

Entropicus

Book 1: The Mastery of Alchemy



Chris Deggs

This is a work of fiction except for the parts that aren't.

www.coloursandwords.com

Published in 2016 by www.smashwords.com

Copyright © The author as named on the book cover.

Second Edition

The author has asserted their moral right under the
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified
as the author of this work.

All Rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior written consent of the copyright holder, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Dedication

This story is especially dedicated to Professor Robert Pope a man who has dedicated his life to the betterment of humanity and who has stood against the tyranny of 'second law physics' which has speeded up the entropic process in human society.

Entropicus

Book 1: The Mastery of Alchemy

Preface

Lamos knew he was exposing himself, putting himself at grave risk, but he had to move in closer, despite it being the full moon. The loud chanting of "DIABOLUS, DIABOLUS, DIABOLUS," rang through the grove. The erotic dancing of drunken lascivious women mixed with the yelps and whistles of masked menfolk. As he edged closer, he clasped his pendant close to his heart, entreating Ma'at to protect him, to deliver him from the madness. The drunken revellers had desecrated her shrine, a holy place and his responsibility. Lamos lamented the decline of virtue that preceded the destruction of the sacred space. He had to do something to stop the blasphemy.

He climbed atop a large boulder and there, bathed in the lunar spotlight, yelled, at the top of his voice, "STOP THIS DEPRAVITY NOW!"

Some masked faces turned toward him. Others followed, and a deathly silence hung in the air.

Ankira, a high priest of Diabolus, the Prince of Darkness, thrust his hand straight in Lamos's direction. "Lamos, your Goddess is powerless. Diabolus rules and will bring wondrous destruction to this land."

Other drunken men and women gathered around him, chanting DIABOLUS, DIABOLUS.

Lamos retorted, "IT IS BECAUSE YOUR KIND HAVE PERVERTED THE MYSTERIES WITH YOUR BLASPHEMY THAT DESTRUCTION IS UPON US."

"ENOUGH, LAMOS. JOIN US OR DIE." Ankira said, gathering his drunken army about him.

Lamos looked around him. The only way out was the way he came in. He leapt off the rock and hit the ground running only metres from his pursuers. They were out for blood. His legs were pumping as he raced through the grove. The perverts were hot on his heels. Only their drunkenness and being bloated from their Bacchanalian feasting gave him any lead at all. But he was flagging rapidly and knew he would not make it to the sanctuary, about one mile ahead. In his last defiant minutes,

Lamos turned and cursed his pursuers. "FOR YOUR SORCERY, ANKIRA, AND YOUR PERVERSION OF THE MYSTERIES, I CURSE YOU TO HADES." As rough hands grabbed him, he Yelled, "YOU, DESECRATER OF DIVINE MAGIC SHALL BURN IN THE FIRES OF DAMNATION."

Then, Lamos was no more than a vague memory for a while in history.

Entropicus (the state where entropy is so advanced there is no awareness of it.)

"Entropy is evil. It's worse than evil, because at least villains usually have a purpose."

~ Oscar Wilde on Entropy

Chapter 1

Abbott Gallagher, a grand-sounding name for a not so grand life, silently cursed the mechanical minds that designed his world. His surname, Google informed him, meant 'foreign helper'. He certainly felt foreign in the world but didn't know if he was of much help to it. Any attempts he made, in his written opinions, to improve the human lot, seemed pointless in the face of mechanised global society and all it entailed. But who was he kidding? How could he make any significant difference? Butterflies flapping their wings causing hurricanes on the other side of the world may well work in theory. Abbott thought that he thought too much. The world, now controlled by smart electronic devices smug in their perfection. But they still couldn't think for themselves - not yet anyhow.

Abbott had never achieved perfection in anything, but he wasn't alone in this. All humans had flaws. That was part of being human. This imperfection was manageable while Man could stumble through his evolution without being challenged by a superior intelligence that was very close to knocking him off his perch. But artificial intelligence was fast catching up, ready to take over. While humans squabbled with each other over a patch of dirt or something valuable beneath it, Artificial Intelligence took over from within, planting a virus in the human brain, while lulling humanity into a false sense of security with its cyber siren song.

