

COLORADO COMRADE

by MJ Politis
mjpolitis@yahoo.com
copyrighted, Feb 19, 2020
all rights reserved



978-1-304-53681-5.p
df

CHAPTER 1

1935, Colorado

Being a creature who told time according to the sun, its position in the sky, and the duration it replaced the moon, the cow resisted being moved from the still grassy and greenish brown pasture in the Colorado high country to winter corals. She was ambivalent about being sent to a railroad car destined for someplace place where perhaps the grass still had some green in them. She had given birth to seven calves thus far, having seen them all grow up to be parents themselves, or become passengers on the large, noisy iron horses which moved on wheels rather than legs. Perhaps her fear of the latter drove her calf to resist being moved by the cowboys who were pushing the herd down the mountain along the gentle slopes leading up to the high country. Or, perhaps, there was a fascination the calf had with the cliff overlooking the valley below. Or perhaps the calf thought he could spread his feet out and fly like the eagles in the clouds. The birds who dipped down to the river to fetch fish three times their size., Or the hawks that lingered somewhat lower to fetch slow moving rabbits. Then there were the low flying crows which pecked out the eyes and entrails of any four legged creature who stopped breathing, eating and defecating.

The harder the cowboys yelled, the faster the calf ran toward the cliff, weaving in and out of brush that most horses would have to go around rather than sneak under. Indeed, the cow had no choice but to follow her calf. Even if it led to the demise of both of them. The eight year old cow, though she had the muscle mass and strength of a one year old heifer, saw the world through life tired eyes which were becoming less functional each year. As such, she knew the cowboys in weather beaten and torn clothing riding magnificent looking horses atop worn out saddles which had been yet again repaired rather than finally replaced. She recognized each of the two legged humans on the four legged equines by voice as much as sight as they moved the rest of the herd along to whatever pasture or feed lot they would be sent to in the upcoming winter. A winter, according the large amount of fur growing on her hide and the others, would be a cold one.

There was Jake Hanson, hotheaded, loud-mouthed 25 years crude cowboy. The fuzz on his upper lip never really grew thick enough to be a real man's mustache. He appended most of his yells at the cow's fellow bovines with the crack of his whip, a spit on the ground, or an expletive of frustration, or all three. The horse between his oversized spurs seemed as unwilling to move as any of the cattle.

Riding on the other side of the herd was freckle-faced Buddy Emerson, whose horse did most of what he asked of it. He was usually quiet cowhand who did everything Jake said to do, including yelling at the cattle and his horse, when he didn't have to.

Riding drag behind the defiant young and life-tired older cattle who wanted to stay atop the grassy pasture that would become an ice covered, slippery skating rink or buried under three feet of snow within the next week, was their boss, Sam Longmore. At the end of this particularly dry summer, his skin was deep red, his hair completely white now. His mustache had grown over his lower lip and nearly his chin. The wrinkles on his face were deeper this year than the last, for reasons he never told Jake or Buddy. Sam seemed to confide a common fate of doom with any cow he looked at. In a herd he worked harder each year to keep. A herd that ate better than he did, by the looks of his slender belly and gaunt face. But there was the hope that better days were ahead, particularly during the middle of what he called The Great Depression. So he kept promising everything walking on two or four legs around him.

On this day the cow, known to the humans (and only them) as 127, was more concerned about her runaway calf, labeled as 127K. That new arrival into the world was ignored by the rest of the cows who under the spell of the bull in front of the herd, or the mounted humans pushing them. For now anyway. It was situation which could change any time if the calf, or she, led them astray, to the overlook where more than one calf, cow or bull had fallen to its death.

Dashing out to help her, the calf, and eventually the herd was a cowhand about the same age of Jake, biologically anyway, by the name of Kumar Patel. His skin was seemed to be not as white as the other cowhands and not as black as the Colored cowboys Sam hired in the 'good old' days before the Depression. He ran his horse, a comrade rather than master to the equine beast he called 'Arjun', towards the calf, and the cow, cutting both off from near falls down the cliff no less than three times. He sang his requests to the calf to move back up to the rest of the herd in a strange language that seemed to the mother cow as Ancient and kind, rather than yelling at her and her precocious son with harsh orders in English. Or Lakota.

The cow didn't know what the words in Kumar's song meant, but whatever they were, it worked. Kumar and his horse, both of whom were very much liked when looked at by the ladies in town (the redskinned and the white ones), were able to convince 127's calf to join his mother, then the herd. Such saved both of them from falling over the cliff. And stumbling in holes made in the ground that broke the legs of two other cows. And preventing the cow and calf from taking a drink from a pool of water that smelled 'off'. And a slow, agonizing death which befell the cows, calves and bulls whose skulls were scattered around the once safe and now toxic pond.

Cow 127 moo'd a thank you to Kumar, which he responded to with a bow of his head. He then got back to his position with Sam in the back of the, thankfully, not stampeding herd.

"Great job," Sam said to Kumar with thumbs up shown to him only.

Kumar replied in a language which Sam didn't understand. The old man raised his eyebrows to the young one with concern and curiosity.

"Hindi for 'no problem'," Kumar answered with a warm smile, and an accent which was as American as any of the other cowboys, but far more literate and seemingly refined. "Loosely translated," he continued with the wisdom of an old man in a young one's body, hiding a wealth of secrets behind his deep thinking brown eyes.

Interrupting Kumar's thinking, just before he seemed to confide something to Sam, was none other than Jake. "Big time problem if he talks that East Indian gibberish in town again," Jake shot back from a mouth as ugly as his tone, after which he spit on the ground.

"HIS problem, not ours," Sam said to the fifth generation White skinned American spoiled brat he felt obligated to hire on. Who was orphaned after Sam's best friend died of the Spanish flu ten years ago. "Or YOURS."

"Sure," Jake grumbled back to Sam, as Kumar, ran off to sing Hindi request to American raised cattle. "But Kumar reckons these cows are incarnations of really great people. Which means---"

"----That you should take care of them like they are," Sam shot back to and into Jake's resentful and jealous face. After which Sam rode back to his position in the herd, Jake taking his after an angry sigh.

The cattle drive progressed further down the mountain, the ground having less edible growth on it with each loss of elevation. The bits of dirt churned up by the bull and his harem of heifers in the lead turned into clouds of dry dust which made the cattle, horses and cowboys cough. Ironically, the river for which Blue River was named still flowed behind the dusty fields. Those once lush fields that supported grass for cows and crops for people were now hard slabs of dirt that sprouted pockets of inedible and toxic weeds. Cow 127, or as Kumar secretly named her, Indira, recognized one of her sisters and two of her offspring by their faces and eyes behind the mangled fences. As for the bodies connected to them, they were more bone than muscle, their feet pillars of rotting flesh. They bellowed calls for help, asking to be invited back into herd they were sold out or, or a bullet from one of the cowboys they seemed to recognize.

In front of the broken down pen those once healthy cattle were in was a sign reading 'Property of Morgan-Richter Financial Group'. Behind the pen, lay three farm houses with boards hammered across the doors and windows. At the gate of the farm, reinforced by three layers of barbed wire, was a metal mini billboard reading 'Property of Morgan-Richter Bank. Trespassers will be shot, even if they are former owners.'

How and why the three bovines remained there and why they were permitted to remain in their condition was something Indira didn't know. But the owners of the spread, Larry

Jackson, his wife and three dirt covered barefoot kids, were just as emaciated as the cattle they had once owned. Cow 127 saw them living in tents outside of the property with 'Will Work for Food' on the 'doorstep'.

Most of the smaller farms and the houses of people who worked in town on the trail to town were also boarded up, property of the Morgan-Richter Bank. The sun baked the land around them. Just last season, they all had been irrigated into sprouting crops for two legged creatures and grass for those able to get around on four limbs. Ironically, the river still flowed, filling the air with a musical murmur. But the player of that watery tune was not matched with the usual harmony of farm animals enjoying being fed, or telling each other how well they had trained the two legged humanoid mammals to feed them.

The ground under Indira's feet felt...violated somehow. Through her various senses, some of which perhaps were remnants of being a highly advanced yogi in Kumar Patel's native country during the last lifetime, she could feel the ghosts of animals from past eras under her feet. Their remains had been converted to crude oil and coal. Those 'resources' had been and even more so now were brutally pulled out of the ground in the dirtiest way possible. For the purpose of serving the wants of the rich rather than the needs of the poor.

Then there were the logged out slopes of the mountains that echoed the dirge of sorrow and despair, holes blown into them by explosives to dig out privately owned mines which were abandoned, or boarded up. The sky felt more black than blue, but still yielded no rain, despite the efforts of those who put up signs saying 'Will Make It Rain for Food' Those signs were appended by correcting 'make' with 'try to make' and 'food' for 'whatever you can spare'.

Indeed, Mother Nature was extracting her vengeance on the Paleskinned two legged creatures who had, out of desperation or ignorance, taken more than they gave back. Of course, just as experienced cattle said to less learned members of their species, there was an 'I told you so' built into this. "Your Dust Bowl, not ours," the Lakota Band who refused to join those who made the land bleed by plowing so much of it said in a sign which was still up, despite bullet holes shot into it.

Upon entering the official town of Blue Water, Indira and her fellow bovines were herded down a street lined with boarded up, repossessed or abandoned wooden and brick shops which outnumbered those still opened for business. Citizens clad in torn, mismatched clothing walked about, rummaging the garbage cans and alleys for whatever could be used for shelter, food or coverings for their thin arms and legs.

Behind the one and two story structures that had been functional businesses last year were three, three and four story dwellings made of material which was made of something else. Something shiny. Something that said the people who lived and worked from them were important. A small number of people inside and around them wore clothes that were color coordinated, which fit their plump torsos well, and with no tears

or holes in them. Their bellies were fat. Their chins were raised up high. Their eyes were diverted when passing by, and insulting, those not of their caste, or class, whose clothing was three sizes too large for their thin bodies.

But of more concern for Indira was what she saw in Sam's face when he looked at the sign on the coral where she was heading as the manager of the coral was approached him. Indira knew that the natural way of things was that old and sick fellow members of her bovine species were destined to be taken onto the iron horse to somewhere else, along with those who had lost the ability to produce offspring. A better place, she intuited. A chance at a new lifetime, according to what Kumar had assured them. But as for what Indira and her were worth this lifetime in her present life form, that was disappointing to Sam and insulting to her. Cattle and horse prices were half of what they were last year. But Sam, who was determined to hold onto what was left of his herd, had no choice. Indira was to be sold for the lowest price imaginable.

While being loaded onto the railroad cars, with her calf, the Cow 127 mooed a thank you to Kumar. With his eyes, from a distance, he wished her a fond farewell in his Native tongue. Promising her to carry on the lessons she had taught her.

CHAPTER 2

Feeling himself to be the eyes, ears and, if he could figure out how, the hope of the mass of well intending four and two legged Coloradans, Kumar viewed what had happened in the town he had last seen two months and three baths in the cold river ago. From atop of the horse that still miraculously didn't have to sell for food and minimal lodging, the East Indian cowboy noted once prominent citizens who spent the work day at their labors milling around the streets in front of the shops which were not yet out of business or bought by Morgan and Richter management, and their other associates. So as to avoid being arrested for vagrancy, which carried a penalty of thirty dollars and as many days in jail, those lower caste citizens redistributed dust, garbage and manure, pretending to be useful to the National Guard soldiers now wearing deputy badges.

Kumar's horse's stare, then his, were held captive by a small framed man in a weather beaten duster one tear away from becoming rags. Under such was an old well tailored suit. He lifted up his more flop than form wide brimmed hat, wiping the sweat off his brow, then quickly placed it back on his balding head, giving Kumar a view of his face. Behind him was a tent, not unlike those used by the numerous migrants and displaced Coloradans who had lost their homes, but not yet their determination to live in dignity and honor in better times. Which the fat cat upper ups, including the new President in Washington, kept promising were just around the corner. A closer look at the assertive and watchful forty-going-on, sixty sleep-deprived gentleman who seemed more at home in a library than the real world described by books revealed that it was indeed Doc Bill Wilson.

When the soldier-deputies weren't looking, the old fart small town Doctor who liberated himself from being a prestigious (and therefore underutilized) physician in Philadelphia motioned for Mary Steiner and her eleven year old daughter Elsa to enter his tent. For a 'Bible reading', as advertised on his 'Bible Readings and Prayers for Departed Loved Ones' sign on his tent. Mary, who read the Bible which she never believed, coughed up phlegm tinged with blood. As did Elsa when Doc Wilson listened to her heart and lungs with his stethoscope. He snuck a pouch of pills to Mary, placing them discretely into the only intact pocket in her dress. "One a day for our literary genius, and two, twice a day for you, for a week. Just between us, or I'll be..."

The frail but certainly not afraid of the flu, or death, Elsa hugged Wilson with gratitude.

"I can't pay you, Doc," Mary said.

"Elsa just did, and will continue to do so by writing about what's happening for when the world is ready to be told about it," Doc Wilson replied, after which he took the Bible out of Mary's hands. He flashed a sign outside his tent, reading "Next", visible only to the 'commoner' in the street. The next vagrant citizen snuck into the tent, after which Doc Wilson closed the flap.

The clanking of spoons against empty metal bowls near the medical tent drew Arjun then Kumar's attention next. It wasn't the first time that Kumar had seen a soup line for former food providers displaced from their homes and livelihood due to wheat, corn and barley prices in New York and Chicago dropping down to almost nothing by executives who still ate high on the hog at the restaurants across the street from the still somehow intact Stock Market buildings. The soup of the day was vegetable beef, though which kind of vegetable and what kind of meat it really was remained unadvertised and unspoken about in the line of 'al fresco diners'. Some of them had lost fingers and arms in 'industrial' accidents, and had relatives who died without leaving enough money to pay for proper funeral arrangement.

Serving sandwiches, soup and, most importantly, a double portion of dignity to every man, woman and child on the line was Father Paul Smith. He was, a middle aged, dark haired, blue eyed handsome Catholic priest, good looking enough to be marriable to anyone in town. The naturally-dramatic Padre also had the kind of face and torso which would make him hireable as the leading man in any 'talkie' movies coming out of the Edison movie studios in New Jersey, or the emerging competitors who actually filmed Westerns in the 'paradise' most people knew as California. Father Paul, as he preferred to be called, was beloved by Protestant vagrant Christians as well as those who forfeited their belief in the Merciful Almighty several repossessions ago. In part this was because he dared to say that the Pope was not infallible. But more importantly and punishable by his upper ups, Father Paul encouraged fellow Catholics to read the Bible for themselves rather than insist that they only hear or are given the passages the Priests deemed appropriate. Like every other citizen of Blue River who came there by choice as an adult rather than those welcomed or cajoled out of the womb when there, Father Paul had his secrets about what kind of man he was that he dared not confess to any man. Except to

Kumar in a theoretical discussion about the special qualities of East Indian half man, half woman Deity Bahuchara Mata.

Assisting Father Smith dispensing food at the outdoor soup kitchen was Leona Thundercloud. She was attractive presumably full blooded Lakota, whose physique defined maximally attainable feminine beauty by any mortal according to Paleskin, Redskin and even brown-skin East Indian standards. With his keen sense of hearing, Kumar eaves dropped into yet another one of the typical conversations at the soup line.

Father Smith offered a meal for five to Leonard Meeker, an out of work half-breed, short haired Blackfoot, reluctantly there at the insistence of his wife and two malnourished kids behind him. His badly cropped hair made him look both diseased in the body and head. Leonard refused to take the plates offered to him by Smith. Just as Leonard was about to pull himself and his family away from the soup and sandwich line, Leona then whispered assurances to the former hunter who had forfeited his braids and dignity to get a job that paid real money in town. She informed Leonard that the bologna sandwiches were made of a mixture of moose meat from the hills and body parts from bologna-speaking fat cat White Capitalists in the East who finally came down with 'industrial accidents'. Leonard smiled with delight, finally accepting the meal for 6 delivered to the family of four.

Father Paul pro-actively short circuited an argument from a not yet emaciated family of White folks behind the Red-skinned Meeker's clan, declaring that Jesus said that the primary commandment of everyone of all races is to give according to their abilities, and take according to their needs. Such was a quote that Kumar recognized from Das Capital more than any New Testament reading he had done while self educating himself politically and philosophically. But more important than trying to find proof of that Marxist ideal in Jesus' teachings, the master East Indian cowboy and aspiring, yet not very accomplished, Labor Union organizer decided to allow himself to be fed by Leona's smile, which was directed at him. He smiled a 'hello' back, hoping, admittedly selfishly, that during his absence she hadn't found anyone else more worthy of her hand in the Comradeship of Marriage than himself.

Kumar allowed himself to think about what life would be like when he could come home to Leona's smile every day after a day of hard, honest and, ideally anyway, service rather than profit oriented labor. But midway through the first day's imaginations, a voice from the real world, from a real boss, interrupted him.

"Eyes on the herd, son," Sam, still on his horse, said to Kumar, pointing his favorite cowhand's attention to the rest of the herd he was charged with moving into the coral for transport. "Eyes not on something bigger than we can stop," the wise old man who had survived bad business deals with those more clever, cruel and often younger than he was said regarding the legally allowed, for now anyway, soup line, and the illegal free medical clinic. "You gotta eat, and so does that horse or yours, while you still have him." Sam, snuck a small roll of greenback Presidential portraits into Kumar's pocket. "What I can pay you, now anyway. Maybe later. When cattle, wheat and grain prices stop

hightailing it down into outhouse crapper,” he related with apologetic eyes, as if all of it was his fault.. “Which they will! After all this IS America!” the veteran of the Great War and some others he didn’t talk about declared with patriotic fervor and commitment.

Kumar looked at the money, assessing quickly that it was less than he expected, or needed, to get through the winter with any degree of comfort. “It’s okay,” he assured Sam. “You can be rich in Creative Vision or flush in pocket, as we both know.”

“And as the Lord said,” Sam added, with the deepest of convictions. “A rich man has as much of a chance of gettin’ into heaven as a camel does getting” through the eye or a needle,” he pontificated as a servant of the Almighty above. “Unless he’s got a great New York Jewboy lawyer. So I’ve heard. From broke Jewish comics on the radio anyway,” Sam continued as a born and bred Coloradan who had seen so much of the world on the other side of the Ocean with his eyes, but not his Mind or soul.

With that Sam rode on to manage the transport of the rest of the herd assisted, finally by Buddy. Kumar looked at the money stuffed into his pocket, then pulled it out. He yelled out to Leona, then pointed to money, then her, as if to give it to her. She pointed to the collection box next to her, then smiled at him. Kumar crunched the money up in a ball and threw it Leona. She caught it, put it into the collection box, then tended to her duties. She gave Kumar a Comrade to Comrade (or perhaps something more personal than that) wink. He retained it until she finished counting the money thrown to her. Before Kumar could reply in word, action, or ocular telepathy, Leona’s warm smile turned into a hateful, condescending grimace. Noting the angle of her stare, it was directed to someone else, this time anyway.

“Kumar,” Jake said having ridden behind him, and spitting another wad of chewing tobacco onto the ground. “Remember what Leona done to you in the last incarnation,” he said by way of ridicule of the dream Kumar related to Jake when he thought that he had a heart that felt emotion as well as pumped ‘real American’ blood through his cold veins. “And what she did to me in this one when I went ta her shop for a trim and a shave!” he barked at Leona. He took off his hat, revealing a bad haircut that looked more like a scalping. “When I was just tryin’ to be polite to that redskin squaw,” he proclaimed to any fellow Paleface who would listen, which they did. He turned again to Leona. “All I said was ‘you people would make more civilized wampum if ya didn’t look like and smell like wild animals.’”

Leona let Jake’s comment incubate behind her thinking eyes and in her, by White, Native and even East Indian standards, highly developed brain box. She considered the explanation for the racial slur, pulled the edges of her lips back, stroked her chin, then looked up at Jake with another blast of vengeful fire out of her oculars. She gave him a third finger salute to be sure that there was no mistaking her feelings and thoughts on the matter.

Jake put his hat on and rode on. Meanwhile, Kumar, this time before Arjun, heard a stage pull in at the other end of town in front of a newly complete ritzy four story building. It bore a sign reading 'Blue River Deluxe Gentleman's Club, Hotel and Restaurant'. The newly erected building stood proudly next to the now boarded up one and a half story "Workers Rights Union Hall", a sign on the door reading 'Property of Morgan-Richter Realtors'. Portions of the Worker's meeting hall were being torn down, and, by the looks of it, had been used as part of the construction for the upscale establishment which now dwarfed it. In front of the Gentleman's club was someone who was hardly a gentleman according to truly civilized standards.

Emerson Morgan had become even more fascist, fat, fashion conscious and fifty over the summer than even Kumar imagined possible. But then again, such was a requirement for the man who claimed to have rebuilt Blue River and most of Colorado during the 1920s, then was saving it from Anarchists at home and the Red Scare abroad in the 30s. Morgan was decked out in what had to be a \$200 suit with, as required by business protocol, diamond cufflinks. All of it was shown off with a chin that was always upturned and never covered with any stubble or dirt, even on the dustiest day. He welcomed new members of his ruling caste to Blue River for a special power lunch after having been dropped off by the shiniest and biggest luxury cars Kumar had ever seen in person while growing up under his rich in pocket but poor in spirit, and heart, father in California. Or in the magazines he had read as a boy afraid to leave home, and wiped his ass with after he left California as an independent, self-liberated man.

All of the honored guests were, or course, men. They ruled most of Wyoming, Colorado and even Utah. Most had at least three initials before their Christian name. All of them had women with them who were more beautiful on the outside than the inside. Their male 'protectors' agreed to be relieved of that female company before entering the pre-lunch meeting room.

By Morgan's side was none other than his apprentice in 1932, assistant in 1934, \and now his associate. Russell T. Richter was younger, leaner and had far more hair than exposed scalp on top of his head than his former mentor. By Richter's side, Mellissa Bullock, Richter's latest fiancée. She was a statuesque and beautiful 25 year old woman of high breeding who claimed, and could verify when required to, a pedigree going back to English Monarch Queen Elizabeth I on the other side of the Atlantic. She also claimed, and so often over-proved, roots to Colonial American financial empires in Virginia and both Carolinas that somehow grew even richer after the South lost the War of Northern Aggression back in 1865.

In the competition for economic superiority which was America's favorite pastime, Morgan had, usually legally, taken less from Kumar than from most of the citizenry of Blue River. But such made Kumar hate the balding mogul with a slick comb-over that never went out of place, even in the harshest wind, even more. Kumar's day dream about taking Morgan down economically one day, this life time or the next, was interrupted by a scream of pain from Doc Wilson's 'Bible Reading and Prayers for the Departed' tent. It came from an overly muscled six foot two patient of Doc Wilson's, who Kumar knew

as a man who had as high a threshold for physical pain without screaming as Kumar had for heartbreak.

“Another ‘accident’ when working at the coal mine for even less than we were getting last week,” Calvin DuBois said between black lung coughs.. He gritted his still mostly intact white teeth, his face was black with coal dust. Doc Wilson continued to maneuver his injured and hopefully not permanently useless left arm. “Happened when I started talking Union to someone who I thought was one of us, Doc, but who---“

“----Rest that arm for ten days or lose it for a lifetime,” Wilson interjected. He wrapped a bandage around the twisted limb, neglecting to make any attempt to close the cloth tent ‘door’ that DuBois had ripped apart while his arm was being pushed back into its socket.

“I’d like to oblige, Doc, but, I got work this week. Paying work,” replied the underpaid miner who had sworn an oath to the mountain he had grown up on five long years ago to never ‘stab in the back’. Or to ‘drill holes into its soul’ for the well being of the mountain as well as the health of the people on or under it. “Who’s gonna feed my family? And the twins that are on the way despite me and the wife trying to be careful? Or her not being careful with someone else behind my---” Back pain held back the rest of his frustrations and explanations.

As for doing what he could about DuBois’ crisis of finances and conscience, Wilson took money out of his trouser pocket. He stuffed it into Dubois’ breast pocket, as discretely as he could but, but apparently not discretely enough.

“Doctor Wilson!” Wilson, and Kumar, heard from Morgan. Who apparently was rudely interrupted in his imaginations about how he would become richer and more powerful than the guests he was inviting to power lunch by working with them. And, no doubt richer and more powerful still when he brought down their organizations from within. Richter and Mellissa welcomed in the moguls of the cattle, oil, coal, railroad, automobile and soon to be corporatized agricultural industries into the power lunch.

“Enabling the lazy, stupid, ungrateful and because of such, poor, is bad business. Especially for a physician who is running low on pharmaceuticals,” Morgan informed Doc, not caring who was eaves dropping on the declaration, and warning. “Doctor Wilson, no, Bill. You are welcomed to lunch, with people who can remedy that situation and your constant need for better surgical supplies,” Morgan proclaimed with an open arm and welcoming smile.

Realizing Wilson was caught in a dilemma, Dubois gave back the money Doc had given him with his still operative arm. “It’s ok. Doc. You gotta do what you gotta do,” the underpaid and endangered laborer said to the Philadelphia raised scholar. While Dubois hobbled away, Wilson was still conflicted. He gazed at the patients in line for the kind of care he was becoming unable to give them with the meager supplies he had at hand.

“Doctor Wilson?” Morgan yelled across the street. “A better medical and personal

destiny awaits you.” Gazing at the next set of patients ready to be seen and treated by whatever drugs Wilson still had on hand, Morgan continued. “A better destiny awaits even those people who are about to be arrested for loitering, if you...”.

Wilson shed his poor man’s disguise coat, revealing business suit under it. He shrugged his shoulder in an “I can’t do any more” to the patients, then left to join Morgan et al, who welcomed him to a ‘magnificent and profitable lunch’ at the Gentleman’s Club. Morgan shut the door behind him.

Kumar had experienced this before, but finally the prophetic words he had heard from so many old farts were about it sunk in. “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s” he commented to his horse Arjun. He was angry at the rich fat cats but pitied Wilson for joining them, for now anyway. “But render unto God that which is God’s!” he yelled up to the Jesus spirit that was supposed to come around whenever you quoted or thought about that Visionary, Profit and/or Avatar, depending on your inner and outer needs at the time. “God, who’s still on a lunch break, while this town goes even further into—“

Once again, Kumar’s youthful wise crack fueled by a weird sense of Ancient wisdom willed to him by his Grandfather on his deathbed was interrupted by even more signs in town describing who Blue River could belong to, or be served by. Above every ‘help wanted’ sign posted on a row of newly built offices and stores bearing Morgan or Richter’s name in some way was, in even more official font---- “No Okies, Italians, Irish, Jews, Negroes, Indians or non-Coloradans need apply.”

Kumar then dared to look at the Blue River Worker’s Union Meeting hall, having heard hammering nails and a chain saw from its direction that spooked Arjun. Soldiers in spotless Mountie hats and crease pressed trousers put up a new sign, announcing in reasoning-shattering bold hues of red, white and blue, ‘Future Home of Bullock, Morgan and Richter Investment Holdings.”

Kumar’s nostrils flared with rage, Arjun’s with terror. Smelling the anger, fear and less ephemeral odors was a tall, a muscular man spoke with deep baritone voice designed to command rather than ask, even if used at a low volume. “Smelling awfully rank there, ‘Comrade’ Patel,” he noted, sticking his nose into Kumar’s duster, then at the blood and sweat stained shirt under it.

“Working hard will do that,” Kumar replied sizing the man up from head to toe, not ignoring the new Colt Revolver and blood stained night stick in between. “New uniform, Sheriff Johnston?” Kumar shot back, fearing falling into his old cowardly habit of ‘conflict avoidance’ more than any bullet released from Morgan’s chief law enforcer’s gun.

“*Colonel* Johnston,” Oliver Johnston replied, proudly pointing to the insignia on his US Army uniform. “Hired to keep Colorado for hard working, God fearing, authority respecting Coloradans. Unlike them...”

Johnston pointed Kumar's attention to a paddy wagon containing broke, starving men, women and children. Chains were all of them, Army personnel of various ranks getting ready to escort them out of town.

"It's only natural," the middle aged, Blue River born and bred protector of the law he so colorfully and somehow legally broke himself for at least the last decade provided by way of explanation. "We gotta take care of our own, ya know."

"At the expense of everyone else, we SHOULD know?" Kumar respectfully replied. "Including, maybe..." He sniffed Johnston's jacket, tunic then shirt. "Whoever manufactured that new aftershave lotion. Makes you smell very 'sensitive' to your citizen's needs," he went on with a mocking lisp. "Except of course for the sensitive Two Spirited and less than totally manly Indians, Negroes and Palefaces, you tarred, feathered and ran out of town," Kumar blasted into Johnston's enraged face with the super weapon of informed, calm and carefully assessed reason. After which he sought a second opinion which was seldom wrong, if you listened to it right. "What do you think about that and everything else here, Arjun?" he asked his horse.

