

TYME WARPED

By

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CHAPTER 1

Barry was always a linear person, logical to the extreme, despite the fact that he hated accountants, bankers and by the book cops more than broccoli. But....there was something he did wake up into one interestingly late autumn windy day after the trees in his yard had liberated the remaining leaves from their branches. “What if in a parallel universe the wheel, sailing ship and airplane were discovered in Pre-Columbian America before they were invented in Europe, introduced by maybe a time travelling Viking after he ate way too many talking berries hanging on singing trees?” he pondered when deciding whether to open his eyes to the world he lived in rather than the ones he imagined. “What if George Washington took the higher paying offer to become an officer in the British Army in 1770 rather than the pro-bono call to lead the Revolutionary Colonial Militias in 1774? And what if Hitler was admitted to art school in 1906, and fell in love with a Jewish lesbian who encouraged him to become a gay Rabbi?”

“Sure, that would only mean the world would have other problems,” Barry told himself as he dragged his feet to the bathroom after banging the fifth alarm clock that month into becoming junk that would be spending the next 1000 years in the dump waiting for the elements to break it down into molecules the earth worms could eat and not get sick with. “And what would happen if I was born as...someone else?” he slurred out of his mouth, wiping the last strands of hair off the crown of his head, making him look more ‘distinguished’ to Curb Your Enthusiasm fans, and older than his real age to most everyone else. “Or what if I was Larry David instead of Barry Davies?” he thought, contemplating the parallel universe theories once again. And thinking about what the fuck he did wrong in his last lifetime that made this one all about 100 units of struggle put out and 5% of results and maybe 1% of acknowledgement. “I’m not stupid,” he told himself in that voice inside his head which gave him a headache every time it escalated in volume or quiet intensity. “But I must be really dumb, because the smarter I seem to be, and the more intelligent I get, the less people understand me and...the less I seem to relate to them,” he noted from the part of his brain that was still sane. “But, I am a masochist, who refuses to join the world, even when I’m invited into it,” he was forced to acknowledge as he gazed down on his left wrist, which he had pounded into a collage of black, blue and red bumpy flesh courtesy of his right fist pounding into it during his most recent set of ‘exploratory dreams’ (aka, nightmares).

The mirror then captured his glance. The reflection on the other side had a mind of its own, affording him a view of the teeth marks on his left wrist and the red tinged gums inside his half opened yapper. “At least the blood between my teeth is my own, this time anyway,” he said, this time with a voice that could be heard by real ears in the land of the living in the present rather than the ethereal beings from his past. That past in the realm of the ‘beyond’ which he wore like a heavy coat protecting him from heat and cold of the ‘real world’ which he battled daily, and hourly, even when it wanted to be kind to him.

Barry peered behind his eyes into his past, and present, planning the future of this, yet another day, when waking up in an even stranger worm hole than previous mornings.

“Or maybe I’m a weak, stupid coward,” the discourse between mind and soul continued. “Assholes and manipulators get things done in a world that’s too cowardly and stupid to make changes it needs, and secretly wants, to,” he said to the reflection in the mirror which, this time, did mouth the same words back to him. “Assholes have to have the balls to follow through with your opinion, making it a crusade and manifesto,” Mirror Barry shot back. “And manipulators have to have brains to constantly recall what they sent out before so they can follow up on it later, so as to not be found out as a liar by people with bigger guns, more money or more popularity than they do,” ‘real’ Barry voiced after which one of the feline roommates in his small but functional mobile home leaped across his path, demanding and perhaps needing to be petted.

“But,” sort of ‘reality based’ Barry said to the purring white as virgin snow feline, whose coral blue eyes seemed to be wiser and stronger than his. “It’s easier and less energy draining to be honorable, honest and hard working,” he found himself saying to the cat with human words that his soul tried to translate into feline-eze with his fingers, which instinctively rested upon and stoked the soft skin between his four legged ‘mastress’s’ shoulder blades. “But is being honorable and hard working the lazy and ‘safe’ mench’s choice of life options, Tripod?” he asked the feline, who managed to run on her three legs faster than Barry could sprint on two good ones. Even in his youth when he was being chased by ex-girlfriends who, from a distance, looked fat as well as pregnant, were determined to throw the blame on him for both conditions. “And maybe because I’m lazy, safe and too cowardly to be an arrogant smart ass, that’s why I accept more punches than I give out in a world that really is about punching and not petting?”

The cat meowed, somehow telling Barry to continue. “But, for today, I have to be an asshole, and manipulator,” he explained to the cat, and tried to rationalize a new strategy to himself. “Because if this experiment that I’m about to take on works, you and me will be born into a better world than we have to endure, or transform now.” He reached down into his pocket to see the latest e mail and promo pitch from a woman he met at the library yesterday who was three times younger than he was, five times smarter, and certainly ten fold more attractive to look at. But the paper with her promise, pitch and Passionate mission was not in his pocket.

“Are you looking for this?” Barry heard in an angry and arrogant voice from a two legged roommate who the law, the IRS and the wedding pictures posted around the house said was his wife. “You dropped this on the floor last night, along with wrappers from three candy bars you didn’t clean up after you fell asleep on the couch, fucking again!” Olivia Bernstein-Davies, clad in a nightgown which hid her sagging breasts, sporting a mop of thinning brown hair over her crows’ feet laden eyes with all too visible white roots yapped through series of snarly yawns. She presented Barry with a fistful of chocolate-coated wrappers within which was a photo of a young women who Olivia resembled in past years, and previous eras. “Time machine Doctor Tanya?” she said regarding the photo of the millennial with a thick long auburn mane, whose optimistic smile was genuinely kind, and whose eyes said ‘intensely committed’ to something. Intensely dedicated to achieving the dream of transforming the world through the ‘love is all you really need’ mandate that Barry and, for a good ten years after their marriage,

Olivia believed in as well. “Who is this idiot bimbo two digit IQ and perfectly shaped C cup breasted idealist?”

“The hope for the future, maybe,” Barry replied. “Someone with three Ph.D.s she earned by doing two real theses from accredited schools that were NOT done on line, and two doctorates in subjects of her own in her own self-funded university. Her specialty being--”

“---‘The physics, pathology and possibilities of time, and the ability to travel back but not backwards in it’?” Olivia read on the headline of the newspaper article for the free library talk she had given the night before. With a tongue that sliced and diced every string of wisdom, kindness and technical expertise that the under-aged, super-hot looking, super-geek with degrees in Psychology, Poetry, Physiology, Physics and Metaphysics which (to Barry’s perception anyway) Tanya had integrated into her life and intense Purpose to live it. “A like, ya know, totally cool trip you and her will go on under the sheets,” Olivia continued in a mocking tone. “To, like, ya know, fucking emerge in another dimension in your demented head, that---”

“---Is better than this one!” Barry blasted out from a part of himself that had been slumbering and self-smothered for a long time. “And...perception can become reality!”

Olivia folded her arms, arched her back, and let Barry have it with both barrels, aiming at the most valued and, perhaps because or despite of such, vulnerable part of his soul. “Like that yahoo Injun theory about the Huyou Enita that what you change in the dream world affects the one we ALL have to deal with here in the real world!!!?”

“It’s the Yaqui Indians and the Huya Anya,” Barry barked back after taking in a deep ‘soothing’ breath regarding the reference in Revolutionary Blues. It was his favorite Western and book, which he had to buy four times as each version he bought and brought home was ‘mysteriously’ pissed on by the cat after Olivia discovered it. “And though it might be true, Professor Doctor Tanya, as she likes and deserves to be called, is trying an experiment.”

“In the physics of time, or the psychology of dreamers who will both wind up in the Nuthouse if you follow through with this too much? OR is about sexual fantasy rather than metaphysical fucking inquiry?” Olivia rebutted with an upturned chin, rolling eyebrows and a vicious tone made more intense by its low volume.

Barry absorbed the insult, holding back his clenched fist. Unable to attack with his tongue as Olivia (who was a nurturing beauty who became an ugly bitch too late for Barry to divorce her)... was maybe right.

“Look,” Olivia continued, with an understanding tone, laying her open, soft palm upon Barry’s rock hard yet shaking like mud-slide shoulder. “Your father lived more less happily in the past when they got Altimier’s disease, but my mother’s journey back to her childhood when she hit the big seven O was hell on her and, as you recall, us.”

“And especially you,” Barry replied with a tender heart, as Olivia’s stare dropped to the floor, and tears fell down the side of her face. “It was a blessing that she ran into that car, and had that accident that killed her.”

“And a source of shame that I, or you, didn’t hire a driver to do it sooner than that,” Olivia said as her body went limp and she let her ass fall down onto the closed toilet lid.

Such confirmed Barry’s suspicions, and secret regrets. But as for what to do now? In the present. And to prevent the same kind of dementia enriched future that was, according to the tests done by the most reliable labs, awaiting both Barry and Olivia as they both were approaching 70 within the next year.

Gathering all the courage in his curmudgeon soul, Barry edged his way towards Olivia, opened his arms, and invited her to become embraced in a hug. She turned her back on him, and averted her eyes, denying him, or the mirror, the opportunity to look into them. “Just go, do what you want and have to do. At least it will make for an interesting book. That you can sell, in REAL numbers this time. As long as you write it honestly and effectively enough, as the asshole and manipulator that you really are. And I suppose have to be.”

With that, Olivia pulled her overweight under-muscled body up from the toilet seat, marched into the master bedroom and shut the door behind her, locking it just as Barry tried to gain entry. Nothing new with regard to being excluded from the room Barry regretted going into most night, but something new made its presence known. A ghost in the room, and a heavy sensation in his gut which said that the key to any kind of future for himself, Olivia and the world involved doing a Sherman and Mister Peabody going back in time. With an alluring, exciting and somehow ancient young woman who, in this lifetime anyway, had never heard of nor seen the cartoon about the wise Professor canine and his pet boy Sherman. On a day that felt like past, present and future, all at the same time. But this time with the participants on stage calling the shots instead of obeying the elusive and perhaps sadistic (or maybe, in His or Her own way, benevolent) writer who scripted the show.

There were many things wrong with the world that wacked Barry into his eyes and found their way into his head now that there was no hair on top of it to keep it out. They came yet again to consciousness in big and little ways as he shuffled into the bathroom to take his second shit of the morning. Once there, he noted that his detritus did stink. And every time he tried to flush it down, it resurfaced three times, bringing up even more ass-wipe that chose to stay at home rather than go to ‘the great beyond’ seen by no man and noted by only the house inspector when it comes time for resale. And, today anyway, Tripod the feline was living down to her handicap, caused by a veterinary surgeon who thought he was an innovative healer when he had used defective ‘made somewhere he didn’t identify’ pins, plates and plastic prostheses to heal a lump on a leg that that turned out to be cancerous, or perhaps just an infection that got in too deep. She nearly fall into the porcelain abyss when Barry banged the plunger on the sink countertop in a ‘victory’

rant. Such caused the radio that never worked to crash onto her ass and somehow turn on.

Barry washed the brown gunk off Tripod's face, doing his best to not get bit, or worse, to wake Olivia up so she would take a bite out of his ass. He listened to the news of the day. Another war in Africa, this time between countries he did know and maybe could find on a map.. Floods in the East, drought in the West, cold snaps in the South freezing roads, water pipes and the electrical grids. And a rash of race riots in the seemingly tolerant intelligent, college 'educated' Northern states. And...not to be neglected on a slow news day... another maybe COVID variant that the 'empathetically concerned' broadcaster with the mid Atlantic trained and conditioned at Vassar, Yale and McGill accent, and no doubt her boss, the government and the sponsors, wanted everyone to believe was new Black Plague before any scientist could see it under a microscope. And...more tragically, and dangerously, Keeping Up With the Kardashians was renewed for yet another season, as well as green lighted for two feature length movies. "And we call ourselves the superior species," Barry related to Tripod as a profound apology for his brethren and 'sistren'.

"So fucking do something about it!" the cat blasted back with a snarl, biting his hand, then grabbing hold of a photo-business card from Tanya with her phone number and address on it, that fell out of Barry's pocket before Olivia found it. Tripod laid it at Barry's feet with a 'help your species and mine, while you're still on top' determined look in her ever open, caring and, if you looked at them long enough, intelligent eyes.

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CHAPTER 2

It wasn't that Tanya was a lazy millennial who got up with the rest of the under thirty herd at the crack of noon. The fact was that she was nocturnal, morning starting at 10:30 AM on 'early' days when she had appointments. "Had a rough time in the Huya Aniya last night," she explained to Barry when he arrived at her door at 11 AM. "And an intense creative session with theoretical physics and metaphysical historical expansions in this illusory dimension we call reality between midnight and 5 AM before that," she said by way of explanation through a yawn as she waved Barry in from the cold into a labyrinth of goat paths on the floor delineated by stacks of books, manuscripts and 'mini-machines' build with surplus asset parts bearing labels ranging from Columbia University to Acme Junk Yard. "I usually don't oversleep like this," she explained. "But after meeting with you yesterday afternoon at the library, I got all of these new ideas that had to be put into print, prose and eh..prototypes for more effective Promethian...eh... explorations."

"Know what you mean," Barry replied to one of the only humans under thirty left on the planet who didn't insert 'like', 'ya know', totally', 'cool' or 'fuck' into every sentence. He also appreciated the work she had put in to keep the 'p's' in her descriptors of what she had done with both sides of the brain. He empathized with her inability to find a p word for 'explorations, yet admired her poetic use of it.

"Midnight to 3 AM is also my best time to create new ideas or discover truths I've buried under my own bullshit and everyone else's detritus," Barry offered. "By midnight, the 'I'm my own boss' sheeple who got their dose of procedural pabulum shows about docs, lawyers, cops and sitcom clowns, their ration of fairy tales and horror stories from the news, and the 'it's all right we'll all laugh about it' from the late night talk show hosts who should do more listening than talking are asleep. Clears up the gridlock and riffraff of transmissible thoughts through the ethers so we can communicate better with..." Barry's attempt to show that despite his age he was just as quick with the tongue and fast with the ideas as Tanya was halted by looking at and, so he hoped anyway, into Tanya's soul.

"You want to define me with words, or impress me with a dramato-comedic phrase that sums up the life, and its purpose, in 5 words?" she replied with an Ancient and kind smile. "Maybe in a past lifetime you were the student and I was the teacher?" She suggested, scratching the chiseled male chin on her otherwise very feminine face. "We do switch roles like that, so I've read. And...maybe you've experienced?" Doctor Tanya continued, as a patient on Barry's couch this time.

Patient and doctor, apprentice and mentor, gazed into each other's faces, and souls, switching roles with each thought, or so Barry felt. And confirmed with the thoughts inside his own self observing and, hopefully not self-absorbed, mind. As a writer, speaker and sometimes actor who made not a unappreciable amount of his money making people laugh, or perhaps chuckle, and who obtained his purpose as someone who wanted to make people think, such was part of the madness. As was, given his age, the necessity

to lead rather than follow. To, if he could, not have the twenty-something Tanya make the same mistakes he did in his 70 year tour of mostly duty the planet. The inner voices and suggestions inside his brain (which was addicted to constant motion) brought up something that emanated from the gut and worked its way to the mouth, particularly when he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror, looking not unlike the bust of the Greek Philosopher next to it.

“Ya know, Socrates said, or should have said, that no grass grows on busy streets,” Barry said, rolling his hand over the completely hairless top of his head with a slow, professorial rhythm designed to keep the listener attentive, but in reality, to allow an old fart with fast brains and a slower moving mouth to formulate the words just right without stuttering. “And that old fart philosopher Greek who weren’t no geek also that, if you have a good wife, you’ll have an happy life,” he recalled, and gave voice to, feeling himself to perhaps have been Socrates, or maybe the unknowingly wise Jewish clerk at Olympia Delphi Deli who sold him cheese, olives and that new invention way ahead of his time (the bagel) three times a week. “And that is you have a bad wife...”

“--- you’ll become a philosopher,” Tanya interjected, with a quicker pace than Barry of course. As if she was, or at the very least had been, Aspasia herself. The brilliant, too wise for her own good female philosopher-courtesan who inspired, taught and loved Socrates in his younger days. The nearly completely now forgotten female philosopher who, when Pericles the Mayor of Athens during its golden age took her on as a mistress, was the brains behind so many legends. At a ‘golden time’ where women were denied the vote as well as to take credit for any idea they planted into the ideas of their ‘man’. Men who of course were allowed and somehow required to have mistresses, while the women had to dance, sing and smile to the tune of Patsy Kleiniokos’ ‘Stand by your Man’ under the statue of the very male god Zeus.

Under normal circumstance, Barry would feel insulted, depressed and defeated by being outtalked by a millennial with a fast moving tongue and quicker wit. He feared that he was being pushed down a cyber worm hole at an even faster rate to a comfortable “Alzheimer’s Are Us...if we can remember who we are today’ Nursing home. But this time he welcomed being ‘out gunned’ in the competitive showdowns that always emerges, somehow, between artists or scientists who have the mixed curse and blessing of working with the same canvas.

The possibilities lingered in Barry’s mind as to what to do. Indeed, he had no idea why he came here instead of going to work at the still-print newspaper he founded. A multi-purpose suburban journal that was saved from bankruptcy and the fate of being more used as asswipe than reading material by a larger corporation which now he and his staff were working for rather than with. He considered calling in sick on that day, just before press release, knowing that lesser minds would feed more garbage to no minds through truthful looking newsprint. Indeed there was an opportunity here with Time Traveller Tanya to change the present, and ensure a better future. Even if it was only a journey between his ears, which, of late both hurt and was less able to hear the noise of the real world. An ever increasing deafness which, Barry speculated, was something Beethoven

faked so he would not have to listen to two digit IQ princes who claimed to be smarter than any of their peasants, know it all musicians who produced procedural noise they called music, money grubbing publicists who insisted on giving the public what it wanted rather than needed or...the applause of the audience, even when they 'got' what Maestro Ludwig was trying to say with music what could not be related with words. Music of the now gone master went through Barry's head, allowing him to sort of see but definitely, what seemed to be the ghost of Old Ludwig slither through the window. Or maybe it was something implanted into the incense from the candles around Tanya's all purpose Living room (big L). Candles which, when she turned on a five symmetrically placed machines, looked like either 1960 carburetors or 2260 Teslian ET communicating devices, depending on how you looked at them through fuzzy eyes. They kept burning without any wax coming down their stem. And shot out what seemed like fire beams up to but not into the ceiling in a rhythmic pattern that...yes, was in synch with Beethoven's fifth symphony playing inside of Barry's head. With...kazoos, farts and belches instead of violas, trumpets and tympani drums. "Okay," Barry said to the White Rabbit he could feel but not see hopping around him like the energizer bunny. "I'm game," he replied with commitment fostered by the reckless and psychologically indefinable quality that overcomes us when we least expect it...courage.

"And so am I, ready that is!" Tanya said with...wonderment, and blissful confidence.

And with that, Barry sat in one of the chairs in an indoor mini-helicopter with a small propeller on its dome roof. He was instructed to insert two earbuds into his ears, and to strap a flesh toned mini-microphone under his chin. As instructed, and inspired to do so, he closed his eyes and opened his heart. Or was it his mind? or was it his soul? Somehow they were all the same thing now.

CHAPTER 3

Barry woke up in a clearing in a mulch-smelling forest, on a not too cold yet not too hot day. Tanya was by his side, the transporter having created that clearing by crashing into a pine tree, which embraced the time-copter with hot, smoldering branches. He looked at the chair under his aching and saddle-sore ass, seeing then feeling it to become a rock, as was the case for Tanya's cushioned seat as well, both seats having been penetrated by jutting boulders. The helicopter roof above him opened up, revealing to Barry's tired eyes an open blue sky. The opening 'curtain' was accompanied by an orchestral overture of strange animal sounds highlighted by an avian solist above him, who cackled in avian voice that felt somehow human. Barry, who had phobias about any animal that couldn't be sold in a pet store or well harnessed by an experienced Hanson Cab driver in Central Park, looked up and beheld a falcon leaning down from a precarious position on a still somehow connected branch. "Hey, she was driving this thing, not me!" he said to the bird while pointing to Tanya, hearing his words being converted to some kind of Avian tone in his hidden earbuds.

"Sure she was driving this thig," the bird replied with his own squeak in a sarcastic tone which was translated into New Yawk English through Barry's ear buds. The strange looking hawk lifted his ass up in the air and laid a wade of avian manure directly onto Barry's head. The brownish white gop ran down his forehead and, somehow on its own, onto his nose, entering his wide open nostrils to deliver an olfactory expression of the bird's dis-satisfaction.

"Sorry," Tanya related to the avian in a squawk through the mini-translator mic under her scarf. "There are still a few bugs about this system we have to work out, then we'll get it right," Barry heard though the translating earbuds.