Another day, Abbott thought, as soon as his mind could deal with the concept. Having just woken up he was programmed to reach for his smart phone. It read 6:15 am. Fully charged, waiting for his instructions, allowing him to think it was his device, not the other way round. The more humans relied upon this smart technology to get them through their day; the more artificial intelligence controlled them.

His phone rang. The caller showed up as 'unknown' Abbott said, "Yes, who's speaking?"

"If you don't stop spouting your anti-transhumanist crap on the Tweed Radio, you're fucking dead!"

Then the phone went dead.

Abbott sat up in bed, stock still. Sure some listeners disagreed with his views, but it was the first time he'd received a death threat.

By the time he had taken his first caffeine hit of the day and gone through his ten-minute stretching routine, he put the hate caller out of his mind and began to feel better about himself, if not about the world. In fact, he tried avoiding the 'world' as much as possible. Although the negative news depressed him, being blissfully ignorant of what was going on did not pay the bills. As a journalist, his job demanded that he keep up with world events, as dreadful as they mostly were.

While drinking his second mug of coffee, Abbott scrutinised his notes. 'The machinations of civilisation are degrading our creative endeavours' he had written, wondering if it should be a bold statement or a question. He made a note to put this to Dr Lynne Becker, in the book review. Her latest book 'The Transhuman' with the 'Vitruvian Man', as a robot, on its cover, scared him, regarding its portent. The whole subject was scary to Abbott. Mixing Biology with Bionics took all things mechanistically and his hatred of them, to new heights. Constantly having to deal with smug devices that continuously reminded him of his human frailties was bad enough but that people were playing second fiddle to robots was untenable.

Somewhere, in the background, the radio was playing a Christmas carol, a reminder to Abbott that the spectre of Yuletide was waiting to pounce on the world. 'Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all men' taunted him as he rushed his breakfast. 'Peace on Earth!' What a fucking joke, he thought. No chance of that while power hungry and resource thieving political and religious leaders called the shots and fired them at anybody who stood in their way. With his anger building, Abbott Gallagher prepared himself for the intellectual clash of minds to come.

As Abbott drove to Tweed Heads and Tweed FM, where he had his weekly gig on the 'Morning Show', an eclectic mix of music, mayhem and social comment. An educationalist had the view that kids were only schooled to become skilled artists, artisans and administrators to excite the demand for commercial gain. A jaded, cynical view, according to the show host, but one to which Abbott subscribed. Education, in his book, was conveyor belt curriculum, turning well-behaved automaton wage slaves into fodder to feed a greedy mechanistic system with no semblance of ethics whatsoever.

Dr Lynne Becker had done her research. She had heard Abbott Gallagher's views on robotics and saw him as a Dr Doom. To her mind, he was like any other two-bit shock jock playing to popular opinion as a self-elected spokesperson for the herd. What she promoted was important because she had a vision of humanity in the future. Her message was, 'If we don't do this, this will happen', scenario. In her last book 'Enhanced' about athletes finding chemically induced ways to improve their athletic performance, she concluded that what performance enhancing drugs were illegal today would not only be accepted tomorrow but would become obligatory in sports events.

In her new book, 'Transhumanism or Perish', the subject of her interview that day, she put forward the view that once Transhumanism becomes accepted as the norm, human ways of being would change profoundly, starting with a much touted 150-year life span. As machines driven by smart technology proved to be much more reliable than humans, with all their foibles, fuck-ups and fantasies, artificial intelligence could overcome the biggest problems facing the world. It was only humanity's fear of the unknown that held back the progress of Transhumanism.