Arjun smelled Johnston, then winced in the most extreme expression of displeasure. Johnston pulled out his blood stained, discretely spiked, billiclub, preparing to teach the equine beast a lesson in manners. With some prodding from Kumar, but mostly his own intent, the gelding turned around and laid a wad of soft brown reply from his anal orifice onto Johnston's new boots.

"Fertilizer, Sheriff Johnston," Kumar related, by way of orderly explanation. "All you need is a little water, and the crops will come up," the East Indian cowboy-philosopher mused at the demon possessing the Soul of a man who really wanted to do the right thing. According to theory and tall tales about the bad old days when Johnston protected Blue River from outlaws far worse than himself, or Morgan et al.

"I'll piss on your gravestone, you Commie Pagan Hindu alien bastard!" Sheriff and now Colonel Johnston barked out as he wiped the manure off his freshly polished Army boots. Johnston's attempt to remove the manure succeeded in pushing it deeper into the crevices of his footwear.

"First, Colonel, maybe one day Comrade, Johnston," Kumar replied as he patted Arjun for administering karmic justice, and dharmic education, giving the horse his head as he headed back home up to the hills.. "I'm a Sikh, who prefers cowboy hats and buffalo knives to turbans and daggers, not a Hindu," the shoulder haired length and short bearded East Indian Wild Westerner added. "Second, I'm a Democratic Socialist. Not a Fascist Communist, which is a contradiction in terms. Who believes that everyone can and should give according to their ability and take according to their needs. And third...I was born in this country. Which I hope doesn't go the way of this one." Kumar pulled out a book from the inner lining of his duster. "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire," he declared to Johnston, giving the voluntarily anti-intellectual officer a look at it. "I just started reading the second part, the 'fall'"

“Which will never happen here!” Johnston yelled out with a clenched fist.

“Right, because men here wear pants and not togas or skirts,” Kumar shot back.

“Because the rich will take care of the poor,” the America First, second and last Sheriff, now Colonel, declared. “Trickle down reality of economics.”

“If you say so,” Kumar conceded, after which he looked up at the sky, halting his horse. “What do You say about it?”

“Your Sikh Hindu Communist Pagan god?” Johnston volleyed back with a condescending smirk.

“No,” the Cowboy whose need to understand and change the way the world really worked exceeded the urge of any of his mounted friends, colleagues and rivals to do so replied. “That bird is my heavenly advisor, today anyway,” he continued as he pointed to a hawk swooping down from the sky. On its own, or perhaps by means of some magical ability Kumar had to create reality from his head, the avian observer who seemed to have followed him from the high country down to the valley perched itself onto a tree limb above Johnston. Then the ‘avian messenger’ dropped its own urinary and fecal excrements on Johnson’s head.

Johnston, pulled out his Colt and shot at the bird. Thankfully, this time anyway, the Sheriff’s usually sharp sense of vision was clouded by residual excrements on his eyes, allowing the avian participant in Kumar’s drama, or perhaps Arjun’s, to fly back up the thermals and head back to the mountains. Ironically, in the direction where Kumar was headed.

Drawn by something the bird was trying to tell him, along with the two legged land walking creatures in town, Kumar opened the book about the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire and proceeded on his way back home. “So, where were we?” he asked Arjun as he began reading. “In this book that would be more effective if it had more jokes in it than hard facts as we go back home to where WE belong.”

CHAPTER 3

Books read by Spirit seeking humans said that just as there is an Avatar such as Jesus, Buddha, Krishna and Mohamed for the human species, there are special advanced souls within each species for that species that look after its own kind. Arjun summoned the spirit of the equine Avatar to tell him why he had to endure yet another read from his ‘master’ Kumar from a book definitely not written by a humanoid Avatar. But, Arjun had spent much time training Kumar to be a kind, reliable and intelligent care taker who fed

him more regularly than he ate himself. And Kumar had the good sense to maneuver Arjun with his legs, eyes and voice rather than a harsh pull of the reins like his former owners did. Perhaps this time, the topic of the book being read, or the reader, would be somewhat interesting.

”Around 300 AD, the architectural wonders of Rome included the new, improved aqueduct system,” Kumar, his eyes buried in the book, read aloud, with virtually no attention to what he was doing with the reins or his feet. Arjun smelled his way back to the trail leading to the shack in the hills which now both rider and horse called home at an effortless short strided trot requiring only the brains in his feet to negotiate the way. Arjun found himself envisioning being somewhere else as did Kumar while the read went on. “An improved aqueduct system that brought in fresh water from the far away Northern mountains to the elite urban citizenry in Rome who--- “

Awakened by a sign painted with non-naturally occurring colors made even more demonic by the sun reflecting on the metal behind it, Arjun opened his half closed eyes. It was attached to a new, circular, 20 hands high barbed wire fence in front of him. The newly constructed barrier closed off the previously accessible open range above it which still, for now anyway, smelled of birch bark and wild alfalfa. Arjun stopped, abruptly awakening Kumar from visions of the past to the all too real present. ‘Property of Morgan Richter and Associates Ranch?’ Kumar read on the sign with shock, horror and, anger. He dismounted, pulled a rusted pair of pliers from his back pocket, and defiantly cut open the wired fence, being sure that it was wide enough for his legs to pass through and that his own writing he put on it was very legible. Arjun wasn’t sure what the letters meant, but the suggestion, nay order, that the new owners copulate with themselves was certainly not complimentary.

“Western cowboys took the land away from the Indians last century,” Kumar said as he rode Arjun up to a well deserved snack of late fall alfalfa grass. “Karma says that Eastern bankers are the new assholes that are somehow required to keep the universe going in this century,” Arjun’s most recent human ward explained in words, not realizing that the meaning was already understood. “But as for what happened in the fourth century, according to the humorless, accurate more than Alive big A writer,” Kumar continued as horse and rider moved up the mountain to greener and, because of the lack of mining, farming, oil drilling and coal excavation, taller grass.

Cows grazed around a pond that smelled...fishy, but from different kind of fish than usual. The rocks seemed to be split open, sparking with green, gold and yellow specks that Arjun didn’t recognize. Unusual for this ride back home through a different route than normal. But there was one thing that was all too usual before the next read from this next book.

Kumar halted Arjun, two seconds after the steed had already made that decision. He let the horse graze on the grass. The brown skinned Indian scholar-activist-cowboy reached into the recesses of his breast pocket and retrieved a cigar which was thinner than a normal stogie, but was thicker and rounder than a cigarette. As to what was within the

paper, it was an all too familiar smell. Arjun shook his head, stomped his feet, back his ears, and snortled.

“Hey, I let you eat grass, don’t pull an attitude on me if I smoke it,” Kumar protested as he took a toke from the reefer.

Arjun was endowed with a keen sense of smell, legs that could traverse 100 miles a day, hoofs that could grab hold of most surfaces and the capacity to sleep standing up. But he did not have an opposable thumb that could to rip the joint of locoweed from Kumar’s mouth before it robbed his initiative, sense of reason and ability to see the world as it IS so he could effectively convert it to what it should be. But, being ridden by a stoned East Indian Truth seeker was better than having your mouth being ripped open by the hard pull of reins held by a drunken Colorado or Californian cowboy.

“Alright, back to reading,” Kumar continued as the mobile reading room moved up the hill. “With colorful commentary that this tight assed and probably never got laid before his third year of marriage historical author wrote...” As quickly as a cutting horse could short circuit a cow from going in the wrong direction, Kumar slipped into an accent mocking the English pseudo-monarchs who came to the wilds of Colorado to become big fish in small, manicured ponds. “...In the colonies of Inja’ wrote down in black and white print that COMMANDS you to accepting it is----“

Arjun halted, turning his ears and head to to the right, suggesting to a stoned and self-absorbed Kumar a safer and perhaps even faster way to go home.

“Yeah....Fine...Your turn to pick the way home,” Kumar conceded, thankfully. “But my turn to..” he continued, after which he took another toke from the locoweed containing mini cigar. He blew its smoke over Arjun’s head, the wind sending it into the horse’s nostrils. Kumar then prodded Arjun forward in the direction the steed knew was a route not occupied by bears, wolves or, worse, toxic fumes of what some called ‘black gold’.

“Wealth inequality in Ancient Rome was not any more than any other civilization of its time. It maintained power for its elite, and comfort for their spouses and security for their associates,” Kumar read as a scholarly English archeologist prick who never left the library. He then slipped into various dictions Arjun didn’t recognize as a writer who got lost in the fog of a stoned stupor. “But Greek language, theology and architecture found its way into Roman society even when Rome had conquered Greece militarily. Yet again, the most powerful changes in Rome came not from the top, but from those closer to the bottom or on the bottom who....”

But what alarmed Arjun was not the rider about to fall off his back, but the country they were riding into. A plethora of rocks that had been split open by the most unnatural of causes dominated the landscape. Their inner skeletons were covered with strange pebbles within them. And there was the sight of dead cattle skulls in the distance. The odor of decaying flesh blew into Arjun’s face now from his right, left and ahead. All of the above

ignored by Kumar. Horse and rider were committed to move forward with the story. The rider anyway. One who now lost or forfeited the ability to pronounce 'r's, replacing them with another consonant.

"The...weality of Ancient Wome and what brought down the Empire wasn't," Kumar continued. He pulled back the reins on Arjun, as he announced that there were 'wabbits' on the cliffs blown up by dynamite, or a thunder that was far more powerful than anything Arjun had experienced. Then Kumar sensed something else. "There are too many hunters here. Twying to kill the Yellow Wabbit? In a place that looks like... somewhere I was before. when I was hunting wabbits. Or maybe.."

Something moved in the bush. By smell, then sight, Arjun confirmed that it is a cow that was very wobbly. Something in its eyes and the way it attempted to move scared Arjun, then Kumar.

"I wemember now! When the wabbits were hunting you and...me, and..." Before Kumar could reveal the details about THIS last lifetime memory, or how he felt about it, the wise, insightful, overly literate orator fell off the saddle, rolled several times over a grass covered wall of cow manure, then fell into a fetal position. He closed his eyes, then the book about the Fall of the Roman Empire. The rest of the story occurred behind Kumar's half closed glassy eyes. "But one could and will speculate that the real genius and significance of the larger and, for its time, high tech aqueducts of the fourth century in Ancient Rome was," Kumar said as his last words to the world of the conscious before fading into dreamland, or perhaps a nightmare. But it someplace of potential importance to the 'real' world, somehow, Arjun suspected.

CHAPTER 4

Like the Yaqui Indians, Sigmund Freud and dogs who always catch the 'wabbit' when chasing them while in deep slumber, Kumar felt that his dreams were more real than his experience in the 'awake' world. Or, at the very least, they were more instructive. This one seemed more real and instructive than any of the others.

Kumar 'awoke' in this Vision as a Greek slave, Kumaris. He was clad in rags and in chains, standing in front of a table in a 'modest' villa worth several gazillion dollars, drachmas or lira. Kumaris was being interviewed by a Roman Noble. One whose face was none other than Emerson Morgan, but even fatter and more laden down with shiny jewelry than his contemporary 'real world' presentation. Senator Morganius' presentation was topped off with an even more plastered down comb over his balding head. Sheriff-Colonel Johnston stood next to 'Kumaris'. In this realm he was a Centurian, the homophobic 'man's man' wearing a toga which was more like a skirt than a kilt.

“So Kumaris,” ‘previous lifetime’ Johnstonious grunted at Kumar with an upturned chin, his oversized and over-tattooed arms folded. “Our generals who established order yet again your region of Greece tell us that you have special talents.”

“Which we want, and therefore need,” Morganius added in an ‘offer you are not allowed to refuse’ confident tone.

“Like making you wear trousers instead of skirts? So that you can show off your balls instead of your legs?” Kumar replied as a counter offer.

Johnstononius growled, grabbed Kumar by throat, and edged the blade of his sword onto his neck.

“No, Centurian Johnstonius,” Morganius interjected. “Remember who you work for...”

“The people,” Kumaris reminded his potential executioner. “Who need to buy your wares, promises and bovine detritus.”

“Bovine what, slave!?” Johnstonius roared out of his mouth like a lion, trained of course to do so by trainer Kumar at the moment.

“‘Bullshit’, for NOW Centurian Johnstonius,” Senator Morganius reminded his most non-thinking, and therefore most useful, bodyguard. The fat Roman nobleman dismissed the over-muscular Centurian with as minimal back-flip of his hand as possible.

“Senator Morganious,” Johnstonius informed his boss, patron and provider of structure the ‘free and independent’ Centurian needed more than he realized. “We shouldn’t trust this...this...this...”. Johnstonius’ anger at Kumar was exceeded only by his embarrassment at burst of wind coming in from the window that blew up his toga, exposing legs he had shaved recently, in private of course. “This..this...”

“...Person of two spirits, or three, or four...or...five,” the, to some anyway, pathologically excessive self-observing and people watching Greek slave offered regarding Johnstonius. “Not that there is anything wrong with that for me or any of you who...” he continued, after which he winked alluringly at Johnstonius. .

Johnstonius lunged at Kumarus, trapping Morganius in between them.

“Enough!” Morganius commanded as the Senator tried to pull the Centurian off the non-repentant and perhaps courageous (rather than self destructive) Greek slave. But as Morganius was far more skilled at hiring muscle than using it, he was tossed away by Johnstonius, landing on his ass near the wall. Coming to Kumarus’s aid were none other than others of his new caste. Slaves from different regions of the Empire, namely Sam Longmoriur, Buddy Emersonian and Jake Halsinia, leaped in. Such prevented Kumarus’s throat from being cut open by Johnstonius’ dagger.

Stopping the Centurian from bashing the blade tip into Kumarus's right and left eye was none other than Leona Thunderstein from Germania, who kicked Johnstonius in his presumably oversized but most certainly sensitive balls. While doing so, Leona lifted the key to the shackles of Kumar's wrist and legs from the Centurian's belt and unlocked them. Kumar gave Leona a nod of thanks. In response, she raised her eyebrows, saying, in Greek, sarcastically, 'now let's see you do something productive with your freedom, you moronic, head in the clouds whimp.'

"Slaves! Back to your duties!" Morganius commanded, his fat head finally reconnecting to the senses on his overweight body.

Sam, Jake, Bud and Leona got back to menial tasks, breaking their backs but somehow not allowing their masters to break their spirits...for now. Approaching the table next was Senator Richterius and his Roman noble wife, Melissa Bullockia. Morganius bowed his head to his guests, and they bowed back of course. By the way they sized each other up regarding what they were wearing and how they were wearing it, Richterius and Morgan were competitors out for themselves as well as colleagues pledged to serve the Roman people. The two noblemen complimented each other on their recent accomplishments, thanking the other for assisting in making those accomplishments possible. While they and competed with each other as to who could make the most colorful dig at those under them both economically and politically go impress Melissa.

But Melissa had eyes for Kumarus. She motioned, behind her husband's back, that she wanted to have sex with the outspoken Greek slave, and would not accept no for an answer. Kumares was forced, by circumstance and curiosity to focus his visual attention on Melissa, who 'coincidentally' worked her way between his eyeline and Leona's angry, and caring, eyes.

"My wife and I are planning a party for my fellow esteemed Senator Morganius, who owns and takes care of nearly 2,000 Romans of various stations and ranks," Richterius informed Kumarus, interrupting Melissa's proposal for...whatever.

"Over two thousand, one of whom, used to be Dominus Richter's here," Morganius added. Kumarus was trying to figure out why these two men of power and influence wanted to impress rather than oppress him.

"Who," Richterius volleyed back with arrogance and pride regarding himself, "has obtained, properties which now exceed that of my former Mentor and friend, Morganius who..."

"...Is one of the most powerful citizens in Rome thanks, in part, to you, Richterius who---" Morganius, stated.

"---knows that it is more important to please the people, than to serve them," Richterius replied.

“And to serve and please us...” Morganius added

“And the vast properties in my holdings...” Richterius noted.

“And the people who make those holdings valuable...” Morganius pointed out, moving in for the kill..

“You need to do something about this, Senator Morganius,” the younger ex-student shot at and into his old former teacher with that ‘it’s time to put you out to pasture, on MY farm, where you can be comfortable’ look in his eyes.

Richterius plunked a jug of water in front of Kumarus, motioning for him to drink it. Such interrupted another round of flirting Melissa had tried to start. It looked like murky shit, and tasted ever worse.

“Water from our rivers and the wells delivered by inferior stone aqueducts,” Morganius explained. “Which---”

“---Are loaded with different kinds of detritus,” Leona interjected as a fellow scholar. “Crap, shit and ‘poops’ and other no good stuff,” she continued, her head bowed as a illiterate slave.

“Which we can’t serve to our guests,” Richterius informed Kumarus, with a sense of urgency, and fear.

“Or ourselves,” Morganius asserted.

“Or our deservedly privileged and beloved children,” Melissa added.

“But on top of the mountains, in the Alps, there is fresh, ultra clean water,” Morganius said.

“So far,” Leona added

Leona’s Germania rage invoked the wrath of Roman born, bred and conditioned for obedience Johnston, who swing his bear like arm towards her insolent face. But she ducked, causing him to fall head first into a vat of vomit which the Nobility filled at least three times a day after over-eating, over-drinking and under-working.

“And if you can bring the magical pure, clean and delicious water from the mountains, the FAR mountains,” Richterius proposed to Kumar. “Down to us...”

“...And only us,” Morganius added ‘thinking’ or rather calculating with the same Soul-dis-connected mind.

“The elite and therefore Enlightened class...,” Richterius added.

“We, and I, will be eternally grateful,” Melissa added. She pursed her lips at Kumarus, then lowered the neckline on her dress, allowing Kumarus, and ONLY Kumarus a view of what was underneath it.

“And given your skill in designing, and building, delivery systems,” Morganius added with a bow, and admiring those below from above a smile. “We will grant your freedom.”

“And anything you want,” Richterius promised.

“And anyONE you want,” Melissa added placing herself, ‘coincidentally’ between Leona and Kumarus, hindering the view of the former by the latter. .

“To make this delivery system you will need the right materials,” Leona added, from the side of her mouth while cleaning up even more debris on the floor that Melissa had now intentionally thrown her way to clean up. “Given your knowledge of metallurgy, architecture and medicine to deliver specific material. To specific people...for the good of all people.” Leona looked up at Kumarus, continuing the rest of her suggestions to him in his native dialect of Greek. “Lead!!!! That fucks up the brain, and the body. To be delivered to them,” she sneered regarding the Romans. “And only them.”

“What did she say?” Centurian, and, soon to be Private or Servant, Johnstonius barked out from his assigned position guarding the door.

“Nothing important,” Kumarus said to Johnstonius with respect for the human he could be if he had the courage to stop being the man he thought he had to be. He treated himself to a quick ‘gotta have a future with her any way I have to’ glance of Leona. Then to Morganius, Richterius and finally Melissa. “Nothing important to to you important people anyway. Just that...Hippocrates said I was his favorite pupil. The brightest, smartest and cleverest, who deserves and HAS to be paid big Drachmas by his patients.”

“A lot of words there that you translated from what this Germanic bitch said,” Johnstonius barked out regarding Leona’s untranslated suggestion.

“This dialect of Greek is a very condensed language,” Kumarus explained, after which he looked at Leona, hoping that she was impressed with his ability to lie creatively and effectively, which she was. “Yes, a very condensed language, my dialect of Greek and hers.”

“Which you will teach us?” Morganius requested rather than commanded, as was the manner of semi-literate powerful Romans who wanted to advance themselves as more cultured and fashionable Nobles.

“While these slaves built the super aqueduct that you design,” still Centurian Johnstonius sneered, no doubt envisioning the hard labor breaking the men’s backs and demolishing Leona’s spirit.

“Which will make us, including perhaps you, more popular, liked and respected, by the people that matter anyway,” Morganius offered.

“But in the meantime, Doctor Kumarus,” Melissa interjected just as Kumarus allowed a plan to materialize in his now swelled head. She took him by the arm, like a Noble Woman escorted by a Noble Man, taking him into a more private area of the multi-purpose orgy room. “People tell me that I am as lovely as Pandora, but I’d like to be as beautiful as Athena...With your medical skills, and connections, can you adjust these,” she continued, pointing to her breasts and face.

“No problem,” Kumarus replied in Hindi, causing suspicions with the Roman elite, as well as with the slaves who he would perhaps liberate when executing the plan to screw up the minds, finances and decision making processes of their current masters. “I mean,” he said in a tongue they all could understand. The specifics as to what Kumarus meant, and who would be told what were abruptly.

CHAPTER 5

“And according to the theory of most scholars, it was not sword of the Hun or the bravery of the oppressed classes that brought down the rich and powerful of Rome,” Leona read from Kumar’s book under the light of a full moon while the brown skinned EAST Indian lay on his back, slobber coming out of the left side of his mouth, snoring from his oversized nostrils. “And according to what is not in most historical records, there indeed was a distribution of wealth to less fortunate Souls, as there indeed was something in the super aqueducts which leaked into the water drunk by mostly the rich and powerful, which was...”

“Lead,” Leona heard from what seemed like an echo from the past. It was something that happened to her a lot lately, particularly when the moon was full. “Which is...maybe here?” Kumar continued as his eyes opened up, then the rest of his senses decided to work together rather than separately. “Like what happened to them!” he said, pointing to white lights in the bush. Closer examination by Leona revealed that it was a reflection of the moonlight upon dead cattle skulls. “Lead did them in!” Kumar insisted.

“Or, something else,” Leona suggested with her much ignored by both White and Red men advanced faculty of reason. Knowing that such required proof, Leona retrieved a permanently borrowed Geiger counter from the saddle bag of her horse. She then put the smelling end of it on the pond and the florescent marbles within the cracked open rocks around it. The ticking spooked Kumar out of whatever century he had visited in dreams to the present.

“What the fuck it that?” Kumar blurted out of a dropped jaw, his ass having landed in yet another pile of cow droppings.

“A toy I stole from the chemistry lab where the kindly, God fearing and very professorial instructor said he was hungry for some ‘red meat’ after class,” Leona explained. She perused the area with the Spiritually primed third eye she inherited from her Shamen Grandfather, while triangulating the source of the radiation with the geometrical precision and mathematical prowess her Grandmother brought to every activity of Native life before most of those activities were officially outlawed. “A Paleface professor who said after praising me for being the smartest and wisest student in the class after the ‘tell me only what I have to know for the exam’ rich, white students had left the lab,.....that he was ‘hungry for some red meat’”

“Maybe he really was wanting a steak,” Kumar offered with the calm, stabilizing voice of his which made everyone else more ‘harmonic’ with the universe. But, as always, it drove a wedge of disruptive fire into Leona’s spine. It went all the way up to her constantly fast thinking ‘galloping to the next thoughts’ brain, which she refused to bring down to a trot, or even a lope. “Professors can get hungry for a steak, with fries. And to sharing a meal and only a meal with students who WANT to learn. It makes them feel purposeful, appreciated, purposeful and.---“

“---This Geiger counter detects uranium,” Leona explained regarding the Geiger counter.

“Uranium being a Lakota god?” Kumar asked.

“No, you idiot!” she barked back at the scholar who was an expert in most everything except hard, real life science.

“A Lakota goddess?” he inquired, sincerely, Great Spirit bless and help him.

“Uranium, Atomic number 92,” Leona reiterated. “Something in THIS universe, not the one you visit when you,” she continued, having smelled the stash of ‘wacko tobacco’ in his breast pocket. She grabbed hold of the weed, threw it into the dirt, and buried it before Kumar, with his slowed down reflexes, could retrieve it.

“Hey, you people burn sweetgrass,” he protested, while trying to sift leaves and seeds from the overwhelming dirt around them.

“Which, unlike that ‘soul opening grass of YOURS, makes our reflexes faster and our minds sharper and our spirits more hard working.”

“I have a right to like, ya know, relax, Leona. Take some time off from the Workers Revolution.”

“Which doesn’t include Redskinned Revolutionaries!” Leona pointed out.

“Your choice, not ours,” Kumar replied, shooting back the accusational arrow directly into a bulls-eye inside of Leona.. “In a world where----”

Leona looked up at the sky, feeling the future calling her to see at least some of it so that the present could be moved forward into it, kicking, screaming and, yes, dancing. “A really hard rain HAS to fall, and should,” she asserted, hoped and prayed while Kumar looked at the cows coming out of the bush, congregating around them both. “You White, Yellow, Black and even Brown skinned Palefaces created the Dust Bowl by making the land bleed by putting the plow to it. It destroyed the natural grasslands, and replaced it with crops that blow away with the wind....When it will end, the answer is blowing in the wind. And as I continue to say things that I wrote which someone will probably culturally appropriated by someone else who—“

“---These cows are not doing so good,” Kumar interjected, this time bringing Leona out of her dream world into the present. Indeed, some of the bovine, perhaps reincarnated human, souls seemed depressed. Some stared into space. Some walked in circles, Some looked at the same tree, rock or fallen branch again and again, as if they had forgot what their eyes had seen ten seconds ago. Some merely walked around with a wobbly gate. One of the bovines, who seemed to be more lost within its own skin and home range than the others, by intention or accident, walked at a brisk pace towards a cliff that would put anything that ventured onto it into a permanent fall.

“No!!!” Kumar yelled at the cow. He rushed over to it, diverting it with a stick, screams and finally his fist to remain on the stable side of the cliff belonging to the still living. In the process of doing so, he saw, then brought to Leona’s attention to bovine bones and corpses below the hill. They were also the skeletons of half eaten cattle. Bushes and small trees with berries on them were interspersed between them. The carrion dining on the cattle seemed stoned, those who were still alive anyway.

“There’s something really strange that’s going on with these guys,” Kumar noted, yet again.

“And gals?” Leona inquired.

“Mostly the guys,” replied the cowboy who knew as much, or more, about domestic cattle as Leona’s ancestors knew about wild bison. “In a herd that I used to know...before someone blasted a hole into these rocks. Looking for oil, copper, gold, dead human bodies, or... well, fuck if I know. The bulls and young ones who still could be bulls who are still alive are depressed. Some have fucked up memory. None of them want to extend out of their territory, or extend out their dick. They’re useless. Suicidal. I don’t give a shit if I live or die zombies who have ‘fuck me over if you want or need to’signs on their foreheads. A state of no mind that I am painfully familiar with.”

“And the girl cattle?” Leona asked, as a both a feminist and scientist.

“A little wobbly,” Professor Patel noted, pointing Leona’s attention to three female bovines getting from point A to B with far more determination than grace. “But they get to where they want to go, and still have the will to know where they want to go and need to go.”

“And situations below the neck with these creatures, I mean, perhaps reincarnated souls?” Leona asked, thinking that, perhaps, Kumar’s theories about past lives could give her answers regarding what was happening in these hills that her people had used but never owned as hunting, grazing and berry gathering grounds. And were still using as such.

Kumar jumped down to one of the dead cattle, then offered his hand to Leona to join him. Due to her admittedly poor ability to stay erect on steep ground, she accepted. He picked up kidneys from half eaten belly of a, thankfully dead, bovine before a crow could eat it.

“No!” Kumar blasted at the black avian diner. “‘Hercules’ here died of kidney failure,” he said regarding the once alive and, according to the size of his family jewels, virile bull.

“After thinking that he himself was a failure,” Leona proposed.

The crow attempted to eat berries off a half stripped bush. Kumar shoo’d him away. He asked Leona to give him the smelling end of the Geiger counter. The lights on the strange box he had never seen which had only recently been devised lit up like fireworks on the Fourth of July. The clicks on it were louder than a swamp filled with crickets announcing their presence on a 100 degree, humid night. Bird skeletons lay under the berry bush.

“And if we can make American success stories think they are failures, like Hercules did,” Kumar suggested, after which he scratched his clean shaven chin like so many professors did with their bearded ones.

“This smells like dangerous medicine, Kumar,” Leona said, sharing a third brain with her fellow brown-skinned expatriate who didn’t quite fit in with his people, just like she, truth be told, didn’t integrate well with hers.

Kumar moved to another bush, and tested the berries there. Less ticking was on it. His life seeking eyes picked up something inside of it. He reached in, and retrieved a nest of birds deep within the branches. He moved them gently to another bush, whose berries did not light up the machine.

“And letting the fuck heads on top keep fucking our people and yours is a safe and necessary thing to do,” Kumar gave voice to, after which he pontificated a proverb in what, if you used a lot of imagination, sounded like Lakota.

Leona allowed herself a well deserved laugh.

“Hey...I was trying to be profound here!” Kumar protested.

“And maybe more revealing that you want to be,” Leona replied, self observing the edge of her lips move upwards.

“So, what did I say?” Kumar asked.

“I wish I could have a chocolate flavored vagina, loosely translated,” Leona replied.

Kumar pulled out a dictionary from his back pocket. “What I meant to say is...” he said while searching the weather beaten pages.

Leona laid her hand on his arm, lovingly. “Tell me what’s in your naïve heart, hard head, and up your fart emitting ass. In English...please.”

CHAPTER 6

When Emerson Morgan woke up in the morning, it felt like just another day in Blue River, Colorado, a town he decided would be transformed into another Boston. But according to Morgan’s agenda, it would be even richer and more prestigious than the city he grew up in, and would not go back to. Not until he had shown his Blue Blood family back East that he was a far more accomplished Colonial Master than any of they were.