"Not with him working with you, you won't," the bird volleyed back. He swooped down as hands as he covered his head in terror. The avian sprayed down a torrent of what felt and smelled like urine on Barry's head, then landed on a branch two feet above the follicle challenged travelers' reach. Barry's fear of birds turned into rage, his right hand clenched in a fist after several failed attempts to grab the bird by hits feet. Such, landed the two legged 'hunter' from the 21st century into the mud in front of him. Mud which revealed footprints as big as any dinosaur whose bones Barry did his cavemench comedy routine for when he was a bored, lonely and (he thought anyway) solitary security guard at the Museum of Natural History during the third slump in his multi-careered life. "Hey, you aren't the boss of me!" he yelled back to the bird, who seemed to be chirp laughing at him taking comfortable rent-free possession of another branch two apartment stories above him. "Just because you can fly. We can fly! Or in the future we can anyway. Higher and faster than you can! Sitting comfortably in cushioned seats while eating duck, chicken and hawk wings! What do you say to that!!!"

The bird cocked his head, looked inquisitively at Barry, then flew onto Tanya's lap. After which he turned to the right, nodding his head. He then squawked something that Barry's human ears didn't understand of course, and which his translator ear plugs

registered as static.

“What did the messenger spirit guide Avatar shit distributor cookoo maybe because of primordial Cocoa Puffs bird say?” Barry demanded of Tanya.

Tanya replied with a warm, uncomplicated smile, happy about something. And worried about something else. The bird pecked her on the lips, bowed to her, then flew off in the direction of his previous head nod.

“I know, it loses something in translation,” Barry replied, noting that the time travel capsule had disappeared into the bush. Or, maybe, hopefully anyway, Tanya had camouflaged is so well that no one from this prehistoric or any other time could find it. “Big Bird want crazy human to follow him this way,” he said pulling himself off the ground, walking in the direction of the bird with a rhythmic limp towards a valley. One that seemed greener, softer and, according to what Barry could hear with his human ears, inhabited by young and probably attractive women singing rather than four legged creatures growling.

“No,” Tanya replied, abruptly, as she whipped off her 21st century leggings and oversized sweater, under which was a fringe leather ‘Calvin Cavewoman’ dress which would make any cave men want to make her the queen of his tribe. “The bird said that we’re supposed to go this way,” she continued, pointing in the opposite direction, to rocky hills capped with snow on top, roaring of beasts whose voices weren’t translated into English echoing from them. “And that face...hmm,” Tanya looked at Barry’s mud, shit and urine adorned face, which he then gazed at in a pool of reflective water. The reflection scared him into believing in spirits, ghosts or even God. “That Holy Man face looks like it goes better with another outfit...Like..” Tanya noted.

She reached into the pits of the helicopter, pulling out a bag from it, throwing it at Barry. Upon opening it, Barry found it to be smelly, more rips than intact fur and far less fashionable than Tanya’s outfit. “You priests, especially you NATURALLY bald ones, are well travelled, and clothe yourselves in the knowledge that everyone needs, and of course wants, the blessings of the gods, which are given by shaMEN and priest. Just try it on, please. For me?”

Yeah, it was one of those ‘do this for me’ requests from a woman who Barry dreamed about being with since the time he discovered that the penis was something other than a conduit for urine. Upon trying on the tattered ‘priest-shamen’ robes made of, so he hoped anyway, animals without diseases. Or maybe faux leather, rather than the hides from other men Tanya had wooed into her ‘inter-dimensional experiments’ after an ‘accidental’ meeting in the library. But, Barry felt like colorful as a priest who talked to the gods but who got his duds at the third hand Prehistoric Value Village outlet. “Hey, maybe I should have tried this outfit on back or rather forward in my own time? Make people believe what I want them to believe,” he mused.

“Which only works if you believe it yourself,” Tanya offered.

“Right, and we have to make whoever you say we have to believe in...what are we supposed to be selling him anyway?”

“It a ‘her’!” Tanya growled back. “And it’s belief in herself!!!”

Tanya led the way up the hill towards the ‘scary’ mountains, walking in a curves rather than circles, as if going through a mine field. Accompanying the ‘march dance’ was the audience was another atonal symphony of animals sound, which got between louder, and fiercer. The animal footprints in the mud as it became caked with snow got bigger and bigger. “By the way, these animals smell fear. Which, for the moment, we can cover up, with this.” Tanya said two hills closer to the mountains, as she threw Barry a can from her travel sack.

“Beans?” he noted, lifting up the half opened, half filled can and smelling its contents.

“Beans beans, good for your heart, the more you eat the more you...” she sang, appending it with a fart. The smell of her human made gas, which the oil companies could not rich off (not yet anyway) made Barry smirk with delight. As he gobbled up the beans and left behind in his wake, what smelled to be brown fog, and felt like a wall pushing upward to becoming....something bigger and better than himself. “Hey,” he thought to himself as he felt his body become ten pounds lighter and his ass twenty fold wetter. “Everyone’s gotta have a deluded obsession hobby that will put you in the loony bin if you explain it to any shrink. Or sleeping on the couch for the rest of your marriage, which isn’t so bad if you’ve outgrown having sex with older women who think they’re still young, or young women who will make you old and lonely before your time.”

Barry recalled his formative years as a truant teenager then a young man hoping to become a successful old one up in the Big Crab Apple. But walking the earth was a lot harder than pounding the pavement in Manhattan looking for breaks from his boring life in the burbs. Or professional opportunities that would allow him to live in the city that never sleeps rather than merely taking the train or tunnel into it during rush hour.

After the third layer of both real and imagined blisters on his feet courtesy of a trail that was more rocks than dirt, Tanya finally motioned her one bull no bullshit cattle drive to a halt. The ‘I know exactly where I’m going well before I get there’ millennial genius seemed to be getting lost. She calmly examined, the tried to adjust the pocket sized tracking device strapped around her neck. If indeed it was a compass, it decided that North was anywhere the needled wanted to point on its own terms. After trying several times to bang it into compliance, or efficiency, Tanya let of go, the decided to repeat poetry, using her eyes and inner gut to guide her steps forward, upward on onward.

“Onward, onward rode the six hundred,” she kept repeating after exhausting herself. After which she sang the first, second and third chapter of what SHE said was Homer’s Odyssey. Then she reverted back to the old standard “Onward, onward rode the six

hundred,” she continued, looking angrily at the the compass whose needle still indicated where North was on its own terms.

“Onward into the valley of death...for king, country and courtesans waiting with open arms and legs for whoever came back alive, victorious, or even better, rich?” Barry advanced as a complaint, and, if he delivered it from the right place Inside, a joke.

Tanya chuckled. Such was an accomplishment for the mission, and Barry’s life agenda as well, since young, smart, honest women were always his most favorite audience, and the hardest to make laugh at his jokes.

“Thiers is not to ask why, or call in their union rep, but theirs to do or...” Barry continued as he tripped on a rock which thankfully halted his mouth from saying ‘die’, or some colorful metaphor of such that would dissuade the fear of it. He noticed something on the path other than sharp rocks begging to find a home into the soles of your feet, dried dung from ‘all creatures big and small’, bones of dead mammals, and footprints of bigger mammals who probably got their take out animal or human meat and fucked off back into the woods. “These are....wagon wheel tracks!” Barry exclaimed.

“Yes, they are!” Tanya exclaimed like a struggling filmmaker actress castaway on ‘Lost’ who discovered that the plane had crashed into the ‘feral gardened’ back yard of a private island owned by Bill Gates’ richer and more generous brother. With its proprietor leaving an invitation to a party just over the hill where she had been hand-picked to star in a movie without having to kiss the ass of any producer or kick ass among her ‘colleagues’ to see who can get into the mentorship program at the ‘Caring, Sharing and We’re All in this Together’ cut-throat Sundance film ‘festival’. “Fresh wagon wheel, which look like they are connected to a wagon! A wagon containing....”

“The first all you can eat barbeque saber tooth tiger take out mobile restaurant?” Barry mused, noting a smoke billowing up from just over a small ridge to the East, according to the compass and the sun this time.

“Not yet!” Tanya blasted out, terror in her voice. “It’s too early for...” the rest of the words were held hostage somewhere inside her wide open jaw.

“...It’s too early for what?” Barry asked. “Lunch?”

“Too early for Uma to be burning...” Tanya scurried up the slope, stopping on the top.

“Burning what? Sabre tooth tiger rare is good, but medium rare is better. And we can both use...” Barry offered as he scurried up the slope.

“Why are you burning that wagon!” Tanya blasted out as she frantically ran towards the woman, this time the ground making her painfully struggle for each step forward.

“Because no one wants what’s in it!” replied a woman who, by her voice and long, straggly grey hair, was past the age of having babies and way past the desire to fall in love with a man who wanted to be a father. “Even though they need what I got,” she said as she was about to set fire to a wagon filled with wares that belonged to some century well in advance of whatever this one was. Paintings on canvases of wood and stone. Some of which showed the outer magnificence of the human and animal body so expressively that the images jumped off the page causing even Barry’s eyes, which saw the Mona Lisa as just another long haired babe who was hired to smile by a rich painter, to pop out of their sockets with wonderment. And others which detailed the circulatory and nervous systems which had not been delineated until the 17th century in Europe. And acupuncture meridian systems which not only showed the system of chi channels on the outside of the human body, but ones that went inside as well. And what looked like a Tesla coil made of a mixture of metal and wood. “You offer drowning people a lifeboat and all they want is for you to sell them more water, so...” the burnt out cynic said regarding the wares which were thousands of year ahead of her time on which lay a logo of a stick figure of woman with big breasts an arched back, proudly holding a spear. She picked up a torch, about to torch the whole wagon. “And even this!” she said, pointing to the left front wheel on the wagon. “Makes for easier movement of anything but...my people, or those who used to be my people, would rather schlep shit on their back or drag it on the ground. And when I told them about the help I got from up there to build these things and create images that will make them look at themselves and everyone else in a deeper way...”

“They wanted to burn you as a witch, Uma?” Tanya said, finally catching her breath and sense of calm, .

“Which you, as maybe another wielder of magic which is the result of hard work and thinking should know about,” Uma said, to Barry. “And if I tell them that what and who was up there in the sky who flew down to my hut when my husband. A drop in visitor from the stars who was more human than any of us were...Or I was anyway, until I got this implant in my head,” she continued, pushing her hair back, pointing to a small scar in her left temple.

“They’ll send you off to the funny farm where life is ‘beautiful’ all the time,” Barry sung back, connecting to the soul of this brilliant mind housed by a woman who, if you looked at her in the right way, was sort of hot looking, in an Emmy Lou Harris sort of way.

“Huh?” she uttered, genuinely confused.

“Music,” Barry boasted by way of explanation. “You sort of modulate the voice, in a way that works maybe not as accurate at auto-tune, but is more real, and...”

Before Barry could show off his unrecognized talent as one of those many singers who in 1969 erroneously thought that the Music Revolution was open for everybody, Tanya sang something in a language Barry didn’t recognize. With a strange melody that you could both think to and dance to. He joined in, at her invitation, improving the words in a

tongue he invented note by note, which emerged into....music.

Uma joined in, with a device that looked amazingly like a flute which emerged, according to the best of Barry's knowledge of ancient instruments, somewhere after the fall of the Roman Empire and before the emergence of the Italian city states that gave birth to Vivaldi, Verdi and Serge Leone, who redefined Westerns with the score to the Good, Bad and the Ugly. The first few notes from the flute sent down to Uma by the ETs who would pass themselves off as Greek gods in a few thousand years sounded....sincere. And on key, sort of working with the trio that emerged between Tanya, Barry and the third musical brain they gave birth to. But somehow, the rest instead of Uma's 'music' didn't sooth the troubled soul of the savage beast, or breast, they irritated both Barry's sensibilities and even Tanya's eclectic tastes. Coyotes in the woods voiced their anger like assaulted wolves. Crows dining on fresh meat of undetermined origin fled the dinner table, flying off as far as they could. Deer fled through the woods as if a forest fire had sent warning laser beams into their ears, eyes and asses.

But the band played on, till the 'song' finally, and mercifully, came to an end.

"Great musical instrument, and great music we just made, right?" Uma declared, overcome with pride and more self confidence.

"Yeah, right, it was," Barry replied, doing his best to fake a smile.

"And I have another instrument here, that..." Uma continued, reaching for another tool she could turn into a torture device for anyone with intact eardrums.

"There is something we do have to ask you," Tanya interjected, gently placing her palm on Uma's forearm. "Why did you stop valuing what you invented, discovered and created in this wagon?"

"As the first Tesla, a Nichole Tesla?" Barry added. "Who, if you want to sit on my lap in the spaceship that got me here, could become in MY worm hole and time warp, a..."

Before Barry's offer to bring Uma back to his time as a second wife, fuck buddy or friend to lament about women he didn't want to take to any bed came out of his mouth, he felt Tanya's heel crushing his toes, and knee causing severe pain in his family jewels.

"So, who was it?" Tanya asked Uma, as her face turned downward. "Who told you that your accomplishments were useless? That you were talentless? That you and what you did was never cool, and never would be?"

Uma took in a deep breath. "The man who came down from the sky, I think his name was Promethius, said I was his next first genius. Who's supposed to live long, and alone, have no kids, but teach everyone else's kids who would have kids of their own," she said fondly. "Then into the village came this..."

“Critic? The next first critic?” Tanya said. “Who could entertain the other villagers better than you could educate or enlighten them?” she continued, after which she took in a deep breath, preparing to blast out fire on the next exhale. “Who was she?”

“It was a ‘he’,” Uma replied. “A funny man whose humor was...cruel. A man who....”

“....Did nothing, was nothing and wanted everyone except him to be nothing?” Barry offered, feeling something ‘smart’ and even ‘wise’ overtaking him. He recalled his own life, and frustrations with such bullies of the soul who were so good at keeping him down as they climbed up the ladder.

Uma nodded ‘yes’, her mind acknowledging that Barry was right, her soul not quite buying it.

“Someone who made you sing ‘I am garbage, I am shit, I should die?’” Barry added, singing the verse he had learned so well in the ‘you’re number one or number nothing’ environment that he, in the advanced ‘civilized’ time in the future had learned all too well. “Which you should turn into ‘HE is garbage, HE is shit, HE should die!’” he blasted out, turning his shame and despair into an attack. “Punch him back! Make HIM feel like shit! Make HIM want to kill himself, like you tried to,” Barry continued, noting the slit wrists on Uma’s arm. Forcing her to look at it. “Put that hand into a fist and hit him back!”

“Which she isn’t able to do,” Tanya interjected. “Because she has advanced intelligence which makes her unable to do anything but....be compassionate.”

“Even to assholes who make geniuses like Uma, who the world needs, feel like idiots?” Barry shot back at his boss turned partner in time travel. He then turned to Uma. “Look, there are other villages.”

“And other critics,” Uma pointed out. “Who are a lot...smarter than me.”

“Cleverer but not smarter,” Tanya interjected. “Who...will need your help as a healer of the body, mind and spirit one day.”

“Which day? And in what place?” Uma inquired, demanding an answer from Barry, who referred the issue to Tanya with an outstretched administrative hand.

Tanya thought long and hard about what to say, and how to say it. Finally, after three deep and reflective breaths she replied, looking down into the ground. “Some things we aren’t supposed to know, and shouldn’t.” She then looked upward, her throat tightening with each word that came out of her mouth. “And even if we do know, we are not supposed to...We have to...Because...”

“Because what?” Uma demanded to know, folding her arms, her shoulders shaking.

“Because heaven watches and earth works,” Barry said, placing his priest like palms on Tanya’s shaking shoulders, causing them to stop trembling . “And if earth works intensely enough...you change the rules. Because...energy once created...”

“..is never destroyed, and is transformed into...something we are not supposed to know about,” Uma said, as if formulating that Ancient Truth with more ‘smarts’ than any equation Newton or Einstein could put into a mathematical formula. She then turned to her wagon, secured the goods on it and invited Barry to get on the primordial buckboard, which he did. She then put the harness hitched to the wagon around her chest. Then she turned to Uma.

“It is said that ‘wise man priest ride on wagon, while strong mortal women pull wagon’, right?” she asked Barry.

Before Barry could avail himself of that invitation to become a god, he was pulled back to morality by a rope around his leg, thrown by Tanya, pulling him down to the ground. Forced to become a noble gentleman rather than a worshipped deity who NO one second guessed, Barry put the harness over his shoulders, preparing to be the big strong ox. He then noted a lone horse in the woods looking at him from behind the trees. “Hey, time for you to do this. It’s easy for you. And fun! And good pay too!” Barry pulled an apple from a tree, offering it to the lone steed.

The horse seemed to be okay with it, walking in for his apple. “Not yet!” Tanya blasted out, as if from nowhere, taking the apple into her hand, eating it herself, and shooing the horse away. She then turned to Uma. “We gotta go,” she informed the ET-trained or inspired primordial master of, well, most trades anyway, after which she futilely tried to shoo the horse back into non-captivity.

“But this horse doesn’t have to go!” Barry said regarding the horse, sneaking it another apple. He then placed the horse into harness, amazed that he was not afraid of the beast. And that he knew exactly what to do. Or so he thought. Until he invited Uma to get on the backboard, then hopped on himself with as much sprite in his step as his bad knees could handle. “Women enjoy the riding, men do the driving,” he informed Uma, feeling himself empowered.

“And men who don’t want to get stuck here, or found out for who they really are, know where they have to go, and do what they have to do,” Tanya informed Barry.

Barry was overcome with common sense, reason or knowing that the cool winds coming down the hills in the afternoon would turn into a cold night gust that he was unable to handle, or the hug from Uma that felt like...lifetime commitment....and having to promise to love, honor and obey till death do us part. All of those agendas voted for Barry doing the walk rather than ride into the sunset, leaving the horse behind for Uma to make friends with. Well before Tanya thought it appropriate, or possible.

“So, we did good here, right?” Barry asked Tanya as they hiked back to the time travel capsule, which thankfully was still intact.

“We’ll see,” Tanya replied, noting with caution the offerings of food, furs, rocks, arrowheads and human skulls left in front of the camouflage covering she had made for it.

CHAPTER 4

The next thing Barry remembered was waking up on his living room, alone. How and why Tanya drugged him into not seeing how he got home, and why, that was another question for perhaps another dimension. But in the dimension, or worm hole, that he had woken up into, it was mostly the same. Around his aching shoulders hung his oversized faded 1996 Cornell University sweatshirt with athletic letters for sporting events more watched than done, that he had that he picked up from a second hand store in the most illiterate section of Yonkers. His legs were kept warm by the bell bottomed jeans he wore at Woodstock, patched together for the fifth time last week. His feet had socks on them which didn't cover any of the toes, as draping them in cloth always made him claustrophobic.

But over his forehead was...as he felt it. Hair! A full, four inch long mane which didn't come off when he pulled on it. Upon stumbling to the can to release the urine about to come out of his bladder and residual manure from the back door, he looked at himself in the mirror, not needing his glasses this time to make out any of the visual details. Indeed, he was, aside from the wrinkles in his face, a dropping chin, white stubble on his cheek, and crow's feet under his eyelids the spiting image of himself as a generously follicled, more enthusiastic about life now than talented musician and WANTING to have sex with any woman around 19 year old.

A feline meowed 'yes' to his question of if it was real. Upon stroking Tripod, the cat didn't live up to her name, as she had a fourth leg which had been apparently surgically repaired. As for the signature on the beautifully done work, the tattoo and prosthetic plate left by the surgeon was of a stick woman with big breasts holding a spear. "Doc Uma, Tripod? Did she do this? Or make possible the technology to do it?" Barry asked the cat, which recognized neither the name of the veterinarian nor being addressed by 'Tripod'.

But in the meantime, Barry had to relieve himself. After sitting on the toilet seat, and putting wiping himself with some Charman, he went to flush his offering to the porcelain gods down to wherever such treasures went. But there was no lever to flush it down. Instead, there was what seemed to be a 21st century spear hanging beside the receptacle whose top lighted up and emitted a lazer beam when his hand moved towards it. A beam which, as it was aimed into the toilet, disintegrated the clog of asswipe and what it had wiped into a puff of smoke, leaving behind clear, clean water. Courtesy of a devise which bore, yes, Uma's 'I am warrior woman' signature.

"What are you doing in there?" Barry then heard from the bedroom. "I have to get in there, now!" the woman continued, in his wife's voice. One which seemed to be younger, kinder and a carrier of gentle intelligence rather than hard edged 'womanly' reason. "Can I get in there please?" once voluntarily rather than obligatorily cared for wife Olivia continued.

"Of course," Barry said, leaving the 'head'. Repeating 'of course' in as many languages

as he could recall, Russian, German, French and a dialect of Swahili he picked up from a Basque guide during a business trip to Africa. He opened the door to the bedroom, anticipating the beauty who he fell in love with to emerge.

“I can open the door for myself!” Olivia admonished like a 19th century schoolmarm in Montana, or a ‘God’s gonna get you if I don’t’ 20th century Nun at a Catholic school. From a body that was still the one Barry had seen yesterday, and so many previous yesterdays. “And you trying to be a linguist is annoying not charming. This is America, where we all speak ENGLISH and ONLY English, for heaven’s sake, gosh darn it,” her final said on the matter, as she pushed him aside, causing his still 70 year old body to hit the wall and fall to the ground. After which she proceeded to lecture him as to how to maintain the bathroom which his paychecks had paid for.

