments while I and my associates were testing out ours. They didn't know that...we don't want things changed," he calmly stated. He then moved to Fernandez's lifeless body, and spit on it. "We don't want smart Indians telling dumb ass whites how to fix their lives, and their fucked up world!" he yelled at the Yaqui Indian's wide open, shock-infused eyes. "We don't want women opening up men's hearts, or showing them how to use their minds," he sneered at the soul perhaps still lingering in Thelma's corpse. "And," he continued, to Ivan, gaining his composure as a gentlemen. "We don't want a world where each gives according to their abilities and takes according to their needs. Everyone takes...Everyone...Including me," who he said, "Who wrote those notes to you idiot idealists that brought you here. To this..."

"Golden glorious death?" the Pinkerton offered. "Sir?" he continued, with a subservient 'Nigger' smile, hoping his Master would see it as a joke.

Leroy smiled, but didn't chuckle at the joke. "My people will be here to collect all of this. And I believe our work is done. Revolutions that these brave but deluded idealists could have started will be..."

"Postponed, Sir?"

"Cancelled," Leroy shot back at the smart assed Pinkerton.

"Along with you taking away from this mountain what belongs to it," the Old Prospector said from his vantage point on the cloud hidden hill above the campground. With that, he inserted a piece of dynamite into the rocks behind him, lit the fuse and rode off towards the next valley. Knowing that the avalanche he was causing would bury the gold into the ground, along with the bodies, and memories of all who sought, for different reasons, to get it. Until, of course, Mother Nature saw fit to release the gold back into a river. Or Father Earth decided it was time for an earthquake. Or, the Old Prospector lamented, some brave mountaineer would discover who the gods who lived above the clouds really were, and were destined to become.

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