If he succeeded in this Western town he broke down so that he could build it back up into his and American Capitalism’s image, perhaps he would wake up rested rather than exhausted by nightmares about being sent back to Harvard Business School or Beacon Hill Prep. It was there that, as a middle aged man, he failed every course he had aced on his own or cheated his way to such as a younger man.

Morgan diplomatically asserted in the back to back meetings at his opulent office with investors and debtors, he was the undisputed King of this town, the county, and, according to all projections, most of the state. He claimed that every day he was having more of an influence on the commoners who served him, and therefore ultimately themselves, than he had planned. Most particularly when the Kumar Patel, Sikh cowboy who usually smelled like East Indian food, high country sweat, or tobacco that reeked of Pagan incense, and whose clothing was more like the rags Socrates wore when day dreaming in Ancient Athens than established gentlemen at established universities donned, appeared before him. Kumar had taken a bath in a tub rather than the river, in real suit. His face was smoothly shaved rather than colorfully stubbled. Seated next to him in another chair which, by design of course, made even a six foot five man’s face lower than five foot five Morgan’s, was 20th century Anarchist Redskin Leona. She was

clad in a generously fringed and colorfully beaded outfit that was as authentic to her ancestral culture as it was alluring to a man of any culture.

What the ‘finally giving into the system’ cowboy and his ‘taking her place as an alluring squaw rather than aspiring to be chief’ Injun girl friend wanted, was a source of curiosity to Morgan. Still, there other matters to be dealt with, requiring Morgan to take the gold watch his grandfather had passed down to him. “You said you have an idea that would make this county, state and country a Paradise,” the overfed tycoon said to the underfed commoners. “You have sixty seconds, as time is money. Go!” he continued, noting the minute hand on the watch, leaning back on the cushioned chair he converted into a throne.

Kumar pulled a jar of berries from the briefcase bearing initials that were not his own. He offered Morgan both a smell and taste. “Special berries from a special place,” he said with a slow, confident voice, and a bit of upscale Bostonian English to his diction.

“Place of big medicine,” Leona added, with an accent that sounded very ‘Injun’. Of course she dropped the articles and verbs. “My grandmother’s medicine. Now my place and my medicine.”

“Now hers. And we propose, now yours,” Kumar added, interrupting Morgan’s ocular upwardly moving survey of Leona’s exposed legs, shapely hips and sized perfect breasts.

“Special healing powers for body and mind,” ‘Injun goddess’ Leona said, with the kind of promise worthy of the alluring Oracles of Delphi in Ancient Greek.

“That make ‘sweetgrass smoking’ brown skinned cowboy waste forty seconds,” Morgan said recalling that these Oracles offered Truth seekers mind-altering mushrooms prior to answering their questions. He turned to Leona. “And makes you, the only member of your tribe with enough brain, sand and, if you decided to use rather than hide it, sexual appeal to get a real education, talking without using articles like a----“

“---This shit works!” the traditionally clad Injun Einstein barked back like a defiant Union Organizer at the docks in Boston Harbor. “As proven in rats, hamsters and mice,” she continued as an accomplished, but still young, academic researcher. She yanked a pile of papers from Kumar’s, plopping them onto Morgan’s desk. “And---“ .

“---And three, two, one,” Morgan interjected as he counted down the second hand on his watch.

“---And tested on me!” Leona shot back, after which she grabbed hold of the berries, throwing one of them down her throat.

Morgan was not convinced or impressed, until she ate another berry, then another, then two more beyond that, each snack of the magic potion accompanied by an alluring sexual

gesture. Morgan put down his watch, sat back, and with the most minimal of movements of his blister-free, manicured fingers, motioned for Leona to continue.

“I still have contacts at the University I went to. did some experiments there, and at home, which for certain financial and political reasons, remain unpublished,” the traditionally dressed Lakota woman rattled off with an upright spine, elevated chin and sharply pronounced consonants more consistent with an upstart but upwardly moving Grad Student at a REAL university located, of course, EAST of the Mississippi. “With enough n values to come up with valid statistics. Using ANOVA testing of all groups, proving to a 98% certainly level that whatever is in these berries and the water that feeds them does indeed generate axonal growth and neuronal network expansion in male animals that makes them far superior to any of their competitors in the control groups.”

Her rapidity of speech making her sound even more intelligent, compelled Morgan to look at the data in front of him. “And the lower dose groups as well. The ability to intuit, memorize, deduce and act assertively against all obstacle provided by nature or setbacks inflicted by one’s...competitors,” she continued.

Convinced by what appeared to be scientific logic and businessman’s intuition, Morgan reached into the jar of berries, eager for a taste. Leona slapped his hand in the manner of the many commoner Dominatrix escorts who he wished would become his wife. But he had many times declined the offer, as surrendering control to a woman was something a powerful man who wanted to stay powerful only did in private.

“No...Let me,” Leona said, seeming to be the composite of every girl toy and mistress bitch Morgan had accessed on his way up to the top, both here in the to be conquered West, and back in the already over established East.

Leona dipped her slender mangled fingers into the jar, then put a berry into Morgan’s mouth. He smiled in delight, his tongue having tasted her intact flesh, a tinge of her blood on it..

“Great man about to become Superman want more?” Leona asked.

Morgan nods his head ‘yes’, his stare fixed at her even more exposed breasts, as she placed another berry onto his tongue.

“Then...Great Spirit say to listen to proposition from Brown skinned Cowboy,” Mistress Leona suggested and commanded.

Kumar seemed to feel confident. A man who pulled himself up from his previous station. Until Leona spat out, pointing to Kumar, “Listen to proposition from Sikh cowboy, whose horse is smarter than he is.”

Kumar felt insulted. But he held back a well hidden fist he made in anger.

“... but...after eating these berries,” Leona continued to Morgan regarding Kumar.
“Cowboy dreamer, head in the clouds Comrade Patel---“

“---had enough brains to dress like a respectable Free Market Capitalist real American man,” Morgan surmised, and gave voice to.

“And he took a bath,” Leona said as she sniffed a now poker faced Kumar, whose chin was held up in compliant-with-the-system pride rather than rebellion. “In the waters around these berries.”

“---That, yeah...gave me an idea that will not only make you richer now. And immortality remembered later,” former Comrade now Citizen Patel said regarding Morgan.

“For being a brilliant humanitarian instead of a rich businessman. And an even greater American. Yes?” Leona added.

Kumar took out papers from his briefcase, respectfully placing the blueprints and cost projections in front of Morgan. “A gentleman’s club for top end gentlemen...And only them...A man’s only place which...” Kumar turned to Leona. “Mister Morgan and I have to discuss the particulars. here...Between men. Which of course you understand.”

“Sure...I understand,” Leona replied with her head bowed, her eyes looking downward. After which she snatched Morgan’s golden stopwatch, pressing the timer. “You ‘gentlemen’ have five minutes,” she proclaimed with just enough rebellion in her voice to sound interesting, but not dangerous to the status quo.

“And if we take six minutes?” Kumar asked her.

“There are other gentlemen who are eager for new opportunities to get richer now and get more famous in the future , in other towns that...well...,” Leona related with as much confidence than Morgan had ever heard from any woman on her way up the ladder. Including his newest love in the bedroom and fellow conqueror in the board room, Melissa Bullock.

While Leona sauntered her way to the door, letting her ass do more talking than her succulent mouth did, Morgan imagined what it would be like to cajole Melissa out of business associate Richter’s bedroom. And to get Leona into his own, experiencing them both at the same time. Or seeing them fight each other over who would be his favorite.

But, business before pleasure. “So,” Morgan said, turning to Kumar. “Show me my, I mean, your idea.”

“The location for this Gentleman of Gentlemen’s club, Sir,” Kumar said as he laid down the aerial map.

“Which we own now,” Morgan noted. “*Good*,” he check-listed in his head regarding the property he had already acquired, legally this time.

“And the design of the facilities, Sir,” Kumar continued, presenting Morgan with the architectural plans.

“Sound,” Morgan said after quickly assessing its essential features.

“And the people I propose to build and operate it,” he converted to common sense Capitalism said, offering Morgan a list of citizens. “Who will keep this New Order and how it does what it does for the county, state and country secret, Sir,” Patel continued with an even deeper bow. It was the third time Kumar had said ‘Sir’ to ANYONE in Blue River, according to rumor anyway.

“And you swear this on...?” Morgan inquired, after leaning back on his throne, looking down at and into this new apprentice who, according to rumor anyway, valued his honor more than his life.

“I swear the delivery and confidentiality of all of this on the life of my horse, Arjun,” Patel pledged.

“Which I will hold you to, you know,” Morgan proclaimed with a raised index finger.

“Understood and appreciated,” Kumar replied, with something Morgan had rarely seen in any of his subordinates, associates or potential wives. Sincerity and commitment, the kind that could not be faked.

Leona waited impatiently in the waiting parlor outside of Morgan’s office. She looked at her watch, noting that the time had passed well beyond the five minutes she had commanded, and the six Kumar requested. Finally, after three times that allocated time, Kumar emerged, smoking a cigar. A big one, which reeked of Fat Cat Paleface tobacco rather than his own brand of ‘High Country Weed’. But this time his head was in the clouds with something more frightening to Leona than past lifetime memories of past glories he wanted to dwell in, or inflict upon the present.

What Kumar appeared to be on the outside was what he now seemed to be on the inside. A man of high station who was being introduced by Morgan and Richter to other men of high stations, and low moral values. Who was being eyed as a new mark by Melissa Bullock as she passed by. All of the Paleface moguls ignored by Leona, of course.

Finally, after seeing Kumar indulge in small talk with words she couldn’t hear but smelled of power which could corrupt even the purest of souls, Leona noted ‘Citizen Patel’ stride her way with a gait that said proud, loud and obnoxious. “You’re late” she said to him in Lakota as she got up, as an obedient woman AND squaw. According to

script, she walked head bowed behind Kumar as he strolled toward the exit door of the Mansion.

“And you’re...hmmm...” Kumar said from the side of his mouth to her.

“Necessary for this plan of OURS to happen,” she said in Lakota.

“As am I,” he asserted, in English, having completely understood her words and feelings regarding many things that had happened. And even more that was to transpire.

As the two commoner Commie Comrades who had conned the richest Capitalist con man in Colorado exited the ornate Mansion, they heard, saw, then smelled the desperation on dirty, gruesome looking prisoners in a chain gang, heavily laboring to make the grounds beautiful. Kumar walked past them, pretending to be upscale. As the prisoners were supervised by highly armed soldiers under Johnston’s command, Leona did her best to appear subservient. She hoped that the most recent prisoners to the chain gang, who had been inadvertently let in on the plan by Kumar, when he was stoned on his ‘special brand’ of sweetgrass, didn’t wink or smile at her or him.

“So, you were able to pick up which berries had uranium in them and which ones didn’t,” Kumar asked Leona regarding the jar of berries she had eaten and the ones she allowed and required Morgan to sample.

“I think so. Hope so,” her reply from the side of her mouth. Her head was bowed even lower when Johnston gazed at her legs, apparently not noting who they belonged to, thankfully. “Besides, the REAL rodent data we came up with, using the rodents I stole from the research lab and pet stores says that low doses of uranium do not affect female mentation, aspirations or execution of plans to expand perspective and knowledge.”

“Where did you learn to do all of that?” Kumar asked, intuiting yet another secret about the Lakota woman and Redskinned bombshell who had promised to never lie to him with ‘forked tongue’, or a ‘fuck me now’ smile.

“I became a research scientist without going to research Science school. Merged art and science. Aspired to be the next Albert Einstein but without the weird hair and German accent,” her reply, voiced assertively and with upturned chin once she was sure that prisoners and guards had focuses their attention on the building yet another opulent stone wall around the mansion.

“No,” Kumar replied. “I mean I wanted to know...How you learned to lie like that.”

“Same place we savages learned how to scalp our enemies.”

“We Palefaces, I know....Which I’m not!”

“Half of you is.”

“Not the half that’s doing all of this!”

“And that, my naïve yet caring Revolutionary for the people scares me.” Leona offered as her final statement on matters past, and uncertain situations that had to be set into motion in the very soon to emerge future.

CHAPTER 7

Why the barn and adjoining cabin used by the Wild Bunch three decades ago as a hold up location was still standing was a mystery. The wind and soft ground under portions of it had converted it into a tilted structure which made the leaning tower of Pisa look like a solid dwelling that was exactly 90 degrees from solid ground. Perhaps it was because Sam Pickering, master carpenter and, because he didn’t get caught, skillful outlaw who rode with the Wild Bunch, had done a good job constructing the facility. A far better job than any of industrially rather than practically trained construction workers in town he could have hired. Or perhaps Sam’s ghost was still hanging around in the place, holding up a pillar and sneaking a nail or two into the posts to prevent the walls and roof from caving in. But three things were true about the location known to the locals in Blue River, and not yet the historians from Denver or Chicago.

Firstly, the dust and snow storms that had torn down so many structures in town were unable to turn The Hold Up into a pile of fragmented lumber and rusted nails. Second, there was more swamp and quicksand around the location than solid ground. In the past such had prevented many a law man, creditor, or nagging wife looking for her absent husband the ability to reach the clandestine location. And third, because of the two aforementioned problems, or legends, no realtor tried to buy The Hold Out, or the land around it.

Kumar found out about the only safe route to The Hold Out through, of all people, his boss, friend, mentor and surrogate father, multi-seasoned cowboy Sam Longmore. When Longmore was a boy, the aging Pickering had entrusted him with his various stories about real outlaws. Because outlaws were not protected by the law, they had to be honest in order to survive and get anything of worth done before they were hung, or faded into obscurity. The stories were passed down to Kumar, and only Kumar by Sam. In part, this was because Sam Pickering’s story was not unlike Kumar’s Sikh Grandfather herdsman who waged war in various ways in India against the oppression of Colonial British Masters. Until he was hanged.

Kumar had thought long and hard about giving selected people the route to The Hold Up. But it felt both appropriate and necessary to discuss at that location a plan which required both unity and secrecy. They all came in dead of night under a half moon, some by car, some by horse, some on foot. All of them made it without losing a vehicle, steed or even

a boot. Kumar had brought the 'Worker's Rights Meeting Hall' official sign away from Morgan's burn pile in town. It was solidly and symmetrically placed above the unlocked, until all invited parties arrived anyway, barn door. "For tonight" was hand painted under it of course.

As someone had to coordinate things, even in a cooperative experiment, Kumar stood in front of the congregation atop a platform. He sat behind a 'table' made by placing an old door over two logs that were, sort of, the same height. Leona stood behind him.

Doc Wilson opened up the discussion, getting straight to the point, as a Doctor who wasted no time in informing his patients about how they could extend their life as best as possible, or deal effectively with its impending end. He stood up on his exhausted feet, looking over the real data Leona had obtained by testing the effects of uranium on rodents she had stolen from the local college, as well as those she had trapped in the woods. The site of those studies was Kumar's cabin. Wilson scratched his head, a reservoir of where old ideas merged with new ones on their own terms, which was going balder with each year he agonized over the best way to cure the diseases rather than merely remedy the symptoms his patients brought to him. "So, this rodent data says that we can drug the confident rich into becoming the self-doubting poor, by taking away their pride, inflated egos, confidence."

"Specifically, their short term memory, and competitive skills," Leona asserted as a calm, logical research scientist whose convictions never exceeded what the data proved. "Dulling the emotions that make them competitive, cruel, vicious. And effectively evil!," she continued as a Passion possessed Warrior.

"Which potentially, can send them into the nuthouse," the critically-thinking ex-researcher who defiantly became a passionately driven clinician pointed out.

"Temporarily, in a few isolated cases, they may have to be treated in mental wards," Kumar interjected, calmly. "Where they can be treated by humanistic physicians like you, Doc. But with the plan we have in mind, and on paper, we'll never send any of them to the coffin."

"But even if we do, we treat the disease of Capitalistic greed that's killing REAL Americans by cutting out the cancer, that wouldn't be so bad...." Union activist by necessity rather than choice Dubois shouted out as he stood up. He clenched his good hand with a fist that had only three remaining fingers due to 'industrial accidents' inflicted by the bosses. He had scars on his face inflicted by undercover Pinkertons who were hired to teach him a lesson after talking Union talk to workers in the tavern after a 12 hour day. "Killing these rich bastards who are starving everyone else into the grave, with 'industrial accidents' is something that, well, if it happens, it happens."

"But not necessary," Kumar offered.

"Yet... We, I anyway, fought a war in the trenches to stop rich and powerful tyrants from

taking over Europe, and this country,” DuBois asserted. Such delivered an arrow that silenced Kumar, as he had never been tested in ANY combat involving fists or firearms on either side of the Atlantic, or Pacific.

“There will always be tyrants,” Father Smith said as he stood up, humbly bowing while delivering the calm assertion. “Jesus said we have to educate and, yes, love them, and endure them,” he offered to the congregation, including ‘undecideds’ Jake, Buddy, Sam, Elsa and her mother, Mary.

“Which is why Jesus asked the money lenders in the temples to leave, nicely, right Father?” Dubois countered. “Gotta fight fire with fire.”

“Which can burn us also,” Smith volleyed back with the assertion of mind, body and spirit.

“Spoken as a coward,” Dubois smirked accusingly with a battle scared face to Father Smith, whose body had not acquired a single blow from an armed or unarmed man. Knowing, as Kumar sensed, the proof of such which, for the moment, would not be voiced.

“I’m concerned about what happens to *us*, spiritually,” Smith offered from the bottom of his tortured, conflicted and secret holding heart. “And if we do this, what are the chances of us getting sick or worse because of this uranium exposure?”

“When we build the meeting center at the Uranium power spots we’ll be wearing protective suits,” Leona replied, bringing the focus of attention to matters physical rather than metaphysical. Such reminded Kumar that he had to now do something in the real world rather than further expand into the realm ideals and ideas. That beast his down to earth, and ‘downer’ merchant father in Sacramento called ‘accountability’. “We wear protective lead suits, gloves and masks.” Leona pulled out the stolen Geiger counter, boldly showing off the University label on it. “And routinely measure exposure with this,” she continued retrieving a Geiger counter from her backpack.”

“And when we serve up old time country moonshine and traditional berry bannock when Mister Morgan’s friends and bosses come out here,” Buddy asked, more scared of the unseeable beast of radiation than he ever was of very seeable and hearable Leona. “Ta this Secret Society city slicker dude ranch we’re gonna build? The grass, berries and water out here can irradiate all of us.”

“Who eats what and when, and who bathes in what, that’s up to Leona,” Kumar assured Buddy. “And, as we all know, or should know about Leona, she---“

“----Can convince any man to do or be anything she wants,” Sam interjected, reading Kumar’s mind, while trying to drive a very private lesson into the East Indian cowboy’s Soul with his eyes. “So I’ve heard.”

“And know,” Jake added, looking accusingly at Kumar.

“Hey! I’m my own man!” Kumar asserted to every member of the audience he had summoned to The Hold Out. “Right?” he asked, looking at Leona.

“Of course,” she assured him, and perhaps only him.

“And I don’t need the approval of any woman or man or man who is less of a man than others to approve of me,” Kumar boldly exclaimed, feeling his lying Pinocchio nose growing bigger with each word. “Right?” he asked Sam and Leona.

“Sure,” Sam said with words that allowed whoever needed to believe they were true to accept them as such.

“I suppose yer someone who don’t need any woman to laugh at your Jokes. Or man ta like your propositions,” Jake challenged Kumar with, not unexpectedly.

“It’s a proposal, Comrade Jake,” Doc Wilson reminded the foul mouthed and even less pleasing to look at orphan brat who was expected to live up to his father’s legacy of being a cowboy’s all American cowboy, but never could, no matter how hard he tried.

“Hey Doc, watch who yer callin’ Comrade, Doc!” Jake yelled back, more concerned with present ideologies than past inadequacies.

“We’re in the new, hopefully not found out about, Worker’s Union Hall. It’s just an expression,” Wilson reminded the hot headed cow puncher who he had treated for so many injuries, both accidental and unconsciously self inflicted.

“An un-American expression! Ever heard of the Red Scare?!!!” Jake blasted back, rising to his feet, his hand clenched in a Union busting fist that would not let go until his knock out the nearest ‘Comrade’, or friend. “The Red s Scare, which is---“

“---What happens on your crotch when you get too drunk and think your horse is a woman who forgot to shave her legs that year,” Kumar interjected as a joke, which did cajole Wilson and Jake into a chuckle, followed by Buddy, then Dubois. But the person Kumar was trying to impress with his humor, even more than himself, didn’t laugh. Leona’s face showed something worse than feminist indignation at the joke, which Mary, Edna’s mother displayed. No, Leona’s sympathetic sigh without a condescending eyeroll clearly indicated pity for Kumar’s lack of wit and intellect.

“Hey, a Socialist joke to bring us all together,” Kumar explained to Leona. He then turned to the others as if they were a single herd. He let his eye find the lead bull or cow so they would lead the rest to where he wanted and needed them to go, as a cohesive unit. “A socialist joke that lets us looking at and into ourselves. So....two Socialists walk into a bar...”

“...While this Cowboy walks out of this morally and biologically Dangerous Revolutionary experiment,” Sam Longmore asserted, calmly and compassionately as he stood up and made his way to the exit door. The old but certainly not defeated cowMAN then turned to Buddy and Jake, cowboys to whom was determined and sworn to pass the rugged individualist Sagebrush torch. Buddy, we got cattle depending on us,” he related as a surrogate father and friend.

“That are now owned by someone else.” The usually silent and compliant Buddy pointed out, while firmly keeping his saddle-worn down ass on the log which was his chair.

“A temporary situation, son,” the nearly completely cattle-less veteran rancher assured Buddy. “This is America. Where hard honest work is always rewarded.”

“With harder times,” Buddy reminded Sam, the gurgling in his underfed stomach solidifying the point.

Sam then turned to Jake. “Ya comin’?”

“Not yet,” replied Jake, the only attendee who Kumar didn’t directly invite to the top secret meeting. “I wanna see what happens with this reshuffling of the gets started. See where the money and power goes,” he continued, remaining in his seat. It left Kumar to ponder the same question, in deeper ways than he bargained for.

“Or who the money and power goes to, Jake?” Sam countered. “Like maybe it could beyou?”

“Or to any of us, Sam,” Jake shot back to the only one in town who would still hire him, addressing him by his first name for the first time. “Which is better than any a’ them who’s on top of all of us now!”

Each member of the congregation nodded ‘yes’ to the assertion by the new Convert to the Cause. Starting with Dubois, then Wilson, then Buddy, then, after the thought had spread to everyone else, finally Father Smith.

“Right, Comrades,” Smith said after deep reflection. He then looked up to the sky above the still present but now creaky roof. “Right, Father?” Kumar waited for a reply from the Unseen Boss who he, on good days anyway, was more of a well meaning friend than a sadistic task master.

Meanwhile, the infection of doubt went through every ‘Comrade’ in the barn, including Leona. Until, finally, Father Smith’s quivering lips broke into a wide smile, his bloodshot eye shining brighter than any star in the heavens. “Yes. Our Heavenly Father, and the Great Spirit, says yes!” Smith reported regarding his dialog with the Almighty. “Hallelujah!” he declared with an unbridled joy neither Kumar, nor anyone else, had seen

the worry wart display. With that, Smith began singing the Internationale, with the zeal of a Baptist Revivalist, and, to everyone's amazement, a voice that provided the lyrics with musically inspiring notes that didn't waver. "Arise, ye prisoners of starvation! Arise, ye wretched of the earth! For justice thunders condemnation. A better world's in birth!"

"No more tradition's chains shall bind us. Arise, ye slaves, no more in thrall!" came from a handful of other voices. "The earth shall rise on new foundations. We have been naught, we shall be all!" Kumar self observed himself singing, badly, but accurately with regard to the lyrics.

"'Tis the final conflict;" Leona added, with an almost operatic voice, in English rather than her own Native tongue, this time. "Let each stand in his place."

The International working class Shall be the human race!" came out of every mouth in the barn, amplified in intensity and volume by the still standing walls of The Hold Out'. Appended by what Kumar felt was the ghost of outlaw Sam Pickering.

But as from the other Sam, the one who Kumar wanted to be part of this Movement most, there came nothing. Sam Longmore walked out of the barn, without so much as looking at Kumar. Or anyone else.

An inner voice, perhaps that of Sam Pickering, informed Kumar that this was the most important night of his so far theoretical but not actively committed life. Sam Longmore was Kumar's only real mentor. Someone he could ask for advise who would give him an honest answer. Someone who knew how things really were, or who knew more than most fellow humans on the planet did. Someone who would remind Kumar when he was flying up towards the sky to reach higher aspirations, or dive bombing into a rock hard abyss.

Kumar was on his own now. A man who was in charge of transforming the world. A lonely man who would share the celebrations with his crew if things when right, but would be forced to walk off the plank and tossed into the deep six if they didn't. An honored position, according to Kumar's heroic Grandfather and sell out father, both of whom he could only see in dreams, or nightmares, now. But there was one perk for this hard earned 'sentence' to a life where Work would replace all play.

After the third singing of the Internationale, with three part harmony now, Leona wrapped her arm around Kumar's waist, then kissed him. On the lips this time. She appended it with a smile of gratitude and, yes, the elusive interactional feeling that all humans need and never really understand, love.

CHAPTER 8

Mother Nature saw fit to delivery warm winter winds that didn't carry much snow to the high country where the Morgan-Richter Mining and Oil inadvertently had uncovered economically useless uranium in the mountain instead. The roads leading up to it remained free of ice as well as mud. It allowed even thin tread-less tires on overloaded trucks, wooden wheels on hastily repaired carts and badly trimmed hoofs of draft horses to grip the ground without so much as a slip that would lead to a slide down the mountain. It also allowed for rapid building of the clandestine capital of the New American Empire coordinated by President Morgan and King Richter, and kept operational by very selected guests, some known to the working stiff's everywhere else, some not.

The workers Kumar hired to build the main meeting hall and adjacent lodge with all of its elaborate indoor and outdoor trimming completed the job faster than any barn-raising in the history of the county. Morgan and Richter's dollars got more work out of the selected wage slaves on Kumar's list than any other enterprise they started. Indeed, as Morgan and Richter saw it, Mother Nature and the common man were both slaves subject to their whims now. Such of course affirmed that God was on their side, without having to be paid off with any more contributions to any Church or Catholic Charity. However, the two local moguls who sought to be National Monarchs didn't realize that Queen in the making Melissa Bullock had her own plans to be Empress.

The moralistic drama and, depending on one's perspective, comedy of ironies, began on Armistice Day, otherwise known to the kids who chose to use their history books as something to wipe their asses with rather than feed their brains as November 11. Kumar's colorfully dysfunctional Comrades in what was, legally anyway, a crime were still skeptical about how tricking Blue River moguls Morgan and Richter and their special highlevel tycoons from cities which had more people than cattle into doing the Right thing. They arrived at noon in limousines as black as the oil that made them able to drive them. They were adorned with gold paint which blinded anyone who dared to look at them with an upright head. On the chauffeured passengers was a plethora of brightly shining jewels in the form of cufflinks, tie pins and canes. The latter were carried like swagger sticks stained to a deep brown red varnish hue with the blood, sweat and tears of those they were broken in on. They all seemed impressed with the meeting hall constructed of freshly varnished wood featuring Greco-Roman bronze trimmings as well as the barrage of well mannered impeccably dressed, hunchbacked more brawn than rebellions brains local servants with bowed heads who took their over-packed suitcases to their rooms.

Morgan, then Richter, decked out in freshly bought suits costing more than the locals' clothing store was worth, greeted each of the men of power and influence with a hearty handshake of equality as well as reverence as they entered the main meeting hall for lunch. He reminded them that there would be ample female entertainment after completion of business at the hotel in town. Melissa Bullock, was clad in a low cut dress

burrowed from the most attended to courtesan at said hotel, with extra layers of make up to hide the crow's feet around her eyes. She provided even the most hideously ugly guests with tailor-made compliments on their most valued physical attributes with Morgan and Richter's silent approval. She interspersed such with praise for what the guest in question had done to make America great again, secretly cajoling hints of secret plans from each of them as to how they were going to make themselves even greater. A clean shaven, respectfully suited Kumar noted it all from his position as attaché to Morgan and Richter was voiced when out of range of their ears.

The names and affiliations of the attendees were as equally impressive as the gold imprinted cards on their assigned place at the oversized, overweighing and over-polished oak dining table inside the meeting hall. They included none other than K. Richard Ranselhoff, director of the Eastern Pacific Railroad, U.R. MacDonald, President of Western Atlantic Oil, F.U Kuntsler, Founder of North American Textiles, and I.B. Younger, CEO of Imperial Steel.