“Can’t have everything, I suppose,” Barry said to the four legged Tripod while stroking her atop her shoulder blades, in that special spot, then moving to her back, which when petted the right way gave her the usual orgasm between the ears. Then to her belly for the final bonding stroke, to which she turned around and the bit the hand that fed her. She then fucked off, growling at him from a high shelf in the hallway.

“So, what else has changed in this dimension after we had our talk with Uma?” Barry asked Tripod, after which the cat pushed a newspaper down onto the floor.

“If that’s another piece of your shit on the floor, YOU clean it up!” Olivia blasted from inside the bathroom.

Barry accommodated the request, picking up the newspaper and reading it. To himself this time, as he wanted to see how the world had changed because of his recent time travel, without Olivia’s or Tripod’s commentary on it.

It wasn’t what was in the news but what wasn’t. No wars reported. No big shoot outs. No floods, fires and fuming volcanoes. And no pandemics. Though between the lines, there was the presence of something a lot more contagious than COVID.

“‘Dull Out virus’,” Barry told himself as he read ‘hard hitting’ stories with smiling faces of the heads of ‘non offensively’ opposing ‘social clubs’ that used to be gangs ‘making even more heavenly harmonic peace’ after one of them accidentally scratched the bumper of another’s car when trying to get into a parking space. At a stadium where the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was performing yet another concert of ‘Up with People’ tunes like ‘Raindrops keep falling on my head’ at half-time at the Superbowl. Which now had new rules, that replaced the tackle in football with grabbing the flag inserted into the belt of the ball carrier. Requiring that the tackler say excuse me before grabbing the flag and profoundly apologize to the tackled after each ‘take down’. And where ALL of the participants in the game are declared Most Valuable Player, including anyone who cheered for them in the stands.

Upon turning the pages to the back of the...yes...New York Post, Barry’s eyed bulged out of his sockets when encountering a ‘big’ story’ (put into the back of course) about

one of the 'New York Biologically Oversized People' (formerly Giants) accidentally touching the ass of one of the Washington Indigenous Aboriginal First Nations (formerly Redskins) and asked for forgiveness, on his knees. And about the burning of secretly discovered tapes which 'jarred the sensibilities of pleasure and security seeking people' from 'criminals of the worst order' including Howard Stern, Frank Zappa and the most disruptive 'minion of evil' of them all, Ludwig von Beethoven. Along with books snuck in from 'an alternative dimension' which included the Complete works of Shakespeare, Plato's Republic and, yes, Fahrenheit 451. And approval of the newest proposals put into a public vote, which now banned laughter beyond a chuckle in any public spaces, forbidding any dancing that involved feet lifted off the ground. And newly passed laws that deemed, once again, chocolate, salt and garlic as top level addictive substances, requiring sellers and users to be sentenced to re-education holiday camps in Salt Lake City until they were deemed 'pure enough in body, mind and spirit to enter the Kingdom of the Heaven.' The boss there being a woman whose face was that of..."Uma? What the f..." Barry observed blasting out of a dropped jaw as he turned to the 'theology news' pages, noting that her face and 'warrior woman mit spear' image was imprinted with every religion's logos. Barry's jaw was punched before he could utter the f word which liberated so many people into connecting to their real feelings and say what was really on their minds.

Barry looked at the owner of the fist that slapped him. He had the face of a 50 year old virgin accountant at the Vatican and the body of a bear muscled up on steroids. Around his neck, a dog collar reading "'Bob, property of Mistress Olivia'. Said mistress pulled Bob's chain back before the Dog-Man connected to it could deliver a punch into Barry's family jewels.

"No, Bob," Olivia commanded the Dog Man. "We still need him as a sperm donor. To produce more daughters to rule the world, and sons to maintain it." As Olivia moved aside, Barry noted a family picture he hardly recognized. One that replaced the son and daughter who Olivia had so cleverly turned against their father in the 'normal' reality, training them as infants to greet Barry when he got home from a hard day's work to keep the mortgage paid with, 'you're late again, anti-Christ'. And more elegant four to five syllable terms of degradation of four to five syllables they learned from books bought for them with money that mysteriously disappeared from Barry's wallet, which of course Olivia said he had been spent on beer and babes at the bar. No...these new family in this new 'now reality' featured photos were even worse than the snarly, lost soul, cool to be cruel mugs of son John and daughter Jennifer. No less than 20 children had been spawned by Barry, according to the photos. The boys in the front row had big, wide 'fun to be dumb' eyes, and marks on their forehead resembling the 'Uma signature' of a woman with big breasts holding a large spear where their lobotomies were no doubt done. Behind them were the girls, with power stares of Amazons who proudly displaying as accessories the scrotums, penises and extracted brains from, perhaps, their brothers.

As for the wedding picture of Barry and Olivia, there were two armed guards behind him, Each held a gun to his head with Uma logos on their stocks. Barry recognized those faces in the 'happy wedding' photo. "Your father and older brother, Olivia," he noted.

“Who in this dimension use guns instead of lies saying that it was ME who got you pregnant. Which I didn’t!!!!”

Bob wacked Barry across the jaw again. “Mistress always right,” he growled out with a monotone lifeless drone that made Tarzan and Tonto look like Al Pacino doing Sheakespeare.

“And when traveling anywhere, Mistress rides in wagon and miserable menches mit penises like us pull the wagon?” Barry recalled. “And the muddier the road the better?”

“Yes!” Bob exclaimed, pointing his hand to a crucifix on the wall, with Uma’s likeness as the one who was to be resurrected.

“Lordess Uma died for YOUR sins, Barry,” Olivia added.. “Original sin started when Adam took the apple and offered it to Eve, you know,” she explained with so much conviction that Barry’s religiously atheistic brain almost slipped into believing not only that the Hebrew fairy tale about the Garden of Eden was real, but that the spin on it Olivia was relating was the truth.

Olivia went on to lecture Barry about the appropriate roles of men and women in this present dimension, worm hole or, as he feared the truest explanation, hard wired one universe only future. A future which was somehow created by Barry going back in time and doing something wrong. Or maybe preventing Tanya from doing something right.

“So, what are you gonna do about it?” Olivia concluded, her arms folded tightly into her chest. “How are you going to repent for blaspheming the Lordess?” she demanded to know. “And for making my morning miserable, horrible and painful,” she continued, tears of pain, sorrow and anguish streaming down her cheek. She averted Barry’s stare, nestling her face into Bob’s hefty, male chest. “How are you ever going to make this up to me?”

“By making more babies, this very morning” Bob assured Olivia. “Right?” he blasted into Barry’s face with a threatening stare that conveyed as much intensity as ‘God the Father’ on the murals of the Catholic and Eastern orthodox churches, or any mortal Godfather Barry encountered during those lost years when he acquired gambling debts.

“Yeah, sure,” Barry said, terrified of what kind of hate and pain would accompany love and carnal pleasure in the futuristic ‘universe’. “But before that I eh..have to eh...”

Barry was saved by a knock on the window. Behind it was Tanya, as she was before the trip backwards in time. She motioned for him to leave out the back door, outside of which there were plastic bags loaded with garbage, camouflaging the time machine.

“What are you looking at?” Bob demanded to know.

“Eh...garbage,” Barry replied.

“Garbage that you tossed out in the yard, that you made. Garbage that you are!” Olivia blasted out, her small head still buried inside Bob’s broad and hairy chest. Bob, who was a Man-dog who perhaps was gelded, or perhaps was pretending to be. “And what are you going to do about all of this garbage?” she pressed.

“I’ll eh...take out the garbage to the bin outside, so it doesn’t stink up the yard, ok?” Barry replied hoping that there were garbage bins in the front of the yard in a world he dared not see or become a fugitive in.

“And then?” Olivia said as Bob led her into the bedroom.

“Take a shower so I don’t stink so much, my dear.” Barry said through the open door into the hated even more ‘love making’ chamber as he gently worked his way to the back door.

“You mean don’t stink so much, Mistress,” Bob growled.

“Yeah, that too, Mistress,” Barry conceded. “Because...”

“We men are garbage, we are shit, we should die if we don’t please our mistress,” Bob asserted, then sang in an operatic voice.

Barry sang a few bars, trying not to believe the lyrics, then slithered out the door. With a big leap, he dove in between the bags of trash Tanya had brought in to cover the time travel capsule, and strapped himself into the seat. “Okay, where to now?”

“Fuck if I know,” Captain Tanya slurred out as she turned on the lights of the panel display. “But we’ll find out when we get there?” She shifted into a facade of being upbeat. “Right?” she uttered as her last thought on the matter, terror in her pale, shivering face.

“Yeah,” Barry assured her as the spaceship started to spin. Then move upward, just as an angry crowd could be heard under the floor, throwing rocks at it, shooting bullets and chucking in a laser bearing spear bearing Uma’s signature that crashed through a narrow slit in the still intact wall of the capsule. Which had it not been for Barry pushing Tanya down, laying his body in harms ways, would have gone through Tanya’s smart, caring and very necessary for time travel head. “Nature never gives you a problem without a solution,” he assured Tanya as she emerged up into his arms, gazing into his eyes like a ...lover seeking connection instead of a Comrade in search of global solutions to save the world from itself.

“And the solution is...us?” Tanya asked Barry. “Right?”

Barry never got the chance to answer that question. Something knocked, cajoled or drugged him into being unconscious. Afterwhich he awoke in...

CHAPTER 5

The time travel capsule took a soft landing this time, easing its way into something very familiar and assuring, as assessed by Barry's oversized nostrils from even when he was a kid in Brooklyn. "Garbage," he said with a wide smile as the door cracked open. "I can never trust a city where I can't smell the garbage. Which is.." he took another whiff of the stagnant fog masquerading as air, sensing old sausage, rotting potato salad, moldy cabbage and fecal material from several species including humans. The door to the capsule opened up a bit more, most slowly than Tanya could handle. Wincing at the odor, she tried to push the door with her feet, her eyes and nostrils averted. Being the 'man', Barry pushed it open with his arms, which were amazingly stronger than they had been in many years, perhaps because he has a reason to use them other than to take out loads of garbage made by someone else.

"So, an overloaded dumpster in an alley," Barry noted of the barely discernable graffiti done by artists who had varying degrees of literacy and paint likenesses of objects in the real world that made them seem more real. But from what Barry could see, there were no likenesses of Uma, nor 'paintings' that looked in any way similar to her own attempts to portray the essence or form of people, animals or landscapes seeable by the human eye. "Is this some prehistoric civilization which happened before Uma?" Barry inquired. "That is, if it is on the same planet we left and am trying to fix." Barry glanced at the portable monitoring device built onto techy Tanya's 21st century phone as she struggled to get find her coordinates. Feeling not lost but....fearful. But of what? Barry had to ask as he approached the readout which flashed out images and numbers at speeds even faster than any car commercial or MTV music video intended to arouse the senses but not inform the mind. "So, can you give me a date that we're in at least, Tan??"

"Time, as the physics of cause and effect, aren't linear, Bar," Tanya shot back. "Or....sometimes they are." With each attempt to make sense of the (for Barry anyway) indiscernible images flashing from her phone into her wide open eyes, Tanya became more sure of her path, current location and mission. "We have to go in there!" she said, pointing to a doorway. On it, in bright red paint that smelled like blood, letters in a German and Russian. The calendar of events was dated in Roman numerals, putting the time at somewhere in the 1920s, or maybe early thirties.

"You'll need these, so we can linguistically and visually blend in," Tanya said, handing Barry a new set of earbuds to translate languages. They were accompanied by a necklace bearing a Soviet hammer and cycle with a knob on it that she adjusted and a set of glasses that allowed him to clearly read and understand read the writing on the door.

"To the brave of soul, please enter. To everyone else, suffer in your ignorance." The usually unilingual Barry read.. "But this whole thing we're doing....," Barry noted, pensively. The thought flashed into his head that maybe Uma's prehistoric home was not so prehistoric. That perhaps she was a drifter in some kind of isolated Siberian Jurassic Park in the later half of the 20th century where radiation from one of those Soviet nuclear accidents that didn't happen caused human and animal life was replaced by

mutants who had the misfortune, or perhaps opportunity, to evolve into a healthy civilized work. Maybe accelerated by biologists who were secretly overfunded by reality show moguls who had more money than God, or even the illuminati heads CEOs of Amazon and Netflix.

Or...all of this was still a dream, or an amplified perception kicked off by mushrooms Barry had ate when Tanya offered her breakfast however number of mornings ago. Or, the thing Barry feared most...Alzheimer's disease invading his brain, bringing him back to some kind of 'forward' he always wanted to revisit when he was young. With a woman who was everything he wanted and, maybe, needed. But there was one thing that concerned Barry more than anything else, as the streetlights from both sides of the alley and one from atop the top fifth of the building to came on at the stroke of 8 pm by a clock in a distance, illuminating a broken mirror by his feet. After catching a glance of him in the reflection, Barry whipped off these glasses. "Yeah, I'm having second thoughts about this mission we're on," he said. "But for now, am not so pleased with these glasses you are making me wear."

"What!" Tanya barked back. "They are better fit for your vision than your own!"

"Yeah, they make me look old. And make my nose look bigger than my eyes," Barry said. "Make me look like a, ya know...."

"...Wimpy, cowardly, have to have everything just so OCD nerd and crumudgen who everyone is supposed to like?" Tanya delivered to, and into, Barry, leaning into him. "Who lives up here!" she continued, ramming her index finger into his forehead. to his "And who should think about what's going on or not going on here?" she blasted out in a harsh whisper, pushing her hand into his chest, on the left side.

"Maybe in this and the other universes I lived in, my heart's on the right side," Barry replied. "When I was in High School homeroom surrounded by Greasers and when I attended ball games in the middle of bleachers taken over by Redneck with loyalties to the world instead of just the red, white and black-eye-on-anyone-who-has -a-problem-with-us blue, I was forced to say the pledge of allegiance and swearing to God about it. I always thought that my real heart was on the right side of my chest, so any violation of promises to America or the American government and the Army and Military industrial complex it serves or God are invalid. Like when..."

Barry's attempts to divert the issue were halted by Tanya pulling her into her, laying onto him a kiss that sent a warm, electric jolt into his brain, spinal cord, chakra points which he didn't know existed and the tips of his tingling toes and finger. After which she knocked opened the door, said something in Russian and German to the a seven fingered behemoth in loose pinstriped trousers, infantryman's boots and a bullet hole ridden German military coat lacking any insignia. As Barry was readjusting his earbuds, he didn't understand any of the discussion between Tanya and the probably decorated veteran turned insignificant citizen. But whatever Tanya said to him brought a smile to the Bouncer's stern grey stubble face, which he was not ashamed to show, despite the

scar occupying most of its left side. As for what she told the bouncer regarding Larry, the guard thought about it, then looked at, and into, Barry. "My father, the buzz kill, who's politically and ideologically harmless," she assured him regarding her time traveling companion and in ways Barry didn't understand, responsibility.

The veteran of the kind of wars Barry was lucky enough to never have to embrace, or be conscripted into, once again gazed up and down at him from head to toe, twice, then finally nodded a half sincere 'yes', motioning for him to come in. Laughter emanated from down the hallway. The jokes delivered on stage that were too muffled for Barry to discern, perhaps because of his normal failing hearing, or something Tanya was doing on a device in her pocket that lowered its volume and added static. Upon looking at the entry sign above him reading 'Pay what you can, take what you need,', Barry reached into his pocket, pulling out some loose change. He placing it into discolored and somewhat asymetrically dented army issue cooking pot doubling as a till. Before Tanya could reach into it, placing with the highest degree of reluctance a woman could show with her eyes and not mouth, her earrings in its place, the guard examined the coins.

"American money?" the guard noted.

"Without the American attitude," Tanya replied, loudly enough for her 'father' to hear it.

"And not giving any 'advice we are forced or paid to take' about how to make our cooperative 'everyone becomes as enlightened as they can' Democratic Socialist revolution like your competitive 'revolution' where everyone is free to get as free rich and greedy as they can," the middle aged guard said with the fire of an idealist half his age. "We don't want your jewelry, even if it is for the Cause," he said respectfully to Tanya, handing her earrings back to her. "And we don't want your money," he continued, with assertive respect to Barry, throwing the coins onto the floor.

"What's wrong with my money?" Barry interjected, picking up the money. "If it's your pleasure and honor to accept money it's my pleasure and right to give it. My Life given right to give according to my abilities these coins which will get dumped in the washing machine or the dryer. Money that I earned, hard earned, doing work in..."

"1975, 1980 or 1983 according to the issue date on your funny money coins?" The bouncer with a bigger brain behind his sloping forehead than Barry thought replied. "Does your father, your newest brat of a child, know where he is and what year it is?"

"We tell him on a need and want to know basis," Tanya assured the guard as she snuck her bent elbow under Barry's arm just before the latter went into a clenched fist. "He means well. And won't disrupt the proceedings. And honors his word."

"If I remember what you just said to me," Barry babbled, suddenly feeling the courage of his convictions. Barry noted Tanya's rolling eyebrows, but felt assured by it as it was a genuine expression of her internal frustrations and not condescension. Barry smiled, having had the satisfaction of making Tanya getting his jokes. Not liking them, but

reacting to them at least, which is better than being ignored as a joke maker of course. But such inner celebrations were halted when Tanya pointed her 'father's' attention to the bulge under the 'I will fight no more forever' veteran's coat that indeed was a revolver. "Which I do!..eh...remember what I promised. To not talk religion, politics or...(as the sometimes successful and sometimes even paid former stand up comic felt the obligation to add a third comment or quip, even when it wasn't necessary, as it was in the rule of threes) trash talk about any man's wife, mistress or guy in drag trying to pass himself as..."

Barry's delivery was halted by Tanya's hand over his mouth. It beat a stomp on the foot, as she had done in 'Uma's time'. Or an insult to his fragile ego which she no doubt was intelligent and now driven enough to deliver. "This disease he has, makes him have a warped sense of humor," Tanya explained to the guard.

"And.." the guard replied, as his face broke into a smile, then chuckle. "Laughter, however you can get it, is the best medicine, for all of us, particularly now."

With that, the guard motioned for Tanya and Barry to proceed down the hallway. The jokes, belchies and hopefully artificial farts from stand up whatever on stage merged with music as Tanya led Barry in. All the while reading her kindle in English, German and Russian faster than Barry could discern anything on the pages. "We're at a critical point of history here with enemies who don't want us to---"

"---Interfere with their own time travel experiments?" Barry interjected. "Like in those time travel tv shows with characters that never age, never change and always have wardrobe, like you do, that fits the occasion," he noted, gazing at the outfit the probably 1906 mismatched suit with tight fitting trousers around his crotch and a loose white shirt with a grubby tie that she could easily use as a leash that he had woken up into. "It's bad form, after all, to crash a party in the any century in the wrong outfit. And what currency do you use to pay off the Fashion Police if they want to arrest you?"

Tanya took in a deep breath, then after three tense seconds of intense, private reflection, let flow from her quivering lips. "I need you on this complicated Mission for reasons deeper than you or I know, or can understand. But in the meantime, don't screw it up by talking politics on stage. Or talking politics or history as we know it to anyone."

"Relax, I failed history in high school and college," Barry replied.

"Because you trash talked the teacher, or fucked his girlfriend?" shot back.

"Difference in perspective," Barry noted after a pensive delay, lifting his lips wide at the edges, keeping the details behind both transgressions locked into his chest, so as to not have to go back in time to redeem himself.

According to where the laughter and applause was coming from in the dimly lit cabaret, this was not only an open mic for different kinds of political comics, but different brands of comedy and music. Barry didn't get most of the references from the comics on stage who talked about politics or history, mostly from a pro-left perspective, in part due to his ignorance of the local events. But he could sense that it was around 1920, most probably. As suggested by half of the women on stage or off having obtained bobs which were half as long as any artistic man's hair in the 19th century or most art watching male in the second half of the 20th. Some of these self liberated females were wearing trousers and fedoras obtained from their fathers or most probably 'disappointed at seeing their woman become a man' boyfriends. But, some of the women sitting together seemed to be discovering that love between two women was more sincere, intense and, after a few too many drinks, volatile than anything with a man.