Aspects of Transhumanism, under other names, had been around for over one hundred years. Lynn's 55-year-old body was a mixture of bionics and biology, with her pacemaker that her been giving her

borrowed life for the last five years. In 1899, J A McWilliam reported in the British Medical Journal of his experiments, in which he had applied electrical impulses to the human heart. In 1958 at the Karolinska Institute in Solna, Sweden, Arne Larsson, received the first successful pacemaker implant. From that day forward Bionics and Biology were integrated.

Dr Becker often used this as an example in her lectures to help allay any fears about Transhumanism. Of course, the body contained just a small aspect of Bionics compared to its well-established Biology. However, medical breakthroughs such as pacemakers, iron lungs, life support technology, etc. had all come about to help humanity, not enslave it. She couldn't see why the likes of Abbott Gallagher couldn't get their heads around that.

Chapter 2

It was a foggy morning in Armadale when the bailiff arrived. Ulysses watched as men in brown dust coats kept carrying his parent's things out of the house into a big van parked outside. His parent's faces were masks of sadness and anger, as removalists cleared room after room of their contents. Ulysses, just nine years old, thought it a kind of game, as the strange man in the grey suit kept ticking things off on a clipboard. The little boy had no idea of the shame his dad felt; he wondered why his mum and dad looked so sad.

After this unfortunate episode, the family moved from Armadale, where his dad had been a lecturer in mathematics at the University of New England, to Dorrigo, a plateau town, in the Mid North of New South Wales, where he could only get a job as a wages clerk in the forestry industry. Ulysses' mother had difficulty in dealing with the shame of being evicted in her hometown, and she kept very much to herself.

As Ulysses came to understand why they had been forced to leave their family home, he found it difficult to forgive his father. It wasn't so much the gambling addiction itself. It was what he saw to be his father's pathetic weakness and lack of self-discipline that he found unforgivable.

As a teenager, Ulysses Covington's two passions became study and rigorous exercise, both mentally and physically. He did not want to pass on any weak-willed genes to any progeny he was likely to sire. Also, he hoped his severe self-discipline, which to him was soul cleansing, would delete all remnants of his father's impuissance from his gene bank. It was around this time that Ulysses took an interest in robotics. His primary research took him back to 1927 when the *Maschinenmensch* 'machine-human' a gynoid humanoid robot was made. Also dubbed, 'Parody', 'Futura', 'Robotrix' and even 'Maria impersonator' it was the first and perhaps the most memorable depiction of a robot ever to appear on film, in Fritz Lang's film 'Metropolis'.

By the time Ulysses was studying digital technology at New England University robotics had taken some huge leaps forwards. From Heron's steam and water powered inventions in first century AD Alexandria, the science had reached the point when in 1975 Victor Scheinman stunned the world with his programmable universal manipulation robot.

Some conspiracy theories do have substance, Abbott Gallagher thought to himself, as he drove his 12-year-old Mazda into the Tweed FM car park. The particular conspiracy theory the interviewer had in mind was about how original purpose got demeaned in the name of a Global Economic Rationalism, controlled by a self-appointed privileged few. They classified the world population as

mere pawns for them to manipulate at will. Abbott went along with this; there was plenty of readily available evidence gave it plausibility. This mechanistic mindset that infected most of the human race worshipped Einstein's heat death law to such an extent that physics sees God as a steam engine. Although this is an amusing concept, this entropic mindset is programmed into even the most up to date artificial intelligence.

Abbott parked next to a Mercedes convertible with the rego LBECK, leaving no doubt as to who owned it. Even Dr Beck's highly mechanised car made the journalist feel small in her presence. Fuck her; she's no better than me, Abbott thought, as he entered the radio station. Dianne's warm smile lifted his mood.

The petite blonde, with blood red lipstick, said, "Good morning Abbott. Your guest is being prepared and primed. So break a leg," she grinned. He returned a "Thanks," and headed to the compact kitchen and coffee number three.