Leona, clad in a tight fitting earth brown leather-wool dress with just enough fringes to make it seem to be authentic, assimilated 'Injun', with a large crucifix around her neck, came by the table. She adjusted the outfits of the white gloved waitresses charged with placing cigars, writing implements, paper and the finest glasses for drinking berry wine available in front of the overly first name initialed royalty who would sit in front of them. She was assisted by two other ladies who volunteered for this 'front line' duty so that other women would be spared being killed, or worse. But their bravery did not come with a knowledge of fashion sense for the occasion.

"Your breasts are uneven, 'gentlemen'" Leona said as she adjusted the artificial breasts under bras worn by Wilson and Dubois, whose faces were clean shaven for the first time in a year. "And you both need more lipstick." She reached into her pocket and made their chapped lips a deeper shade of red. Such was necessary so as to draw attention away from the dark brown foundation over the rest of their face and exposed skin on their arms and neck. It was essential to Wilson and Dubois appear to be servants from the inferior gender as well as 'subhuman' colored race. "And if we are going to pull this off, particularly with both of you observing clinical signs in the fat cat lab rats who will be in here before you can say 'George Armstrong Custer is a pampered, self-absorbed, Mama's boy with delusions of grandeur', which he was, try smiling and waltzing around the room, like Sister Paul there."

Leona discretely pointed lady Wilson and Dubois to Father Smith, who in black face and a conservatively designed dress. He was setting up the buffet table for the Power Meeting with a gracious dance in his step, a musical lilt of his wrists, as well as a delicate movement of his fingers when handing the silver-wear. It was culminated by his adjusting his curly shoulder length wig with the fourth and fifth digit of his fingers.

"It's an act," Leona assured Wilson and Dubois regarding the 'sexy progressive Nun'.

“Was it an act when Sister Paula presented herself as Father Paul, or when Father Paul was pretending to be Sister Paula since he arrived in this town?” Dubois grunted though ruby red lips. “Which explains, a few things about him and his past, and why he is here, . which---“

“---Are not important now,” Wilson interjected, pointing to the door to the lobby opening up. The procession of Captains, and if they had anything to do with it, Generals of Industry, strolled into the room like Presidential Royalty on their way to take their assigned seats at the round table. “We have to be sure these gentlemen get exactly what’s coming to them, pharmacologically and otherwise,” the Doctor whose job it was to help dose and clinically assess the lab rats who owned and decided who got into so many universities and medical school. So far anyway.

“‘Gentlemen’ you call these robber barons, thieves and scoundrels?” Dubois added. “Gentlemen who broke so many of us. Who we will train to do what we tell them to! Gentleman who will lick my boots! Gentlemen...”

“---And lady,” Leona interjected in the middle of the rant by the beaten but far from defeated man of many trades, as Melissa came into the hall. She lifted the name tag of one of the male participants off the table at the opposite end of Morgan’s position, then crumbled it like a squashed bug still grasping for life. She then sat down at the table with the rest of the men. “Yes. Mellissa. A lady who---“ Leona continued.

“---Is in this room by the guests’ request, and obviously not the hosts’,” Wilson noted as he and his lead-gloved ‘sister in crime’ Dubois proceeded towards the table containing the first bottle of Uranium spiked wine which would be poured into the glasses on the table. To the exact proportions of the toasters’ body weight.

Leona’s third eye sensed Mellissa’s stare at her. The descendent of European and American Royalty smiled at the ancestor of First Nations Warriors, Sages and Chiefs in the manner of a Queen to her most willing subject. Leona returned the gesture, with an accentuated bow, but ‘Queen Millissa knew that this First Nations was on the warpath . Each woman, of course, knew that secret agendas were so often the ones that came to pass more often than those stated out right. But in the meantime, it still was a man’s world.

With bowed heads and, to the varying extents, wiggling asses, the blackfaced ‘waitresses’ served food made appealing to the palate by Mary Steiner’s cooking skills and selectively psychoactive by Leona’s expertise in pharmacology. Leana returned to their station near the kitchen, taking on the demeanor of a decorative, silent, but always watching totem pole. Morgan, at the head of the more rectangular than round table stood up on his two underused feet and raised his glass of ‘power berry’ wine, thinking of course that there was more brain expanding extract in his glass than anyone else’s.

“A toast, gentlemen!” he proclaimed to his fellow penis bearers, with joy. “And Lady,” he continued, to Mellissa, by necessity, as he saw more than one of those penises grow

bigger in the presence of the Lady who invited herself to the table. “To this first annual Western conference of us, the best of the best. Who can be the Greatest of the Great if we....take more control of what we control already.”

“Together. A Supermen,” ‘as handsome as Morgan was homely’ Richter added with a big, bold baritone voice that echoed around the room.

“And superwomen,” Lady Mellissa reminded Richter, her, for the moment anyway, husband to be.

“Smart Superwomen,” Ranselhoff proclaimed. He smiled at Melissa so wide that the waxed tips of his handlebar mustache nearly touched his ears. “With memories as great as any Superman.”

“Expanding their horizons, like supermen,” offered Kuntsler, the German immigrant who build his first fortune selling arms to the Kaiser in the Great War and his second treasure chest doing business with the Allies after America joined the War to End All Wars.

“Confident. Proud. Never doubting themselves,” declared Younger in an unapologetic aristocratic Georgian plantation owner accent, one that was passed down to him by his Dixie ancestors. Along with his grandfather’s Confederate Colt which he, according to rumor anyway, had been used to kill his way to into acquiring as many counties in Colorado as his grandfather had slaves.

“Takers of power, influence and wealth,” Highland Scot born McDonald echoed from a double sized mouth rolling his r’s so loud that one could feel the room rumble under your feet. “Strong winners who are, because we are good Christian men, caretakers of the weak. And disciplinarians of them when such is necessary.”

“With magical abilities that will spring from special centers and the good earth around it like this, to be on top of the top,” Morgan proclaimed, anticipating his ability to not only be partners but masters of these moguls after the first glass of power berry wine. “With the help and those few talented people temporarily on the bottom, that helped make that magic possible,” he related and confessed, pointing to Leona and Kumar who were at the positions assigned to them just outside the kitchen door.

Morgan invited and commanded Kumar and Leona to pour a glass of wine for themselves from the ‘magic bottle’ from which he himself got a larger portion than all of his guests. Leona picked up glasses next to them as they stood by the kitchen door. Leona smiled, bowed, then poured the (as Morgan thought it be) ‘brain and balls promoting elixir into two glasses, half-filling them.. She handed one to Kumar, who lifted it up to his exceedingly generous patron mentor and mark.

“Yes. With this nectar of the gods!” mortal Morgan, anticipating that he would soon be equal to the god Zeus, proclaimed. “Which we drink as gods.”

“And goddesses!” Melissa insisted, in the manner of a mother who was both taskmaster to an errant child and mistress to a man who considered adultery as a required act of strength rather than a weakness of character.

“Yes,” Morgan conceded.

With that Melissa sipped her wine, like a lady, as the men gulped theirs down as the more assertive gender. Thankfully, the men were more concerned with looking at Lady Melissa than Injun Princess Leona, or Squire Kumar. It allowed the two latter Comrades to discretely pour the contents of their uranium spiked wine into spittoons that would be cleaned out in short order.

“Yes, gods and goddesses, on day one anyway,” Leona whispered to fellow commoner Kumar as the royals toasted each other yet again, and as predicted, led by Richter. “And as for day two, three and five,” a more confident than ever Leona said to an abruptly cautious Kumar.

CHAPTER 9

Leona had insisted on dosing Morgan and his guests with uranium wine and food. Hot comfortable baths were scheduled for all of the moguls after they had engaged in a ‘hard day’ of devising different ways to distance themselves from the planet’s ‘commoners’ with regard wealth and social prestige. Leona claimed that this had to take place so their minds could not observe how their brains were being sedated and manipulated, much like what had been done to her people in the latter half of the last century. Wilson monitored their clinical signs with meticulous care. ‘Sister Paula’ assured them that their light headedness was not due to losing brain cells, but a side effect of increased geographical elevation. And being brought closer to Heaven with each humanitarian decision they made with regard to their fortunes. With a hoarse voice blamed on being exposed to a new version of the Spanish Flu in the valley, Dubois assured Morgan et al that the new strain of the bug was putting down the commoners in town would not affect self-made kings and queens whose place was to survive on top of the mountain while Mother Nature culled the inferior populations of the overpopulating poor down below.

Prior to completion of the new Gentleman’s Club in the high country, and during the three days before the banquet, Kumar had cajoled his way from being Morgan’s personal attaché to being his junior partner, and most trusted advisor. Even more trusted than Richter. The honest as the day is long (in summer anyway) Sikh cowboy also worked such an arrangement with Richter.

Morgan, Richter and the rest of the gentlemen, and Melissa, settled in for yet another dinner four days into the power meeting of power meetings, having devised progressively unworkable plans for how to turn their collective and individual territories into empires. It began, as all of the other days did of course, with Morgan proposing another toast. But

on this evening, the master planner who could think five chess moves ahead of any of his opponents didn't even know where the board was, and if his pieces on it were white or black. "A toast, after a productive day of saving American by..." he proclaimed boldly, after which his eyes turned glassy, and turning to Richter. "What did we do yesterday and earlier today?" he inquired, thinking that he was whispering but with a confused voice loud enough for even Mary in the kitchen could hear.

"Something great and...I hope productive for America," Richter said with lips trembling in terror. "Our America," he tried to convince himself. "Right, Mister Patel?" he asked Kumar, addressing him as Mister for the first time.

"I wrote down all the details of what you and the other gentlemen and Lady, decided on," Kumar assured Richter and then Morgan, attempting to bring his two 'bosses' together. "Which requires verification of your signatures to make it happen!" He summoned Leona to come over and show the two now near sighted moguls proof of such from a briefcase filled with newly signed transfers of property and rights.

"Yeah...I've been so used to signing things today, that one of my three arms are very tired," double-visioned Kunstler commented. "What did I sign anyway, Emmmerstttton?" he slurred out of the side of his mouth to Morgan.

"What my trusted apprentice Mister Patel drew up," king of the now sandbox rather than castle Morgan proclaimed as he swayed back and forth.

"Important papers, drawn up on what you all told me to write down. That you signed," Kumar assured Ranselhoff and the other men as Leona presented them with the documents.

"And some that I composed," Leona whispered to Kumar. "And some that..."

"---Are blank," Kumar noted in a whisper, with admiration. "That we'll BOTH fill in later," he insisted with a grunt directed to the side of a face bearing a forced smile to the men who signed them. "Which will---"

"Make them as broke as they made us," Leona added, in Lakota with a smile of delight to the men.

"I nay kin! What did that lassie bampot say?" McDonald asked in a Scottish brough fueled by paranoia of the present. It was accompanied by unbridled terror his 'hero' uncle serving with Custer felt when he saw how many Indians really did show up for karmic payback at Little Big Horn.

Ranselhoff leaned even further back on his chair, taking another puff from his cigar, a carefree grin plastered on his usually trademark pensive face. "Something...profound. And..magical. Like what's in these cigars that makes me...less competitive.

And more...hungry for this really great food,” he continued as he somehow pushed himself forward to dip two fingers into his bowl of not yet completely gone berry jam. He licked the bowl and his fingers dry with more vigor than any overpaid hooker, beggar or demoted employee licked his boots or toe-jam.

Fruit hating, ‘meat and just potatoes’ Younger decided to put down his stogy and finish the rest of his allotted berry topping with a spoon that, for the most part, was right side up. “Yes, those who dine together, liberate the world together, cooperatively.” the grandson of a former slave owner who had unknowingly just signed away ownership of hundreds of black, white and yellow skinned ‘employees’ said with delight.

“Made possible by me putting the uranium in the food,” Leona whispered to Kumar.

“And me for putting my special weed into those cigars to make them eat the food,” Kumar reminded Leona. “Which doesn’t taste as good as you think it does.”

“And if they eat too much, too fast,” Leona warned.

“We schleps, serfs and slaves take back this country sooner than later,” Kumar countered .

“Giving some of it back to my people, who were here before you and they crossed the oceans, ‘Mister’ Patel”.

“Sure,” Kumar replied, not sure just how to address Leona by name this time, as she kept altering preferences for such. “That’s what I said. But these lab rats have to lose their edge. And their will to---“

“---Do or say anything...With or to anyone,” Doctor Professor Leona interjected. She pointed to Younger, who at this point was despondent to everything and everyone. Then to Kunstler, who gazed alternately at the vegetables, meat and potatoes in front of him, none of which he seemed to recognize. His stomach grumbled.

Mellissa, strategically having placed herself next to Kunstler, the richest of the barons, for the last two days, leaned in towards him, “I.B. I mean, Isiah Bentley...You’re hungry..But you aren’t eating. Thirsty but you don’t drink.. And...” Mellissa, with shaking hands directed by her strong will rather than the whims of invisible puppet masters now in control of the men’s appendages, eased her hand between Kunstler’s legs and gave the soft tissue between them a gentle yet rhythmic rub. But the penile structure underneath it, unlike other times, turned softer rather than hard.

“Nothing there,” Kumar heard Mellissa mutter to herself with his keen ears, confirmed by his recently acquired ability to read lips. “From the only man in this room who had the balls and brains to fuck these whims economically who---” she continued not caring who could see or hear her, apparently recalling Morgan and Richter’s insistence that she remain silent at the meeting table when the men were discussing business. She caught a glimpse of what Kunstler just signed away to the poor and indigent, draining his own

bank account dry. Then she got a better look at his catatonic eyes and dumb as hammers happy smile. “So, the once great Kunstler who signed away his fortune to ‘the less fortunate’ as an ‘investment’ is now a...”

“--- Nothing...In a world where nothing matters,” Younger stated, feeling like a prophet in a wonderland he had just discovered behind his glassy eyes. “But not to ‘nothings; like me,” he continued, abruptly feeling like shit that was being flushed down the toilet rather than the asshole who did the flushing.

Leona smiled in at seeing Melissa alone, and frustrated. Melissa assessed the other men in the room who had lost contact with each other, themselves and the reality of who they were supposed to be, then stood up. As she passed by Kumar and Leona, she stumbled on the floor. Kumar offered to help her. She refused with more stubbornness than Kumar had seen in any woman, even Leona. For the first time, she was at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. But unlike the men, she was aware who put her there.

“My legs just went limp!” Melissa viciously blasted into Kumar’s caring eyes. “My brain is fine. And will make my legs go where I tell them to go.”

“Or the poor house,” Kumar self observed himself saying, celebrating a day when clever right did overpower economic might.

“But not the fucking Nunnery!” Melissa lamented as she pushed herself up onto her feet, then stumbled her way out the door.

Wilson sashayed, then with a manly stride, approached Kumar and Leona.

“So, you don’t need me to be a waitress or nurse anymore?” he asked his two ‘supervisors.’ “I can go back to being a doctor. A male doctor?”

“With a pharmacy filled with drugs that your patients need,” Kumar said. He presented the externally but never internally feminized ‘waitress’ with papers signed by Morgan and Richter confirming the funds donated to his clinic. “Everything your patients need!”

“And lots more that they want...” Leona added, placing in Wilson’s other hand a blank piece of gold embedded stationary with Morgan’s company on it, bearing his signature. “Such as...” She wrote down a few donations on the blank piece of paper Morgan and Richter signed. It brought Wilson’s grumbled yet still ruby red lips into a pleased as punch womanly, and manly, smile of satisfaction. “And...if you want, after experimenting with being Doctor Willimina, a new dress, shoes and...wig.”

“That isn’t taken from by scalping a female shithead heiress,” Kumar interjected, as he noted Queen Melissa outside the meeting hall. She was crunched up and balling like a lone peasant who had lost home, bread and family. “Right?” Kumar asked Leona.

“We’ll see,” her reply. Leona’s real thoughts, agendas and feelings were hidden behind eyes. They had seen more horror in her real life as a real life Western Indian than Kumar had as a relatively sheltered East Indian.

CHAPTER 10

Christmas came early that year. With all the legal documents signed, and the signers in mental wards unable to remember their real names and former Callings as robber barons, Santa Kumar et al saw to it that all of the of what was taken from the poor by the rich was returned to them. As to the explanation for such to the general population of Blue River, Dubois, new owner of the coal mines in which he worked harder than of the people under him, informed them that there was another crash in the Stock Market that only the rich had access to as an explanation for his newfound wealth.

As Doc Wilson’s clinic was well stocked with needed and effective medications, he was finally able to give away for free on the basis of need. He said to his curious patients that there was a virus going around that ate up the area of the cerebral cortex which made people greedy, vicious and ignorant of the ‘what goes around comes around’ rule. He even gave it a Latin name. which he gave a Latin name to.

Father Smith said that Jesus had appeared to Morgan, Richter and the other moguls in a Vision and that their souls were being ‘reconstructed’ by special prayers and medications while in confinement.

As for Lady Mellissa’s new role as a commoner hard working laundress with a limp in the legs she had formerly used to attract rich men and kick the asses of down on their luck ones, Leona said that she had an accident when skiing in the hills that joggled the blister-lacking bitch’s brain as well as her hindlimbs.

Kumar was elected ‘Comrade Mayor’ mostly because he DIDN’T want the job. When asked why he took it, he said that that ‘karma is a bitch that comes to bite you in the ass’, which he hoped would make the people who now owned the houses, farms and stores that the bank had foreclosed on think about not becoming as vicious, greedy and ignorant as their former economic masters.

Unlike the previous ‘golden times’ in Blue River when gold, silver or oil were discovered by hard working citizens, the color of one’s skin was not an issue. As was the country or state of origin. The new law, which needed no sheriff to be enforced, banned all signs excluding Irish, Mexicans, Migrant Okies, Indians, Blacks or Chinks from honest work which now paid appropriate wages. No one dared put up signs excluding women from men’s job, perhaps because they feared Leona’s wrath. due to habit. Father Smith’s Halleluiah Café was now working out of Morgan’s once high priced eatery. It advertised: ‘All you need to eat. All day every day. Pay what you can, IF you can.’ The communally

owned food store which sold goods brought in from other counties as well as grown and grazed locally, had the same policy. No one was hungry, cold or shelter-less. But, there were still some things which needed adjustment.

“So, how long should we, and our trusted Comrades here, keep them like this?” a now re-bearded Doc Wilson asked Kumar as both idealistic rebels turned social revolutionaries gazed upon a despondent Morgan and a self-hitting Richter being guided on their daily walk outside the renovated and expanded hospital. While patients Ranselhoff, Younger and McDonald were being escorted onto a car to for transport to other facilities operated by Wilson’s most trusted medical colleagues elsewhere. “And to keep them in this condition of dis-connection from their former selves?”

“Till we, or your trusted and smart research buds in Denver find a biological cure for greed, cruelty, evil and stupidity,” Kumar related.

“Socrates said the cure for all evil is knowledge,” Wilson replied. “As well as wisdom and---“

“---Be sure they don’t get kidney problems,” Kumar heard from Leona, as she snuck up on him ‘Injun style’ yet again, in mocassined feet..

“And keep Morgan and Richter away from her,” Wilson shot back, drawing his Comrade’s attention to Melissa Bullock, hard at work doing laundry for the commoner women she had spit on and the town whores who she stuck up her nose at.

“So, without those men, Morgan, Richter and the others, Lady Melissa really is broke. ” Kumar noted.

“With regard to her personal money, she always WAS broke. She was able to act rich because of ‘allowances’ from whatever man she was trying to trap into marriage, without actually getting pregnant herself, of course. But being the only woman in this socio-biological experiment of ours, she is an interesting lab rat, who may give us problems down the road,” Wilson warned.

“And you know this, Doc, because...” Leona inquired.

“Doctor patient confidentiality,” Wilson answered, his back arched, his eyes averted. “Some rules we have to obey. Even if they are---”

“---UnAmerican!” Kumar heard from another familiar voice in a day filled already with too many surprised and startles. “And illegal!” ex-Sheriff Johnston, still in his US Army uniform, barked at the trio. “Which all of this probably has to be.”

“Maybe, CAPTAIN Johnston,” Kumar said, noting the ripped off Colonel flaps on his newly issued tunic, and the captain bars reminding him of his new rank.

“And if you make any more false accusations, Sergeant or Private Johnston,” Leona reminded the Paleface bully with the beet red angered grimace.

“I’ll have you know that I was a decorated,” Johnston barked into Leona’s smirk. “Special assignment Indian fighter in the Yaqui Injun revolt in Mexico back in ’26!” he said to fellow white-skinned (and still courteous by professional necessity and habit) Doc Wilson.

“The history books will call it a revolution,” Kumar interjected.

“And record who assigned you to go there,” Leona added. She appending such with one of her accusatory looks which said she knew your deepest and most incriminating secrets, even though she didn’t.

Johnston huffed and puffed like an outsmarted proud cut colt who had been denied access to the ability to kick the crap out of his trainer. “We’ll see about that!” he grunted in frustration. “But I know things about you all, or can make them up and have other people believe them, and---”

“---Second Lieutenant Johnston!” Kumar heard from someone he was pleasantly aware of, from behind Johnston. “We don’t have all day,” Colonel Oliver, the first Native American in Colorado in the Army Reserve to hold that rank, barked at his now subordinate officer Johnston from atop a truck filled with other soldiers below his rank.

“Of course,” Johnston conceded, still holding onto his pride and former station.

“Of course WHAT!!!?” Oliver barked back, pointing to the Colonel clusters on his shoulders that had been taken from Johnston which he acquired as part of the de-segregation order signed by a uranium- berry wine intoxicated Morgan AND Richter.

“Of course, Sir,,” Johnston grumbled.

“You mean, I suggest strongly, SIRS?” Oliver reminded Johnston, pointing to a dirt poor Irish immigrant Captain and a Black Major who used to be private and corporal when Johnston was a Colonel.

“Alright! Of course SIRS!”

Johnston pulled his rifle over his shoulder and joined the rest of his troops in the truck. The detachment of soldiers formerly dispatched by Federal and Business Mogul order to keep American migrants, Mexicans and political dissidents out of Colorado left Blue River left town. Their new orders were to to build houses for those in neighboring counties whose homes were bulldozed down by Morgan’s satellite banks after being re-possessioned. Leona and Kumar smiled with ultimate delight. But as always in cases of ‘all is well’ in matters medical and otherwise, Wilson’s face displayed severe caution.

“Just remember,” he said to Kumar and Leona. “Fugam Gloria est,” the self-assigned healer of body, mind and spirit proclaimed sadly, but assertively, after which he departed, leaving it up to his two patients to take or leave to take his advise.

“What did he say?” Kumar asked Leona.

“Glory is fleeting,” Leona replied. She recalled no doubt the buffalo days of her own people when they got the horse and were able to establish mastery over not only the buffalo, but neighboring tribes who had not yet learned how to ride. After which she turned to Kumar to share the lesson they were, hopefully, about to learn together. “Something you maybe remember from that previous lifetime in Rome you keep dreaming about where ‘we’ drove the rich mad, and made the empire fall. To be replaced by----“

“---Something better! This time,” Kumar asserted “And while we’re quoting things to each other to sound learned, something from one of you and Al Einstein’s hero...Isaac Newton...” Kumar took in a deep breath, recalling what he had taught himself just that morning. “Energy once Created is never destroyed,” he said in Lakota, forcing his tongue to pronounce vowels and consonants he never encountered in any other language he had tried to learn.

Leona scratched her chin, looked into herself, then at and into Kumar. “I’m impressed,” she finally declared. “And you even did it with sort of understandable pronunciation.”

Kumar thanked her for the compliment and sign of respect in his best pre-rehearsed academic German, Russian, French, Spanish and ancient Greek, feeling impressed with himself beyond measure.

“But as the White Nigger Scot in the woodshed n my genetics back in 1789, Angus William McDermott, said,” Leona reminded him. “If ye dae guid th’day, ye hae tae dae better th’mora,” she continued with in the Scottish Highland dialect her great grandfather proudly carried with him to Colorado a century ago along with his fiddle, coat of arms, and wanted poster for his head for giving an English landlord banker the beating he deserved after foreclosing on his clan’s ancestral farms.

“Nay probs,” Kumar replied to what was no doubt, ‘if ya do good today, you gotta do better tomorrow’. With that Kumar reached into the breast pocket of his newly and honestly acquired shirt as Mayor and took out a joint containing his special mellow weed.

“Without that!” Leona insisted, pointing to the specially mixed brand of wackie tabaccie. “We’re trying out a new social socialist experiment, that requires a clear head!” Leona requested. “Please,” she begged.

“Sure,” Kumar considered. “But this weed does make me feel good,” he pointed out after which he put it back into his pocket.

Leona kissed him on the lips, then pulled away. She then gave him another smack of love, respect and affection with her eyes.

“That makes me feel better,” Comrade Mayor Kumar related with a wider smile than any he had experienced on the weed. Cheers from the somewhat less well dressed citizenry of the town he was entrusted to coordinate, but not control, made the experience more special. It was accentuated by another hug, kiss from Leona. Yes, glory was fleeting but...to not seize the day and enjoy it would be an insult not only to the many gods who are encompassed within the Great Spirit, but a dis-service to humanity who It serves, and is served by.

CHAPTER 11

It didn't take long for the news about the town as well as surrounding county, in Colorado that had no police force, no REAL Mayor in charge of the citizenry, no hunger, no unemployment, no homelessness, no newspapers that increased their readership by telling emotionally charge lies rather than the bare bones truth, to reach the populated centers that urban dwellers still called the 'important' part of the world. One such location of course was New York City, a town of 6 million souls whose consciousness and travels, rightly or wrongly, seldom went west of New Jersey. But despite the white lies of hope offered by Priests on Sunday morning to nearly penniless parishioners and on Saturday night over the radio by politicians who needed votes from the huddled masses to be re-elected to their still high paying jobs in Washington and Albany, the gap between the have nots and haves was never greater.

One of those privileged overly 'haves' sat comfortably in his office in the top story of his still maintained and, thanks to the Cops and sometimes Federal troops down below on the street, not bombed by 'Commie Anarchists' building in lower Manhattan. R.B Wentworth rotated his pot bellied but somehow handsomely clad in a brown tweed suit torso towards his window. He gazed down on the American flags flying proudly on every one of the office buildings while common citizens, some of whom had lost an arm, leg or eye fighting to defend it in the Great War overseas, begged for food from those who still had matching shoes with intact soles on the them.

“The way it is,” the double chinned, immaculately bearded and neatly combed back brown-grey haired Boston Blue blood who had not only survived but, due to tips from undisclosed sources, flourished after the 1929 Stock Market crash said to his guest with a baritone voice that echoed from his double chin. He felt himself to be both God's and America's personally assigned prophet atop the brick and mortar Mount Sinai. He was born to a well-off family in Boston. Dut to luck and some cunning, he was able to marry his way into a richer one in Long Island. His wife died a year later, leaving him the seeds for his next fortune. Recalling all of the above, he took another puff from his Cuban cigar. “Yes, the gap between those of us who have and those who don't,” he said as he looked out the window again. A Cop pulled away another emaciated one handed War veteran unwashed hobo, this one wearing a Red Star on his cap, for 'three squares and a

cot' in jail with of course a well deserved beating beforehand. "The way it is here in the East," the gambler who, by various means and divinely passed on good fortune, never lost any toss of the dice in any game he played noted with a sense of righteousness and glee as was his habit, and passion. "And almost every place in the West," he continued, gazing at the smog emerging from his factories in New Jersey. It added an 'interesting' color of grey to what had normally been a clear blue sky a generation ago. "But not apparently, where you came from," Wentworth noted to his guest, picking up a copy of the Colorado People's Herald, its main office in Blue River.

Wentworth waddled his underused legs towards his desk. He retrieved a bottle of 'wildberry' brandy specially mailed to him from that location from 'an admiring friend'. He then took two glasses from his gold trimmed, oak cabinet, pouring an equal portion for himself and his honored guest.

"Special and very expensive berry brandy," he noted regarding the elixir that smelled so fragrant to his oversized nostrils. "Which, according to the manufacturer, has special herbs that give 'pleasure the palate and special power to the innovative all American innovated soul'," he read on the label bearing the likeness of a philosophical East Indian Western Mountain man and the most beautiful portrait of 'Princess Pocahontas' he ever imagined possible.

For reasons Wentworth couldn't figure out, the US Army Officer seated in front of his desk refused to imbibe the brandy. And even more to his surprise, when Wentworth tried to sip a portion of it, his guest abruptly slapped the glass out of his hand, grabbed hold of the bottle, spit on the images of the people on it, and smashed it to smithereens inside the trash can. Then, said guest calmly walked back to his chair and plopped his ass down on it.

"A fellow highly decorated veteran who is a zealous tea toddler," Wentworth noted, gazing yet again and the red, white and blue ribboned clanking medals adorning most of the left side of his tunic. "I can honor that, as you honor me, by telling me alone about what is happening in the go-nowhere landlocked Colorado town that is making a big splash on both coasts." Wentworth perused the stack of legal documents, newspaper clippings and affidavits on his desk that the Sergeant from the other side of the Continental Divide had come to deliver to his hands, and no one else's. "So this is what you claim is happening in this illegal, immoral and, more importantly, very unAmerican social experiment in Blue River. But before I take this to the board of boards in this always-going-somewhere town..." Lord Wentworth put down the papers, leaned back on his chair, and stared into the angrily determined, yet somehow conflicted, face of the soldier who had risked life and limb to have a private meeting with him. "Tell me why you are here, and telling me all of this, Sergeant..."