"Nothing new," Barry thought to himself regarding the music, and the jokes, and the audience as he observed them from his secluded table which was frequently vacated by a worried and sometimes victorious as well as tight lipped Tanya. "Thinking 10 PM approaching colorful and sloshy 11:30," he said that in a normal volumed voice which couldn't be heard by anyone as Tanya came back to the table with yet another set of papers, notes and official documents she had put into her already over-stuffed pockets, with more drinks so that he and her would not be kicked out. "The political and personal jokes are getting cruder and crueler. Half of the crowd booing the comic, the other half laughing at the jokes and applauding him, or is it a her?" Barry noted. "Alternatingly anyway. Divide and conquer. And the music, going from sincere, artistic and good to just loud, rude, simplistic one or maybe two chord rants so out of tune so much that they can't be corrected by any auto-tune program I know of and only to those who drink more of this.." He continued, pointing to the eight glasses on the table. Spiked with something that smelled more 'off' as the evening went on. He picked up the menu, noting with suspicion and interest its featured offerings. "Special sauce, special tobacco, pastry and house brew, which are...fed to this, when sober, free thinking, deep thinking crowd for 'whatever you can afford' by..."

Barry pointed to a bartender clad as a hard working Socialist laborer whose face was clean shaven, his eyes and bearing militaristically aristocrat. "Mark of the Narc," he commented, averting the barkeep's stare. "From my time anyway. Who fed the masses who were about to do real revolution reactionary capitalistic 'goodies'. Such as weed to suburbanite whites. Heroin to ghetto blacks. Specially made illegal acid to 'experimental seekers' of all colors. And of course bootleg booze to everyone. Then told the cops, called pigs in my day, when it was time to arrest the pushers who were hooked on those mind altering, soul destroying, accomplishment-halting 'happy' elixirs. Get them so obsessed with 'sticking it to man' by partying hearty with sex, drugs, firewater and more volume than value rock and roll on the weekends, in establishments owned and taxed by 'the man', that when Monday came around they were too tired and broke to even think about real Revolution. Or reminding their about to be hooked activist Indian comrades that their ancestors died broken, diseased and starved because they decided to enjoy the 'happy' of firewater that got them so hooked that they would sell their last horse, their most beloved daughter or most faithful wife for a barrel or even jug of 'happy juice'.

Happy juice that my wife Olivia said, along with wacky tobacco of course, was required to be an 'all about me and MY music' artist who could make the 'we're all individuals' bop their heads, wave their hands and surrender their brains to the beat that YOU led them to. With of course dancing in step to YOUR tune. A tune which when you really listened to it, after you recovered from being stoned, drunk or boinked to exhaustion under the sheets was..."

Barry noted that his audience was, yet again, imaginary. How long Tanya was gone on another assignment in the Mission, perhaps the new Narc Comrade Bartender, he didn't know. But there was one person who was within hearing and hopefully listening range. It was a young man dressed as an old one, in an oversized Karl Marx beard which was poorly glued to his face, with a suit the most famous last and perhaps this century Proponent of Communism posed in for so many pictures. But without the fat belly of the, some said anyway, over fed author who never spent a day in jail for writing things that believers in him had been shot for trying to carry out. He thumbed through his pad of jokes, mumbling incoherently in German, fear and lack of confidence escalating with every turn of the page. Barry could hear his stomach rumbling and smell the acetone released through his mouth, indicating that he was burning whatever fat he still had on his thin body with intense desperation. Yet, he was determined to follow through with...something. Something which was scheduled to happen at...

"Eleven forty five," Barry said, reading the circled slot on the sheet from the club manager in front of the young man trying to look like an old one. Barry, the for real old man, offered the pretend one a generous slice of bread, the remaining sausage on his plate, a chunk of freshly delivered cheese and (as determined by smell and cautious taste anyway) cole slaw which would feed the belly but not distort perceptions of the mind. "Looks like you were one of the last picked to go on stage, number..."

"...Nothing. When I get in front of this crowd," the young man said as he helped himself to badly needed sustenance for his stomach while still focusing on his routine. "But, my allies and few friends say that if you want more allies, and friends, you have to present your case to your enemies."

"Your enemies being drunks and dopers who want a cheap laugh and a mind-numbing fuck with whoever they go home with," Barry replied.

"And...others," the young man said, keeping the identity of those enemies a secret. "I thank you for the food," he continued, taking only a small portion of the food into his mouth, giving the rest back to Barry. "But I have to work on my routine here. Make people laugh and you can make them think, then make them act to better themselves and their countrymen," he explained. He pressed on with his joke pad, trying to commit the lines to memory with his eyes closed and his voice pathologically monotone.

Barry could feel that he was suffering from a big dose of dull out disease, and if not assisted, he would be a carrier of it. Indeed, he seemed to be the most boring, lifeless and procedural man Barry had ever met, in this century and his own. Yet, the young man was

determined. Barry, who now felt as alienated from humanity as he did, had no choice but to edge his chair towards the fake bearded self-proclaimed 'prophet' and, hopefully willing student whose mind seemed more logically linear than musical, or comedic.

"Who are these enemies you're talking about?" Barry enquired.

"Disruptors who have nothing to offer except more destruction, and degradation," he answered.

"Who are?" Barry pressed.

"The people on top who rule all of us on the bottom, and make us hard working stiff slaves, while history presents them as intellectual geniuses," the young man said to the old one after taking in a deep breath, spitting out his case with the intensity of a fire breathing dragon ordered by the rest of the jungle inhabitants to become extinct. "Who of course will recognize you as a genius too if you are admitted into their elite club on their terms playing their game, and if you're not one of those winners..."

"...you're a loser according to their scoreboard, and if you play enough of their games, on your scoreboard too," Barry added. "But...I think I can help you out with this material," he said, asking the young man to share his notebook.

"My Mission, my Cause, my purpose..My Struggle!" he said, with escalating commitment, and anger, which exhausted him.

"My...recommendations against," Barry read as he struggled ineffectively to read and understand the poor penmanship and even worse German grammar in the notebook, clearly evident with his instant translation glasses. "These J's and Cs? And...HSs? And...hmm," he said of the initialed demons. after which he noted some of them named in full. "I get your beef with Gypsies. Who I had some run ins with back in..."

Barry stopped himself, realizing that he would be overstepping the line by talking about a 2018 gypsy sleeze bag in Queens who sold him a car that broke down three blocks after it left the lot. And his sexy sister on Wall Street in Manhattan who convinced him to buy stock in a company than never existed. A very dangerous thing to do while trying to warp history back into a forward and upward direction. But, perhaps this thinking, determined and struggling 'uncool' young man who wanted to set the world on fire was part of the solution. Another destiny-fulfilling coincidence.

"Ya know, if you want to ridicule and expose what gypsies are, and find a solution to them, and for them...with comedy, there's a formula," Barry said.

"A formula to make people laugh?" the young man asked, his eyes open so wide with desperate wonderment that it pushed his beard upward, revealing a thick black mustache under his nose. "Tell me what it is," he continued, grabbing hold of his pencil and ripping out a large piece of blood stained paper from the back of his notebook.

“OK, the first thing about gypsies, J’s, C’s or HS’ is...’what’s up with them?’ Then, ‘why I hate them.’ Then what scares me about them. Then...what I ‘love’ about them.”

“A lot,” the young man said as he wrote down the formula, like a Crusader being offered the trail-map to the Holy Grail and the magic inside of it to Christianize the entire world.

“And once you write down at least three pages of ‘what I ‘love’, hate and fear about the gypsies, the Js, the C’s or the HS and the whatever’s, and select the best answers to all of that, the ones you know in your gut will work for any crowd, you ask the most important thing...’Why is it hard to be a...whatever.,”

“Hmm...an interesting concept,” the young man said, hand to his artificially haired chin, contemplating the issue.

“And the most important thing, person or event that you ask these questions about...insert ‘me’ into those blanks,” Barry added, feeling like both a learner and a teacher with more intensity than he recalled every experiencing. “What’s up with me, or something I do. What I hate about me or something I do. What scares me about me or something I do. Why I ‘love’ me and some of the things I do. And why its hard to be me and do some of the things I do.”

“Even more interesting,” the young man replied, scratching his chin. “But...throwing darts at yourself?”

“Makes you stronger, and more relatable to,” Barry replied.

The young man seemed to think about it, which was enough for Barry to feel accomplished about relating to him. Time for another lesson.

“And what about music?” the young man asked with a completely music-less voice, as the singer and band on stage kept producing noise that matched each other less with each note, to an inebriated crowd that seemed to like it even more because of such.

“A formula for that too,” Barry offered his newly met comrade in the Cause, and perhaps protégée who would grow old and meet him back in his own century. He grabbed hold of the young man’s pencil and wrote it down for him. “Related to me by on Halloween when I was dressed as a priest in a hospital where I was picking up some meds for my wife a nurse left a room where, by accident, a major record company exec was dying, and wanted to confess his sins so he could maybe get to a not too bad region of purgatory instead of hell. The most popular songs, sure hits, start with a home note, go up and down mostly one note at a time, are repetitive, have a bridge, minimal changes from major to minor notes, have a predictability, a loop that never ends, and...” he wrote the rest down as best as he could remember. “The best examples are...” he continued, trying to not name any of the numerous pop tune after 1920 that lingered in his head after accidentally coming into hearing range with them. “Football tunes from Ivy League

colleges. National Anthems, except for the Star Spangled Banner. And as this ad exec also related, something you can dance to as a civilian or march to if you got drafted. Because as we all know, the three things anyone who wants to rule the Pop Charts or a country needs is a catchy tune that sends recruits dancing and marching into battle without caring why or who are fighting. Like the Gary Owen that sent Custer into his last stand. And to be the bandleader, ya gotta have some unique facial hair.”

“Hmm,” the real young man in the fake old beard said as he ran his fingers across the edges of his mustache, as if contemplating a change to a modification to an under the nostril only facial hair presentation which was typical of 19th century Northern Europeans.

“And a banner. A symbol. An artistic symbol which, if it has to use colors of another symbol, at least does it creatively. Like the Confederate flag. Which could have been more effective for the Rebs if it had some art work put into it.”

“I can do art work,” the young man said, taking out some designs from his briefcase. “See?” he continued while showing off sketches he had done.

Barry exhausted his drawer of ‘great effort but short on deliver’ smiles and approving nods ‘when shown of the sketches of large buildings and landscapes, which were more like accurate photographs than visions seen and felt by the Inner Eye. With small people whose faces or emotions were never revealed, perhaps because they were overshadowed by the large buildings or landscapes. Or perhaps because the painter didn’t had too much admiration for historical realism than contemporary expression. But there were other drawings that did have soul to it. Maybe too much soul, and expression that was real, loud but not subtle or cool. They revealed the human body, and faces, with muscular strength and single minded boldness. One of them was portrait of an old woman who the painter had a real connection to, but by the look in her and his eye, a complex, emotionally complicated one. “This one I like a lot, A.H.” Barry gave voice to noting the proud signature on the bottom of it. Not for a banner for any political cause or a logo for a band, but...”

“...My mother, as she was and in my heart is, but whose portrait, like these other sketches, the J’s at the art institute I worked so hard to try to get into said was too simplistic. And the sketches were too mechanical, crude, simple to be ‘art’.”

“The J’s being stuck up assholes who were too cool to sweat and too cruel to care,” Barry said, feeling so moved by AH’s pain that he forgot to ask him his name. “Like the ones I knew in High School and College, and in the entertainment biz I wanted to use as an educational enlightenment conduit for the world. Like Rachel Weinstein, who would date and take money from gentiles like me, looking down at me whenever I wasn’t looking, but turned down my marriage proposal to marry a rich Jewish lawyer, or doctor.”

“The bitch,” AH replied.

“And there was Sol Liebowitz, head of the drama and literary department, head of the cool crowd in high school, who saw to it that I was always turned down every time I auditioned for a part on stage, even though I nailed down more parts than he did, or tried to do,” Barry grumbled, reliving those days. “Who said he would invite me into the department to be a stage builder.”

“With me it was a referral by the selection committee at the Art Institute applied to to be a painter of houses rather than canvases,” AH angrily replied.

“And the time when I applied to be represented as a hard working, honest story telling, prolific writer,” Barry added. “By the all Jewish and some by necessity mob connected Italians, at the Bernstein Talent Agency. Where I was told, that ‘you have no talent’ with an upturned noses from fucking everyone. Particularly by Deborah Sarah Bernstein.”

“Who was ‘connected’ to the right family and the right religion as a critic who never did anything herself, no doubt,” AH replied. “Who considered effortless success the best and only real kind?”

“Yeah...you got it,” Barry pushed out through clenched teeth. “But ‘her people’ do make better pastrami, knishes and gefilta fish than any gentles, even if they’re overpriced. And as for the self hatred based in feeling inferior to them that hand over the counter to us, for no extra charge,” he continued, connecting to the probably better part of his brain. “In small, handlable doses, it makes us work harder than they ever did, or do now. And become better than they are...and better than ourselves. So...I suppose we shouldn’t kill them.”

AH considered the matter, silently keeping his thoughts about how to apply that recommendation to himself. “Yes,” he replied after intense thinking, and reassessment. “But in the meantime, I want you to have this,” he said, handing over to Barry a sketch which upon first assessment was crude, simple and childlike, but...both honest and profound. “A man leading a horse pulling a wagon which is pulling a wagon on which there is...”

“...A woman I recognize,” Barry said, sensing Uma’s presence in the likeness. Or perceiving such anyway. Maybe because he was suffering from time travel lag, or something in the cheese. “But...I can’t accept it.”

“But you must,” AH insisted. “Besides, I made several versions of it. For...”

“...the woman in the carriage or the hard working man leading the horses?” Barry asked.

“Both of them,” AH said as he got up from the table, taking his notes, and briefcase with them. “I thank you for reminding me of who I must be, and where I must be,” he said, extending his hand to Barry. “And if there is anything I can go for you some day?”

Barry thought hard about it as he shook this 'on his way finally' late bloomer's hand, then dug into his pocket. "For FUTURE reference," he said, handing AH his card. "My name is Barry Davies. Yours, AH?"

"Eh....Andre Henrich," AH replied as his beard started to fall off, as he heard boots approaching the establishment and a police siren. Gathering most of his notes, and his briefcase, he discretely left the establishment leaving Barry with the drawing.

Tanya arrived, with a fistful of documents in her pocket and relief in her eyes, and three policemen behind her. "Finally, our mission here is done," she said. "Or...maybe it's just started," Tanya uttered with sheer terror when she looked at the sketch, her jaw falling to the floor, her lips quivering. "AH. Where is he?"

"You told us he was here," the head constable said..

"Andre Heinrich?" Barry replied. "He just left."

"To where?" the chief constable.

"I don't know?" Barry answered with upturned shoulders. "Somewhere else, I suppose. To maybe change the world, if he took the advice I gave him, and if that advice was right. His struggle."

"Translated which means Mein Kampf!" Tanya growled after reading the notes left behind. "Do you know what you just did?"

"Gave some sound non political advice about life and living to Andre Heinrich. Other wise to be known as the artist AH!" Barry said proudly, pointing to the signature on the drawing.

"You mean the wannabe fascist dictator Adolf Hitler!" the head constable said, reading the comedy notes. "Who told you about his being rejected from art school run by Jews."

"And who said that he was forced to work as a housepainter to feed himself?" Tanya added.

"And who has it in for, C's. Otherwise known as communists, which I am," the Cop in the military helmet which didn't fit his eyes or temperament said proudly. "And HC's, homosexuals, which I am not!" he continued with enough conviction to his colleagues to indicate clearly that he had experimented in such things, or was thinking about it.

"And..gypsies, who everybody hates, but secretly admires."

"I eh..told him that he shouldn't kill any of those people!" Barry replied in his defense as the assistant constables grabbed him. "I'm part of the solution!"

“The final solution which maybe he wasn’t thinking about till you suggested it” Tanya blasted into Barry’s face. He turned to the head constable. “Go ask him...he’s out there.’ He’s still probably wearing this fake beard, Karl Marx suit. You guys can find him, right?”

“Maybe, but probably not,” the head Cop said.

“You have to try anyway!” Tanya said to the Constable, offering him money, jewels and her watch, then a view of her chest after loosening two buttons on her blouse. “As a service to humanity, and favor to me?”

The head Constable agreed, taking his two assistants with him. En route to the door, Barry recognized one of them. “Grandpa Jacob?” he gasped. “It’s you!”

“And you are?” the confused handsome third police officer entering the room from the side door inquired.

“Your eh...” Before Barry could give any further description of himself as he was or could be, he felt the pain of Tanya’s foot into his legs, then the kick of her knee into his groin.

“Grandpa Jacob, we have a criminal to catch out there?” the head Constable informed his younger assistant, and the young soon to be maybe old (if he didn’t wind up in a Concentration Camp) Grandpa Jacob.

“And I have a self sabotaging lunatic who I have to show something,” Tanya said, leading Barry out of the establishment and into the time capsule, where she flipped on a video. “This is New York in the future. The world’s ONLY future.”

Barry couldn’t believe his eyes when he saw footage of Adolf Hitler at Times Square doing stand up comedy from the podium to a large audience, getting laughs and applause from the crowd. Then introducing a band that played pop music that made the crowd sway and dance in unison with each other, while doing the Sieg Heils.

“I didn’t know!” Barry said in his defense. “So where do we go now? And what about Grandpa Jacob? The hero of my family from a long line of sons who made other sons?”

Tanya flipped the screen on her phone to a photo of him being hung on a tree by proud Nazi henchmen. “You and my ancestors were killed,” she said. “Make us in the future...”

Yet again, Barry smelled, tasted then felt a bolus of something hard, fragrant and ghostlike work its way through his thick bush of nose hairs, wacking the top of his sinuses harder than a feminist COVID tester with PMS who had just been rejected by the only man she thought was different than any other Y-chromosome holding sperm donors. Where he woke up was a future unimaginable to any sane television writer and

far more personal than any performance he had seen on the small screen.

CHAPTER 6

“Is is selfish or cowardly to demand of the universe to know where you are in it and what the fuck you’re there for?” Barry asked himself as he woke up from yet another dream so intense that his ‘awake’ conscious mind dared not recall any of the details. “But, at least in this worm hole, I’m sleeping on a bed,” he said to himself as he felt his ass against the mattress. “On a bed that I paid for, where the cat decided to not take a piss or a dump,” emanated from his muttering, dry lips as he recognized the linear lump in the middle of the double-queen-king sized mattress which had been pushed into being a wall. Upon lifting his head from the mangled pillows he felt a tug on his head. Looking to see where it was coming from, he was, for the first time in thousands of mornings, eager to face the day. “Hey I still have hair!” he said as he untangled his very long mop from behind the bedpost. “And now, lots of it!” he noted, as his four inches of hair had grown thicker, and was now all dark brown, bouncing back over his shoulders and down his back. Falling upon his chest where he noted that the skin under his nipples had grown into volcanos. “Breasts?” he gasped, discovering their true nature. And no hair on his wrinkle-free, smooth face, neck, chest, arms or legs.

Setting the latter on the ground, he noted something red on them. “Nail polish?” he gasped. “Which I...” he continued, his ears hearing his voice at a higher register than normal. A quick glance in the mirror on the wall startled him into more realizations. The wall behind him boldly displayed a Super Bowl poster of an ageless 90 year old Adolf Hitler holding a victory football while dancing with Britany Spears and several other young blonde beauties, one of whom looked like his daughter, the other his son in drag. “What in the name of Mel Brooks and Springtime for Hitler in America is fucking going on!” he muttered. But the reflection of his own body in the mirror vetoed any other emotional alarm bells ringing between his sequenced red, white and blue swastika earrings. “And who the fuck am I?”

“Barri,” he heard from a musically bartone and very male voice behind him. “Barri with an I, of course,” Major-General ‘Oliver’, formerly Demoness Diva Olivia, said as she, or rather in this form he, put on a tunic bearing the American flag and the Nazi eagle resting its claws on a swastika. “Who, because you were born a member of the fairer and more beautiful gender, doesn’t have to go to war like I do,” Barri’s ex-wife and now husband gently related. His tone was empathetic and caring tone. Oliver kissed Barri on the cheek, after which he grabbed hold of his holstered service revolver which bore the mark of Uma (from AH’s drawings of such). The multipurpose pistol featured several auxiliary barrels that delivered things into victims deadlier than bullets. “We have job of protect you from the enemy, you know,” Oliver assured Barri.

“The enemy being who and what?” Barri asked.

Oliver pulled in his lips, seeming to ponder the issue carefully.

Barri could feel his, or rather her, heart pound within the chest, loud enough to hear its beat and feel its vibration up and down the spine. “The enemy being who, or what?”

Barri demanded to know, working her way towards the window.

With a swift, powerful movement of his left hand, Oliver closed the curtains. With his muscular right, he gently pulled Barri into him. He looked at his American Frau, with a mixture of affection and warning, as if to an errand child who needed protection from the world or herself. “We know what happened with you asked that question before, don’t we, Barri?”

“Yeah, Oliver...I do,” Barri admitted, hoping that Oliver would believe her.

“I’m...I’m’...” the Barry part of Barri recalled the most effective thing an Canadian could say to an American when trying to deflect or win an altercation. “I’m sorry,” Barri said, putting her head down. “It won’t happen again.”

“What won’t happen again?” Oliver shot back, as a quiz, rolling his eyebrows.

“What I did last time to...eh...ya know,” Barri replied, after a tense delay, hoping that the mind would censor the words that the mouth wanted to emit.