Sitting in the cramped studio, Abbott sat close to Lynne Becker, who although carrying a few extra pounds, had a certain allure about her. Lynne had lightly coiffured her greying hair for the occasion. Abbott, wearing denim and a sweater, thought it odd that people should be so self-conscious of their looks on the radio. Perhaps if they felt good, about themselves, they were more confident in the interview. Following sponsorship commercials, Abbott introduced his guest and asked her about her new book

Lynne explained, "Transhumanism is about enhancing the biological human to bring about a smarter, fitter, harder working society better able to overcome major global problems."

Abbott had his questions ready. He was going straight for the throat. "Dr Becker, productivity is central to our society, so doesn't this Transhumanism merely name a new productive model of society where we are in danger of becoming just externalised objects?"

"It seems logical to assume, as with the emergence of industrialism or feudalism, following slavery that other changes will emerge."

"Yes, but will these new markets provide real solutions? And if so, will government and family remain as they are?"

She could see what he was doing, and she determined not to play his game. "Nothing remains the same, Abbott. Change is what evolution is all about."

"Of course. So do you see the significance of greater risk of adverse outcomes to humanity as we meddle or try to recreate what took millions of years to evolve?"

"And is still evolving. Transhumanism is just part of our human footprint."

"Okay Dr Becker, you spoke of Transhumanism solving some of our human ills but how do you know that? Isn't it just as ominous that Transhumanism may use the technology to provide the Armaments industry with new robotic weapons, far more deadly than we have so far seen?"

Dr Becker smiled. "Humans have fought wars over space, resources, ideologies and will soon be fighting over water rights. Have you considered that new robotic weapons may be soldier bots, making it unnecessary for humans to give up their lives in battle? There may well be a logic-based blueprint for continuous war with disposable, compostable cyborgs."

Damn, she had made a good point, and Abbott felt like he was on the ropes. He needed to recover - quickly. "Robots programmed to kill and destroy. That sounds pretty dangerous to me." Before she had a chance to comment he stated, "We could well argue that Transhumanism will be a tool used by economic rationalists to try to make their flawed financial system work. It's like trying to push a car that only has three wheels."

She quickly came back with, "We need to stop and think with our unaugmented brains. So far, humanity is just treading water and getting increasingly tired. Surely enhanced humans, who have the greater brain power, are super fit, emotionally neutral and solution oriented, are going to have a greater chance of figuring out how to fix the fourth wheel." Lynne paused for a sip of water. Then, looking at the camera, she said, "Transhumanism is not the enemy here. Stale, outmoded and dangerously ignorant thinking is. Humans have dug themselves into a deep hole from which they cannot extricate themselves. Enhanced humans are the rescue party about to liberate humanity."

"From being human - yes. Okay, now the lines are open to see what you listeners think about becoming a human robot."

Chapter 3

ARL needed somebody who could pole vault over the fence and let them in. Olivier Leroy thought they were joking at first, but they assured him it was not the case. Nicky drove him by the facility to show him the fence. His best jump was just over 6 metres. As the wall was 15 feet tall, he figured clearing the razor wire at the top would be easy enough. The lack of a sand pit to land in did concern him. He could wear padded clothes, but their construction could impede his performance. The group, called ARL (Anti Robot League) rigged up a fence for Olivier to practice his vaulting.

After a warm-up session, he soon sailed over the top and landed on cardboard boxes stacked on the other side. They never told him what they planned to do, once they were in, and he never asked. The ten grand in his bank account was enough of an enticement to get him to play his part. One member of ARL, Abe, had worked in the Heron Robotics research centre. He knew it was easy to open the gate from the inside, without activating the alarm. He also knew where they would find their target.

Abbott Gallagher felt his true calling was investigative journalism. So whenever he got the chance to play that role he jumped at it. Most of the time he was either cobbling together freelance articles or working as a reporter on a part-time basis, for the Tweed News. Phil Rosendale, the paunchy middle-aged editor of the newspaper, called Abbott into his office one day. Such a summons meant he was either going to get a bollocking or a particular assignment. Phil was known to be a straight shooter, so the smile on his face suggested to Abbott, it was a job. Phil, a man who got straight to the point, said, "Ab, I want you to look at something." He handed the journalist an article from a Sydney newspaper.