"Longmore," Sam, Kumar's former mentor-friend and now ideological enemy, said as he felt the tightness of the uniform he had put into the closet for safe keeping nearly 20 years ago. "Former Sergeant Sam Longmore."

“Who re-enlisted again, so my sources tell me. As a knight in shining yet tight fitting armor, according to your service record,” Wentworth mused at yet another button on Longmire’s tunic which was about to pop loose if he breathed any heavier. “Or perhaps a Judas, who---.”

“Has to stop the new Jesuses in my town,” Sam asserted, leaning forward across Wentworth’s desk, his hand clenched in a fist. “Who don’t know that redistributing wealth before its natural time is wrong and ultimately....destructive.”

“Yes,” Wentworth agreed, calmly. He reached for his cigar, igniting it with a gold plated lighter. He blew smoke up into the air rather than into the face of the veteran from the other side of the tracks who he knew would have to establish a rapport with, for the sake of his own well being and maintaining the status quo of the country God had entrusted him to manage. “Because the common man, especially in this country, is ignorant. Give the masses too much power and wealth too early, and they will become a destructive, anarchist mob. John Adams said that. But you say, or feel, something different.”

Wentworth decided abruptly to blow smoke into Sam’s face, which made him cough, but not shut up. “The common man is a noble man,” the seasoned Western cowboy and former well decorated veteran continued, calmly this time. “Because he knows that to be noble, he has to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s. And a newly rich man, particularly one that has been poor, will turn into a corrupt, evil one. One who is worse than his former economic Master.”

“Masters like me, Sergeant Longmore?” Wentworth challenged, utilizing his X-ray vision to see beyond the four layers of facades a man puts up. And to see to his real core and agenda, which, rightly or wrongly, few men, or women, were ever really aware of themselves. “Master like me who you see as an economic and political necessity?” He aimed his oversized mouth at Sam to blow another blast of tobacco at the non-smoker. But instead, he puffed out a perfectly symmetrical circle of white smoke up to the ceiling.

“Yes,” Sergeant Longmore replied. “Men like you are required to be Masters on top. Until a smooth, legal, and moral distribution of wealth happens on the bottom. As the REAL Jesus intended. Heaven on earth.”

“And the saying that it’s easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than a rich man to get into heaven, Sam?” Wentworth inquired, putting down his over-priced custom blend Havana rolled stogie.

“Not true for rich men who help the poor, when they can, and should. Smartly, and wisely,” replied the bold Sergeant and apparently equally intelligent philosopher cowboy who wanted to return to the home he had exiled himself from when it was ‘home’ again. “Someone has ta be in charge of the money, just like someone has ta be in charge of the horse that moves the cattle. Right?” he continued in diction more in keeping with his real identity, and agenda.

“Yes indeed,” Wentworth said as slowly as he could, so as to let the thought incubating in his mind could take final form and be voiced without interruption from anyone else. “By blockading the cattle that are about to stampede the town,” he continued as he glanced to the Western horizon beyond New Jersey through his window. He visualized the tailor-made-for-the-customer (or mark) metaphor. “Or run off a cliff. Like...we did in Russia back in 1918 and 19...” Images of the Big Wide Open in the Wild East from nearly 20 years ago ushered into Wentworth’s mind, pulling his vision away to the medals he acquired, by various means of course, when he was in service to his country as a high ranking officer in the Army rather than a civilian on his way up the political and economic ladder back home. “The international and mostly American funded expeditionary force we used against the Bolsheviks after tossing the Kaiser out of office in Germany didn’t work as well as we planned.”

“Yes” Sam said, recalling his extended period of military service that he didn’t tell anyone in Colorado about. “But the blockade of Russia kept the godless, armed and radical Communists locked and hungry inside their own experiment.”

“Which would have destroyed that experiment if we were funded better. Not shackled by deluded soft hearted politicians in Washington and London, Sam,”

“Or if we were distracted by the Spanish Flue, that killed more people than cannon-fire, bayonets or trench-foot. Or us being exhausted after winning ‘the Great War’ in the trenches which everybody in one way or another, lost, Major Wentworth,” Sam said, noting the rank on the photos of Wentworth in uniform behind his desk.

“Yes,” former Major Wentworth noted. He felt a rash of sincerity rushing down his spine as he crossed himself in the manner that his Catholic mother taught him to do at home. Such was an ‘insurance policy’ that he used when asking God to look after the slain enlisted men who died on the front after enthusiastically carrying out orders passed down to him from the Colonels and Generals. “But this time our weapons are economic...and very, very legal, Sergeant, and as I DO have something to say about it, Captain Longmore.”

“And these weapons and strategies are moral as well as legal, Colonel Wentworth?” the patriotic and religious cowboy inquired.

It wasn’t the first time a trusted and specially brought in subordinate had posed such a question to Wentworth. As such, he provided his answer, in a pre-rehearsed manner which he used in the last 100 deals he made with such well meaning Judases. “Our strategy and methods are as moral as possible in a world God assigned to endure, survive and, with enough American ingenuity, transform.”

Wentworth appended the deal by pouring cups of tea for himself and Sam. He proposed a toast. “To...transforming America to what it should and is destined to be. So help us God!”

It was a toast that no true American who still believed in Jesus, or who knew how to control those who did, could argue with.

CHAPTER 12

The last letter Kumar's heroic yet historically unrecorded grandfather Arjun wrote before he was executed by the British Army was sent to Kumar by his father, unopened, presumably because Kumar's Dad knew it was time for his son to consider its contents, which were:

- (a) Enlightenment and Masochistic madness which accompanies it skips a generation,
- (b) You will die a coward's death slowly if you follow in the footsteps of your economically successful father, who published magazines and books that printed whatever his American patrons as well as purchasers wanted to read
- (c) The greatest contributions you make to the world is appreciated and implemented after you die and
- (d) One should never believe everything you read in print...and finally
- (e) The most painful way to live is to be too comfortable.

The latter two points hit hardest, and truest, as Kumar stood in the middle of Main Street in Blue River as Mayor. He picked up the newest batch of newspapers coming in on the delivery trucks which had previously been used to export hobos, Mexicans and Okie migrants from the State. Kumar was clad on this fine morning in the third outfit which the town council deemed appropriate for and deserve, Philosopher King Mayor.

Such included jeans bearing no tears, a shirt which had pockets without hole in them, boots that had never seen cowshit and a large brimmed 'going to meeting' cowboy hat which had not been pissed on in on by rain clouds above or angry cattle below.

Kumar was worried that his new job was too easy relative to the many hard working endeavors as a manager of cattle, tutor to special as well as ordinary kids, barn builder and horse. He allowed himself to enjoy a read of the front page stories in the Denver Gazette and every other paper published in urban locations which had once been rural regarding the 'Socialist Experiment' in Blue River. He gasped at disbelief, and then anger, at other articles and letters from government health inspectors describing varieties of highly infection viruses and bacteria in the cattle, people and crops in Blue River and every ranch in the surrounding valley.

Proof that such was believed came on the hoof. Jake and Buddy drove back what was left of the extremely healthy cattle co-owned by the citizenry of Blue River they had brought to market in adjacent counties and railroad heads to send to Denver, Chicago and San Francisco. They were returned, after having been diagnosed with diseases Kumar

never heard of, confirmed by autopsies and labs tests done in Denver by Universities the new Mayor wanted to attend someday.

On the opposite entrance to town, trucks and wagons loaded with prime quality wheat, potatoes, cheese, rice and, specially brewed wine, not all of it spiked with uranium for special buyers, came back as well, some carts full, some nearly empty. “This is bullshit!” Kumar grumbled to Leona as she came by. “We have the healthiest cattle, best crops and fittest people in the fucking state, and maybe the country!”

“Reading is believing,” Leona replied, helping herself to a toxic dose of clearly readable fibs in black and white print that reported the same falsehoods in every ‘all the news fit to wipe your ass with’ paper. “Interesting fairy tales,” she noted with a cynical grimace, as if what she was reading was not at all unexpected. “From the reporters whose fathers said that we were all blood thirsty savages who scalped nuns and enjoyed feasting on ‘white meat’ from Christian kids after we burned down their churches and farms.”

“----Hey these cattle are supposed to be sold. Somewhere else! Anywhere else!” Kumar yelled out to Buddy as he drove the cattle back into the holding corals.

“No one wants cattle with anthrax or hoof in mouth disease,” Buddy yelled back.

“Or Rinderpest,” Leona calmly noted while reading one the articles “A disease that only happens in Africa...And hasn’t happened there in 30 years.”

“But the wheat? And potatoes? Barley? Corn and fucking hay? They won’t let us sell anything!” Kumar barked out like terrified dog. “Half of which they sent back to us and half of which they also, according to the newspapers, burned. In a country that needs to feed its people and cattle!”

Leona helped herself to another healthy dose of Paleface lies elegantly written in a newspaper from Laramie, owned by a publishing company from New York.

“Ah, me ladies,” she said in a ‘top of the mornin’ Irish smile and matching Emerald Isle accent. “As for the potato and other agriculture crops, includin’ the fine tastin’ berries, they caught more than a wee touch of Phytipthohora infestans. The name of that small nasty bug which they mostly spelt right that, ah yes, was brought in ta this magnificent country and previously God fearing patriotic county by a group a ‘well organized Irish Anarchist Communists.”

“Anarchists are against organizing ANYthing!” Kumar yelled out.

“International Anarchists who snuck into country illegally,” Leona paraphrased from the rest of the article without sardonic Gaelic flare. “And found their way into Colorado with the help of...hmm...”

“Godless Communists,” Father Smith read as he passed by.

“And the tractors that we paid for!” Kumar demanded to know of his fellow citizens, the world and the Great Spirit who set him up with the social experiment which should have still been working. “So we can grow more food to feed everyone, including anti-Communist Christians after Church on Sunday and every day during the week. And so no more horses, at least in this county, have to be worked to an early death by being pulling a plow?”

“The bulls and federal troops at the railhead said that we should get ‘em from Comrade Stalin,” Buddy offered as he got off his sweat soaked horse. He offered the overworked steed a well-deserved drink of water from the town trough, after which he washed as the caked dust, sweat and probably tears off his face.

“And the medical supplies?” Kumar asked as he noted another truck coming into town, sputtering due to lack of gas in its tank driven by Doc Wilson. “That we OVERpaid for?”

Kumar rummaged through the truck. He found it empty, with exception of a large crate of books, all bearing the same title. “Apparently they think we will read our way to good health with prayer,” Wilson said of the Bibles in the boxes which were supposed to be filled with life-saving and life improving medicines.

“And ink and paper, to print our own books and newspapers?” Kumar demanded to know of Wilson.

The Doc who had seen and felt more misery in others than any man or woman deserved to acquire, directly or indirectly, looked towards the sound of a creaky three and a half wheeled wagon coming into town. The horse pulling it in soaked in sweat, the man on the buck board in even worse shape.

“On back order,” Dubois related and confessed, falling off the buckboard just as one of the apparently half chopped up wheels gave way. Upon hitting the ground, his coat opened up and the hood on his head fell off, revealing a body underneath had been beaten to a pulp, bearing a generous coating of tar on which there were an ample collection of feathers.

Wilson and Kumar rushed over to help as Dubois’ heavy breathing turned into a death rattle. “All of our printing and writing supplies are on back order, till hell freezes over, Comrade Cowboys and Cowpokes,” he slurred out through a mouth full of phlegm tinged with blood. “With us in...” Dubois faded into unconsciousness. Leona ran over to Wilson, carting his medical bag as well as her own kit of medicinals grown from the earth rather than purchased from laboratories.

“Who did this?!!!” Kumar demanded to know of Dubois.

“Someone who, if they get the chance, will do the same to us,” old before his time Doc Wilson informed Philosopher King before he was ready Kumar.

“Or worse,” Leona added as she and Wilson somehow, as always, worked together with a shared third medical brain. “Unless, maybe I can bring in some redskin Reds to help us out, kinder-than-he-should-be Comrade King Kumar. But, as you know organizing Indians is as difficult as getting your old cattle boss, friend and mentor, Sam Longmore to do a Sundance with even pretend buffalo horns in his chest. Or come to a sweat lodge. Or you telling me or anyone else here exactly WHY you traded in your turban in California for a Stetson here. Speaking of which, anyone heard where Sam went?”

“I just did,” interjected Jake, having overheard. He read a letter he had just received from the last, and perhaps final, delivery of government mail. Kumar noted a conflicted look on Jake’s usually ‘I made up my mind and stickin’ to it till the bitter end’ face. The confounded and now terrified cowboy’s eyes scanned the letter several times, not knowing what to make of it.

While Leona and Wilson managed somehow to bring Dubois back to consciousness and, Jesus as well as Great Spirit willing, some kind of functional health, this time anyway, Kumar rushed over to sneak a read of the letter. Jake held back, read more, hiding his face from Kumar’s view.

“It was addressed ta me!” Jake barked back like a cornered dog about to be demolished by a pack of hungry wolves.

“But it concerns us,” Leona pointed out, with her index finger pointed at her.

“Come on, son,” Smith assured a shaken up Jake with a firm yet gentle palm on his shivering shoulder, his eyes averted from the hidden letter. “Jesus said, ‘thou shalt not lie. Particularly if telling the truth shall benefit another man, or woman, or one who is conflicted as to who he or she really is.’”

Leona, still tending to DuBois’ medical needs, looked up at Father Smith, seemingly confused as to where that passage came from in the book Leona knew better than most who believed in it.

“I don’t recall Jesus sayin’ that!” Jake barked back.

“Well he did, Jake,” Smith asserted to Jake, after which he winked to Leona.

“In my and now your enlightened dreams,” Leona whispered to Kumar after leaving Dubois in Wilson’s very able and effective medical hands, realizing the quote that was only in the Gospel according to Father Smith.

Jake, having read the letter, prepared to swallow it. Smith opened up one of the American Bibles that had been delivered to Blue River in place of medicines. “And Jesus also said, ‘He who destroys with his body or closed mind, anything that will help his brethren is destroying his chance to enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

After some careful soul searching, and calculating just how many latrines he would have to dig in hell, or how many shovelfuls of cowshit he would have to move from one pile to another in Purgatory, Jake decided to not swallow the letter from Sam Longmore.

“Where did Jesus say that?” he inquired.

“The sermon on Mount Gehosiphus, of course,” Smith related, seeming to believe the on the spot fabricated fable as fact.

Kumar noted doubt on Jake’s face, then concern in Leona’s, then worry in Smith’s mug. For the first time he feared that he and his fellow Truth serving and seeking Comrades had gone too far with their experiments in benevolent deception.

Before Kumar, Leona or Smith could get an answer from each of their Deities about what to do next, an answer came from a mortal on earth. “The Sermon on Mount Gehosiphus. I remember it well,” Doc Wilson said as an all knowing scholar with his mouth while sewing up Dubois’ wounds with fingers that were smarter than his head. “Where our Lord said that... ‘A man who tells less than the truth is less than a man,” the once God loving Christian who became an Atheist Pagan after seeing too many of ‘the Good Heavenly Father’s’ children die ugly deaths before their time as if reading the words in a special cloud delivered from the Heavens above them. “At the temple. In the workplace. And...”

“...in the bed chamber of the woman he loves,” Father Smith interjected in Divinely inspired harmony. “In the original translation that is,” he concluded.

Jake scratched his head of finally grown in hair, pulled back his lips, then said, “Well, Father, Doc, if you say so.” He handed over the letter from their mutual boss Sam, and (for different reasons) friend to Kumar, who read it with concern, and shock. “Yer better at book learnin’ in them old languages, Padre Smith,” Jake slurred out of his mouth with downturned eyes, more down on himself than Kumar ever saw him, in private or public.. “While I’m, I suppose, just a cowboy who...ya know...”

“Is thankfully, for the moment, functionally illiterate?” Leona whispered to Smith.

Smith nodded his head ‘yes’, relieving Leona’s concerns.

“...Yeah...I’m an American born and bred cowboy,” Jake went on kicking the dirt with his boots as if kicking himself in the ass. “Who....”

“...’Can accept this offer from Sergeant Sam and now Captain Longmore, to you, to join the other side in this war. If you want to. Or need to,” Kumar read on the letter addressed to Jake alone, and Buddy if Jake wanted to share it with him. ““Top Grade pay. Security. For you and any future family you’ll have. And amnesty for any criminal actions you committed or didn’t commit’,” Kumar handed the letter back to Jake.

“The easy and smart thing ain’t always the right thing. And the hardest thing is sometimes the rightest thing, I recall my Pa yellin’ at me, and Sam tryin’ ta tell me,” Jake related, and confessed. “Jesus musta’ said that, didn’t he?” Jake inquired of Smith,

“And He lived it too,” Smith replied, from the bottom of his now more than once fib telling heart.

“As will I, live it,” Jake declared, his gaze fixed on his past and future, both at the same time. With that, he tore open the contract offered by Sam. That bold and no doubt, for Jake anyway, destructive decision was accompanied by a voice coming out of the grave, no less miraculous than Lazarus praising Jesus after being resurrected from the dead.

“What happened”? Dubois said, waking up from the herbal and factory made anesthetics that put him out long enough for Doc Wilson to put his torn flesh back together again. “Where am I?” the labor organizer who always worked harder than any men over or under him asked. Such was a question that Kumar asked himself as well.

“In the middle of an epidemic,” Kumar and Dubois heard from high pitched voice as scared as it was pure. “According to these signs everywhere outside of town,” Elsa Steiner continued as she leaped off her horse drawn one axel cart. The 10 year old going on 90 young girl who wanted to grow into far more than just another good hearted and baby making woman pulled out one of the government printed signs she had uprooted from the ground on the outskirts of town. “Plague. Quarantined. Entry Forbidden. By Order of the Governor,” she read, aloud.

“Don’t believe everything you read, Elsa,” Doc Wilson said to the terrified young girl whose mother, Mary, still in the cart, let out several dry coughs.

“But believe in what you write!” Kumar declared, inspired by something bigger than himself, and his previous imagination. He grabbed hold of a paint brush outside the general store, and inscribed his answer upon the sign. “I’m a better talker than a writer,” he said by way of explanation. “But in the meantime...”

“Which loses NOTHING in translation,” Leona smiled back as she read “”FAKE plague. Entry WELCOMED. By order of ‘THE PEOPLE WHICH IS YOU AND US “.

Kumar took hold of the corrected government sign, then painted the same message on the rest of them still in the cart. As soon as the paint dried, he loaded them onto a travail, leaped on a lightly harnessed Arjun, and headed off up the main road leading to town from the East. Upon reaching the official limits of Blue Water where the predominant majority of the travel into and out of that community happened for as long as anyone could recall, he pounded the adjusted signs into the ground with a hammer, nearly breaking his fist with the intensity used to plant them permanently into the nearly rock hard ground.

He felt a cold wind on his sweat soaked neck. It was coming down from the North, on its way to meeting warm clouds emerging from the South. He then smelled the emergence of a light, dry snowfall. The soles of his feet and the gut under his loaded revolver bearing belt could feel the vibrations of the earth saying that it soon would be time to unload the bullets in that Colt into something other than the head of a dying cow, the skull of a crippled horse, or the chest of a man, or woman, eating Grizzly.

Kumar's ears led his stare to a verification of that possibility. Three Green trucks arrived from the horizon at the opposite end of valley to the East. Upon closer examination, still under cover from the bush on his side of the river valley, and with the aid of binoculars from his saddlebag, Kumar saw well armed men in a variety of Military Uniforms jump out of the main vehicle. Some of them pushed men in stripped uniforms chained to out of two other trucks.

Men with half-shaven heads wearing chains as well as those bearing military caps were building a fence as wide as the horizon. Other very official vehicles moved in on either side of the main detachment. Heavily armed civilians and military men emerged from them, expanding the constructions of fences that were impassible to cattle, horses or any civilian vehicle Kumar knew about. An American Officer with a long rifle strapped to his back trotted his steed along the fence line pointing with his swaggerstick crop where mines from the trucks and bear traps on the trucks should be inserted. Kumar recognized both the horse and the rider.

"Yeah, old friends. Sergeant Sam, now Captain Longmore, re-united with his favorite horse, Chief" Kumar said to his own steed Arjun. "Suppose we need to get into town to get some more paint, and signs of our own," He mounted the horse, turning his back to the fenceline. "And painters," he asserted boldly, prodding Arjun along on the way home. "Painters who have more artistic penmanship than me, are more colorful in their verbiage, and..." Kumar's next remark about others being more humorous, in print anyway, was cut short by a bullet hitting the ground in front of Arjun's feet. It sent the horse into tailspin to the left. Kumar could hear two other shots after that, though it would have to remain for later to see if they landed into the ground, horseflesh or human tissue. Thankfully, Kumar was able to hold onto his nerve, the flanks of his startled steed and reins.

Upon re-finding balance with the horse, and gravity, Kumar looked up to see who had fired the shots. He looked upward and saw a lone sharpshooter, his face not identifiable. Perhaps it was Sam Longmore delivering a warning shot, or perhaps another officer of equal or superior rank, as the brim of his hat covered his face. One more shot was fired, resulting in clanking of metal. It hit one of the signs Kumar had put up, joining two other shots that had gone into it, all three blasting out Kumar's calligraphy very specifically.

The sharp shooter aimed again. Fearing that the next bullet would go into Arjun, Kumar waved a friendly 'see ya later' to the shooter and rode away. "Yes, Arjun," he told his horse. "We need people who can paint, shoot and bullshit better than I ever could."

CHAPTER 13

The next morning, under cover of thankfully a foggy night, Kumar returned to 'the front'. This time he was clad in the turban which his grandfather had Willed to him, along with his last letter. Maybe it had magic powers, or maybe it didn't. He would soon find out. As would artistically gifted citizens sign painters armed with paintbrushes. And those who, rightly or wrongly, were more skilled at ejecting lead out of steel barrels, or (in the case of Leona and several bush Indians she convinced to come out of hiding from civilization) flaming arrows from bows. All were in bush-heavy positions where (so far anyway) if they stayed low to the ground, they could be seen from birds above but not the fence builders and mine planters on the other side of the valley.

Amongst the Paleface defenders of those replacing government signs warning anyone seeking to enter Blue River of death by plague, US Army bullets or an in-determinant time in 'biologically necessary solitary confinement' with custom made pictures and words welcoming greetings for the bold, curious or homeless were Jake, Buddy, and still standing but sorely hurting Dubois. Their orders were to shoot warning shots near the feet of enemy combatants, but to blast away at any mechanized beast made of metal. The sign painters included a mixture of red, white and black skinned Rembrandts in the making. Their orders were to put onto their posted canvases what they felt, and thought. One of those artists brought with him both a machine gun to ward off fence-building Uniformed Palefaces on the other side of the valley, a sense of humor and his own unique vitality. Kumar feared most the latter. Particularly when he painted his sign with the intent to endear a special audience of one.

"You sure about this treaty with the Palefaces?" Chief Russell asked Leona as she aimed his machine gun towards fence builders in the not too distant hills while he tended to putting something on his sign with brush strokes that flowed like a musical river from his hand. "And what's up with your brown-faced Paleface, Leona?" Kumar heard with his keen sense of hearing, and dared to confirm by his even more developed faculty of lip reading.

"As sure as I am that any marriage with you would have been hell for both of us," Leona replied as she let the business end of the machine gun discourage no less than 6 fence builders from doing their assigned job. It was a gun that Chief Russell had acquired from 'accidentally scalped' paleface bootleggers from Chicago who thought they could make a fast buck by converting his Traditional dry reserve into a drunk tank that would pay anything for 'the first bottle is free' firewater. "Yeah, any marriage with you would have been bad medicine for both of us," Leana repeated, this time remembering the good times rather than the bad ones.

“Maybe,” Chief Russell noted with mixed feelings regarding the still not yet manifested ‘match made in The Happy Hunting Grounds’ he and Leona had dreamed about. “But I’m a wittier artist than your Comrade Mayor is,” Kumar’s far superior rival with regards to looks, strength, financial stability, charm and genetics continued. “And I can put some humor into the Revolution. These palefaces, and you, take liberation way too seriously.”

With that Russell showed Leona, and only her, the sign he made. She laughed, in an unbridled carefree manner Kumar had never seen her display with him. Or for that matter, anyone else.

“A step towards making you change your mind, and open that closed heart,” he noted with a welcoming, self-assured smile.

“Yes...a heaping big step,” Leona said as she came down from the laugh, then gazed with longing at Russell’s Herclean muscles as he pounded the ‘welcome home Comrades’ and ‘don’t believe what the government and their Capitalist cronies say about us’ sign into the ground. Its writing was in three different languages, one in what looked like Russian and two of them being Native, adorned with an intricate design including aspects of at least ten wild animals that still inhabited portions of Blue River, mostly on their own terms.

“A private joke between them, no doubt,” Kumar heard from a high pitched voice behind him. “And an invitation to more people to enjoy the growth promoting struggle and privately felt bliss of your social experiment.”

“OUR experiment, Elsa,” Kumar said to his sign painter, the Blue River’s female literary Einstein who was barely 11 years old in body but Ancient in Spirit. He turned to see what she was telling the world through pictures and print, but instead was still drawn to the all male cowboy clothing she seemed to fit into so well in some ways, and so poorly in others. The ensemble was thankfully not matched by a short Amelia Earhart haircut which Elsa had requested on more than one occasion when dress shopping with her still long haired mother in town. “How many soldiers are really up there?” she inquired, without a trace of fear.

“Enough,” Kumar replied.

“And we’re changing these signs that even my mother says no one is going to read, because?” she asked with an assertive yet respectful tone. “And don’t tell me I’ll understand when I’m older, like everyone else here said to me.”

Kumar thought long and hard about what to say to the girl who had told her mother she would be in the library all day, instead of in the hills risking her life making history rather than safely reading it. “This land belongs to the people,” Kumar said with chin upward just enough to feel the Spirit in the sky but not so much to be superior to his fellow mortals on earth. He felt like he was channeling the Spirit, Wisdom and many Miscalculated Perspectives of his Sikh revolutionary Grandfather. “And right now, we’re

the people. And as for the people from elsewhere. They will come, if we give them good Welcome signs like...”

“...This one?” Elsa asked, seeking approval from Kumar. It was an honored position that would make most egotistical men feel important, but which made him sense his own vulnerabilities even more. By the way he looked at her art work, Kumar produced a smile of pride in his surrogate goddaughter, anticipating that whatever she did as an illustrator who was better at print than images. But, as usual, he forced himself to see something positive in it that could be used to instruct her as to how to correct the negatives. But such a gift, and judgement, was short circuited by Kumar hearing another burst of laughter, from Leona. He looked her way.

“Is something wrong?” Elsa asked Kumar, feeling that she had not pleased or served Kumar, or his Vision appropriately.

“No, everything is great with what you did,” Kumar said, mostly as the truth.

“And what he did also?” Elsa added as Kumar saw Russell complete yet another sign which made Leona laugh even harder than she had before. It was appended by her falling into his arms into a loving hug.

“Leona looks, happy,” Elsa noted.

“Yeah...I know,” Kumar was forced to admit, while trying to not let Elsa, or Leona, or Russell, see his fist tightening with rage so much that it cut open his palm.

“Aren’t we supposed to be happy for others when they are happy?” Elsa pointed out to Kumar, as an inquiring student or perhaps an experienced before her time teacher. Indeed, as Kumar looked at Elsa’ face, he could feel worry, or rather ‘concern’ lines trying to form themselves on her wrinkles angelic face. One that, he knew, would be doomed, or blessed, to always be alone, even with someone she loved. “Isn’t love being able to enjoy what others do more vicariously than directly?” she proposed.

“Yeah...theoretically,” Kumar admitted. “But with regard to happiness, bliss and, as far as I’ve stumbled into it, the Wisdom to---“

Kumar heard even louder vehicles moving in on the other side of the valley. Looking up through his binoculars, he saw three supervising solders emerge, followed by men who had lost at least a third of their normal body weight but not the right to wear their own choice of clothing, or rags. The ‘hobo’ detail commenced connecting the strands of heavy, sharp barbed wire to the thin lines already on the posts.

“Who are those people?” Elsa asked.

“Un-evolved souls in uniforms with guns,” Kumar answered regarding the clean shaven soldiers in tailor made uniforms which made their small framed shoulders look like they came off of a portrait of George Washington. “And wage slaves who don’t know that selling out to feed their own families does bad things to many other people’s families,” he continued regarding the civilian workers.

“What bad things?” Elsa inquired.

Kumar thought about answering, but didn’t, as he would have to be truthful.

“So,” Elsa shot back, folding her small arms into her just recently breast sprouting chest. “You’re not going to tell me because I’m a girl and can’t handle it?!”

“No,” Kumar said, still averting his eyes, as Elsa could see straight through them. “Because you, well...”