“Disgrace our family?” Oliver said.

“Yes,” Barri replied.

“And embarrass me!” Oliver blasted out.

“Yes, which won’t happen again. It won’t happen” Barri said. Acting on an impulse inside her, she wrapped her thin and short arms around Oliver, saying those words that Barry as Barry never thought were ever necessary, or appropriate, or really understood the way they were intended. “I love you.”

“I know you do,” Oliver said with a tone that seemed like he meant it. In all the good and sustainable ways. “Which is why you’ll stay here and let me finish off the enemy who, if it gets stronger, will finish off us. And take away everything we, you know...”

“...Earned,” Barri replied, avoiding the temptation to suggest ‘steal, grab, or pilfer’.

“Yes,” Oliver answered with a satisfied nod. “Life is now good, safe, secure and comfortable.”

“As well as boring, lifeless, procedural and simplistic,” Barri thought, but didn’t give voice to, feeling the contagion of dull out virus coming from Oliver’s fingers, chest and smiling while at attention lips. Mixed in with a toxic dose of selective compassion microbes. Germs which coralled basic human kindness for humanity into taking care of only those in your own small herd, at the expense of everyone else’s herd.

Barri allowed him/herself to fall into the role of ‘protected and well cared for’ Mafia

Fascist Princess, as Oliver demanded, and seemed to need. As Barry, he had dived deep into the universal mind of humanity inside himself as an exploratory (and truth be told two spirited) soul and wrote some women's stories, including one for a bombshell babe at even an old age like he was now. But of course, a woman up the corporate ladder (sometimes cued in by Olivia) would shoot down the sale down, handing the submission over to a life inexperienced girl for a complete re-write. Of course, having a vagina as a 16 year old makes you far more qualified to write stories about aging men than an old and over-experience man could. Or even a two spirited man who had yearned to experience, if even for a magical month, being a woman with a full head of natural.

"You do know what your purpose is, Barri," Oliver said to his wife as he walked through several rooms, each bigger than the last, to the door of the house which was more lavish and opulent than any used for the filming of the Sopranos.

"To take care of things at home here, while you take care of the homeland out there," Barri replied, filling in the blanks as carefully as she could.

"Yes, indeed," Oliver answered, the edges of his thin moustache forming a wide horseshoe. The most happy, contented and purposeful smile Barry as himself had ever seen on his wife, or himself. That grin of happiness was broken when Oliver opened his assignment pouch for the day, glancing at the picture of the most recent Most Wanted. "The likes of this one will never threaten the safety, security, comfort and prosperity of our family, or any other truly Aryan and American family again!" he asserted with the kind of conviction which most probably in this 'reality' never resulted in a failed mission. "Sieg Heil!" he concluded, pressing his hand up towards and into the sky, his stare fixed on the picture of the Fuhrer on the wall. His inner ooculars focused on the God he seemed to think had sent Adolf to save the world from itself.

Barri, being the obedient Frau, snapped her high heels while Sieg Heiling with a louder voice and even more snap to it. All the while sneaking a glance at the photos and sketches of the 'enemy' in Oliver's pouch who she was 'spared the hardship' of knowing about. As expected, it indeed it was Tanya, regaled with a star of David around her neck, a hammer and sickle tattoo on her clenched fist, sporting a gypsy dress while passionately hugging a girlfriend.

"We have her in custody now, and she will never get out, but today she WILL give up where the rest of 'the underground' is. What's left of her anyway," Oliver pledged, answering Barri's next question before she could make any inquiries. "And she had the nerve to say in her song to her followers at the rally we broke up that 'tomorrow belongs to'..." Major General Oliver broke into a sadistic, and overconfident laugh.

"Belongs to who?" Barri asked, as assertively as a sheep under the bayonet of a butcher at a slaughterhouse dared.

"The one who figures out how to turn this fiction into fact!" Oliver replied in his own time as he came down from a laugh, throwing a DVD on a most probably \$4,000 marble

table in front of Barri.

“‘Stalin’s Psychiatrist’?” Barri read, looking at the cover portraying an attractive woman in a lab coat listening to the heart of a self-absorbed, soul and brain dead actor portraying Stalin, the female doc looking at the camera with a ‘we both know what the real solution to this problem is.’

“As if Stalin ever had a psychiatrist!” Oliver mused. “And as if he ever emerged from his ‘self-isolation’ nervous breakdown in his office after the Fuhrer set in motion his conquest, or rather, his Sacred mission to civilize the Soviet Union. The communist ‘cooperation over competition’ experiment ‘where ‘everyone gives according to their abilities and takes according to their needs’ which never worked, and never will.” With that, Oliver left for another day at the office, leaving two guards outside the house, for the protection of the woman he loved.

After finally having a view of the complete DVD, between giving cookies and cakes coated with ‘chill out and snooze happy pills’ from the bathroom to the guards outside her front and back door, Barri and Barry felt united in one purpose. “Yes, both of us have to find our way into Stalin’s locked office where he had a nervous breakdown in 1941,” both entities said to each other in a silent conversation only they could hear. “To make him man up and get the ‘we do nothing without the approval of Comrade Stalin because he will put us in a Gulag if we do’ Soviet Army operational,” Barry said to Barri while looking into the full body mirror which reflected a female body not unlike that on the cover of the DVD. “Perhaps in this reality, which is the only one we have now, Stalin never did emerge from his private basket-case room because...”

“...You enabled Hitler to be as entertaining as he was scary,” Barry heard from a voice he thought was Tanya’s coming from the other side of the mirror. “Now you have to be more manipulative than scary, or entertaining. And somehow make Stalin...ya know.”

“Man up?” Barry said to the reflection of Barri which was part Tanya somehow.

“And make him laugh,” Tanya-Barri replied.

“Stalin laughed,” Barry replied, more as his male than female self.

“At other people, and at his own jokes, but not at himself,” the comeback. “So your job is to----”

“---click these high heels three times, say or rather sing ‘I’m back in the USSR, don’t know how lucky you are boy, or girl,’” Barry shot back with his best Beatles voice with, surprisingly, the ability to not only hold a tune, but make it musical. “I just need one thing! Something to get me there. Which is...”

Tanya gave Barry no answer. Neither did Barri. He/she opened up the middle pages of the Community Newsletter, which still bore the name and brand of font when he was its

official editor. It featured Tanya's capture, arrest, trial and options the public could vote on for the means of her execution. He then turned to the classified section. "No ads in here for how to find a time machine to get you out of this," Barri/Barry said, after which reality hit hard, once again. "Which means...I, or we have to find you, Tanya," Barry asserted on behalf Barri when looking at the newspaper clipping of the capture of the, (for the captors anyway) 'bold and brilliant apprehension' of the most dangerous criminal in the Third Reich that popped up that fell out of Oliver's assignment envelope. Something was drawn to something other than Tanya's somehow cool and collected face on the more photos than print article. "Somehow, but..."

There it was, the solution, in the background of the 'heroic capture' of the most dangerous degenerate in the state. The time machine, buried amidst a mountain of garbage in the woodland junkyard, which included scrap metal, torn clothing, rusted tire rims and human limbs. Along with stacks of books written by deceased authors considered great, and those written by new ones who hoped that they would be remembered for what they wrote rather than who they were when writing them. Most notably hand written manuscripts penned by 'Tanya T'. Someone who, in any universe, would ask that her works would be evacuated from a burning house before she would consent to be. Those most sacred scientific discoveries and artistic insights which could enlighten the world or empower shithheads who were 90% on the way to conquering it. In a heavily guarded junkyard with a sign atop of it announcing a 50th anniversary of a book burning festival, scheduled for..."Noon today!"

Barri gasped as the sun outside her window edged its way up towards its zenith. Front row seats gives to those who brought in the most 'degenerative and seditious books for permanent disposal'. "An hour away by cab, if I can get one," Barri calculated, having recognized the street sign on the junkyard from when she was Barry, and noting that everything in this American Fatherland First was different except street addresses, and no doubt traffic jams. "Or..." Barri considered, as she looked towards the garage in the house that Barry had lived in over several dimensions. Indeed, the Indian motorcycle could bypass traffic jams in the 'old order' dimensions, and perhaps checkpoints in the new one was still there. But was there gas in it? And what about getting past the 'protection detail' hubby Oliver had posted outside every entrance? And what about the guards at the book burning fest? And the flames that would burn the books and the time machine? And what about Tanya, who could only be saved by Barry going back in time again to do....something to, and for, Comrade Stalin?

But, first things first, sort of. The protection detail outside the house assigned to keeping Barri shielded from the still not apprehended 'no goodnicks' seemed to be waking up from the happy slumber induced by Barri's specially sprinkled cookies and cakes. And the liquor bottles in the house, at most, had 2% alcohol content, as the Fuhrer was a tea tottler, according to history books written in simpler dimensions anyway.

Barri knew that she had to not only do heroic things in her new role as...surrogate Tanya, and to do them differently than Tanya or Barry did. The first choice regarding the 'hows' dealt with the security police outside her door. From somewhere inside of her new body,

and perhaps mind, she came up with something. ‘The easiest way to a man’s heart it through his stomach’, she recalled from being Barry with a spry, active size 30 waist at the time of marrying Olivia which grew to a sedate ‘what the fuck’ 38 after he allowed himself to become addicted to the food she cooked, and perhaps drugged by unnamed spices she put in it. “But, Therefore, ergo, it stood to logic reason and gut intuition that the easiest way to knock the manhood out of any man is a frying pan full of empty conked on his thick head,” Barri pondered as she pulled out two matching frying pans from the wall of the overstocked kitchen. “Size 9 helmets for soldiers who thankfully left their metal hats at home,” she thought to herself as she edged her way to the back door, which had now only two behemoth Aryian all American men. Men whose job it was to protect the All American ‘little woman’ from outside intruders, or exposure to the outside world.

After opening the door, quietly, Barri tip toed her way behind the two guards in soft hats with sloping foreheads, noting that they were a foot taller than her, even while walking in her stileto heels. She lifted up the pans, and self observed herself hesitating. “Gotta follow through with this,” said the soul who, as Barry anyway, never hit, punched or clubbed any other human except himself. “Come on, ya gotta do it!” raced through Barri’s head. “Or everything that Tanya worked for will be gone forever, and the world will be stuck in this new dimension where, yes, the trains would all run on time but take undesirables to places NO one desires to go to, even death seeking masochists.”

A quick turn around by one of the guards pushed Barri into action. There it was, the face of Billy Harden on guard number 1. Bill Harden, the charismatic super strong one armed kid who made his reputation on the playground as someone who taunted, hit, pushed and laughed at young Barry in front of the whole neighborhood. Starting Barry into a career of making jokes in print, rather than out loud, mostly at himself. But sometimes at others, in print or behind their backs, while he effectively remained a virgin till after he had his second kid.

“Nazi Billy” had two arms in this dimension, both twice the size and length of Barri’s. He smirked at her, while Barri held the knock out pan in mid air with her shaking hand. “The General said she was crazy,” Billy commented to his fellow guard.

“And cowardly,” Billy’s companion added. He was Corporal whose face Barri recognized as...his father’s when she was Barry. “If I had a son as cowardly as this one, I’d cut off his balls and his right arm,” the spitting image of Barry’s father shot at, and into, Barri, hitting the most vulnerable places inside of her.

“Which would leave him one arm to entertain himself with,” ‘Seargent Billy’ smirked. “But I’d still send him back out to the playground to fight back against the guy who punched him. Without a baseball bat!!!”

“Or a knife?” Corporal Dad spat out from his upturned chin. Such was an instant replay of the time young black and blue Barry ran back home with his tail between his legs after getting a public whoopin’ from Billy Harden in front of all the cool kids and grabbed hold of a knife, determined to cut open the super-arm of tone one armed charismatic

super dude.

“But now, this Barri Barbie is bringing pans to a talking fight,” Sergeant Billy sneered. “What do you think she should do with them?”

“Have her make us an omelet,” Corporal Dad suggested, turning around to view a more attractive woman jogging down the street. “With onions.”

“And potatoes,” Sergeant Billy added. “As big and round as HER hooters!” he said, pointing to a young jogger half as old and twice as endowed in the chest as Barri.

“What does she have that I don’t have?” Barri thought, and gave voice to regarding the newest object of attention from Sergeant Billy and Corporal Dad. Feeling both insulted and ignored, just as Barry was as a male teen. “What the fuck does she have that I don’t have!!!” Barri demanded to know of the all smiles flirtatious cool chic she now wanted to be.

“Obedience to the way things are and should be,” Billy explained.

“And knowing her place, in the New Order,” Dad added. “And the new world...and...”

“In history?” Barri said, overcome with something that she felt was...courage? Or was it stupidity? Or just plain reflex. In any case, it was followed up by both her arms moving the cast iron pans squarely onto Billy and Dad’s, head, knocking them out cold. The young jogger waved a ‘thank you’ to Barri, followed by a fist of defiance in Sisterhood.

The two guards hit the ground, their eyeballs rolling around in the sockets. Barri hogtied their hands and feet, put gags in their mouths, and pushed them into the bushes. She apologized to the rose bushes for giving them shit fertilizer rather than the good stuff. The botanical creatures used the wind to echo a ‘thank you’ to her, promising to be sure that if and when the guards did wake up, they would have to untangle themselves from very defiant, thorny branches..

As for the motorcycle in the garage, it was filled with gas. To the same level that Barry, before experimenting with time travel, had left it for that ride to escape his mundane life which he never took. On the rack was a CD player which, yes, still did have Flight of the Walurie cued up to play. “Well,” Barri said to the picture of Richard Wagner on the cover. “Your music doesn’t belong to Hitler’s Capitalist Henchmen, and you never intended it to...but so I can look and sound like the idiots I have to get though, gotta do what I gotta do.”

With that, Barri put on Barry’s German WW II helmet with Peace Signs on and the leather fringed Dennis Hopper Easy Rider coat that was left on the hog when it belonged to him, and speed off towards the junkyard to hopefully redeem himself from empowering Hitler with the ability to entertain as well as to terrorize.

Due to traffic jams that took place on the usually least congested service roads, Barri arrived to the 'Festival of Lights' at the junkyard just outside the airport minutes before the pile of books, manuscripts, the time machine were to be converted into black ash. Along with, yes, people, who wore hoods on their heads indicating that they were 'toxic and infectious vermin'. The more they squirmed, the more the 'out for an after Sunday Church service' all white crowd applauded the torch bearing men, women and especially children whose honor it was to set them all ablaze.

Within what seemed like seconds after Barri's arrival, the honored all white-skinned burners gathered in front of the pile. A loud speaker blared out a tune with an upbeat, comforting 'Sound of Music' feel, and lyrics which basically said that 'we are all individuals as long as the group approves of us first'. With a rhythm that made the whole big smiled ensemble, except the heavily armed guards of course, sway their hips, wave their arms and wiggle their feet to the steps of a big breasted, long haired, performer who Barri recognized as Shania Twain. She was of course appropriately outfitted with an overly fringed and opulently beaded outfit cowgirl-Injun princess ensemble plastered with swastikas, as all good white, Aryan Germans, particularly Adolf, were fans of Westerns and, ironically, brown-skinned Indians.

The horror of it all hit Barri hard, literally, as she saw from the corner of her eye a large hand shut off her motorcycle. Its owner seized the keys and stuck them into his front pants pocket. After which the owner of that hairy appendage inserted the business end of a pistol capable of more than shooting bullets into her forehead.

"You're not smiling," the twenty something Bouncer in the muscle shirt, Village people leather pants and hip boots said from behind a pair of dark tinged sunglasses.

"Eh...Bad teeth," Barri replied, trying her best to make the left side of her face look like it was numb. "Just came back from the dentist. Who drilled too many holes in my mouth after I didn't laugh hard enough with an open mouth at his jokes. Really lame jokes that I didn't know were supposed to be jokes."

"Which is, like, totally, ya know, acceptable," the Bouncer said in millennial language with a Gestapo tone. Such was the strangest combination of cultural contradictions Barri had encountered in any of her travels in this dimension as herself and others as Barry.

"But, like, your feet, and hips. You're not, like, dancing with the music?" the Bouncer pointed out, removing the gun barrel from Barri's forehead, aiming it at her heart.

"I'm a..eh...a...music composer, who dances with her....eh...shakras," Barri replied, knowing that even if she tried to shake her booty like the rest of the crowd, she would be detected as not being one of them, and thus be hogtied to a burlap bag to become barbequed rather than barbeque eater Barri. "Beethoven didn't, like, ya know, dance, but he wrote great music that you could, if you wanted and needed to, dance to," she self observed herself 'musing', recalling that on the way to this 'festival' there were several ads for Beethoven concerts on billboards.

“Yes, this is like totally, absolutely, ya know, true,” the Valley-Dude Gestapo guard agreed with a nod, lowering his gun. “But...”

Barri’s smirk of satisfaction and relief was short lived, as she felt the barrel of the Bouncer’s pistol under her chin. “You’re not doing something that I know you can do.”

Indeed he was right. Without knowing it. As the countdown to torch time ticked down to thirty seconds. And the crowd sang along in perfect pitch to the words of the ‘I am my own person’ song in unison, with many words Barri did not recognize as English or German.

“Like...singing to the music? Like everyone else is? Ya know?” the Bouncer said with a musical inflection in each statement-question. “You DO know the words, don’t you? Only losers, defective citizens and disruptors to the happy life we have no don’t know the words, ya know. And if yer’ not in the know, we all know what happens to you,” he talk-sung, pointing to one of the burlap-bagged seditious still alive squirmers about to be set ablaze.

Barri did her best to hum to the tune that kept changing melodies and keys on her. As the clock ticked down. And the Bouncer turned to her slowly, looking at her at first like she was an uphip defective piece of meat, then as a potential disrupter. Then as....someone who he would like to rape before burning.

Barri pushed herself into the best dance she could do. She let her body talk without being moved by her mind. In a ‘dance’ that turned the Bouncer’s grimace into a smile. Then a chuckle. But his body was talking too, most particularly the third leg between his muscular legs, which got hard, and big.

Barri kissed him on the cheek, hugged the stuffing out of him, and whirled him into a dance. One which enabled her to grab hold of the keys the motorcycle, and his pistol. But something else was happening which presented other opportunities. When she looked up at the crowd, she saw that hey had made her and the Bouncer the center of attention, and admiration. As long as she let him lead in the dance she was instructing him in, of course. In a dance which led her further away from the motorcycle but closer to...yes the time machine.

“Take me with you to the moon, and the stars, whoever you are,” the Bouncer, and now lead attraction at the Festival of Lights sang to Barri. “”We’re gonna go...far.” He said as he flung Barri up into the air, showing himself off to the crowd as the new Fuhrer. “But tell me where you are!” He said to the sky.

“Only after you become a star!” Barri boasted from atop the pile of what the crowd considered junk with attitude. That ‘be an asshole to your fans so they will treat you like a saint’ that worked in ‘normal’ Barry dimensions and, both thankfully and tragically, worked better in this ‘Barri’ one. With that she dove into the time capsule. “I am great.

You just wait. Do nothing till I return. Or ALL of you will burn!" she instructed the crowd, after which she shut the door to the star-ship. Then flicked the 'forward to the past' knobs onto the coordinates written in code in the credits of the Stalin's Psychiatrist DVD. Such was, so Barri hoped. Where the real author of that 'what if' fictional (and perhaps fact based) drama was waiting for her. Perhaps it was another Tanya, or somewhere Tanya had escaped to. But, first, Barri had to get away from her adoring crowd before they figured out what and who she really was. Particularly when an angry Oliver was driven to the scene on his tri-wheeled motorcycle and spotted Barri through the window of the time travel machine.

Thankfully, the capsule emitted a flame of brilliance which baffled, excited and terrified the crowd, and Oliver. "Hey, in this time like any other time, keep the masses entertained or technologically hostage and they won't burn you at the stake or give you an eviction notice from the village," Barri said to herself. "Something that maybe my guidance councilor, philosophy professor or older brother told me back in...." But before Barri could remember where (as Barry) the seeds of practical wisdom were planted inside his fat head, that cranial vault fell asleep. Then heard...

CHAPTER 7

“So tell me about your mother,” Barri heard from a bearded ‘Doctor Professor’ smoking a cigar, the smoke entered her nostrils as her ass landed on a couch in a windowless room in which the walls were overloaded with photos of Lenin and Marx, Vladimir and Karl of course. “Or, your father,” the 19th century academic with a high class tie which would be laughed out of any library in the mid 20th century said, having noted that the intruder was a woman.

“You first, Sigmund,” Barri shot back, noting the similarity to the pictures of Freud. The real ones and not the ‘handsome look alike’ photos that were plastered on the walls of Olivia’s study when she was in her ‘I wanna be a shrink’ phase, during which she was most crazy and therefore thought herself to be better than any other shrink on the wards, in the offices or on the tube. “And besides,” Barri said looking at the patient, a man with a honking big mustache in the middle of the five star private bunker rocking back and forth muttering ‘yes, I am garbage’ in a variety of languages and tunes to someone only he could see. “What are you doing to my patient?” Barri demanded to know, hearing that her voice sounded more like Barry. “Stalin, ‘man of steel’ who you turned into...” Barri continued, trying to push her voice back up into some kind of female octave.