Abbott looked at the article and scratched his head. "Why am I looking at this? It's from a Sydney rag, and it's five years old."

"Leroy has just gotten out of gaol, and he has a story to tell. And you know how we love stories."

"What sort of story? About life in prison? If so..."

Phil stopped him. "...He wants to tell a story about the night he jumped a fucking fence. And I want you onto it."

Abbott perked up. A real job, and one a lot of journos would kill to get. "What about contacts?"

Phil handed his man a piece of paper with a phone number. "Don't say I don't look after you, Ab. Now don't fuck it up. You never know. There could be a PP in it."

As he left the office with a spring in his step, Abbott wondered why, if the assignment was such a peach, Phil wasn't out there getting the credit? How did Phil find out about it? Why was Leroy spilling the beans to a tin pot local rag and were there any beans to spill? Abbott did tend to have a suspicious mind. But he'd follow it up anyhow. But not until he had spoken to the Prof, while they played their lunchtime chess game at a local cafe.

The Prof, as the Grey Man was also known, was considered an oddity at Jack's, but as the Prof kept mostly to himself, nobody seemed to mind him being there. None of the customers knew why the senior citizen with long straggly grey hair got called the Prof as he didn't come over as being at all well educated. None of the punters took much notice of him, except for Abbott.

The Prof dropped in Jack's Cafe most days, to nurse a cup of tea and read the newspaper. Accepted as an eccentric old icon by the locals he kept his counsel. But he did enjoy his chess matches against 'the reporter' as he referred to Abbott.

As the Grey man moved his rook to safety, he said, "They justify their tyranny by masking it with aesthetic excitement."

Abbott was used to such seemingly random pronouncements. They seemed to come out of the blue, hang around for a moment, then, if not responded to, dissipate in the ether. On this occasion, the journalist was intrigued. "Prof, you will have to elucidate."

The old man chuckled as Abbott moved his bishop. "Well, it's all a bloody con. Beauty in decay, atoms deteriorating, subject entropic enslavement. Aesthetics is nothing more than a temporary illusion that makes us forget about our economic slavery."

Sometimes, after they had parted company and the Prof went wherever, Abbott would recall and think about one or more of the little verbal bombshells that had exploded in his brain. But now he needed advice, and the Prof was only too willing to dispense his wisdom on just about anything. "Prof, I've been given a job which could turn out a bit dicey."

Moving one of his pawns, The Prof chuckled. "Don't do it then."

"Yes, but it could also be the scoop I've been waiting for."

"Then do it." Then the Prof's curiosity got the better of him. "Why is it dicey?"

Abbott moved his knight into position. "An ex-con wants to spill the beans about the night the police arrested him. That's all I know."

"How much do you want this story?"

"I don't know. Pretty bad I guess. But it could open a can of worms."

The Prof grinned. "What have you got to lose, except maybe your life?" Then he added, "And this game. Checkmate."

Abbott phoned the number, arranged to meet Olivier Leroy, and was on his way to Palm Beach, the one in Queensland, Australia. The Prof's thing about aesthetics being an illusion to distract us from our economic slavery penetrated Abbott's mind. It made sense. He thought about all those fridges adorned with preschool scrawls and splashes of colour as the little angels created their first artworks. The illusion had begun. The economic slavery needed to purchase the four-star white goods appliances got forgotten, in the generous praise bestowed upon the child artist.

Democracy talked of liberty, but there was no freedom. It was all a crock of shit. Abbott became disturbed, thinking about it. His driving became aggressive with frequent horn blasts and light flashes, aimed at motorists who impeded his progress.

He remembered reading somewhere, possibly in a social media post, that some ancient Greek, probably Plato, said "All is Geometry". Then, much later some person, perhaps Thomas Jefferson, said:

"Human liberty rested upon a complete government design based on the balanced principles of physics and geometry."

The words had impressed Abbott, even if he did not have a clear understanding of what it meant.