“Because ‘well’ what?!” Elsa demanded to know, moving in front of Kumar’s face, forcing him to look at her.

But before an answer could be given, Elsa turned her focus up to the hill. She was startled by a loud clanking noise, from a beast that seemed to be crunching the bones of condemned souls in hell. Terrified, she wrapped her thin, tiny arms around Kumar’s (to her anyway) strong, unshakable chest.

The beast was made of metal, with the look of a dragon. It pushed aside everything in its path, remodeling the earth on its own sadistic and impersonal terms. Indeed, the bulldozer was creating a dirt wall with trenches on either side. Leg traps and sharp wire were thrown into those ‘moats’ to disable anyone who dared to cross them, from either direction. Prisoners in the chain gang pulled cannons from trucks into their designated positions. Others pounded stakes in the ground to make barbed wire fence, their ungloved hands bleeding. A foreman on horseback supervised them, beating the prisoners who were lagging behind with a whip. “This is a work detail. So work, you miserable, lazy pieces of shit. Work, you hobos who were complaining because you were out of work!” he screamed at them.

“And who are, or were, those men in stripped suits wearing chains around their ankles?” Elsa asked, pulling herself away from Kumar, more concerned with their horrible lives than her relatively good one.

Kumar raised his rifle to his shoulder and took aim. “Men who are about to take the day off,” he answered.

“And the rest of the week,” Leona added as she rushed over to Kumar’s position, bow and arrow in hand. She seized hold of the lighter in Kumar’s breast pocket, ignoring the flesh under it, and prepared to light the ball of twine, wood and oil near the arrow’s tip.

“Or month,” Chief Russell appended, setting up a portable machine gun belts of ammo over his shoulder weighing half as much as even he did.

“Or the mother fucking year!” Elsa declared, pulling out a sling shot from the under her oversized shirt tail.

“Hey!” Chief Russell demanded to know of the girl who any Comrade citizen of Blue River would be proud to call his or her daughter in public, but who knew they couldn’t handle at home. “Where did you learn that kind of language?”

“My Pa,” Elsa shot back as she loaded one of Leona’s rock hard fireballs into her sling shot, preparing to take aim at the Foreman above. Until, Elsa seemed to see something in the faces of the oppressed souls in chains, or perhaps the ignorant one who kept them in bondage. Her beet red angry face began to be washed over with tears of grief. Yet grief that had to be nullified by action of some kind now.

“Her father was a labor organizer who got tossed in jail,” Kumar explained to Russell in soft voice. “Tortured by the cops, starved in solitary, poisoned the day before the Labor Union finally got him released to be delivered home...”

“...In a fucking box!” Elsa yelled back, apparently having better ears than Kumar thought she did. “Dead. Like those fucking goons and scabs on top of us are going to be.” Elsa stood up from her so far secluded position, putting herself in line of fire and vision of foreman, and the very armed soldiers assisting him in ‘supervising’ both the chain gang, and now the work detail of ‘free’ laborers. “A whole lot of people are going to be dead after this day is over,” the master sling shot shooter in Blue River and all of its surrounding counties asserted with gritted teeth.

“But not you,” Leona offered, with a caring smile and nurturing eyes as she gently tried to pry the sling shot away from Elsa,

Leona edged her left hand over to the sling shot to remove it from Elsa’s hand. With the other, she grabbed hold of the back of her shirt, then her long mane of braided hair to pull her down from being seen by the well armed and numerous troops on the other side of the hill. “The revolution needs you to run away, back home,” Leona yelled in a loud whisper into Elsa with as much logic and gentility as she could.

Elsa replied to Leona’s kind and intelligent wisdom with the same response that Leona did so often when being corrected by those seeking to keep her protected, safe and happily secure as a child.

Kumar had no idea that Elsa’s ability to fight with her fists, feet and teeth were so advanced. Apparently, Leona didn’t either. But Leona refused to leave any fight as a conquered victim.

“You have to go home, Elsa,” Kumar said to Elsa as she and Leona exchanged blows, holds and punches, unable to stop the fight, as he struggled to get into the middle of it. “To warn everybody else about what might happen, ok? And to protect your mother.... And every other mother...And....” Having got into the middle of the fight, Kumar absorbed blows from both combatants, landing him against a tree, directly next to Russell. “That speech I gave to Elsa is always supposed to work,” he said through a hurting mouth that was reconnecting to part of his brain anyway.

“You forgot to put it into future tense, brown-skinned paleface,” the wise and unpredictably brash Chief replied.

Russell reached into Kumar’s pocket, removing from it a joint and pen. He threw the joint away, stamping into dirt like an angry bull. Then he gently offered the pen to a still fighting Elsa. “Take this weapon,” he said to the usually thinking before she acted female Einstein just as she was about to nail Leona in the belly with another jab of her small yet powerful fist. “State of the art pen, that doesn’t require you to dip it into ink every third line,” he smiled.

Elsa looked up, seeing the pen. It allowed Leona to escape a no doubt final blow in the belly that would put her out of commission as a fighter today, and perhaps a mother some day in the future. Russell placed the writing implement into Elsa’s tender white and, no doubt later, black and blue skinned hand. “You can fight these shitheads with a stone age slingshot and get killed and forgotten, or use this fountain pen to write the story about what is about to happen here the way it happened. For this generation and generations to come.,” the not so old Chief said to the not so young literary maiden.

“The pen is mightier than the sword,” Kumar added, feeling inadequate of course about his inability to come up with his own witticism.

“Yeah...Especially when you poke the pen’s sharp end into your enemy’s eye, or heart,” Leona grunted out as she pushed herself up onto her two badly hurting feet.

“The world needs your brain and skill with this, now,” Chief and now Professor Russell continued to Elsa. “And future generations will need your soul later, and wisdom with this (his heart) when you grow older”. After taking a deep breath, Russell edged closer into Elsa, continuing in German... “Like your great grandfather who fought against the Kings and Capitalist Tyrants in Europe in 1848. And after coming here, the pro-Slavers here wearing Grey Uniforms then after the war, the white hooded Klansmen. Verstehen Sie?”

“Ya. Ich verstehe,” Elsa replied with the diction of Texas German passed down from her ancestors. With that, she took pen in hand, mounted her horse, and rode down the hill towards town. Leona hugged Russell, with thanks. The gesture emerged into a kiss from him to make her body bruises better, which found its way to her lips.

“Eh...Leona,” Kumar felt coming from his gut, then into his mouth while the kiss continued, bringing Russell and Leona’s bodies and souls closer together in bliss with each snort of frustrated rage Kumar was feeling. Indeed, they had been connected deeply in this lifetime, and perhaps even more tightly in previous ones. “I didn’t know that Chief Russell...hmmm...spoke German. And is good with Elsa and...” Having seen enough loving shared by others for one day, and realizing that the trumpets would call everyone to fight in one way or another very soon, Kumar dared to interrupt the kiss with a nudge on Leona then Russell’s shoulder. Both had their usually watchful eyes closed shut. Leona motioned with her fingers for Kumar to wait five more seconds.

“Sure...Five seconds. Indian time,” Kumar slurred out of his mouth. “Your Indian time which is...”

Kumar’s reminder was answered with a flash of five digits from Leona’s hand three times.

“So...” Kumar waited impatiently while the woman he wanted to be with and the man he wanted to be fell into an more intense embrace. Rather than torture himself more, he looked upward with his binoculars at bare-handed prisoners building a flesh cutting barbed wire fence., One of their faces looked painfully and interestingly familiar. “What the fuck...Sheriff, Colonel, Sergeant now INMATE ...Johnston?” he exclaimed.

Leona and Russell released each other. Kumar handed Russell the binoculars, respectfully. Leona grabbed them from Chief Russell, rudely, throwing the, for the most part, rightfully elected head of the Indian band off balance.

“I thought Johnston was the first asshole we were supposed to scalp!” Leona grunted as she brought the ocular to her eyes.

“Think someone else may have beat you to it,” Kumar replied, having seen the shaved half Johnston’s head lacking visible stubble, as it was on the rest of the prisoners in the chain gang.

“We take him alive,” Kumar ordered, picking up his rifle.

“So I can scalp the rest of his head,” Leona asserted.

“Depends what’s in that head,” Russell interjected, calmly.

“And what he wants to do with it,” Kumar added, after which he picked up the slingshot Elsa had left behind, or had forgotten to take with her. “You two, and anyone else who has anything stronger than this Goliath slayer?” he asked as he inserted branches into his coat and turban. “Something that can take out the vehicles. The bulldozer and any tanks they may have. And NO people, not yet anyway,” he ordered as he slithered up the hill, using branches to make himself look like a tree, noting yet another barrage of soldiers on the other side of the valley.

“And when they fire at us, again?” Leona inquired.

The ‘walking tree’ stood still for a moment. “THIS revolution has two agendas,” Kumar said, recalling the tragedies he had read about in other logically designed social experiments that met armed resistance from illogical assholes. “Above all do no harm, not intentionally anyway. And, make the biggest mother fucking shit blasting impact possible.”

“Being a doctor who heals the world and a warrior who liberates it,” Russell replied, scratching his chin while considering that proposal., and of course his witty rebuttal to it. “Like trying to jump into a pool of shit and not get wet or stinky.”

“Just do it!” Kumar barked back as an incoming wind blew more branches into his mouth than out into the air above his head. “On the count of...,” he said, after which another a fistful of leaves found their way into his mouth. He then reached into his pocket, reaching for the watch his grandfather had willed to him, but finding it missing. “Anyone HERE have a watch?”

“Used to...” Russell replied.

“Work according to the clock, you get enslaved by it,” Leona added.

“Then, you fire away when the shadow of those rocks heading into the river,” Kumar said, trying to devise the best natural sundial available, after which he saw yet another problem. “Or, if the clouds move in...again,” he continued, flashing on an idea that was both more practical or witty than anything Chief Russell or any of his legendary comic-warrior superhero ancestors had come up with. “Say ‘Kumar is a misunderstood genius, 100 times.’”

“Positive self talk that he does to himself, which never works,” Leona explained to Russell.

“Repeating is believing,” Kumar asserted straight at and into Leona, after which he slithered away.

“I fucking well hope so,” Kumar heard from Leona.

“So do I,” Russell added.

Kumar worked himself into the bush behind the prisoners, close enough to the mounted Forman to smell his whiskey-intoxicated breath. En route, he discovered that he had put his grandfather’s pocket watch into his other pocket. “You lazy idiots,” the Forman yelled at the inmates between lashes with his whip, most of which hit their mark. “You’re working to protect America. My America. Your family’s America. Your source of your father’s shame America. Your...”

Kumar finally was able to grab hold of the business end of the whip as it was pulled back for a back as well as flesh breaking snap at the slowest and oldest prisoner who, ironically, turned out to be Johnston. A quick pull on the whip disarmed the Forman. A rock sent out by Kumar from Elsa's sling shot to the horse's ass dismounted him. Chloroform from Kumar's portable medical kit over his mouth rendered him unconscious, followed by a gag just to be sure, and then a rope tied around his wrists and ankles.

Kumar snatched the key ring from the guard, then unlocked the first prisoner on the chain gang. He quickly motioned for each of the shocked prisoners to free the next one on line. Kumar looked at his watch, noting that it had stopped. He reluctantly inserted it back into his pocket hoping that maybe someone in town would get in working again, if indeed he was able to get back there alive. "In twenty 'Kumar Patel is a misunderstood Genius' incantations. You run for your still valuable lives.," he continued as he put on the Forman's hat and coat, mounting his horse. "You miserable, despicable pieces of shit," he barked out in his best imitation of the gagged Foreman's voice.

"Not anymore," Kumar heard from Johnston, whose turn it was to unlock the shackles. A task the former taker and keeper of prisoners accepted with both vigor and gratitude.

On the other side of the valley, Leona and Russell lined up at the ideal position to see but not be seen so as to fire at the soldiers on the other side of what was now clearly a battle line. As was his habit from fighting in the War to End All Wars in Europe as an underaged combatant, he put strokes in the sand for every soldier he saw. Joining them, ducking so as not to be seen was none other than Buddy Emerson, second fiddle to anyone in command, even if said leader couldn't play the violin.

"Buddy Emerson is a misunderstood genius," Leona said, loud enough for the scared gun toting cowboy who had only this year been able to grow any kind of mustache to hear.

Next to reinforce the offensive position was Dubois, who stumbled up, still injured, toting a rifle with his still hurting arm. "Emerson Dubois is an under-rated hero," Leona offered as a phrase for count down.

Next on line to support the outnumbered battle line was none other than Jake. "Jake Hanson is still a misogynist racist asshole," Leona noted in rhythm.

With that same tempo, Jake offered Leona an extended third digit 'fuck you' salute with his left hand while aiming his Winchester towards their, for the moment anyway, common enemy. Leona clenched her fist at Jake, about to give him the same gesture, but, Russell gently lowered her wrist. He pointed her attention to the notches in the sand. There were 90 marks on it for the enemy. No more than twelve Blue River paint and protector teams were present. As there was about to 99 'So and so is a so and so'. Russell counted down on his fingers from ten.

Kumar on horseback, dressed as the Foreman, pushed the chain gang towards the now large group of soldiers, who were very armed. Three more supply trucks carrying ammunition, cannons, machine guns, building supplies and men to use them come in from the Eastern horizon.

“And in...five, four three...two...” Kumar whispered to the now free men masquerading as prisoners.

Russell et al opened fire at the military detail. Surprisingly, most of the armed and uniformed men ducked for cover. Some of the prisoners, led by Johnston, jumped them seizing their weapons. Some headed down the hills without arms. Some for the woods. Some put the shackles back on their feet, refusing to move or accept weapons thrown by Johnston to them.

Johnston led his new band of rebels down the hill, past the bulldozer, which was hit by an arrow with flame on it after they passed it. The mechanical dragon burst into flames, its guts shot into the air and falling onto the ground. Five enlisted men ordered by their commanding officer, a Colonel by the looks of him, rushed their way to the ammo and weapons truck. They were halted by machine gun fire in front of their feet which sent them to the ground. A flaming arrow from Leona's bow hit the truck, sending the ammunition and guns back into their chemical components in a blazing explosion. Most of enlisted men assigned to repel the attack ran Eastward into the woods, leaving behind boots, hats and most probably a large supply of urine spilling out of their wet trousers. The remainder fired back at Kumar's 'Communist Anarchists' and his 'redskin renegades' with intense ferocity.

As for the civilian laborers, some of them ran towards Kumar's side of the line, the rest into the woods. The few soldiers who still held the line as more gunfire from the Comrade side of the valley received bullets in front of their feet and into their hats every time they tried to get up.

Before heading back to the other side of the valley, a mounted Kumar shed the Forman's coat and hat and gazed with delight at the display. No one was killed, or wounded. But there was one brave soldier who seemed to want to have blood spilt on the ground, from both sides.

“Get back here!” Captain Sam Longmore yelled to the wave of conscripted soldiers and hired civilians retreating back into the woods, hightailing it for somewhere safe. “Like Sergeant Jones here!” he blasted at the cowards, referring to the man still next to him on his side of the ‘trench’. “And Private Newman, who..” Sam looked at the two men, as did Kumar from his location. Indeed, those two heroes stayed at their post because they couldn't move. Both shook like leaves, terror in their catatonic faces. It was the first time Kumar had seen shell shock, but certainly not so for Sam, the veteran of the War to End All Wars. “Colonel Daniels!” Sam yelled out to his apparently commanding officer, safely in an armored car behind him. “We have orders to hold our ground! Call for reinforcements.”

“Not today, Captain,” Daniels screamed back, having put down a portable radio. “New orders. We’re pulling back. And you ARE coming with us!” With that, Daniels’ relatively sheltered driver finally got the engine going. “That means NOW, Captain! ”

Kumar treated himself to a look at Sam as he decided what to do. Sam gazed back at his former surrogate son to whom he wished to pass on his Life Torch , but this time as an enemy. One that Cowboy Sam and now Captain Longmore hated, feared and pitied. Kumar returned the same feelings, then rode down the hill, just in time for shots from a rifle he recognized all too well to be fired at Sam. It forced him out of the trench and into the armored vehicle with Daniels, which disappeared into the Eastern horizon, ten times quicker than it arrived..

“There ya go...Just made my old boss dance to my tune...” Kumar heard Jake say upon his arrival back on the Comrade side of the line, after Jake had emptied the last of his supply of bullets from his Winchester at Sam’s feet.

“So you did, Jake...So you did,” Leona said with pride.

“Good shooting,” Kumar said to the detachment of Comrade shooters. “No one killed anyone. Including me.”

“Not yet,” Leona warned.

“Thankfully,” Russell noted, after which he addressed Kumar with a name the EAST Indian didn’t recognize with a courtly bow and poker face.

“What did he call me?” Kumar asked Leona.

“Your new AMERICAN Indian name,” she said, proudly.

“Which means?” Kumar inquired.

“Loosely translated,” she said with regret through a mouth unaccustomed to the taste of eating crow. “Kumar Patel is a misunderstood genius and revolutionary visionary.”

“Which me like,” Kumar replied with a proud shit eating grin.

“Who will be given a warrior’s burial sooner than he planned for,” Russell said with admiration and regret. With that, the Chief motioned for his Indian buds to follow his departure, some of whom were wounded.

“Where are they going?” Kumar inquired of Leona.

“Somewhere I have to go too, for now...temporarily,” her reply with lowered eyes which seemed to hold more secrets than usual. Made even more secretive by the way she

hugged Kumar, with the deepest of affections. Without a word said, she joined Russell and the exodus of every American Indian who had joined in the East Indian's 'all races included' crusade.

"What do they know that I don't?" Kumar inquired of Jake.

"And we don't," Kumar's former rival and now, perhaps, best bud replied. "What did we do wrong?" Jake asked Kumar, fearing that within victory there was defeat.

"We woke up a sleeping giant," Kumar said with remorse and pride. "Or worse...showed him what he really is. But...Jesus said...Blessed be the peacemakers."

"For they shall die, as I recall?" Jake countered.

"Not without transforming the world, and themselves." Kumar said as he mounted his own horse for the solemn ride back home, inviting Jake to do the same. "And entering the kingdom of heaven...where..."

"...Horses never get tired and always do what you want them to 'cause they want to do it also, and never give you any back talk about it?" Jake asked, and claimed.

"You bet," Kumar assured Jake, trying his best to believe in that white lie. .

"And buckle bunny babes laugh at all of my jokes, even the bad ones?" Jake asked of his new friend, and perhaps mentor.

"Sure thing," Kumar replied, testing out the theory that if you act like a leader who knows what they are doing you will become one.

"And no one is gonna try ta trick me into thinking that what's wrote on a page is what they want me ta believe is there?" Jake gently pressed.

"Absolutely...hmmm... Yes," Kumar replied, knowing that one of the weapons he would not have at his disposal for the battles ahead was to be a convincing liar. An armament which, unfortunately, his adversaries were experts at.

CHAPTER 14

Wentworth always trusted that the newspapers, particularly those he paid good money to co-own, tell him what he wanted to hear. He didn't bargain for them to relate to him in unmistakable black and white print with no grey to it what he needed to hear. Still, he read on, aloud, from the New York Herald Gazette, behind his desk on what was still his eagle's nest on the top floor of the skyscraper overlooking the two legged human field mice down below on the street. "Jackson County, from its capital, Blue River, Colorado

declared independence yet again today. As a self reliant community. Taking what it needs from Mother Nature and serving all of Mama N's childrens' needs, and wants with more children of all ages arriving every day, and now night. Running through, or going around, the blockade which is still in place. Some with no worldly possessions. Seeking survival," Wentworth paused, recalling the previously read paper which did a personal interest story on the dirt poor, empty bellied and minimally clothes unemployed Okie migrants who risked imprisonment or death to become citizens of a new country rather than continue being bottom feeders in the one they were born into.

"Some who gave up their worldly possessions, seeking a new salvation, and a new covenant with the Almighty," Wentworth read with escalating yet still controlled rage,+. He remembered the sermon he attended at St. Patrick's Cathedral so as to be on better terms with Joseph Kennedy, thus far the most successful Boston-based Irish neuvorich mobsters. A young Padre who filled in for the usual priest told the congregation about how his fellow seminarians and nuns discretely robbed the drug supply rooms of five upper tier hospitals and two army bases on their way to Denver. Then they very dramatically ran through the blockade under a moonlit sky, given cover to do so by captured US Army cannons which the 'Comrades' adapted to fire boluses of smelly and fog producing manure.

"And some came because they wanted to make history rather than comfortably writing about and interpreting it," the riches to even more riches self made mogul read on. He recalled how his sister's summa cum lauda Harvard law school graduate and his double Ph.D.'d English and Political science girlfriend collected the most intriguing books they could buy, or steal. After sneaking their stolen car through the blockade, they were now Deans of the new university in Blue River which, prior to the 'revolution', didn't have very much more training for young mind than a two room schoolhouse for kids below 12, and a high school for the few adolescent citizens, or knowledge hungry adults, who had the time or inclination to obtain a high school diploma.

"Miraculously, no one on either side of the blockade has been killed in the skirmishes between the haves and the former have nots who became haves because they share what they have, or can get. But what has been killed is..."

Wentworth, slammed the paper down on his desk, then took in a deep breath through his oversized nostrils, feeling a knot in his giant sized belly. He waited for his hard ticking heart to stop beating so fast, and so intensely, then finally said to his guest, "What has been killed is journalistic integrity. This 'story', maybe fact or maybe fiction, is, as we both know and should realize, being picked up by established newspapers run by established men in established cities. And this story is written by....." The now old before his time mogul who still thought he could buy off the Grim Reaper, took in another breath. "Written by a 10 year old girl! Elsa Steiner, she calls herself. And her propaganda spinning coaches."

"Who are more resilient than I thought," Sam Longmore replied, calmly smoking a cigar. "But it's temporary."

“

“How temporary, Captain, and if our other plan doesn’t work, Private or Inmate Longmore?” Wentworth pressed, leaning back on his chair, regaining composure as always happened when his back was against the wall.

“OUR plan being...?” Longmore inquired, abruptly puzzled.

Knowing the worth, and pleasure, of keeping his business partners and potential competitors confounded as to what he was thinking or prepared to do, Wentworth pulled out papers from the left side of his usually locked desk. He handed them to Sam, who put down his cigar, reading it with admiration, interest and worry.

“Some supplemental plans to what we already discussed,” Wentworth said, after which he lit his own cigar, blowing smoke rings into the air, and towards Longmire’s troubled face. “Which you will not discuss with anyone else. As we are counting on two things that are always true in any game between competitors, no matter what their ideology is.”

“That. Absolute power corrupts, absolutely,” Sam related, and conceded. “True enough. As we...I mean.I look in the mirror, Sir.” His stare was held hostage by the mirror behind Wentworth which the clever mogul placed on that wall to distract his most vulnerable and egotistical ‘partners’.

“And that nature never gives you a problem without a solution,” Wentworth continued, after letting Sam get a good look at himself in the reflective surface. Longmore was somehow disabled by some of what he saw in it, and empowered by something else. “Which in this case is...”

“Something that can be done...legally,” Sam said, assertively, having seen the plans Wentworth presented to him on paper, and the anatomy of his evolving or perhaps devolving soul as one of its prime implementers.

“And something we must do, any way you have to, Sam,” Wentworth said to Longmore, addressing him by his Christian name for the first time as a fellow Christian in the service of a Capitalistic Christian country. “Because, well, you, me and Him above us, know why.”

CHAPTER 15

There was one thing that Mother Nature always provided Jackson County and Blue River, and that was water through an always flowing stream of that necessity for all life for which the town got its name. The spring thaw came early, releasing a torrent of water flowing down from the still snow covered hills into the river which spoke to anyone who dared, or wanted, to listen to it. But as for this year, that water was being diverted

elsewhere by dam builders. This time it was not an army of deforesting beavers moving sticks from point A to B, but two legged human varmints armed with weapons far more deadly than sharp teeth or hard flapping tails. The company of Army, Police and civil engineers building the dam very legally just outside the limits of Jackson County worked like an armada of workaholic, supercharged beavers. It turned the river flowing through Jackson County from an eight of a mile wide, five story deep rhythmically flowing body of clear aqua into a slowly moving sludge of mud which got shallower and narrower with each layer of the concrete, lumber and steel enforced dam laid into the all too easily penetrated earth. At the rate they were building, it would a matter of days until the river that flowed even in the driest of seasons would become a valley of dried mud littered with dead skeletons from dehydrated animals and people.

With a parched throat, mounted on top of a still well watered Arjun, Kumar beheld with his terrified eyes and painful ears the wonders of modern technology diverting a river which, when it wanted to, decided to flood over its banks in the constant battle between the principalities of water and earth.

“He who has the biggest guns and is prepared to USE them controls the law,” Leona commented atop her appaloosa stallion, who, for her anyway, was as obedient as any well broke gelding.

“He who controls the law controls the river,” Chief Russell added, seated very comfortably on a nearly full blood Arab mare who, because she was of the highest thinking breed of horse, was the least popular in most areas of the state.

“And he who controls the river controls...” Leona appended.

“.....All of the people and animals it feeds,” Kumar barked back.

“Or fed,” Leona informed him, this time holding back most of her ‘I could have told ya so if you asked’ eye-roll.. “Which means that...”

“...You two are going back to the still water fed Rez, to save what’s left of your people,” Kumar replied.

“Because White Democratic Socialists still don’t want to include Red Indians into your Revolution,” Leona informed him in a hard hitting soft tone.

“Which is NOT MY fucking fault!” Kumar shouted back, trying to believe that claim. “I begged, asked and pleaded with them to do the right thing by your people.”

“But you didn’t MAKE them do the effective thing for my people! While...ahhh... you still refer to MY people as your FAVORITE people or YOU people, Comrade Philosopher Coordinator Kumar!”

“Because you refer to my people as your people!” Kumar countered, after which he pinched a fold of loose, prematurely for the season dark brown skin on his forearm. “You see this skin on me! Think it’s easy being my kind of brown in a white world?”

“And you think it’s easy being directed by a revolutionary who values philosophical wisdom over force? And power? Who tells your people and my people that we’re fighting against a powerful enemy?” Russell offered in that soft tone of his which made you scared of what would happen if you ever heard it raised.

“Power corrupts, absolutely,” Kumar related.

“But power is sometimes necessary,” she calmly said to Kumar, extending her palm out to his shaking arm. “Like...”

Leona’s attempt to alleviate Kumar’s fear gave way to dealing with her own visceral pain. Her palm went instantly to her belly. Kumar noted that it was bigger than usual. Out of her mouth came a bolus of vomit, most of which hit the ground rather than the tip of Kumar’s boot.

“Yes, necessities,” Kumar admitted. “Like you raising that Red skinned baby of yours with his own people...I know. Which is...Okay. Really,” he continued, pushing his mind into believing what he knew was right in his soul.

“And you, doing whatever you need to, so you can force your people into doing the Right thing...Instead of inviting them to...” said the Chief who was no doubt the father of the Lakota female Einstein’s baby.

Such convinced Leona to contemplate something deep behind her averted contemplative face. She said something in Lakota, then prodded her horse to go back to her new home in the Rez. It lay North of the borders of Jackson County. Russell followed.

“OK, don’t tell me what that Lakota credo means!” Kumar yelled out as mother, father and soon to be born into maybe a better or maybe a worse world disappeared into the distance. “I can ask someone else to translate it. I have a smart mind. A powerful mind. that...”

Frustrated, Kumar reached for his reserve friend, and crutch. It had been weeks since he smoked a joint, as he was saving imbibing the weed that allowed him escape from the world as it is (and the one he was trying to create) for emergencies only. But just as he brought his lighter to tip of the wackie tobaccie cigarillo, he was presented with a clear glass vial of white powder by a man on horseback whose presence he least expected.

“You can be more powerful, and effective, and clever with this,” ex-sheriff, ex colonel, ex-prisoner and now Comrade Johnston said regarding the magic power as he stroked his fingers through his finally fully grown-in symmetrical head of hair. “It was recommended to me by a convicted doc in prison who turned my soul around. And by

Doc Wilson to everyone here, just before he left two days ago to recruit more counties and doctors to join us.”

“And Doc Wilson recommends this to himself?” Kumar said as he opened up the vial for a test smell.

“When he has to work around the clock to put together what disease and trauma tore apart,” Johnston assured Kumar, as a Comrade in Common Cause rather than Capitalist snake oil salesman.

Kumar dipped his finger into the vial, then moved it towards his mouth. Johnston placed his hand between Kumar’s shaking phalanges and hungry for anything that would work oral cavity.

“No...like this,” Johnston said, taking three pinches of the white powder with his shooting hand. He placed on his, then snorted all of the white powder up his nose with the voracity that a hungry dog licks a plate coated with beef gravy and giblets.

Johnston’s face which had been a minute ago that of an old man tired of living took on a glow of a young one who was eager to embrace three new lifetimes and ten times that number of adventures in each of them. Such looked inviting enough to Kumar.