“...Someone who is in...hmmmm...in transition to becoming something he always wanted to be instead of being who he thinks he has to be,” Sigmund said while stroking his immaculately trimmed macho beard, after which he turned his attention to Barri, admiring her very femme anatomical features. “Like perhaps you are in transition to something that...”

“...Reminds you of YOUR mother? Or sister? Or alter ego which, take my word for it, from the dimension I’m stuck in, you don’t want to be,” Barri replied, pulling down the hem of her skirt with her left hand and wiping off lipstick that smeared outside of her lips with her right. “I really like the mop of thick, long hair, and people opening doors for me, and not having to look in a mirror to shave my face, but one thing feels kinda weird.”

“Penis envy, of course,” Sigmund replied with assuredness. “And above all, the desire to...smoke one of these,” he continued, taking a cigar out of his pocket, throwing it into Barri’s lap. “I can see you are still at the oral stage of development. And as for this cigar, symbolically is...”

“...just a cigar,” Barri replied, sniffing it “With some special oregano in it which...maybe got very present Little Joe here to ask imaginary Big Jack, or Jill, to whip him some more,” she said, noting that Stalin was on his knees, feeling his back being whipped by ghosts. “But wasn’t Stalin a sadist and not a masochist?”

“A masochist treats others like shit because he wants to be treated like shit also,” Sigmund noted. “And right now, he feels like a failure,” he continued. “Which you are! A failure. Comrade Stalin!” the good doctor yelled at the ‘bad’ patient. “For letting Hitler attack you and your country before you attacked him and his! And for killing all of

your best generals two years ago because you thought they were smarter than you! And having nothing but 'yes men' in command who are afraid to do anything without your approval! Who need a plan to push back the German Army as it advances more and more into the Motherland every day! A motherland that needs a plan. YOUR plan! The Master plan that will save the world and make it a Democratic Socialist Workers Paradise with you in charge! So you can make your dead father proud of you!"

"So, this other shrink who came in his own time capsule is stealing all of my best lines," Barri thought to herself, recalling the DVD of Stalin's Psychiatrist.

"And," Sigmund went on, getting into Stalin's face. "You are a failure because you could show God who is boss, you or Him! God, who allowed Hitler to come to power!"

"Yeah, God," Barri added, hoping that Sigmund didn't know that it was she as Barry who empowered Adolf to be an entertaining megalomaniac tyrant instead of just an angry one. "God who..."

A thought came to Barri. "Hey, Sigmund. Why didn't you talk to your patients in your own time and homeland about God? Ya know, God, the big man up in the sky with the angry voice who doesn't have a wife or a girlfriend, at least that we know about. Who gives us a mind a free will, but punishes you when you have thoughts that piss him off or offend him. Ya know, God, who can't take a joke but probably really wants to share a good laugh. And who, maybe should be seen in therapy for having put his kid through so much hell on earth. God, who yer supposed to fear, obey then love? God who..."

"...This patient thinks he is, or should be," the presumably atheist Jewish father of modern Psychiatry replied. "And has to be turned back into if the world isn't going to be overrun by Nazis who will kill all of my people, your people and so many other people, which could be stopped if we..." The grandfather clock on the wall struck twelve. Professor Doctor Freud put the notes from the table next to him into his briefcase, then

looked at his pocket-watch as he rose up with his painful and slowly moving feet. "Yes, it is time for me to say what all therapists must to all of their patients, and even to God."

"Your hour is up?" Barri asked.

"And yours is on," Sigmund replied with a warm, professional smile to Barry. He gathered his notes, inserted them into his briefcase and walked toward the wall, stopping under a portrait of Lenin. "We'll have to keep the secret about how and why Comrade Stalin killed you between us, Vladimir." He turned to Barri. "Right, Doctor Barri?"

"Sure," Barri said, to Sigmund, and the photo of Lenin.

"And as for your decriminalizing same sex relationships, Vladimir, you and Comrade Stalin...."

“Were gay?” Barri asked.

“One of them was,” he stated. “But there were other issues. Which I am sure you will deal with...” Sigmund handed over to Barri a stack of notes from his briefcase. “For your eyes only. Those invisible balls between your legs are in your court now.” With that, Sigmund walked into the wall, disappearing somewhere on the other side of it.

Barri prepared herself to become the first person to see the real, no bullshit, notes of Sigmund Freud. The charismatic, self-tortured, too intelligent for his own good shrink who made creative cookoo crazy not only acceptable in modern society, but required for advancement into any kind of stature in the film, theatre or dance world. Barri prepared herself to be educated, enlightened and liberated. And, yes, to figure out what knot was tied up in Barri that could be untied to make him be able to not only understand life, but, yes...enjoy it!

It was a short lived ‘woulda/coulda’ moment. A note was slipped under the triple locked from the inside door. Barri’s 90 going on 19 Woodstock hippie mama granny translator glasses from the time capsule read allowed her to decipher the Russian writing on the sweat and blood stained memo all too well. “German Army now 300 miles inside the Soviet Union. Need orders as to how to proceed, Comrade Stalin,” it read with handwriting that displayed low crossed t’s, big loops, a left slant and a light touch on the pencil. “Please, Comrade Stalin, you will tell us what to do so we don’t do anything you disapprove of?” the man, or rather mouse, who delivered the memo said. “Low self esteem, terrified of criticism, more submissive than a Mormon CEO who inadvertently hired a triple D Dominatrix in a Vegas hotel room, and lack of self determination. The kind of slave who’s more afraid of freedom than the Master’s, or Mistress’s whip,” Barri quietly said to herself having assessed the voice and writing as belonging to the same shivering, and perhaps by the smell outside the door, urine spilling soldier who knew how to take orders but was terrified to give them.

“Please Comrade Stalin, General, Sir, Your Excellency, tell us what to do about the German invasion? How shall we fight them?” the messenger begged.

Barri took in a deep breath, then took another listen at Stalin as he was arguing with whatever ghosts he was imagining, or about to bring into the ‘real’ world. She then replied in her best ‘man of steel’ imitative voice, “Start anywhere and keep going. Fight as free thinking individuals fighting for your Comrades and the Motherland.”

“Yes, but who shall lead us to be free thinking individuals?” the cowardly Comrade said, surprisingly convinced that the terrified Barri was indeed his ‘fearless leader’. “Which one of us should lead the Army in the North, the West and what is left of the South? Who shall be our leaders?”

“Whoever...eh....doesn’t want the job when times are good,” Barri advanced, sharing the discovery that had just been born into her brain because she was bold enough to give birth to it. “And who takes it on when things go to shit.”

“And if he does anything wrong, according to you anyway?” the officer of floating rank asked. “Do we have your permission to reassign him? Or...”

“Pick the smartest guys, the wisest guys and,” Barri recalled something he read about Socrates, which maybe was true, or maybe wasn’t. But it was worth a shot. “As ignorance is the soul source of cruelty and ineffectiveness... the most caring guys,” Barri smirked to himself, unable to resist the next credo that came out. “And the guys who have fucked up family lives. Since if you have a good wife, you’ll have a happy life. And if you have a bad wife, you’ll become a philosopher, or a philosopher king. Or a philosopher warrior who knows that the only thing that allows shithheads to rule the world is for good men, women and anyone in between to do nothing.”

“What was that?” the soldier-commissar asked. “You don’t sound like yourself, Comrade Stalin. Should I call a doctor?”

Barri collected herself, having realized that putting words into Stalin’s mouth that weren’t and couldn’t be his would meet with suspicion. Particularly if they were related with expressive vitality, as Stalin was famous for his droning, hypnotic speeches that lulled people into obedience. Much like the Eastern Orthodox priests were masters at doing. And which Stalin had been schooled to become when he was training in the Seminary.

“Comrade Stalin?” the soldier-commissar enquired, with an increasingly sense of self-assertion bordering dangerously on independent thinking. “Can we perhaps ask if you don’t mind, that you open this door, and come out to give us orders? Even cruel ones? We don’t know what to do without you! You rule with an iron hand and that is what Russia needs now most of all! Please do not shoot anyone else who tries to open this door!”

“So, then, fuck off and let me devise a plan!” Barri blasted back in her best droning Dominator voice, staring towards and into the man behind the door. “I am the Man of Steel.”

“Yes, I am, Man of Steel,” Barri heard in a loud voice from behind her, in a voice that convinced the junior for life commissar to walk away. “Or I...used to be anyway,” the ‘real’ Stalin continued, in a thankfully softer voice. But with a sense of finality. He reached for a knife, preparing to slit his wrist. “This will please you, yes?” he asked the ghost in front of him. “I am garbage.”

“Or maybe you can use this knife against him,” Barri whispered into Stalin’s ear as she held her own hand against his wrist, pointing in the direction of the ghost he had lost so many arguments to.

“You mean her,” Stalin said to Barri regarding the ghost, after which he looked at the hand which saved him from exploring what was beyond the veil. Then the body, then

eyes to whom those gentle, soft, feminine paws belonged to. “Who is a lot more beautiful than this bitch is, or ever was,” he said to the ghost. “And who would have ASKED me if I wanted to be born into her family instead of forcing me to!”

“So, tell me about your mother,” Barri asked Stalin, as a shrink.

“Ask her to tell her about herself!” Stalin grumbled as he threw away the knife, then pushed himself onto his feet, shuffling to his cushioned lounge chair like an man twice his age. “You woman have a special way of communicating, so you tell me.”

“Which we do,” Barri replied, raising her index finger toward the ceiling and perhaps smoke and mortar filled sky above it. “A..eh...whole language of our own,” she explained with a confident grin.

“Which you will show me?” Stalin begged, retrieving a revolver from under a pile of maps on his night-table, aiming it his head. “Tell her,” he said as he pointed to the female ghost. “In the language that she understands, that everything I did I did for her. But that I failed. And am a failure. And will repent for it, as a MAN!”

Barri took in a deep breath, then addressed the ghost in her best gibberish.

“And her reply?” Stalin asked from the depths of despair.

“She says that you still have it in you,” Barri translated.

“What! My defective father’s genetics!!!!” Stalin blasted back, lowering his pistol.

“No,” Barri volleyed back. “Destiny is what you have in you! The destiny that was entrusted to you by him,” she said of Saint Vladimir Lenin, pointing to the photo behind the cracked glass. “And approved by Him! God!”

“God does not exist,” Stalin shot back. “Tell her, this ghost of my mother, that You don’t exist, You underachieving sadist!” he continued, addressing the Divinity who was voted out of existence at the Kremlin Constitutional Convention but who, Barri hoped, remained in the hearts of everyone who wore the Red Army star.

“God is a sadist and he doesn’t even know it,” Barri said, recalling an old Sam Peckenpaw film.

“And what philosopher said that?” Stalin inquired.

“Eh...a German soldier who was retreating from the Red Army,” she said, recalling the classic, in her time anyway, film Cross of Iron. “But the worst you can say about God is that he’s an underachiever,” Barri continued, allowing the outer margin of her lips to turn upward, reminding her that she was developing more worry lines by the minute and would be an old hag, repulsive in appearance to her patient and her within the hour.

Stalin holstered his revolver as he smiled then chuckled slightly at Woody Allen line from Annie Hall, revealing, yes, a sense of humor in the most dangerous carrier of dull out disease created in the 20th century.

“Yeah, heaven watches and earth works,” Barri continued, strolling around on shapely legs which...were developing ugly varicose veins with each step! “And if we work hard, and fast enough, we change the rules,” she went on as she sat down on Stalin’s cot, which by the smell of it, had been sweated in and urinated on for at least a week. “YOU change the rules! And the primary rule is that, assuming you’re not a card carrying masochist, treat others the way you want to be treated and good shit will happen to and for you. What do you want? What do you really want?”

“The question is WHO do I really want,” Stalin replied with a twinkle in his eye, approaching the cot with a strong, assertive stride, loosening his belt.

Barri shook in her stilettos, pulling in her arms as ‘But will you love me tomorrow, or send me to a Gulag for disappointing you under the sheets?’ went through her head.

“The who isn’t you, or course, but...” Stalin said as he stared down at Barri, seeming to be ten feet tall, After which he turned away and pushed him self-mutulated legs to the victrola, viewing the record on it with loving eyes. “It’s her. The woman in this song.”

The Man of Steel turned into a bowl of half chilled jelly as he put the needle onto the record, and sung along with.... “I looked for you, little grave. My heart choked with pain I wept and called out Souliko. Overwhelmed by your misfortune.”

The rest of the lyrics to Suliko, apparently Stalin’s favorite torch song, were as uplifting as a three D rendition of “Nomadland” or an updated HD version of ‘Rosemary’s Baby’. “Whoever sent in this recording was a German agent, or a mad scientist working in Moscow who was devising a new audio drug to put out ALL of the inner fire in passion-driven psych patients,” Barri thought to herself.

“I saw a rose in the forest, from which dew ran like tears In my sorrow I cried Souliko, Is this you, who has flowered so far away?” Stalin sung with regret, sorrow and defeat in his eyes as he sunk deeper into his arm chair as it if was a coffin. Before Stalin could shut the lid on that coffin by withdrawing his revolver, or falling upon his knife or, worse, willing himself into a coma he would never wake up from, Barri pulled the needle off the record. She grabbed hold of Stalin’s shaking, cold weak heads and pulled him up on his trembling feet.

“At first I was afraid, I was petrified, kept thinking I could never live without you by my side,” Barri sung with her best, and apparently effective, imitation of Gloria Gayner. “But then I spent so many nights thinking how you did me wrong. And I grew strong,” she continued whipping the limp Man of Steel into a disco dance carried by her own

voice only. And the music that Olivia, in her younger days, and Tanya, more recently, said was inside Barry's 'I don't dance and can't sing' soul.

"You think I'd crumble? You think I'd lay down and die?" Barri fast forwarded to, putting the disco dance into full throttle. "Oh no, not I, I will survive. We will survive!" she went on, feeling the music pour into and bring new vitality into Stalin. Who, yes, she was falling in like, lust and maybe love with.

Barri felt...accomplished, and privileged. Comrade Stalin, who normally walked like Frankenstein and talked like on Stephen Wright on downer qualudes, was singing and dancing like he was a cross between John Travolta and Luciano Pavorati.

"Hey, what harm can it do?" Barri asked herself in advance of Tanya's hyper affirmative request to not tell people in the past what would happen in the future. "Disco becomes king in the Soviet Union. Stalin leads his country into a victory dance into Berlin in record time. And Adolf Hitler is sent back into rehab after the war instead of becoming a resort owner in Argentina. Everything is back on track, as long as I can prevent myself from aging as a woman, into something Comrade Stalin will dispose or, or be repulsed to look at or dance with," Barri thought to herself as she felt crows' feet developing around her eyes, and a double chin growing below her smiling lips. And saw flaps of loose, wrinkled skin fall down from her forearms. "Yeah, gotta get Comrade Stalin back into battle, fast, so this train of history can get back on track," she concluded.

But as for what the track will lead to, Barri fell off the train when the dancing man of musical steel threw her for a leap into the air that landed her on the wall, then into...

CHAPTER 8

Men age better than women, as proven through the ages in ANY age eon. Better to be an old man accepting of advanced age rather than an aging woman fighting to deny it, particularly a woman who was aging one year for every minute of 'real' time in Stalin's very real private bunker, Barri recalled as she woke up as Barry, remembering a long dream filled with a lot of music, a whole lot of dancing and then a whole lot of marching. All of which left Barry with a sore throat and really tired legs. Said legs had hair on them this time. Unlike his head, which had far fewer hair follicles on it and shorter ones.

"No grass grows on busy streets, I suppose," Barry told himself as he stroked the crown of his smooth head, feeling the rim of straggly hair around it. As for the skin below his waist, he found his ass jiggling around in a bed that was far more comfortable than the one from his original 'home time'. In a room that smelled of 'clean' rather than sweat, grunge or residual cat pee. As said cat meowed, leaping on top of his hairy chest.

"Yeah, a fucking top of the mourning spelt with an 'ou' to you too, Tripod," he said to the cat who still had four legs as he stroked her between her shoulders. "And where were you in the last 'future' I woke up in? I missed you girl," he related, and shared, after which the cat turned its back on him. "Or I mean, 'boy'" he said, seeing the Tripod bit the scruff of a cat hiding under the blanket next to him, determined to get her knocked up. Indeed the lucky, or unlucky, female cat was Chester, a stray male cat in Barry's original 'home time' who was now female. Who Tripod had been having a secret affair with when human 'Mama Olivia' wasn't looking. "But, guys," Barry said to the now happily mating feline as his legs hit the floor. "This bed, with this mattress I don't recognize, is for humans to sleep in, and drop in from other dimensions from, not for you use as a love nest to..."

As he watched the cats enjoy the pleasure that the Creator permitted as part of painful procreation Barry recalled, with more fondness than he intended to feel, how the bed in his private study had been the location for a few special nights of love making with Olivia when his wife was especially needy, loving or inebriated.. As the felines got that glassy 'I don't know where the fuck my soul is now and don't care' glow in their eyes, he imagined what it would have been like to wake up to see Tanya's face smiling at him in the morning, inviting him to share yet another day with her. He found himself vicariously enjoying watching the feline love fest, but not as a perversion this time. Indeed, there was one thing that he was concerned with. "Tripod," he said to his beloved cat, adjusting his tone and intentions to his new male gender. "If Chester is, as I suspect, a female feline because of something I did back in Comrade Stalin's bedroom, be sure that she's spayed OR that you sign a prenap. And that she won't nail you for child support payments once she gets tired of you."

Tripod nodded 'yes' to the suggestion and warning, or so it seemed anyway. Barry let himself think that the message was understood by the two love cats as he got up and pulled the newspaper away from under the litterbox. He read the headlines as they were illuminated by the rays of morning sunlight which penetrated through the partially closed

curtains. Half of the writing in the New York Times, which pledged that its contents contained ‘all the news that is true, relevant and/or useful’, was in English, the other in Cirillic. “So, the Russian Mob, or a genius stock broker in Brighton Beach took over the New York Times, or the Cold War ended with a cooperative tie, or...” he said as he put on his glasses to read them. As the bold fluorescent print penetrated his eyes, his pupils opened wider than those of the felines at the height of carnal ecstasy. “Tanya re-elected Philosopher Queen of the US, USSR and most of the countries in between! By an overwhelming majority.” he related to Tripod and ‘Chestera’ a with dropped jaw that turned into a shit eating grin. “So, in this universe, guys,” he related to the cats, feeling that he had put the world irreversibly back onto a course upward towards an inevitable Enlightened Destiny rather than down the crapper with a slow flush. “Shit doesn’t rise to the top. And....”

“We’ll be late for the Inauguration,” he heard from the next room. From a familiar, friendly and supportive voice. “It’s appropriate that we share this affirmation and accomplishment,” Tanya said as she entered Barry’s study, after which she gently pulled him into a hug, then laid a hefty kiss onto and into his lips. After pulling back from such, her smiling face was radiant, confident and lacked any sense of worry or self-effacement. “But there’s something I need you to do right now,” Tanya said, as she twirled around her 20--something year old more perfectly than ever body around, her long, red hair flipping around like a flame of magnificence. “Do me up,” she instructed Barry, pushing the zipper on her bod-con purple dress into Barry’s chest.

Barry did her bidding, of course, then waited for the whole ‘President to be yet again’ package to present herself to him. Upon doing so, Tanya’s chin was held up more than usual. Her back was arched. Her shoulders pulled back when she stepped into her four inch stiletto heels. Her cell phone rang. When looking at it, she rolled her eyebrows, pursed her lips and slurred out a discrete wade of spit regarding the caller.

“Another loser who thinks he has a chance to be a winner. A winner like...me,” she said regarding the caller. “And you if you stick around me long enough,” she smiled at Barry in the way that reminded him of...someone else. Olivia, who was not at home. Or perhaps was never at this home. But whose picture was on the wall in a special frame marked ‘Most Wanted and Not Needed’.

“The biggest loser of them all,” Tanya said regarding the image of Barry’s wife in different times, and dimensions “Who, well, finally is getting the help she needs,” President Philosopher Queen Tanya commented with pity, and the kind of detachment that the educated on top said of the ignorant who were born on the bottom. Or had been put there by the ones on top. “A good thing that I saved the world from her, and you, aye?” Tanya continued, slipping into a Canadian diction, as she worked her way to the porch of the house, which was now a balcony overlooking an incoming crowd.

“Yeah,” Barry replied, following her. His gut said that it would be futile to ask any questions of the Renaissance millennial chick who seemed to now become Catherine the Great. Great in her mind anyway. And, apparently, in the trusting hearts and simple

minds of the crowd that emerged on the other side of the window, applauding her, begging her, like hungry dogs eager for any bone they could get, to come out and say some words to them. ANY words. They applauded her, bowing their heads, speaking her praises. “Long Live Comrade Philosopher Queen Tanya!” they chanted, then danced to a disco beat.