Number twenty three, 6th Avenue was a block of six units. Luckily one of the stacked mailboxes had Leroy inscribed on it. Abbott located unit three and rang the bell. Just an inch thickness of timber separated him from a barking dog, a giant beast by the way it made the door shake, jumping up at the other side of the barricade. Then a voice. "Get down Spartacus. Go to bed." After the sound of a sliding bolt, Abbott found himself looking at an ebony giant, at least 6 feet 6.

"Yeah, what do you want?" Olivier asked, suspiciously.

"I'm Abbott Gallagher, and I believe you have a story to tell."

"Well, you'd better come in then."

"The dog?" the reporter asked.

Olivier grinned, "Spartacus is an old softy."

Abbott, unconvinced, sat down quietly.

The pole vaulter said, "I'll be back in a minute. Make yourself comfortable."

Eyeing the dog lying in a large basket in the corner, Abbott felt anything but comfortable. The room's decor was all pastel pinks, including the glass cabinet that displayed delicate china. It was an unusual choice of decor for an ex-con athlete. An aged framed print caught his attention. It showed a bunch of blokes, sporting top hats and tails, standing around, taking their turn at signing something.

"That belonged to my grandmother," Olivier said, breaking into the journalist's observations.

"As did this place, I'm guessing," Abbott said.

"Yes, it's hardly my style. But I'm thankful for it, till I get back on my feet."

Abbott's mind was back on the print. "It looks official like it's recording some significant event."

"Yeah. The signing of the American Constitution." Then, as an aside, "My grandmother was born in Alabama. She was a Yankeeophile, and she loved all things American. She was amused when my mother settled in Palm Beach.

Abbott switched on the voice recorder on his phone. "So, Olivier, what's this story about?"

"It's about some bastard that set me up. The dobber worked for Heron Robotics, and he infiltrated ARL."

"Okay, give me the full version."

He did, and the story was not that inspiring. In a nutshell, the No Robotics League, a group of wannabe terrorists had a spy in their midst, a guy who went by the name of Abe Lincoln (no joke). In an attempt to raid Heron Robotics, Leroy was caught trying to let the NRL group into the research facility. The others got away, leaving the pole vaulter to take the heat.

Funny, Abbott thought, while driving homeward, to Murwillumbah, the athlete had been very calm about the whole affair. Never once did he talk about exacting revenge on Abe Lincoln for dobbing him in. Oh well, a couple of years in the slammer can change one's perspective, the journalist reasoned, while pondering how to jazz up the story.

Abbott Googled ARL. Apart from The Amateur Rugby League, which dominated a few pages, he found a reference to a blog called the 'No Robotics Liberation' group. It hadn't been updated for some time and looked as though it might be defunct, hanging in cyberspace, a mere shadow of its former self. There was an email contact listed, but Abbott held out little hope that the link still existed. Still, it was worth a try. There was no joy there but 'who's is' came up trumps and provided Abbott with a web master address. This time, the link took him to ARL, which expanded to become the 'Anti Robotics League'. No imagination these guys, Abbott thought as he checked for a contact.

Olivier Leroy enjoyed the early morning freshness as he jogged along the beach with Spartacus in tow. Spartacus, more wolf than German Shepard, was his mother's dog and she would be returning soon; then she could look after the dog. Some people are attracted to dogs, others to cats. Olivier favoured neither, but looking after the German Shepherd was the price he had to pay to live in his mother's house. Jogging helped him think, and he was thinking about how to make capital out of his situation. Out of shape, in contrast to his peak fitness days, puffed after a couple of kilometres.

He sat down on a rock. He thought about the letter. Why would Heron Robotics want to interview him? It certainly wouldn't be about his pole vaulting skills, and it was hardly likely to be a job offer. Still, it was enticing. He looked up and caught the admiring glances of a couple of female joggers, as they passed him. He began to feel better. He obviously still had what it took where the opposite sex was concerned. Pumped up, he jogged off in their direction, with Spartacus in the lead.