A strange sensation hit Kumar’s nostrils, then head as he snorted in the white powder, after which his nose decided to have something to say about it. Kumar sneezed out a small cloud of white dust, after which Johnston insisted that he try again, but to do it slowly. This time, most of the magic medicine stayed inside Kumar. But before he could self-observe any effect on his own body, mind and soul, Johnston pulled his attention to something more important.

“Any new thoughts about Leona?” Johnston inquired.

“Thoughts about something more important are brewing between my ears now,” Kumar replied, after which he tortured himself to a needed second look at the dam being built. The equipment being used was now so loud that he couldn’t hear or feel Silence, that ‘ringing’ in the ears which he could always sense and connect to, even in the middle of a busy city street or wilderness thunderstorm. “What do we do about that dam damn?” Kumar grunted out as the structure got taller, and the river it was blocking got shallower.

“You’re the director of this peoples’ democracy,” the former enforcer of all laws when Morgan owned Blue Water said to the present still somehow elected ‘Civic Coordinator’, as a compliment.

“Yeah...I am,” Kumar replied, assertively, as if the soul of his grandfather, father and all of the grandfathers, fathers and unborn children of such in Blue River had cohabitated Johnston soul when he delivered that remark, and fact.

How Kumar would deal with the wish of being a Philosopher Comrade King that he never thought would happen was unknown to him. The REAL answer as to why he was now head of a community of individualists aspiring to think for themselves was as unknown as why the sky was blue. Why God created mosquitoes. And why a man and woman's idea of love were never the same thing. But he did know the 'where' the 'how' incubating in his soul, but not yet in his brain. It would have to be shared, and implemented, very soon.

CHAPTER 16

Kumar rode down the hill overlooking the dam towards town, noting the tributaries of the progressively drained and soon to be completely diverted river with every turn. Not showing up for the scheduled open town meeting to try to cooperatively, rather than oppressively, deal with the life threatening water shortage would be disastrous. The urgency of such was all too apparent when he rode back to town, gazing at the dried beds of rock and dust which, just that morning, had been flowing streams of water. Clearly a new plan was required. One that was more bold and innovative than devising an ORDERED rather than voluntarily carried out rationing plan for whatever water was available.

Kumar felt his soul embracing what his brain now plotted out, awakened to the reality outside of his own head with the aid of Johnston's magic dust. The how to do it was working itself out. The where to formalize it would have to take place after sunset. Hopefully with some cooperation from the ghost of sometime Wild West outlaw and sometime law-abiding citizen Sam Pickering.

It was a particularly warm, and yet another rainless, evening at the Old Hold Out where Kumar and Leona had shared, as well as designed, a plan to depose the rich and powerful without killing the innocent or the guilty. On the agenda for the scheduled town hall meeting was how to selectively, and safely, maintain Morgan and his horde of vicious Capitalist tyrants as passive, deluded puppets who would not interfere with the People's Revolution. How to still keep them as happy commoners who still didn't know who was cooking the drug and uranium-spiked food they enjoyed eating in selected 'holiday' mental hospitals.

Kumar, now turban-less, walked onto the podium with the 'all is well' upscale suit he wore in town a few days earlier to assure the public that the water situation very soon. He took to the podium at the Old Hold Out, which still had not fallen into the ground. He felt the absence of Leona as a Comrade and potential lover more than he expected, but he was somehow was not depressed by such. Rather he felt empowered. By perhaps the ghost of Sam saying that outlaws needed to trust each other. Or maybe the spirit of his

grandfather Revolutionary Sikh making him feel like he was in control of his and everyone else's destiny, someone who didn't have to obey ANY rules anymore. Or maybe there was something in the powder which Johnston offered to him, confidentially, as such was in short supply, and needed to be used effectively, by the right people.

In any case, it was time for some serious Revolution rather than playful mischief. With the same rules of course. Make an impact but do no harm, since those who have the most guns, once the rules permitted them to be used, would surely demolish those who were less armed.

In front of Kumar was very selective company of citizens, chosen with the help of Johnston. The Sheriff Kumar had hated, feared and ridiculed most barely 4 months ago, over the past few days had become his now closest, and most trusted, advisor. The most innocent, vulnerable and perhaps most courageous of the citizenry Kumar was charged to serve in the meeting hall spoke up first.

"So, without water, what are we going to do about feeding our crops and animals?" Mary Steiner challenged with arms folded regarding the obvious issue for all concerned, coming from an enlightened perspective of universal caring for all her fellow humans and four legged companions. "And MY children!" she continued, hugging her now 11 year old daughter with desperation, fear and anger, unapologetically out of selective compassion.

"I'm not a child," Elsa grumbled. She pulled away from her mother's loving embrace. Then she took pen in hand, continuing to write about the meeting for the newspapers now and for posterity later with charcoal sketches rather than words. "And I belong to..."

"Yeah! The 'People's Revolution'!" Mary blasted out of her beet red face. "Which you keep telling me about," she commented to Elsa with a snide grunt. She then turned to Kumar, unleashing both barrels of volcanic rage at the still calm, cool, collected 'Comrade'. "The People's Revolution YOU keep telling her about! With things you don't tell me first, because..."

"Because Elsa...belongs to the Revolution," Kumar asserted, his still somewhat self-observing soul heard from his mouth. From someone who was not him. But someone who was more powerful, forceful and autocratic than his usual self.. "Which is us!" he declared to the crowd as not a comrade but a somehow all knowing leader. "All of us!"

After taking in a deep breath so as to collect his thoughts, and review his new perspectives, Kumar looked at the congregation as they passed around a water filled canteen, labeled 'One sip only'. First on line was DuBois, then Buddy, then Jake, who passed it on without drinking. All of the attendees had dust caked and stubble covered faces. They looked at Kumar with suspicion. Still Kumar continued the lecture as he felt a surge of energy coming up his spine, pushing into his mouth. Decorticating himself from the gentle, and therefore overtaxed, soul he had been in the past. "We all belong to the Revolution!" the new and never to be stepped on again Kumar pontificated,

imagining a white horse between his legs. “Especially those who are digging wells and MAKING the ground give us water!” the cowboy who normally had worked with rather than against Mother Nature continued.

“The ground which isn’t giving us water,” Mary interjected. “Not enough anyway to...” she appended with a dry mouth which held the rest of her reports hostage. After several coughs which Kumar self observed evoked no pity in him, she gazed at and into his face. “While you seem to have enough water to shave...and keep get that ‘People’s Mayor’ suit cleaned and...” Mary stopped in mid rant, gazing at what Elsa was putting onto paper. “What the hell...I mean hec...are you writing down now?” she blasted at her pathologically independent daughter who she never yelled at, at least in public, using the ‘h’ word for the first time anyone had heard it. “What fables are being immortalized as fact for the Revolution now and the history books later!?” She snatched the paper from under Elsa’s small, tender hands to read it herself.

“For OUR next article of people’s liberation to send out to the world,” Elsa explained, calmly and confidently, as it pertained to the writing which was beyond her mother’s comprehension with regard to vocabulary and concept. “And a picture says a thousand words,” Elsa said, pointing to a charcoal sketch of Kumar.

“Words about and pictures of a servant-director of the proletariat, us common folk, who seems to be eating better than the rest of us,” Mary grunted as she showed the sketch of Kumar to her fellow ‘commoner’. It showed him as a hero, with a full belly with the title of ‘A REAL Philosopher Comrade for all the People’.

“That’s not true! I’m not eating any better or more than any of you!” Kumar said of the likeness which Mary was so proud of, which revealed, ironically Kumar’s face with distinguishing features of his grandfather..

“No, yer not stealing food from hungry people’s tables,” Jake interjected sarcastically, a mode of communication Kumar had never heard from him, in the manner of one of those cool, calm collected egghead critic who hired less ‘enlightened’ people to sweat for them. “Yer just, well, someone who has ta have a clear head, so he feeds his belly with more grub so he can think more clearly fer the revolution.”

“And a white powder lining on his upturned nose,” Buddy added, imitating Jake’s sarcastic tone as well as the always caring ‘simple soul’ could. “A honker that---”

“---is getting special medication that’s in short supply, for a special medical condition that only he has,” Johnston interjected, after which he stood up, converting the flat floor under his feet into a podium. “But if we go with the plan Comrade Kumar has, that we all have been thinking, but not saying...plentiful water again and whatever else we need, and want.”

“And that people’s plan, ‘Comrade King’ Kumar, is?” Mary demanded in a tone more forceful than any woman, or man who had demanded a real answer from him. All adult eyes were fixed on Kumar, asking the same question in the same way.

Kumar took in one deep breath to reconnect to his mind, then another to his seemingly wandering soul. After forcing himself to encapsulate the multi-faceted set of commands which had to be carried out secretly, and effectively, he finally gave it voice. “To kill or injury no one.”

“But to do severe damage,” he heard from Elsa, with gentle assertion, but unbridled dedication. “Destruction to...” she continued, showing her mother the picture she had just drawn. Mary smiled with pride and delight, then hugged Elsa. The renderer of that drawing showed her quickly sketched likeness of the blown up dam to Kumar, then the rest of the congregation. Everyone, finally including Father Smith, nodded ‘yes’ to the proposition. .

“Alright then, the details,” Kumar said, wiping the sweat that had poured down from his brow off his eyes, so as to see the faces of those he would share the plan with more clearly.

CHAPTER 17

It was a tradition in Jackson County as well as most every other county on the Western slope of Colorado to celebrate Easter with a bang. Old Man Winter had a way of making life miserable for everyone one way or another. ‘Resurrection Days’ in Spring came with longer hours of sunlight. It was accompanied by winds that blew warm air that didn’t freeze exposed skin upon contact. Thus, Easter was an event observed with picnics, fireworks and thankfulness to some Entity bigger than oneself, even to the Atheists. Fireworks were not only welcomed, but required for the occasion, which was greeted with more enthusiasm than Christmas or even the Fourth of July elsewhere in America.

From the bush covered overlook, Kumar assessed the construction of the dam through his binoculars. He noted that it was complete, the residual water in the once big, bold river was absorbed into mud under an unusually more hot than warm Easter Sunday sun. For those on the watery side of the dam, it was a celebratory occasion. Snappily clad soldiers and well dressed civilians gathered with their families for a picnic behind the tanks and artillery poised to invade Blue River when the command from head quarters, or rather head Office, came. A detachment of 10 uniformed personnel prepared the fireworks display between swigs from a jug passed around between them. Assuming all was as previous years, the Springtime fireworks display would commence as soon as the sun slipped over the horizon.

Only three soldiers guarded the dam atop the bridge across the reservoir of water it had created. They marched back and forth on their positions with their rifles poised over their shoulders. Their eyes were mostly half closed. When they opened them, they looked enviously upon their fellow servicemen and women enjoying a late afternoon supper on the fairgrounds below.

“They don’t seem to be worried about us,” Kumar noted, as he put down the binoculars. He looked at the Army uniform which ominously fit perfectly around his torso and, more dangerously so, white powder empowered psyche. “Who do they think we are, and who do they think I am?” he asked, nay, demanded to know, of his second in command.

“Someone who fits my Captain’s uniform better than I did,” Johnston remarked as he adjusted the home made insignia of the same rank on his only spare soldier suit. “But to pull this off, everyone in this Revolutionary People’s Platoon have to act like how they appear, or are required to appear.

Following Johnston’s more concerned than condemning eyes, Kumar looked at three ladies who were locked into completing the mission at hand. In the dim light, with Mary’s help as wardrobe and make up expert recalled from the days when being a theatre actress and director was something one got paid for, Buddy, Jake and Dubois looked every inch the spitting image of the gender men required to have sons to pass on their family names. From the tops of the still intact wigs Mary hadn’t sold, to the dresses wrapped around their tightly corseted bellies, to the pumps cut open two sizes larger to fit their oversized feet, Buddy and Dubois looked like top end marriage prospects for husbands in want and need of wives.

By the way Buddy and Dubois frowned their brightly painted red lips, they were not happy about the role they would play in this drama. With an expected sense of pride, exploration and liberation, Jake showed off his very ladylike walk, pushing his chest up, as if proud of the extra padding covering both his nipples which looked like real breasts. Like his two unwilling thespians, Jake was entrusted with a picnic basket containing goodies for the guards and dynamite to blow up the dam. Along with some extra explosives strapped between their legs under their skirts.

Clad as a rich, overdressed young daughter of whichever one of the three well off ‘mothers’ wanted to adopt her for the evening, Elsa picked up her pad of paper and pencil.

“No way Elsa’s gonna draw any pictures of me like this!” Buddy barked to Kumar, grabbed hold of the pad..

“Or me!” Dubois immediately added, seizing the pencil with fingers stained, temporarily according to Mary, with bright red finger polish.

“Mommy,” Elsa said turning to ‘mother’ Jake; “Tell your Comrades that I’m just drawing pictures of the women inside of you all. Who are stronger and smarter than the men you think you are. Right?”

“Seems so,” Mother Jake smiled back through lips that seemed insightful and self-nurturing. “Maybe...I hope,” the once homophobic cowboy continued, with averted, self-examining eyes.

“That’s enough wise cracking from you, still LITTLE girl,” Dubois scolded Elsa in the same manner he did to his errand daughters at home. As Dubois saw it, Elsa needed a father who could stand up to her more than her mother did, or could. He grabbed Elsa by the waist and tied her to the wagon Mary had driven up the hill, next to her mother who was already sitting on the buckboard. “Take both of these ladies home,” he said to the mare hitched up to the harness. “No matter what any of them say.”

“Why?” Elsa demanded of Kumar. “After I got all patriotic’d and Easter Sunday’d up for this?” she continued in a frightened convincing imitation of a pretty in pink Capitalist princess who loves her country as much as a father who steals hamburger from the mouths of other kids so she can eat roast beef. “Why do I have to go home?”

Kumar had to think long and hard about his answer, as any flaw in his reply would be picked up and picked apart by the maiden who was sprouting extra brain cells 100 times faster than any of her girlfriends were sprouting breasts. “You have to go home because the Revolution needs some... innocence,” he finally answered, after which he patted the horse on the ass and set it on his way, encouraged to not stop by Mary. “Alright, gentlemen, and ladies. You have your orders,” Kumar announced to Johnston and the three ‘ladies’.

“Your orders?!” Dubois barked back as an angry stallion and certainly not a gelding, or a mare.

“Alright...then,” Kumar replied, pulling his new personal backwards, and pushing his truer self into its place. “As not orders, but thought-infused requests that if not followed will fuck us all over. You okay with that?”

“Fer now,” Buddy grumbled back. Jake nodded an affirmative ‘yes’. Dubois, moved away from Jake as if he was carrying a communicable disease. Johnston put his thumb up, enthusiastically, after which he opened up left elbow, inviting lady Jake to insert his arm under it. It left the management and difficulties of dealing with Mrs. Dubois and Miss Buddy to Kumar, according to plan.

As the ensemble moved down the hill towards the dam, according to plan, Kumar heard, then saw, that Elsa had worked her way out of her restraints. She leaped out of her seat on the wagon and shot her sling shot at the ass of the horse, sending it and her mother back down the hill at a full gallop. As if being cohabitated by the ghost of her slain Union Organizer father, she confidently marched to the overlook, took out her pencil and

pad, and looked down below to record the events to happen. She helped herself to a full view of where the drama was to happen with a pair of her own, no doubt stolen, binoculars. Kumar thought about giving her another talk, but...he knew that someone had to survive what had to happen. Someone had to tell the world what was intended, and what would occur. Truthfully for a change.

CHAPTER 18

The corporal marching back and forth at his post on the bridge over the new reservoir with water rights belonging to Smithmore County, Jackson's rival, averted his eyes when seeing Jake approach as if he was the embodiment of every woman the sentry wanted to marry. And every girl back home he couldn't have. Jake offered the corporal with the peach fuzz mustache a sip from a flask of liquid refreshment. But upon sniffing it, figuring out that it contained more alcohol than fruit, he refused because as was on duty. Jake's offering of specially spiced strawberry scones was graciously declined due to 'allergies'. Jake then put a specially spiced hotdog into his own mouth, then offered the lonely, and admittedly not bad looking, corporal the opportunity to have an eating race down to the middle of the offering. Just before the soldier could race his way to the other side of the wiener, his eyes turned glassy. Then enamored. Captain Kumar came in just before the two 'lovers' lips met, startling the soldier with an authoritative 'What are you doing with my wife, soldier!' and saving his 'lady' from explorations that were too early to take.

The soldier snapped to attention, to the best of his ability. Kumar told sentry that he was just as entitled to celebrate the building of the dam as anyone else, ordering him to join his buddies down below, who had women who were not spoken for. Demonstrating his point, Kumar took Jake by the hand and gave her a peck on the cheek. "She lives to flirt with other men, but that makes her even more lovable when she comes back to me," Kumar said by way of explanation. Such was accepted by the soldier, who joined his buddies down below the dam. Meanwhile, Kumar and Jake inserted dynamite with very well times long fuses into the recesses of the concrete wall.

At the other most vulnerable side of the dam, a Sergeant with a pot belly outmatched in ugliness only by his double chin and angry-at-everything eyes marched up and down his post. The pounding of his boots on the newly built bridge made anyone feel it to be from a five story high dinosaur trampling on the forest which he continuously claims as his own. Major Johnston approached, Miss Buddy arm candy on his left elbow and Lady Dubois on the other. Each of his companions carrying a picnic basket filled on top with mind altering goodies for the belly along with dynamite sticks under their skirts and, in the case of Buddy, breasts that changed size with each step he took.

The dinosaur Sergeant approached the three celebratory guests with the business end of his carbine rifle. "Who goes there!" he grumbled with a baritone voice that shook the earlobes of anyone within hearing range. Self-promoted Captain Johnston let go of the two escorts on his arms and handed a note to the Guard.

The guard's overgrown grey brows rumbled as he carefully examined the note, then basket's contents. The eyes under them seemed to strain to make out the writing on the note. He lowered but did not let go of his rifle. Johnston reminded the Sergeant of his rank by pointing to the counterfeit clusters on his shoulders. Still, the Sergeant had some doubts, as he read on. But Johnston knew that the easiest way to an overweight Capitalist Imperialist serving slave is through his already overfilled stomach with...mind melting tongue pleasing spices,

Dubois offered the non-commissioned officer who no doubt did all of the officers' dirty work a smile to feast his eyes on, and a cookie to indulge his palate. After that was swallowed with one gigantic bite, Buddy offered up a large piece of strudel. Without looking at it or its provider the Sergeant gobbled down the second offering off food prepared by Master baker Mary Steiner and fledgling pharmacist Kumar. The Sergeant's unmovable bear-like torso began to sway in the windless air as if blown back and forth by hurricane force winds which switched direction with every breath. His wide open eyes closed, half way.

But he was still on his feet, babbling off complaints with his mouth about everyone in his self-made but still held on to miserable life. A drunkard's delight smile came to his face when Buddy and Jake relieved him of his overcoat, cap and rifle. They escorted him down towards the picnic below while Johnston put on the Sergeant's overcoat and cap, then took over the sentry post for the overworked and under-appreciated guard. Johnston discretely removed the dynamite sticks from the ladies' baskets, and under their skirts, motioning them to move themselves and the Sergeant off the bridge with the utmost urgency.

Once he was alone at the post, Johnston hid the dynamite sticks in the specific locations that Dubois (self-taught builder of structures he was not allowed to own or walk on after by the fat cats who underpaid him) had dictated. The once King-serving sheriff who had become the most fervent revolutionary who now hated all royalty, looked at the gold watch he was given for his former services as protectors of Morgan et al. Then he checked out what was going on in all of four directions around him, with deep thinking eyes. After he had communicated with every portion of his mind, brain and soul, he reinserted the watch under his tunic. He then removed a gold plated lighter that had been pilfered from Morgan's once overstocked closets, igniting the tip of a well hidden fuse.

He looked at his watch yet again, then upward. Two cars approached the bridge. Two soldiers, each with their all American wives and to be turned into all American children emerged from the vehicles. They were followed by a man in a well tailored brown vested suit who, upon taking off his fedora. It was none other than the Forman who had whipped Johnston and his fellow prisoners in the chain gang who were 'honored' to have the task of building the fence around Blue River during the 'sign painting' skirmish.

"Colonel Johnston! Happy Easter!" the first soldier yelled out with abandonment and glee.

“A celebration for us, and our families,” the second soldier added. “Who...”

“...appreciate your doing what you’ve done for us,” his extremely well dressed and even better fed wife smiled back from a goddess-like face that most probably had never experienced blood, sweat or tears added with an aristocratically tilted nod.

“After we...well...I didn’t know you were working undercover,” the first soldier said to Johnston, apologetically. .

“It was nothing personal. We...or rather me... having to lay some lashes on your back while you were officially a prisoner,” the former Forman of the chain gang offered to Johnston.

Johnston faked a smile of approval.

“In the service of...” the second soldier’s wife said as she pointed to a diamond studded American flag pin embedded within the lapel of her coat.

“And I hope you are still being paid handsomely by...them,” the second soldier added.. pointing to a black sedan coming to a stop at the end of the bridge. Emerging from it was a plain clothes chauffer and a nurse, who escorted none other than former moguls Ranselhoff and Younger towards Johnston. Though they were just as well dressed and fed as when they arrived as honored guests at Morgan’s power meeting in view of everyone in town and in relative secret at the power lodge built for them in the hills, Ranselhoff and Younger’s feet were barely able to keep their bodies from falling onto the ground they had formerly owned. Their eyes rolled around in their sockets, like lost deer who wandered into a wolves’ den, not knowing if they were invited diners or lunch.

“We’re working on finding where McDonald and the other CEOs are being stashed,” the second soldier said. “And figuring out what Commie docs we have to pay off to get them, out. And, brilliant idea on your part getting Kumar hooked on the kind cocaine that gives you energy and pride at the expense of intelligence and common sense.” Having declared his statement with the utmost confidence and glee, he removed a vial of white powder from Johnston’s breast pocket.

“Which will, eventually, show these equality, fraternity and liberty idiots that absolute power corrupts, absolutely,” Johnston smirked with delight regarding the empowering white power. “And that....some of us are powerful than others,” he continued, taking back the specially formulate cocaine before the soldier could avail his nostrils and tired brain of its benefits.

“And the rest of us are?” Johnston’s fellow soldier in the service of the same country and ideology inquired.

“The rest of you are...expendable,” Johnston replied, averting his face.

“According to. who?” the other soldier asked, nor fearing but welcoming the answer, whatever it was from someone who he thought was his comrade.

Johnston took in a deep breath of twilight air, stroked his chin, then looked up at both of the army buds who he served with in so many campaigns overseas in their youth. And even more attacks against anarchists, communists and socialists at home which would never reach the history books. “You both, and so many others whose pleasure, passion and destiny are to be like you, are expendable according to, well, bosses you and even them aren’t supposed to know about,” he said regarding Ranselhoff and Younger. After giving his two former comrades in arms the chance to realize they were about to be royally fucked, but before they could figure out what to do about it, Johnston whipped out two revolvers with a mini-silencers from his holsters. He pointing the business end at his two former army buddies. They held their ground. Their wives attempted to slither away with their children.

“All of you, back here!” Johnston ordered his buddies’ wives along with the children who knew him as ‘Uncle’. “So you can get a full view of the fireworks,” he sneered by way of explanation. One by one, Johnston lined up his buds and the families who loved them more than they could love themselves on the railings of the bridge overlooking the reservoir below. With rapid succession, and a steady 4/4 beat to which he hummed Battle Hymn of the Republic, Johnston executed each of them, leaving their bodies hanging there like lifeless dummies. Another two stanzas later he sent Ranselhoff’s Nurse and Younger’s chauffeur to their heavenly reward where they would be served and pleased by the upper ups who had spit on them in their now ended life of servitude. With the remaining four bullets, Johnston shot Ranselhoff and Younger in both legs, causing them to fall to the ground. They were unable to do anything but slowly crawl away from the now fast moving fuse about to blow up the dam. Their cries for help were drowned out by the first blast of the fireworks below, a prelude for a magnificent rural Colorado Easter light and that rivaled any July 4th celebration in Denver, Santé Fe or Chicago.

Johnston made his getaway not 60 seconds before the scheduled blast of the explosives he and Kumar had planted blew up the dam before anyone who build it could notice its disappearance. As did Kumar, Dubois, Jake and Buddy in a wagon driven by Mary Steiner, returning to the scene, as scheduled.

The dried riverbed leading to Blue River flooded with water, welcoming the rapidly flowing liquid that made all life possible. The concrete, wood and steel used to build the bridge returned to the earth in mixed disarray. But the bridge upon which lay dead bodies of two soldiers, their families, as well as two former moguls of industry and their servants, remained intact. Angry and scared men in blue, green as well as black uniforms swarmed in to assess the damage, along with photographers who came to take pictures of the All American Easter Celebration for their local newspapers.

Such is what Elsa saw, and sensed, from her position atop the hill using eyes as good as any hawk amplified by super power binoculars, ears as sensitive as any guard mare in a herd of foals, and the ability to lip read which she became an expert at during the year when she had gone functionally deaf. She wondered why Kumar didn't swing by to get her. But perhaps it was fate that said there was more that she was supposed to see, and report to the world. She remained at her post all night, not so much because she was scared to move but because someone had to report what had happened.

At the crack of dawn, Elsa could clearly see the sun illuminating the mangled bodies of Ransellhoff and Younger being taken on a stretcher to an ambulance. A portly, well dressed man who she recognized as Wentworth appeared as if from nowhere, halting the stretcher bearers with a slight rising of his ring loaded hand. He knelt down, then took hands of the two slain men into his own, kissing them both. He made the sign of the cross three times for each of them, then laid upon their lifeless chests a gold cross, an American flag and a flower. The photographers rushed in, taking pictures of the departed and the man bestowing blessings on them. After wiping a tear from his eye, Wentworth got back on his feet, and walked away from everyone. While the bodies were taken into the ambulance which now of course was a hearse, Wentworth looked up towards Elsa. Not directly, but directly enough. His grief-stricken face instantly gave way to a shit eating grin of delight. He smiled with even more delight when presented with wanted posters which were being posted on bridge.

"\$10,000 each, reward, dead or alive. For any of the murdering Anarchist Communist Terrorists," Elsa said to the rabbit who decided to have breakfast not 10 feet from her, thinking it to be her slain Union Activist father. "A hefty sum for Kumar, Buddy, Jake, Dubois, Father Smith and Mom, who pledged that they would kill themselves before killing anyone else, Pop," she said. "But...interestingly, the same reward for 'Comrade Johnston', who is wanted...alive."

"Which I am," Elsa heard from a man's voice behind her that merged somehow with the wind. Upon turning around, her eyes beheld not a coyote who allowed her father to co-inhabit its body for a father daughter post-mortem conversation, but something more alarming. Particularly when the silently approaching visitor extended a very human hand over her shoulder, grabbed hold of the pad she had over filled with writing, then seized the pencil she had worn down to a one inch stump.

"The truth, as you see it, sense it, which is...amazingly accurate," Johnston said as he read the report and very humanistic commentary which Elsa wrote in the service of her dead father more so than for any fellow revolutionary, or even her own journalistic future. "But..." Johnston continued, as Elsa reached for her knife, which she was directing towards Johnston's oversized testicles.

Johnston snatched the knife from her small hand, then pulled out his revolver, aiming it at Elsa's head. She looked up. Unafraid. Knowing that she had spent more Alive big A moments than any 11 year old girl she ever knew, and perhaps any 100 year old adult. "Yeah, yer right," Johnston conceded, after which he pulled out a picture of Elsa's mother

from the breast pocket of his, as she noticed, Army General holster. He pointed his revolver at the picture.

“What do you want?” Elsa demanded to know.

“For you to, you know...” Johnston said, as he began to tear up the novel length manuscript of words and pictures into which Elsa had put so much blood, sweat and tears. He handed the minimally torn book that would change the world back to Elsa, motioning for her to tear it up herself.

Elsa thought long and hard about what to do. What would her mother want her to do? What would Spirit that was beyond any religion require of her now? And, most immediately, what would Pop, who gave his life for his fellow Workers now and fellow workers in future generations want her to do? As for that answer, she looked toward the rabbit, who stared back at and into her. But before delivering its message in any language Elsa could understand, Johnston’s bullet sent it to the afterlife.

As if called down from the heavens as well as the depths of hell, a crow swooped down from the thick bush above and helped itself to a breakfast of rabbit meat, starting with the eyes. “The way it is, the strong stay stronger, the virtuous become extinct,” Johnston said by way of commentary, after which held up Mary’s picture again. “One more chance to do the right, patriotic and Christian thing,” he said. “And to keep doing the right, patriotic and Christian thing.”

Elsa’s soul painfully self observed her hands tear up the rest of manuscript which was to be her best work to date. Her mind, with even more agony, visualized a future where she would never write it again.