“Act like an asshole, be treated like a saint,’ a necessary strategy for these useful idiots who, with my help, and your continued cooperation, will become useful citizens, and enlightened individuals,” Tanya affirmed to Barry from the sides of her mouth as she waved her hand to her adoring crowds, rewarding them with a ‘yes, I do approve of and allow you existence’ regal smile.

“And the first one who stops chanting, dancing and clapping gets sent to the same mental ward as Olivia is in, for her own good,” Barry gave voice to, noting the ‘Metropolitan Psychiatric Institute’ logo on Olivia’s blouse and the wall behind her in another ‘most wanted and not needed’ photo of her hanging on the wall. “When the music’s over, turn out their lights?”

“Yes, of course,” Tanya said, with a matter of fact voice.

“It was a joke,” Barry explained with a wide smile as four men, and two women in black suits, dark sunglasses and tight lips approached him from both sides, as if from nowhere. “Humor,” he explained to them. “Lets you master tragedy and convert misery into...”

Barry thought about tickling the Minions in Black into cracking smiles on their grim, humorless, wrinkled faces, but he feared that it would make crevices that would bleed.

Another call came in on Tanya’s cell. “Someone....important that I have to deal with,” she explained to Barry as she connected emotionally to the caller. “You understand, don’t you?” she told her husband with the happiest of tones.

“Yeah, I do,” Barry replied, lying and telling the truth both at the same time.

Tanya left the balcony, retreating into her private study, the doors closing behind her by more sun-glassed personality lacking good looking goons.

“Yeah, like the Godfather, with her being Al Pacino,” Barry said to himself as he heard the office door click into a locked state. “With me as Diane Keaton,” he slurred quietly from his dry lips as he looked at himself in the mirror. “And you as someone...who I have to know a lot better than I ever did,” he remarked, silently addressing the reflection of Olivia’s photo.

Once again, Barry’s problems dealt with finding old locations in a new ‘present-time’ and explaining his absence to those who demanded his presence. And the present presence of Tanya as Comrade Philosopher Queen of most of the world. A flash came to Barry’s brain box regarding the reason why she tolerated, used and trusted him. “Somehow, me

being who I was and she tricked me into being seemed to make this moment possible,” Barry thought to himself. “Becoming Philosopher Queen Comrade President of the world with the power to do anything she wanted, or needed, to do, was exactly what she was planning?” he asked himself. “But was the world so bad because of such?” he posed as yet another inquiry.

A quick speed read of the New York Times, spelt with a y of course, reported no hunger for food, no shortage of housing, no wars, and no dull out disease. And the writing was literary, musical and contained jokes in it. Complete with five syllable words that few people could understand, but could figure out given the artistic and informative phrases around them. All of it told with several voices which belonged to one source, when you listened to them closely enough. “Yeah, Tanya is really doing an effective Ben Franklin here,” Barry muttered to himself.

“Ben Franklin, Sir?” asked one of the secret service guards with intensely good hearing, perhaps amplified by earbuds bearing Tanya rather than Uma’s likeness as a trademark. He leaned in towards Barry demanding an answer. “What do you mean by that?”

“It’s a....ya know...compliment,” Barry replied. “Comrade Tanya coaches the best and most honest writers she can find, who learned how to write as individuals by working with her,” he gave voice to. “And not telling the public that all of the bylines for those different writers with different voices and opinions were hers. That she was writing every news story that everyone in the world believed, whether it was the truth or not,” he kept to himself. “But, more important to keep the people inspired and effective than informed,” Barry continued in voice, as the secret service agent stared into his face. With an X-ray vision as to what was inside his head that rivaled that of the mother who raised Barry. A mind reading ability which was as sharp as Olivia’s (the surrogate mother he married) and Tanya’s in previous dimensions. Yes, Tanya who in Barry’s ‘original home time’ said on more than one occasion that anyone who wanted to be king, queen or president of the world should not be trusted with the job.

“Believing and dedicating yourself to an ideal illusion makes a better reality happen,” Barry said in audible words to the even more suspicious and well armed secret service agent. “Which, as you know, Tanya said a long time ago.”

“I don’t recall her saying or writing that,” the agent in the black suit whose soul was even darker replied.

“Well, I do!” Barry replied with affirmation that scared the agent, as well as himself. As it was the truth. From a truer time. One that he had to bring back, even though it had its problems. “And if anyone knows what was in Tanya’s heart and mind, it’s me!” he affirmed.

“What was or what is?” the agent demanded to know.

“Both,” Barry answered.

“But the important question is what WILL be,” he advanced, shifting into a non-confrontational modality, offering Barry a cigarette.

“I don’t smoke,” Barry replied, smelling the label-less doobie with the strange aroma that was pleasing to the nostrils yet scary to the soul.

“Comrade Tanya says you do, and will,” he smiled back.

“Can’t,” Barry answered, faking a cough. “Allergies, that she does know about.”

“To what?” the agent requested to know.

“The fabric you’re being cuddled, clothed and choked by,” Barry’s reply as he took hold of the lapel of the agent’s coat and smelled it. “This wacky tabacchi that probably will take me to outdated strawberry fields,” he went on, sniffing the cigarette. “The disco dancing and chanting of liberated individuals outside who ‘will survive’ until they die early inside of too much mindless happy thirty years before their bodies and souls decide to get permanent divorce,” he continued, futilely trying to point the seemingly intelligent head agent to the non-thinking crowd below the balcony.

Barry’s body shook as he realized what was coming out of his mouth, and gut. And that most of it WAS understood by the dull out disease infected head secret service agent. “And...eh...” Barry continued, faining being defectively sick in the knogin rather than psychologically different in the soul. “All this, like, power. Which is shaking and baking all of my harmony shakras. I need some fresh air. Some quiet time and... A....eh...zagnet bar. Comfort food and the right dose of theobromide, bromochlick and clikomedroniambenzoid,” he said, trying to invent another seven syllable non-sense word that is in the dictionary of every nut case who makes up his own language. “And the medication that Tanya’s doctor secretly prescribed for me so that I don’t embarrass her in public as a husband who—“.

“---Is happily married,” the agent assured Barry, placing his arm on Barry’s shaking shoulder like a caring brother and honest friend. “To the woman he always wanted, and envisioned as his love mate from the first time he discovered his manhood.”

“And...was thinking about coming out of the womb,” Barry replied. “From a mother who...well...was from up there,” he continued, pointing to the sky.

“Up there where?” the agent enquired, with the furling eyebrows of a new detective trying to fish out what woman, man or non-humanoid companion his abusive Captain is boinking in the interrogation room when the curtains are drawn closed.

Barry looked at the photo of Olivia, who on more than one occasion successfully pretended to be both emotionally unbalanced so that she was excused from being a human being who is responsible for her actions. And thought about the mother he had

before he got married. Or maybe he discovered something empowering within himself. But wherever it came from, it flowed out fast and furious.

Barry named the planet of his origin in a language of his own making. Along with the reasons for having to go back there for a break, delivered convincingly in enough English words mixed in the tongue of his ET 'Metametamorfo' family in such a way that he sounded convincing, and terrifying. He seemed harmless to the contingent of agents. Then became the source of ridicule. Who was allowed to go outside for some fresh extra-planetary air by the head secret service agent, who seemed to want to be more than that.

Barry discretely nodded a thank you to the photo of Olivia in her Harmony House hospital gown, and noted that she winked back at him. Maybe it was real, or maybe it wasn't. And when he promised Olivia, in Metametamorfoese of course, to find and liberate her from the nuthouse, she nodded back a thank you which was sincere. She mouthed the address of her current residence to him, which maybe was an auditory hallucination or perhaps was some other law about how the present future operated. Or maybe it was the same as the original miserable present that Barry found himself yearned for. The primary law being that just as 'you become what you write, eat and decide to fuck under the sheets' is the law of any land. The second, third, and fourth law being that 'if you fake being something, you will become it.'

Finding Metropolitan Psychiatric Institute (now renamed Harmony House) was easy, as it was advertized on every billboard in town as a place where disturbed souls could find 'peace and purpose'. It was an impressive facility from the front. Happy patients, caring orderlies and docs so aesthetically pleasing to the professional seeking eye that they made Doctor Oz and Queen Oprah look like the schleps who got plastic surgery on their faces that were too distorted to show even on 'Botched'. But the back door was something else. Garbage was taken out on a regular basis, containing rotten food of every food group, including chicken wings, buffalo ribs and what looked like humanoid fingers. "I am garbage," Barry thought to himself as he slipped into one of the mostly empty bins about to be pushed back into the facility. "But I'm not a piece of shit and I will not die," he whispered to himself as the rest of the altered lyrics of the 'garbage song' that he had learned when living with, and for, Olivia. Thinking, and hoping, that she was his new Tanya now.

Armed with wardrobe from closets, laundry bins and lockers in the shower rooms for the staff, and a renewed ability to believe his own bullshit, along with making others believe it (temporarily anyway), Barry posed as a muscle bound 'speak no English' orderly, a granny nurse who forgot to shave that morning, a Viennese shrink who was doing a study for the local university, a pharmaceutical rep who was looking for the junkie who stole his free samples, and finally a priest who insists that he was assigned by the Vatican to do an exorcism on the Pope's sister. He finally found Olivia in a very private room, under a different name at the end of a long corridor of locked doors with brightly white walls that reeked of ammonia, urine and half digested lunch.

“So, Amelia O’Brien-Chang,” Barry said with his best fake Italian Catholic Priest accent, looking above him for whatever cameras were watching. “Satan be gone,” he commanded, pulling out two Buddhist chopsticks he had fashioned into a crucifix which may have actually done the job on three patients of unknown identity and a self-loathing head nurse he had treated en route. He followed up of course with mock Latin, or something that sounded like it. It felt like the real thing to a closed eyed and comatose Olivia. Finally he had to stop, facing the fact that Olivia was unreachable. “Olivia, I’m... s....,” he said, kneeling on the floor to the woman who he was told he had abandoned and hurt in this ‘future’, or perhaps the others. “I’mmm sssoorrr...”

“Sorry?” she said, opening up her eyes, and turning to him. “Sorry for what?” she demanded to know.

“I don’t know,” Barry replied, truthfully, averting his eyes.

“Do you want me to tell you?” she asked, constructively. “Inform you about what and who you fucked up, ‘Father’ Barry?”

“Maybe later,” Barry replied. “But for now, tell me how to fix it all. If you can, which I think you can. Hope you can. And...ya know...”

“Pray that I can?” Olivia replied. “It may be too late,” she said as...Tanya, somehow. “You were always a horrible mechanic, particularly when I needed something fixed. The only kid in your class who failed shop class, twice, so you said, and was proud of that. Who finally passed when---”

“---yeah, I made that ash tray that wobbled when you put an ashes into it, and a water pitcher that leaked every time you tried to fill it,” he reflexely shot out, having realized that it was from another ‘future’ which perhaps had not happened in this one. “And who---”

“---- somehow kept all of his fingers, unlike the eight fingered crabby shop teacher who told you that---”

“---I would make some real man a great and helpless wife,” Barry interjected, recalling many speculations, and truths. “A wife who...” Barry fixed on Olivia’s face, recalling the dimension when she was Oliver.

“A wife who did and was what?” she asked, baffled. “Why are you looking at me like that? And what’s really going on between you and Tanya now, after you left me.”

“Which wasn’t all my idea!” Barry speculated, and hoped was true.

“Which I do know,” Olivia confessed, and related. “Tanya has to be stopped. Something that I know, knew anyway and...maybe you know, now.”

“Which she can be, if know where she hid the machine. That time machine that---.”

“—Has to be real,” Olivia blasted back, sitting back, lifting up her arms. Shaking the restrains which dug into her wrists the harder she tried to get loose from them. “The only explanation I have for all of what happened, and I dreamed did happen. That machine which I found one day in---“ Olivia said no more, pointing Barry’s attention to a roving drone outside the window. She nodded her aching head to the pen in Barry’s pocket, demanding that he put his hand on her shriveled wrist.

Barry could make out the map she drew on his forearm all too clearly. “I hope it’s still there. But it needs a battery. You DO know how to put in a battery. And how to drive that thing, right? But...”

Barry’s jaw dropped.

“So, you fucked up at driving school also, I suppose,” Olivia related with a ‘what else can go wrong’ shaking of her head. “But...I think the settings are...”

When the drone left, Olivia instructed Barry to unzip his pants, and allow her hand to sneak under them. She wrote down the numbers that Barry on the skin around his, for the first time in a while, hard penis, with affirmation and affection. “Time it was, it was a time it was,” she sang in a droning voice. “A time of innocence, a time of confidences.”

“So, what does Simon and Garfunkel have to do with this?” he asked.

“You’ll find out,” Olivia said, with certainty. And the kind of knowledge about the real world that only a crazy one living in her/his own universe could obtain. “And when you get there, you have to...” she continued with a voice that abruptly lost its volume and intensity. From a mouth that froze shut with eyes that were pulled into a blank stare.

Barry tried to shake Olivia out of the demons or drugs in her infusion pumps that were pulling her into what was a very real coma. Or a sleep from which she would never wake up from. Neither shaking, nor reason, nor exorcisms in which Jesus, Buddha and Mohamed were invited into could wake up Olivia, even as Oliver. But there was one thing which was real. “Father?” the nurse whose soul Barry had on his way into Olivia’s ward liberated from bondage from Satan, and her own defective self-destructive reflexes said from behind him. “We have some special patients who need your help, right now.”

“And this one!?” Barry blasted out, pointing to Olivia.

“Lost,” the nurse said with a mixture of resolve and pity, after which three very big for real orderlies came in, adjusting the pumps shunting goodies into Olivia’s limp arms. “And, not on the list of those who need immediate treatment,” she continued in a very official capacity. “We’ll take care of her, as best as we can.”

“And are assigned to,” Barry thought but knew enough to not say. While being guided out as the newest fad and miracle in psychotherapy, he looked back at Olivia, assuring her in a silent conversation between their eyes that he would make things alright. Or at least different.

After three more miracle cures he was requested to do, and one failed experiment in giving back the soul to its original owner, ‘Father Barry’ left the hospital. Not recognized, so he thought, or hoped. He found his way to the address Olivia had given to him. “Uncle Joe’s Auto Repair”, it read, with a picture of a smiling Joseph Stalin on the logo of the sign above the barbed wire fence which, with skill Barry found in his fingers, he was able to cut through and inactivate the security system. It was night time, thankfully, and the next auto to be ‘rebuilt’ and re-licensed was indeed the time machine. Lacking a battery. In need of a driver that Barry became, once again. Hopefully for the last time. As usual, the procedure involved him falling asleep at the wheel. After a five second slumber that felt like five years, he woke up in and as...

CHAPTER 9

“Time to get to work,” Barry heard while waking up from a slumbering in a chair more comfortable than any bed he recalled ever being in, by himself or with anyone else.

“Barry,” the greeter continued out in high pitched, hypnotic voice .

“A few more minutes of sleep, Ma,” Barry slurred out.

“I’m not your Ma,” the woman blasted out. “Or your Pa!” she continued two octaves lower. “I’m...”

“...One of the gods who was assigned the job of pissing on me!” Barry said, after feeling a stream of water from the sky, or maybe from someone’s bladder, on his face. But this time, unlike the dream he had experienced several nightmares ago, the rain from the sky tasted sweet. “Since when did you immortals becoming diabetic? Stop pissing on our parades and making our computers crash just before we’re about to put in the last edit on our films or books and maybe we inferior mortals will share some of our insulin with you,” he asked, and offered. opening his eyes, prepared to tell Zeus, Wotan or the more contemporary ETs. But what he saw was more frightening, and disturbing.

“You’re the only Guidance Councilor who didn’t call in sick today,” said the very mortal Secretary in a men’s blazer sporting short Clark Gable purple-red hair framed by very feminine eyebrows holstering a water pistol back into a purse, or shoulder briefcase. “And it’s that problem student again who needs your help. You need to tell her something that makes her feel better, or, even more important, make her look like she feels better for the State Inspectors so we won’t lose this new grant like we did the last one.”

“And this new grant is to do what?” Barry asked, having assessed that he was perfectly uniformed as a ‘thinking for ourselves’ teacher with jeans, a tweed jacket and a white shirt, which of course was not accompanied by a tie. “Specifically, that is.”

The gender neutral Secretary angrily plunked down a two inch thick file onto Barry’s desk. “Apply this mandate!” she said of the grant application bearing the names of ten educators who had more initials after their names than the number of letters in their surnames. “To this problem!” he/she continued, throwing a file onto Barry’s lap.

The name of the problem was all too familiar. “Ah, yes, Tanya,” Barry slurred out through his interestingly mustached lip, trying his best to fit into the role in which he was put into without the benefit of seeing the script first, or the series bible. While reading the report on triple troubled teen who was soon to be a trouble making millennial adult, Barry put his hand over his mouth, hiding the expletives he was muttering to himself from the no doubt triple PC Secretary who would have him fired, fined and imprisoned if he/she knew who he really was. It was an issue indeed that Barry couldn’t answer for himself either. Who was he anyway? In what ‘future universe’ did he fit in? And in which one would he die? Or live in illusion? Indeed, dementia in some form hits

humanoids over 65 more often than those with as many IQ points are pulled into become disciples of the Kardashians. “Maybe I’m imagining all of this?” Barry asked himself. “And imagining that Tanya in this universe never won an award other than a ‘finally, go decided to climb out of there’ from her mother at the time of birth. And is on the bottom of every totem pole, even though she knows more about Indian totem poles than the Indians themselves know. And her poetry declares that she will---”

“---Turn the totem poles upside down or blow them up entirely,” the Secretary said, reading Barry’s mind, or perhaps hearing what he was whispering to his imaginary friends. “She’s dangerous to herself and others, but she said that she will talk to you. Tell YOU where she hid those, as she described them, ‘stink bombs that will bury and smother the cool, hip and happening assholes with their own shit’.”

“Sounds like she’s stuck in an anal stage of development,” Barry noted with a whimsical grin.

“Into what?” the Secretary inquired, confounded rather than offended.

“A common problem, that goes away if you eat the right kind of fiber, make some Mister Hanky’s and can sing ‘It’s Hard to be a Martian on Earth, Especially at Christmas’ with more notes that are off-key than on,” Barry mused in a Viennese accent as an onstage “Dr Sigmund”, feeling himself liberated and empowered. knowing that indeed he was able to transform struggle and tragedy into humor for himself and others.

But the joke didn’t register with the Secretary. Her lips pursed themselves into an indignant frown. But, at least it was some reaction, since, as Barry knew, ‘if it’s not offensive to somebody, it’s not comedy’.

But, maybe the whole joke was on Barry now? What or who arranged things such that he wound up being Tanya’s guidance counselor in her younger teenaged years? Those years she never talked or wrote about. Yet, there was one thread that seemed to hold together the disconnected ideas and theories about her upbringing that were now gelling into one cohesive explanation. “Tanya did say that I looked familiar when I first met her in the library,” Barry noted, and said, regarding the conversations he had with Tanya when this whole time travel situation started.

“She says that to everybody now.” the Secretary interjected, from a crueler and less enlightened perspective. “‘Past lives’ she says when she’s asked to explain it. Or...”

“...Future encounters?” Barry speculated, and offered.

“Yes, that too,” the reply with a sigh of distain. “Since, according to her, the past, present and future all intersect in a place she calls...”

“...Trafalgar according to Kurt Vonnegut, writer of Slaughterhouse Five,” Barry interjected as he flipped the pages on Tanya’s academic transcripts, criminal record and

psychological profile. “The creative zone, according to musicians who lose themselves in the riff. The Eternal now to yogis who can meditate themselves through the planes of consciousness and hop across any border guards and customs agents who want to see their passports and covid vaccination certificates when they---“

“---Do what they have to do, because they forgot what they want to do,” Barry heard from someone who sounded and, other than the fresh blood, vomit and excrement plastered on her upper chest and neck, smelled familiar. “They told me that I had to talk to you,” Tanya said, lighting up a joint just below the ‘no-smoking, please’ sign. She offered him a toke.

“Not this time,” Barry replied, noting the slit marks on Tanya’s wrists which occupied more space than the skin. “But I thank you for---”

“---- Not blowing up the pretentious shitheads who make me AND you feel like crap, or sending myself to the abyss?” Tanya said, after which she lowered her head, and unbuttoned her blouse. “Making you this last offer which....”

“----You never did make, when you were in your right mind,” Barry interjected. “In another time, a sort of future time,” he dared to put forth.

“Yeah, time,” Tanya replied. She was lost in the idea of it rather than the realities that could be changed when you fucked around with the historical clock, and karmic destinies it set in motion. “Wish I could go back in time to...make things different.”

“Different how?” Barry asked.

“Maybe I fucked up in a past lifetime, or didn’t use all of my opportunities, so in this lifetime,” the 14 year old poster child for depression, suicide and the existentialist award for burnt out cynic of the century slurred out of her pierced lips.