“Yes,” Johnston smiled back at Elsa when the final pages of the work were nothing but bits of confetti scattered to the winds. “Family before Comrades. Smart choice,” he continued, stroking Elsa on her trembling and tear covered cheeks. As he got back on his horse and rode back to town, Elsa’s knew all too painfully why selective compassion for family and friends prevents you from being of maximal service to the world. And how not fighting oppression makes you complicit with it. But, her days of being a theoretical genius were over. Maybe, perhaps, if she became a ‘good girl’ now and an obedient wife later, she could have a daughter who would carry on the Revolution. And, more importantly, Elsa’s mother, Mary, could be that daughter’s proud grandmother. Who, justifiably, would encourage said granddaughter to not be a coward or an idiot like her mother had just become.

CHAPTER 19

The life-giving and sometimes life-challenging river flowed once again on its own terms, inviting the two and four legged animals to avail itself of its greatly appreciated re-delivery of water to Blue River and the rest of Jackson county. But such came with a heavy price, as the rules of the 'game' had changed, and it was no game anymore.

Blue River, a town which boasted no fences to anyone who wanted to come in or out, was now a fortress. Unused wagons and any spare lumber not essential for housing were converted into fences. Books were converted into cartridges for double barrel hand muskets and Kentucky long rifles which had been removed from special places above home fireplaces and inside the Homestead Museum. Whether the varied weaponry could hold up against tanks surrounding the town, that was another story. But one story hit Kumar hardest when he read the latest tall tale believed in the East about what was going on in the West. "Pacifist People's Revolutionaries become Murderous Terrorists" the headline in the New York Herald Gazette read on the latest publication that somehow got through the blockade, by an act of courage or perhaps by intention. Ironically, it was the journal which, up till now, had boosted moral in Blue River and because of such boosted sales to their readers in the 'comfortable' East with any story Elsa Steiner had sent them.

But there was one truth to the black and white print that, rightly or wrongly, most Americans believed as fact. Every citizen who chose to remain in Blue River was armed with something that could tear open human flesh or end human life. Kumar's ceremonial Sikh knife which he inherited from his grandfather was supplemented with a colt revolver on both hips, and a Winchester rifle strapped over his shoulder. As he stood in the middle of the most recent round of building up the barricades, Jake, Buddy and Dubois organized the defensive people's army, working together with one shared brain. They shared with all those who remained the optimistic 'fib' that the US Army soldiers and volunteer 'militiamen' hired by the Wentworth et al would not fire their machine guns and artillery shells if strong minded citizens held on to their rifles, senses and nerve.

Amongst the armed defenders was none other than, according to the hospital staff, voluntarily enlisted and insistently present Morgan and Richter. The moguls, who were just starting to realize who they once were before receiving 'uranium therapy', were clad in their now favorite outfits of farmer overalls and cowboy jeans. With slow thinking foggy brains but, ironically, happier souls than anyone else in town, they tried to figure out how to work the only weapons they could be entrusted with. They somehow wrapped themselves and each other within the elastic bands of the sling shots with which they were 'knighted'. 'Duchess' Mary, Elsa's mother, rushed over to help them.

"No, Sir Morgan...and Sir Richter," she said as she untangled the elastic bands of the slingshots from their arms, wrists and, if it had not been for her swift intervention, necks. Upon detaching stone age weapons from eager industrial age wielders of such, Mary's

mind was baffled by the complications Elsa had put into those usually simple devices. She called out for Elsa to come help, which she did, promptly and, surprisingly, without fanfare or cleverly phrased commentary about how life for adults was or should be. Mary asked Elsa if there was anything wrong, yet again. The usually over-talkative genius and, on so many occasions, problem child answered with her hands. She used the to break the sling shots with an angry burst of rage channeled completely into her fingers. Then she...slithered away, saying nothing with her mouth and even less with her averted eyes.

"Do I know her?" Morgan asked Mary, furling up his 'thinking' overgrown left eyebrow.

"I think we did," Richter added, scratching his head. "When we were...who were we?"

"Rich men who became poor ones," Mary heard from behind her from a fellow member of her more often than not oppressed, forgotten and taken for granted gender. "Then patients." Melissa was clad as a proud member of the Comrade's Militia, her well bosomed chest extending outward, a headband bearing a Bolshevik red star on her forehead. She turned to her two former patrons, partners and masters. "You were rich men who became poor ones, then patients who...."

Mary's stare shut Melissa down before she could remind Morgan and Richter who they had been, and would never be again, as long as she had anything to say about it. Morgan and Richter slipped back into a despondent, yet happy, stupor. Melissa's attention and mood shifted quickly when the newly turbaned Kumar came over,

"Yes," Melissa said of Morgan and Richter in the presence of her new benefactor. "Rich men who became poor ones, then patients who—"

"---Will be, somehow, treated," interjected the Comrade Commander Philosopher King whose hard-earned dreams had become a nightmare. Melissa extended her soft and despite the few blisters on them, elegantly female fingers to his arm. "So that they can become real people again."

"Moron Morgan and Ratshit Richter were never real people, or men, Comrade Kumar," Melissa said as she wrapped her blistered yet still very feminine fingers around his shaking arm. "Not like you, who converted me into becoming...dedicated to something bigger than myself," she continued, appending it with a grateful smile.

Kumar smiled back, feeling that maybe this was his greatest victory. The conversion of a greedy, clever, money and status seeking bitch into a giving, intelligent and service loving human being.

"I am dedicated to something bigger than all of us!" Militia in Service of Man, Woman and anyone In Between Melissa yelled out to her fellow citizen comrades with a clenched fist raised defiantly and victoriously into the colder than normal Spring air. "Power to the people!" she declared, exclaimed then commanded.

The reluctantly armed citizens setting up the barricades could not risk the temptation to affirm their beliefs and diminish their fears. They joined into the ‘power to the people’ chant, turning the crowd into a determined, unstoppable and ineffective mob, as Kumar felt it, anyway.

Comrade Johnston led a horse loaded with ammunition from sources he didn’t identify into the center of town. But under the loud ‘Power to the People’ chant, ‘power to the idiots’ softly came out of Johnston’s mouth, according to what Kumar thought he heard with his ears and saw with his lip reading eyes. But matters of altered perceptions were put aside when Comrade and now Commander Kumar heard something behind the line of tanks. The strange, loud engine drove literally shivers up and down his spine. It came from a motorized visitor from hell, or worse, a special government envoy from Washington.

“Shut up!” Kumar blasted to the enthusiastic crowd, not caring if he was a buzz kill, party pooper or deflator of much needed morale. “Shut the fuck up!” he commanded with the loudest voice he could. He finally silenced the crowd, then rammed his binoculars into his bloodshot eye sockets, perusing the Eastern Horizon.

An open jeep carrying Major Sam Longmore and his superior, Colonel Daniels weaved its way through the armada of vehicles and artillery, finally stopping at the high ground visible to every naked eye in town. Sam was handed a bullhorn from a lower ranked soldier, taking it into his hands like the high ranking officer he now was. “Everything will go back to normal if give up the saboteurs who blew up the dam and killed two families,” he proclaimed in a voice that sounded very much like the always honorable cowboy, rancher and horse trainer he had been only one uranium exposure experiment ago. “They killed six innocent people!” he declared, motioning for two of civilians from the neighboring county and three Blue River citizens who had given up their citizenship in that ‘independent country’ after the dam was exploded to put up a billboard. It clearly showed the pictures of two common soldiers, two military wives and as many children who had lost their lives in the explosion. “Six innocent people, murdered!”

Kumar and his fellow comrade hold outs said nothing, and did less, till Daniels intervened. “EIGHT innocent people!” he declared, as another mixed detachment of former Blue River citizens and their fellow countrymen from adjoining counties put up larger than life photos of slain business tycoons Ranselhoff and Younger.

Three shots were fired from behind Kumar’s back. Two hit the smiling, paternalistic likenesses of the two American success stories between their shifty eyes. The third knocked off Daniels’ hat.

“Who shot those bullets?” the cap-less commander yelled out, while quickly trying to push the long hair on the left side of his head over the nearly hairless crown on top of it. “Who shot those bullets!” he repeated with even more fury.
“

Jake raised his hand. Two other Blue River Militiamen raised their hands no more than two pensive breaths afterwards, followed almost immediately by a dozen others confessing to the offense. Melissa then raised hers, jumping onto a pile of burnt lumber, so as to be seen by men on both sides of the barricades, and most particularly, Kumar.

“Till we figure out who did this,” Daniels barked out as an aide returned his shot up hat. “And this!” he continued, motioning for other photos of the slain ‘victims’ after their souls had left their mutilated bodies to be displayed. “No one gets out...And no one comes in!

Kumar’s keen inner ears once again heard something coming in from the tree covered South side of town. Its presence was confirmed by birds flying up from the bush in the wake of the ‘ghost’. Another motorized vehicle, he intuited, bashing through the bush. He quickly grabbed hold of his binoculars, noting birds fleeing from the mechanized monster. He ignored, for the moment anyway, Melissa’s perhaps loving or perhaps entrapping arms embracing his sweat-soaked waist.

Upon seeing the beast, Kumar confirmed its identity before anyone else could hear it. “Let this one through!” he announced to the congregation of rebels who, with God’s help, and the blessings from Father Smith, had kept most every other uninvited vehicle from coming into town. “And give him cover!” Kumar yelled out as an armored truck chugalugged through the bush on three and a half defiant half wheels, creating a new road of its own. “Now!” Kumar blasted into the air, pulling away from Melissa’s now desperate rather than status or love seeking embrace.

The men and women under Kumar’s direction fired away at tanks, artillery nests and machine nests which opened fire at the encroaching truck. The truck, which sported a plethora of bullet holes from previous encounters as well as this one, finally gave way, collapsing on a broken axel which plummeted to the ground in the town square. Its engine blew up in a puff of smoke. Whatever oil and radiator fluid it still had spilt onto the ground.

“Made in America, destroyed by America,” Doc Wilson noted regarding dead on arrival vehicle as he climbed out of the driver’s seat though a windshield that had been shot out of existence. “Along with most, but not all of...what’s in the back,” said the Doctor who had saved so many lives, (but according to what Kumar knew anyway had never taken one) hobbled his way to the back of the truck. With the greatest of pride, and the deepest of sorrows, he pulled the door off the truck’s hinges, getting out of the way before it broke open his one still good leg.

The citizen comrades rushed to collect the still intact medical supplies, food and weapons Wilson was able to steal while on his ‘medical conference’ Fort Collins and other locations he had no time to talk about. But there was one item Kumar looked for, yet was unable to find. “Got any of this, Doc?” Kumar asked Wilson, pulling him away from the supply grabbing crowd. Kumar pulled out his last vial of the magic white powder that ‘Doc Johnston’ had specially prescribed and procured for him, and his special medical

condition related to his East Indian biochemical physiology. “Your special recipe to make good men into effective ones,” Kumar whispered to Wilson, handing the good doctor the vial.

While Wilson examined the white powder which seemed to make Kumar more effective at a leader but less likable to others, including himself, Morgan and Richter shuffled by within hearing distance. Each of the former captains of Industry and modern technology now had a working sling shot of their own, which they used to inflict pain on their own flesh. “I’m a piece of shit and garbage,” Morgan sang in a disharmonic song that felt all too familiar to Kumar, particularly when he was between snorts.

“And I should die,” Richter appended with the next stanza.

“So, as I was saying,” Kumar whispered to Wilson again after the two deluded and, perhaps now self aware, former master moguls were out of hearing and seeing range. “I need more of this rare and needed power powder. Your special recipe, so I was told.”

“Which is not in my cookbook. And not on my clinic shelves,” Wilson asserted after smelling and tasting the white powder. “Who gave you this?”

Kumar pointed to Johnston, who was busy distributing weapons to children who were no more than 10. Elsa tried to take weapons away from the schoolmates who had bored and ridiculed her. But when Johnston looked at her, she backed down. After he turned around to tend to other matters, Elsa resumed her job of suppling repeater rifles to children that were not much bigger than them.

Kumar self observed his mind ordering his confused and pharmacologically altered brain to look at what had been in front of his eyes but failed to see. He pulled out from his pocket a copy of the wanted poster on himself and three of his comrades which were amongst the hundreds that were dropped down onto the town square an hour earlier. Something flashed in what was left of his thinking brain. “The only one on this wanted poster who’s wanted alive, and not dead is Johnston,” he finally realized. He then glanced towards Elsa, who took away weapons from armed and determined teenagers whenever Johnston looked at her, then gave them back to the young warriors when he was out of sight. “And Every time Comrade Johnston looks at Elsa, she turns into...”

“Someone she isn’t,” Wilson noted.

“And won’t be again!” Kumar asserted, crumbing the wanted poster into the recesses of an angry fist, which was directed at himself more than anyone else. But determined to settle the score with Johnston first.

“And...some pictures that came across my eyes in Fort Collins. When I tried to console the families of the dead soldiers...Medically anyway,” Wilson interjected, pushing against Kumar’s shaking chest with his left hand. He discretely placed a set of pictures in front of Kumar’s blood shot oculars. “Cameras don’t lie, not yet anyway.” Wilson

informed Kumar of the pictures portraying “Uncle’ Johnston an anniversary party with the two slain army buds, their wives and children in a photo taken, according to ribbon behind them, three days before the dam was blown up.

“Take care of this situation with this,” Wilson said pointing to Kumar’s head. “Not this toxic powdered firewater.” He reached into Kumar’s pocket, grabbing hold of then throwing away the nearly empty vial of the specially formulated cocaine ‘Doc Johnston’ had prescribed for ‘Philosopher King sucker Kumar’. Wilson then pointing at Kumar’s clenched fist which had dig so deep into his palm that he was leaking blood onto the ground. “And not that either. In the battle between intelligence and power, the winner will always be---”

“Whoever we say it is,” Kumar grunted, after which he pushed the good doctor aside, and marched to Johnston. The double agent turncoat ‘Comrade’ handed a vintage 45 caliber buffalo rifle from the Heritage Museum to a nine year old boy who was half its size as if it was a toy from Santa. A toy that Kumar knew was defective which if fired would dislodge barrel and shratnel into the person who pulled the trigger rather than whoever the barrel was pointed at.

“You’re never too young to fight,” Johnston said his latest ‘expendable’ soul. It was none other than ‘gullible Geoffrey’ who believed any tale of heroism told to him by anyone. Except the ones he needed to hear from his biological father, who died ugly and unnecessary death while fighting the Kaiser. “Never too young to fight and, if necessary, die for what’s Right.”

“Or too late to correct what’s wrong,” Kumar interjected. For reasons he still didn’t know, he calmly showed Johnston the pictures Wilson presented him with.

“They were ...friends,” Johnston replied after what seemed to be a reflective and emotionally painful pause. “Who turned on me.”

“In a picture that was taken...days before they got blown up,” Kumar pointed out.

“By....accident!” Johnston asserted. “Because they were on the wrong side.” He then turned towards Elsa, gently pulling her towards him. “Comrade Patel. Kumar. Ask your...no OUR.... brilliant, honorable and beautiful historian. She’ll tell you the truth.” Johnston looked down at Elsa, addressing her in the kindest tone Kumar or anyone else in town had ever heard from his mouth. “Tell them the truth, Elsa. I’m one of you now, right?”

Elsa looked back at Johnston with fear and anger. Kumar turned his back on her, pretending to cough. Johnston winked at Elsa, secretly showing her picture of her mother, motioning with his fingers across his neck that the price of more defiance would be her becoming an orphan. All of it was seen by Kumar in the reflection of the lighter, ironically, the one given to him by Sam.

“Ah...yeah...Eh yes. Yes.... You’re one of us now,” Elsa said to Johnston.

“Sure...if you say so, Elsa,” Kumar replied as he turned around to leave. “I’ll just go back to what I was doing, while you and Comrade Uncle Johnston---”

Before Johnston could whip out his gun, or another even more effective bullet from his lying tongue, Kumar grabbed hold of Johnston by his bandana. They struggled, while the whole town watched, Wilson, being a foot shorter than any of his fellow baffled citizens, was unable to see what was going on. He worked his way through to do something about it. Johnston emerged, with Kumar’s gun. He grabbed Elsa by her hair, aiming the barrel at her head.

“Guns down, you deluded idiots,” Johnston proclaimed in a harsh, deep voice, as the sheriff who never bluffed and always came out of every skirmish as the one standing. “This town will belong to the people who built it and will rebuild it in America’s image, not yours. So God help me!” To demonstrate his resolve to those who any newcomers to town who didn’t know what ‘so God help me’ really meant from him in the ‘good old’ days, he shot Elsa in the left foot. “The next one goes into her brilliant, subversive Demonic Communist head,” he pledged. “So help me God!” he repeated while looking up to the sky.

Mary Steiner, Elsa’s mother, ran up to rescue her daughter. But from the corner of his eye, Johnston aimed his revolver at her, hitting the exact same spot in her foot where her daughter was shot. He then fired another shot at the knee above it to keep her from coming any further.

Every gun in town was raised towards Johnston. “Lower them!” he commanded. “All of you. Or mother and daughter get matching shots in the organ they value most,” he said, alternating his aim between Elsa’s overly developed brain, and her mother’s heart. Elsa’s yelled out ‘no’ each time Johnston aimed at her mother. Mary did the same when the business end of his revolver was pointed at Elsa. .

Kumar lowered his gun, placing it on the ground. Then he motioned for everyone else to do the same. Slowly, and finally, they obeyed.

“I’m taking these two with me!” Johnston ordered. “For insurance.”

Kumar approached Johnston, arms in the air. “Take me instead.. I’m---”

“--- the one who will surrender this revolution. To me, now!” Johnston interjected, calmly, grabbing a tommy gun with enough rounds to obliterate at least 20 revolutionary citizens before they could even say ‘internationale’. “The new boss,” he declared with the same arrogant smirk that Morgan and Richter sported when they owned the town, and him. .

“No,” Kumar dared to say to the newly crowned king of Blue River and its potentially mineral and agricultural rich valleys in its jurisdiction. “No, you are not the new boss,” Kumar tried to inform Johnston.

“Yes, I am boss of this town!” Johnston yelled to the silenced crowd, . “Who’s not going to be fucked over by the other bosses who are now losers,” he yelled at and into Richter and Morgan, awakening both from a happy slumber. “Whose fiancée and mistress I fucked again and again under the sheets! And she liked it!” he continued referring to Melissa. “Right, Madam Melissa?”

“No!” Melissa yelled out to a heartbroken Richter and angry Morgan. “Not true!”

“Oh yes,” Johnston smiled.

Melissa curled in shame as Johnston went on and on, very loudly, about every detail regarding how he degraded her in the bedroom while plotting how to send her two rich patrons and potential husbands to the poor house one day.

“But as for you, Comrade Kumar,” Johnston finally said to the always likeable and handsome philosopher-jokester who had ridiculed him so many times as an ordinary, order following dumb shit enforcer. “Tell, no sing..to all of these educated rebels who think they are Revolutionaries that you, you and everyone here are a piece of garbage, shit and should die. Yes?”

“No,” Kumar heard from a voice behind Johnston, from none other than Richter. He and Morgan had somehow merged their mangled sling shots into a single working weapon. They jointly fired a rock into Johnston’s back, throwing him balance and his Tommy gun onto the ground. While the two former scheming high society gentlemen laughed amongst themselves like gleeful five year olds, Elsa kicked Johnston in the scrotum. She then made her getaway.

Johnston doubled over in pain with tightly closed eyelids. When he opened them, he discovered and felt a barrage of bullets that had penetrated into his chest. When he looked up, he stared disbelievingly into the face of the shooter.

“For my dead husband. Who lives again,” confirmed pacifist Mary said in English and German from behind the stock of Johnston’s Tommy gun. “And who lives in us!” She unloaded a burst of gunfire into Johnston’s skull, delivering his nearly headless body to the ground. With that, she sung the Internationale. Everyone joined in, including Morgan and Richter and, then Mellissa. Kumar finally added his admittedly off tune voice, when he heard another singer whose ability to carry a tune was far better than his.

It was from Sam Longmore who was approaching town, alone. His singing of the Internationale was with that same voice that soothed scared cows on the open range and prevented bar fights between old timer Southerners and Northerners who wanted to re-

ignite the War between the states. His down home operatic voice soon became the only one audible.

“There’s been enough killed, by accident and on purpose,” Kumar’s old surrogate father, and now perhaps most trustable enemy said as he stripped off his guns, throwing them on the ground. “Too much rendering unto Caesar.”

“And not enough rendering unto God that which is God’s” Kumar added, realizing something from inside himself, or perhaps from something in Sam’s humble and somehow knowing eyes. Kumar threw down his weapons, then folded his hands in prayer.

“Hey get back here, Captain Longmire!” Daniels screamed out. “Who I still can promote to Major.”

“Private, would be better,” Sam added, stripping off his insignia.

“Or convict,” Daniels said, aiming his rifle at Sam. “Who is under arrest.”

“Liberated convict, who is surrendering to a higher court than yours, Colonel,” Sam replied removing his tunic as he approached the barricade. He waved white flag in one hand. With the other he held two letters. He handed Kumar one of them, which the Philosopher Comrade King opened. “With some information that all of you should know about... them.” Sam said to Kumar regarding the armada of soldiers and fire power behind him.

Kumar read the contents of the envelope addressed to him very carefully. Some of his Comrades kept their guns pointed at the soldiers surrounding them. Some of the soldiers countered with the same defensive posture. Finally, Kumar finished reading it. “So, why is this addressed to me and one other person only?” he asked Sam.

“Because power corrupts absolutely, and no one, including me, knows what’s going to happen today. And that includes them also,” Sam said as he pointed to the East, West and South horizons. beyond the army trucks, tanks and artillery. “Spears and arrows against tanks,” Sam continued. Kumar beheld more armed to the teeth with anything they could carry or put on a saddle Indians than he had ever seen in full traditional regalia led by Chief Russell and Leona. “The Indians coming in to save your Palefaces from my Palefaces,” Sam added.

The soldiers caught between the Indians and the Paleface Revolutionaries aimed their weapons at the one or the other ‘adversary’, each man seeming to decide which of them he had a chance of stopping.

“And all of this being watched by----” Sam pointed to the Northern horizon.

“---Reporters who...work for who?” Kumar asked regarding no less than twenty cars stopping on the Northernmost overlook. Men, and even a few women, with fedoras, flash cameras, movie cameras, portable microphones and notepads emerged from the vehicles, lining up to record what was to happen below.

“Them I didn’t expect,” Sam said regarding the press. “Not yet anyway...”

“So,” Kumar asked his newest ally, and re-found friend. “What do I do now. Or...what do WE do no?”

That most critical explanation from Sam’s lips which Kumar wanted and needed to hear was silenced by a thunderous blast from Daniels’ long range rifle that landed between Sam’s open ears. Daniels then aimed his rifle at Kumar’s head. Kumar prepared for his final reward, or next incarnation. But, alas, he was sentenced to life by an arrow that went straight into Daniel’s head, released from Leona’s bow.

Daniels’ third in command, a young First Lieutenant, looked at the arrow, the situation, then ran his fingers through his thick hair. “We go, and no one gets scalped. Deal?” he yelled up to Leona. She turned to Chief Russell who flipped a coin into the air.

“Heads or tails?” Leona asked the Lieutenant.

“Heads?” the terrified junior officer declared.

“Tails, future baldies,” Chief Russell yelled back at the soldiers. He motioned for his horde of riders, drivers and infantry Injuns to go back home. The soldiers dispersed, after the Indians did, in different directions. For now, anyway. The cameramen stayed in their positions, grabbing whatever footage they could get, from a VERY VERY safe distance.

Kumar looked down at his slain friend. His now lifeless fingers held on to second letter he had brought. Father Paul gave Sam last rights, his benediction listened to and absorbed by everyone present, except the person named on the letter. Kumar took the letter into his hands, and worked his way towards Elsa, who distanced herself from the crowd of fighters turned mourners.

“Something you want to give me, or tell me?” Elsa asked, as a hardened adult more educated in how the world is than how it should be.

“For when you’re...younger again,” Kumar said to after which he pocketed the letter. When the benediction ended, Kumar turned to the still partially armed populous, rolled up his shirtsleeves and commenced to dismantle the barricade. “Each gives according to their abilities, and takes according to their needs. For as long as we can.”

CHAPTER 20

1968. Hollywood, Los(T) Angeles.

An old in body but defiantly young in spirit woman sat in front of two bell bottom suit trousered executives, each one of them half her age, with 100 times more wealth and connections. The manuscript the sixty years defiant woman had written lay on their desk. “So what was written in that letter, Ms. Steiner?” the first ‘working within the system to change it’ producer asked her as he sat back on his easy chair, stroking his manicured fingers through a perfectly symmetrical \$300 ‘hippie working man’s’ hair doo.

“A message from Leona to Kumar, Elsa?” the slightly older and, maybe, wiser Associate producer inquired scratching a newly grown goatee on his chin so as to divert attention from his thinning crown on top.

“What happened to Blue River?” the younger gatekeeper who stood between artists and the people who needed to hear what they had to say pressed.

“It held on, for a while anyway, on its own terms, long enough to make a statement, to keep the Revolution Alive for future generations. Which is...you, and your kids.” Elsa answered. “As you may have or I hope read in the script I just put on your desk.

“Which you’ve been marketing for the last 25 years, with no success apparently,” the older producer assured Elsa. “Along with yourself as a writer, I see by your resume. What happened?”

“Another blacklist at home, another war in Europe, then another blacklist at home after we ‘won’ the war in Europe,” Elsa pushed out of a mouth and chest that had been through two bouts of mysteriously occurring cancers and two accidental beatings, one in jail and the other in a mental hospital to which she was diverted by the second judge she stood up when defending a city of broke but not poor people against a corporation that wanted to own their town and souls. “But, it’s part of the cycle, which has its own clock,” she noted. “Our isolated and historically unrecorded revolution in the dirty thirties pavs the way for the hip, cool, popular and very marketable Revolution now. Which I hope is going to be about more than sex, drugs and rock and roll.”

“We don’t call it rock and roll anymore,” the younger gate keeper informed Elsa with a smugness and disrespect for hard earned wisdom acquired by living long, hard and honestly. “But your script...it does have some relevancy, and I think, a market now. But...we’ll have to make some changes in the narrative of course. To increase popularity, appeal---

“---And sales. I know,” Elsa interjected with as much courtesy as she could muster amidst a storm of rage. She assessed the two young Capitalist gatekeepers who were fooling the world and themselves into thinking that they are an integral part of the ‘do not trust anyone over thirty’ generation that will change the world. She pondered whether they

were ready for an extra dose of truth from an old dinosaur. But as Elsa's doctor, none other than Jake, said. She would join Kumar in the happy hunting grounds in 6 months or less. And she realized that maybe there was a functional justice, or at least explanation for why you could be rich in vision, but not in pocket. She had to give voice to it "Without fuckhead, manipulative, bastard, motherfucker tyrants and pseudo-liberal capitalists like you," she said to the committee of 'hip, too cool to sweat, elitists' on the opposite side of the 'table. " True, honest and intelligent revolutionaries would be out of work and Purpose."

"Like the fuckhead, manipulative bastard motherfucker bosses on top who Sam Longmore listed, and gave to Kumar? Which he gave to you?" one of the producers replied.

"Which I inherited from him, after he, well...died a noble death while trying to bring them down too quickly," Elsa related, reliving the horrors of that loss yet again. "But," she said, pulling herself up from the abyss so that everything which she witnessed and perhaps even did would not be for naught. "Gotta die of something, right?"

"A 'B line' from a B movie," another one of the young and pathologically inexperienced gatekeeper smirked.

"But, which is true," his slightly older colleague noted.

"And which can become hip again if spoken by a really cool, groovy, happening, right on actor, or actress?" Elsa suggested, using the metaphors she had satirized with so much intelligence and depth in so many of her unpublished books and small audience radio shows. "And what's old always becomes new again," she continued. "Part of the Cycle, that, if we push hard enough, leads us Upward instead of just in dead end circles." The words popped out of her mouth from a place she couldn't identify but could feel. She looked at the table separating 'them' from 'us', wanting to thank the third brain that had somehow come into the room, despite the fact that, to her perception anyway, there was only one expansive human brain in the room.

It was then that the ghost of Kumar, or some other expression of Spirit big S, which he insisted was always around, and never definable, made something 'groovy' happen.

"We'll take this upstairs to our bosses," the first wet behind the ears executive offered, holding Elsa's true life story turned into both novel and script in hand.

"And if they don't like it, to their bosses," the elder gatekeeper pledged. After which he rose from his chair, and extended his hand to Elsa. "We'll be in touch."

The 'elder' 29 year old gatekeeper's handshake felt firm, and honest.

Elsa walked out of the office not knowing of course if the bosses on top would go with it. But she was convinced, somehow, that if they didn't produce it, for whatever reasons, she

could organize enough people on the bottom to make something happen on the big screen in the movie theatres, and the small screens at home. Or that the few people who still did read would buy a book from an author who was also a publisher. Or, perhaps, that there would someday be a means of distribution of truly independent works that didn't require a gatekeeper. A system which transmitted those works in print or screen over airways which were free and accessible world wide. Something to call...perhaps.the internet.