“You offer a dollar of sincerity and dedication to the table and the other diners fine you ten bucks?” Barry inquired, leaning back so that Tanya would have ample room to attack.

“Or steal twenty from my pocket, then laugh at me,” the ‘Woman of Steel’ replied, melting into a bowl of under gelled jello. Tears of shame flowed from her one fiery eyes, streaming down beet red angry cheeks. “The cool fucks are so good at making fun of everything I am and do, from my hairy legs.”

“Which you can shave,” Barry offered.

“To the balloons on my chest,” she continued, wiggling her breasts.

“Which tiny titted mean girls envy,” Barry suggested.

“And the smell under my arms, and the BO on my neck! Even after I bath, use deodorant. And the way I get out of breath when I struggle to do anything!” Tanya screamed back. “And my deep, full, un-hushed, un-slick voice that makes me...”

“...Unable to fit in with the effortless success is the best kind idiots and assholes who are too cool to sweat, and too stupid to know that no struggle leads to no accomplishment?” Barry advised, with a directed intensity, recalling all too many memories from his own experience being the ‘golden age’ of 15 going on 50, or 500. “They may seem to be the winners now, but as someone who we all should listen to, ‘the first ones now will later be last’.”

“Bob Dylan, yeah I know,” Tanya blasted back. “Who was never number nothing!”

“And Jesus,” Barry replied.

“Who was born to an ‘up there’ family who DID call the shots, after a fucked up three days on the cross,” Tanya offered from a 14 year old defiant mouth that sounded like it was 140 years experienced, and defeated. “AND he had 12 great Jewish agents to be sure that what he said wasn’t forgotten, and what he probably said that he didn’t want to be remembered never got to press.”

“True enough,” Barry said, impressed with the seed of intelligence and brilliance in young Tanya which dared to sprout branches without fear of them being cut down or burnt. “But,” he said, turning to her academic record, which was far less than stellar. “It’s common for Martian geniuses to know 130 percent of the info and getting, at most, 75 percent on the exams designed and graded by earthlings.”

“I’m a whole lot smarter than any scientist out there, more creative than any artist, and more able to make people think, feel and laugh with the operas and books I’ve written, like what’s in here,” she countered, handing Barry the overloaded briefcase slung over he hunched over and probably permanently bent into a bow back.

Tanya went on to describe the contents of her ‘independent study’ Missions with more confidence than Donald Trump regarding his brilliant climb to the top of the American economic and right wing political ladder. Or the undefeated, for real, ‘I am the Greatest’ Mohamed Ali. But, according to what Barry saw, heard and endured Tanya’s ‘modest yet honest boasting’ and the notes acclaimed experts and her teachers said which found its way into her file said that there was a big gap between her enthusiasm and delivery.

Her scientific innovations had mathematical miscalculation in them which a first year geometry student could pick up. Her thriller novels had as much spice and fire in them as warmed up water and luke warm oatmeal. Her attempts to insert comedy into her ‘dynamite discourse’ had all the punch of knock-knock jokes that a Mormon five year old kid would roll his eyebrows at. Her singing was so off key bad that it would take three technogeeks a week to auto-tune it into anything resembling a melody. Her

underground newspaper looked and felt like finger-painting. But, Tanya did bring fiery enthusiasm to everything she attempted to do and, as Barry saw it, and a few teachers confirmed, she had many truly innovative Visions incubating behind eyes. The only problem was that those eyes had rosy colored lenses on them, or were completely blind as to what she sent out to the world. But, all the experts who could be trusted said she would be a 'late bloomer' who would 'redefine everything and everyone' in the garden, and forest.

Yet there was one thing Tanya was very good at, right now. Her designs as to how to build explosives and to develop mind as well as body destroying toxins that could kill effectively, selectively and in ways that would not be detectable was top notch. And she understood history, her heroes being Napoleon, Caesar and a misunderstood artist who was forced to be a housepainter after being rejected from art school by 'cool, hip, happening' Jews.

Barry listened to Tanya's boasts about her abilities, and indignation at not being allowed into any 'club' of movers and shakers. As to how to get what she wanted, and deserved, Barry decided to quote the smartest person he knew. "Ya know, you should never want to be a member of any club that would have you as a member," he related with a fake cigar in his mouth.

But Tanya didn't understand, or appreciate, the Groucho Marx quote. "So, I'm free to go?" she asked Barry at the end of the session, as two policemen appeared outside the window of his office. One of them held up a straight jacket, showing it to Barry, pointing to Tanya.

Barry nodded 'no' to the cop with the straight jacket, then closed the curtain. "Stay here," he instructed Tanya. "And don't say anything to anyone who comes in here," he said, putting his firm hand on Tanya's tense shoulder.

Armed with an idea more daring, and perhaps brilliant, than any in Tanya's notes, or developing Soul, Barry addressed the head Cop, Linquist according to his nametag. "I have an idea that will make that un-necessary," he said regarding the straight jacket. "And those too," he continued, pointing to their guns.

"Which is what, Doc?" Officer Linquist asked Barry.

How and why Barry, in this dimension, had a doctorate in anything other than personal self-sabotage was a happy accident. And, he considered, a God given opportunity to re-define the rules of heaven and earth. He turned to the 51% female Secretary, whose back was arched, focusing on whatever was on her computer screen. "Bring to me all the cool kids in this school. The effortless success is the best kind brats who get straight As, are the presidents of all the extra-curricular clubs, and the ones who always get the leads in the school plays."

“I’ll get on it, Doctor Davies?” Barry’s androgynous probably female Secretary slurred out of the corner of her mouth with as little commitment to her job as she could come up with without being fired.

“Now! My office in an hour. ALL of them!” Barry yelled back, shutting off her screen. “And tomorrow, we’re having an assembly. At two o’clock.”

“And what are we going to do about that lost cause in your office?” Linquist asked.

“You keep her in confinement till two thirty, Professor Doctor’s orders!” Barry blasted into his un-offensively official smug face. “Comfortable and respectful confinement!”

With that, ‘Doctor Barry’ left the room, claiming that he needed to use the student bathroom as ‘someone’ put a suspiciously odorous tampon into the toilet of the single all gender facility in his office. And hoping that the plan he had in mind was not wishful bullshit.

CHAPTER 10

There were as many ways of course kids bullies each other as ‘must implement if you want your funding miracle cures’ sent to their teachers by academic shrinks who, so often bullied their own way to the top as they rose up various educational ladders. Or perhaps were bullied themselves. They ranged from the gentle explaining of what it felt like to be at the sharp end of the stick to assholes to shoving a bigger stick up their asses than they had used against lower humans on the food chain. And scientists, despite their generally noble intentions and abstinence from getting their hands dirty like the conflict addicted ‘common folk’, were still unable to come up with a drug that would eliminate cruelty or cure ignorance, its pre-existing condition. And even if they were ‘highly recommended’ by celebrity scientists in \$600 dollar lab coats or peace loving government officials with even more expensive outfits on television, it would be perceived as a mandate, the other side of the political establishment insisting that assholes had the God given right to be who they are and that being stupid was a constitutionally protected choice.

What was left was, of course, to use the pathology against itself. Such was the only option when Barry looked at the faces of the ‘top 20’ kids in the school, representing all disciplines of study and expressions of recreation. Though they came from all cliques, all colors and mostly cash rich parents, there were three things these new pre-designated movers and shakers had. Upturned chins with condescending grins. No record of any time they had to struggle to succeed, with no attempt they ever made to succeed at something they are not naturally good at. And fragile, vulnerable egos, that still feed on support from a ‘higher up’.

“So, Doctor Barry, what did you ‘advisors’ call us DOERS in here for?” inquired their leader, Lance Wentworth, clone blue blood head actor and director of every play the school put on with the suave entitlement of his role model, Kevin Bacon.

“We were told that you were bringing in scouts from ‘way up there’ who were looking to recruit the best of the best to graduate from this made for commoners school a year early,” Jennifer McGraw, Lance’s singing and dancing co-star in every play he did, whose father could buy their first film a sure screening and prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

“And I assume that ‘way up there’ means that they are well stocked, well connected and have the intelligence to know that it is US who can save the world from itself, and them,” American born and bred science fact and science fiction writer L. Katherine Davidson said with an English accent she acquired after, so she said anyway, being invited to go to Oxford for three week which, intimidated the congregation, including Barry, into reflexely thinking they were dumbshit Colonials. “The people’s revolution can of course only succeed if there are those with class, distinction and superior IQ’s leading it.”

“Who are rich and popular,” added starting and starring Quarterback for the third year running Hermann Steiner. Who inherited his ‘I was just following orders’ Nazi

grandfather's Aryian athletic physique and ability to intimidate his opponents with his eyes as well as his golden throwing arm. "The only scoreboard that really matters. And in every football game, there's are winners, like us and losers like..."

"...All of you, once another winner comes onto the field," Barry interjected, having had enough of the snot nose brats who knew all too well that a colorful critic can influence the masses far more than a passion-driven (and eventually super-able) artist. "Who I am sure you all know," he said, slapping a picture of Tanya on the wall.

"A winner in a game of her own making," Lance advanced with a chuckle.

"That's played in the world of her warped, infantile imagination," Jennifer added.

"That one needs a gas mask to go into because of her foul and offensive corporal aroma," L. Katherine noted in a crisp British tone. "A more dysfunctional than normal commoner."

"Who defines what an inferior race or eh, I mean...defective species really is," Herman added.

"Who is being given scholarships, grants and PAID internships with THESE companies, and CEOs," Barry announced, after which he posted no less than ten notifications of awards on the wall. "You JUNIOR princes and princesses have heard about the Illuminati and its branches. Well, these are it." Barry described each of the grants, awards and companies with names that the 'cool kids' didn't recognize. And, perhaps because of such, were intimidated by. "A tip for all of you, potential winners, or runners up anyway," Barry said after having bullshitted all of the crap heads who had made life shit for Tanya, and so many other 'commoners' who had to struggle to get what they wanted, or needed. "Give Tanya a big applause, that you mean, at the presentation of her improvisation of scientific intellect and the arts at the assembly that's being filmed for REAL television tomorrow, and, she will reward you with...well, more than you ever have or think you can get on your own. Even with your connections," he said. "And, I am sending this around to all of you, for you to sign."

Barry observed each of the 'influencers' to put their real, rather than cyber, signature onto. "It says that you are inviting her to each of your clubs, events and parties, which she will accept, IF she chooses to stay here. And if she does accept your invitations to be one of you, I won't tell her the Groucho line that maybe you all will understand one day."

"That you shouldn't want to be a member of a club that would have you as a member?" Lance said as he grabbed hold of the document to be the first signatory. "From...that movie which was, of course.." he advanced, looking to his associates, or perhaps assistants, Jennifer and L. Katherine, to fill in, as he was above having to remember it.

"Vita Reali," Barry affirmed.

“Of course, their most famous movie,” Jennifer said, actively hiding her ignorance in the way she was so good at, not to be out of the know as she signed the group invitation and apology.

“‘Real life’,” L. Katherine translated, after which she corrected Barry’s diction. “I didn’t know the Marx brothers made a movie by that title.”

“There’s a lot you don’t know, but can learn about Vita Reali or real life,” Barry said. “And Tanya can teach all of us a lot!” he declared with zeal, hoping the bullshit would be true. Both now and in a better ‘future time’ than he had just left at the other end of the time machine.

Tanya’s ‘Ted Talk’ in front of the fellow students and faculty lasted far more than the usual 10 minutes for such, and well beyond the one hour allotted to her. Perhaps she was able to hold onto the audience’s attention because she somehow was able to wow them with technological scientific wizardly regarding things they needed, and was able to entertain them with story through drama, comedy, satire and even singing which, if you somehow adopted her scale into your musical understanding, made her off key songs, tomes and arias feel melodic, somehow. As Barry felt it, her 90 minute One Martian performance was an intellectual improv that rivaled Buckminster Fuller intermingle with an unscripted laugh-and-think fest akin to George Carlin AND Robin Williams. Was everything Tanya say about the world as it is, and should be, and technologically could be accurate? Maybe so, or maybe not. But Tanya believed it, as did the cool kids, their followers and most of the faculty. There was not one member of the audience who was not gawking with amazement, singing along with Tanya’s music, belly laughing to her joked, nodding their head with discovery after figuring out what she said, feverishly writing down what she said so it could be learned (or perhaps stolen, as such) is the most flattering thing one can do for an innovator in science or the arts) or some combination of the above.

As for the moguls, scouts and real funders who attended, they played their parts perfectly, well coordinated by (as Barry now knew him as) Detective Sergeant Richard Linquist, Ph.D. (from above), who was assigned by the bosses above his boss to oversee the affair before he, with reluctance, would escort her to a facility where she would not be a danger to herself, or many, many others. But, Linquist was working with a fake budget as well as a plan which changed every minute, particularly when he partnered up with Barry. The ensemble of admirers from ‘way up there’ included the latest man convicted of fraud who posed as Bill Gates as part of his community service, to a homeless bi-polar ex-cameraman who thought that because he looked like Stephen Spielberg he thereof was such, to a triple Ph.D.’d literature professor who took it upon herself to give the know it all male dean a lesson in economics by diverting university funds into her own bank account posing as the silent partner who held all 60% of the stocks in Doubleday, MacMillan, Penquin and Viking Press.

Tanya seemed to not only be smart, but humble, and...a servant to those who gave her rounds of applause that seemed to never end. Gone was the dis'ed soul who, out of frustration, anger or perhaps some degree of justification, was bent on destroying the establishment that kept her out of the upper ranks, and killing anyone who was in or affiliated with it.

“So, I suppose that if you let a frustrated, angry and destructive portrait and sketch artist into art school, even if he isn't qualified, he, or she in this case, won't take on a career in politics,” Barry commented to Linquist from their darkened, secluded positions in the behind the wings of the auditorium. “And THIS Tanya said, in more creative ways than one, that anyone who wanted to be king, Czar, President or Comrade-Philosopher Queen of the world shouldn't be trusted with the job,” he continued, with pride. “You don't suppose that, maybe, you can commute her sentence for contemplated but not carried out mass murder, or purging of the upper crust that makes everyone else eat rotten bread to the worst sentence imaginable for a potentially brilliant martian. Which is, of course, having to live with earthlings. Or, worse, being engaged or married to one.”

“I'll talk to the judge,” Linquist promised, with averted eyes and an official tone.

“You mean we will, right?” Barry suggested.

“Sure,” COP added, adjusting his sunglasses, belt then holster still discretely hidden by an oversized ‘Give Peace a lot of Chances’ neo-hippie coat. “But, as for her attending those parties, clubs and functions with the ‘in crowd’ here that the cool kids so desperately are inviting her to be at, so they can ride the coattails of her as she moves up the ladder after graduation.”

“Yeah, I know,” Barry replied, opening up his mustached lips into a shit eating grin, while glancing at the ‘in crowd’ makers and shakers who he so successfully bullshitted into not being shits, for a little while anyway. “Those ‘never been rejected from anything’ fucks will have their ‘too cool to sweat’ princes and princesses feel what it's like to be a common schlep when they Tanya rejects them by not accepting to their invitation to be the guest of honor in their castle on top of the hill. Like the writers of the REAL Nietzsche-esque novels know, the rejection slips that don't kill me make me stronger. And, eventually more creative. And then...” Barry stopped himself, as he recalled the first Tanya he had known, loved, envied and admired, hiding his face, thoughts and plans as to how to exit this ‘reality’ through the time machine.

“And then what?” Linquist pressed. “They become more creative and then...”

“Misunderstood?” Barry offered. “And, unpublished.”

“Until the time is right,” Linquist volleyed back, after which he looked at his watch, then the SWAT team behind him, then the orderlies in white coats behind them. Then at Tanya. Then at the men operating the curtains.

“No!” Barry said. “A little while longer, ok?”

“Rule about business, the smart person knows when to get in, the wise one knows when to get out,” Linquist countered, after which he put his arm on Barry’s shoulder. “Especially when you’re offering good shit to fuckhead shithead bullshitters,” he whispered. “Tell Professor Doctor Philosopher Martian whatever Tanya that it’s time to go, or I will.”

Barry went out on stage, announcing to the crowd that Tanya has to be elsewhere. “A special meeting with the top officials at the White House, and their assistant, the President. Top secret!” he said. “Which I am sure that none of you will talk about to anyone else for at least...an hour?”

The crowd laughed the joke. Barry put his arm around a really pissed off Tanya, whispering into her ear. “You can leave the stage with me, or be taken away by them,” he said regarding Linquist and his men.

“I know who they are,” Tanya noted, with calm resolve. “But you, Doctor Barry Davies, if that is your real name. I don’t know who you are.”

“Makes two of us,” Barry replied. “But...”

“Better the devil I know,” Tanya said, looking at Linquist. “The one who’s not lying to me anyway. And who...seems to know more than he is supposed to know...but won’t tell me what it is.”

With that, Tanya thanked the crowd, then with the calm resolve of Jesus on the way to the crucifixion, walked off stage, offering her wrists to Officer Linquist.

Barry rushed to grab hold of her. “Tanya!” he screamed out as she was taken away. “What do you want me to do?”

“Forget about me, please,” Tanya yelled back as more men and distance between her and Barry materialized,. “With the electroshock they’ll give me, I’ll probably forget about you,” she blasted back.. “But if we do meet again...” Tanya added, followed up by syllables in Gaelic, which she sung longing and love. In syllables Barry could translate all too well. “We’ll accept what has to happen instead of fucking up everything so we could change it,” Barry recalled to himself from his Irish grandmother on her deathbed when he was no taller than a leprechaun, promising him that she would come back to haunt, support or challenge him, depending on what kind of man he grew up to become. And woman he married.

CHAPTER 11

Finally, Barry figured out how to drive the time machine with regard to what era to land in, and how to negotiate its movement in a 'real' three dimensional universe and remain somewhat conscious at the wheel while doing so. "There ya go," he said to himself proudly as he parallel parked the spaceship between Tanya's shed and side door of the garage, with not so much as a fender bender. He quickly checked the time indicator on the screen. Indeed it was the day before he met Tanya at the still under-utilized community library. As for the inventor of the machine he had burrowed, and hopefully not bashed into too many trans-dimensional iceberg, she was inside the house, sleeping, in her 'wake up' clothes, covered with papers, manuscripts and drawings. A view through other windows of the house through cracks in the curtains indicated that everything was as it was at 'time zero'. "So, things are as they were, and maybe should be?" Barry said to the reflection he saw of himself in one of the windows darkened by black plastic bag. "No grass on the roof," he said, stroking the crown of his bald head. "But maybe some seeds germinating some interesting weeds under it," he continued, reflecting on it all.

He looked back at the time machine, thinking about what else he could or should do with it. Drawing in a bolus of suburban air, he noted that the aroma of gas fumes were stronger than that of the trees and flowers, but at least there still were trees and flowers around. Looking at the election posters stuck into the lawns, he noted that the candidates running for mayoral, congressional and senatorial seemed to be victims rather than active, intentional carriers of dull out disease. but the potential voters passing by them were more concerned with their own dogs, kids and bicycles. The articles in the newspapers thrown on the lawns smelled like 80% fiction and 10% fact, but did contain 10 percent hope. Gas guzzling vehicles lined the street but none of them were tanks, and the garbage in the back of the open trucks didn't contain any human flesh. The community board advertized sales of cats, dogs and photographs of horses rather than indentured servants or slaves. The local symphony was putting on a concert highlighting works of Beethoven, Mozart and 'contemporary yet to be discovered Ludwigs and Amadeus'. And...Tanya was doing a reading at the library. "Improvizations of the Arts, Sciences and everything in between. An offering."

Two lads in matching white shirts and black pants and regulation 1956 flat top haircuts came by. One of them whipped out a sheet for another function, and offering. "Feast With the Lord. Soup, Sandwiches and Salvation," Barry read on the poster the Mormon Missionaries put up, next to Tanya's. "What if I want only two of those?" he inquired.

"Salvation and Soup?" the taller young man mused with a wide smile.

"Or salvation and soup?" the shorter lad added, breaking out into a chuckle.

Barry envisioned what these two lads would become this close to the Big Crab Apple if they met New Yorkers who would be less tolerant of their innocence. And, worse, what would happen if they were not awakened from the dream of being one of the 444

thousand souls who would be having Thanksgiving dinner with the Lord every day of their after life.

“You look lost,” the taller dream merchant said to Barry.

“Like you don’t know what your destiny is,” his shorter partner added in musical accompaniment without missing a beat to the hymn going through their heads.

“Time will tell,” Barry said, contemplating whether he should go home to Olivia, or somewhere else with Tanya. “And sometimes we don’t know what is good for us, or anyone else. Most times, anyway. But....we gotta try and...well, heaven may be watching, we know earth works. Or should anyway.”

With that, Barry walked away, letting the winds of time, or the warping of such, tell him what to do. And who to do it with. And...for.