Something about the story niggled Abbott Gallagher. Namely, why did Heron Robotics see the need to have a mole in the ARL group? They must have thought it necessary to go to such lengths. ARL was small fry with a perhaps a dozen members, so how did they turn up on Heron Robotics radar?

Now that angle would give the story more mileage The journalist was about to research Heron Robotics when Phil Rosendale showed up on his phone. "Hi, Phil."

"How goes the scoop on that black athlete?"

"Not much mileage there. Leroy could be holding out, though."

"Why would he do that? He seemed enthusiastic about telling his story."

"Yes. Why would Mr Leroy do that without asking for payment."

"I dunno Ab. Not everybody is just interested in the money."

"Come on Phil. He's sleeping on his mother's lounge for Christ sake. He's just out of gaol and jobless. So why isn't he demanding a fee?"

"Okay, write up what you've got and I'll look at it."

"There might be a better angle. I'm following something up."

"Why the fuck can't you just stick to the assignment I gave you?"

"Ask yourself this. Why did Heron Robotics place a spy in a piss-ant group like ARL?"

Phil sighed, "Okay, what's the answer?"

"I don't know yet, but I bet you a dollar to a cent that Abe Lincoln would know."

"Do you know where he is?"

"No. But I've just got an excellent idea."

"When you get ideas, I duck for cover."

After listening to nauseous music for what seemed like an eternity, before being connected to a human, at Heron Robotics, Abbott was feeling infuriated. "I would like public relations?" Abbott said, having linked to a woman called Sally.

"Indeed sir. Whom should I say is calling?"

"Abbott Gallagher, from the Tweed News."

After being put on hold for a while, he heard a voice.

"Matthew Sheen speaking. How can I help you, Mr Gallagher?"

"Background info on a story."

"What story?" the director of PR asked, cautiously.

"The Olivier Leroy one. I've got his side of the story. Now I need yours before we go to print."

"I'm sorry, Mr Gallagher, but I have to know idea what you are on about."

"It was about five years ago. Maybe before your time at Heron Robotics. I thought your company might want to make a statement."

"What does this Mr Leroy have to say?"

"It's not the sort of thing for the phone. Can we meet later today? Sorry about the rush but we go to press tomorrow and ..."

Feeling harried, Matthew condescended, "Yes, alright. 4 pm. Don't be late."

"Damn, I'm good!" Abbott said to his office. He checked his watch. Time for lunch. He grabbed his wallet, phone and keys.

Chapter 4

The Prof's real name was Harold A Scholfield, but he kept that to himself. Only his doctor and the Australian Tax Office were privy to that information. After settling in Tweed Heads some ten years earlier, he'd kept a low profile. Having lunch at Jack's greasy spoon joint would have been anathema to him in the old days when he had and could afford a stylish lifestyle. As Professor of Social Studies at Griffith University (yes the term Prof is accurate) he'd earned a decent wage that provided him with a reasonably abundant life.

Harold came from humble beginnings, though. Having been abandoned, as a baby, on the steps of St Michael's Church in Bray, Harold was brought up by the Church Warden and his wife. He was a bright lad and got awarded a scholarship that secured him a place in Eton Young Harold hated it there, dominated by strict and oppressive role models. He pushed such memories to the back of his mind. The Prof didn't like to dwell on any aspect of his private life.

Abbott put the Prof, in his seventies. Although he tended to wear the same old shabby coat and Turkish hat all the time, his hygiene seemed reasonable. His grey/white long uncombed beard made him look scruffy, and his surly nature kept most people at bay so that no matter how busy the Cafe got, nobody apart from Abbott sat at his table. The seat opposite him was always empty, as though protected by some force field that could only be broken by Abbott's presence. The journalist arrived, ordered his lunch and occupied the reserved seat. The chess board was set up, and it was Abbott's turn to play white.

As the game commenced, Abbott said, "I've been thinking about what you said yesterday."

The Prof smiled wistfully, through his full unkempt beard. "Then tell me what I said so we'd both know."

Abbott moved a pawn. Then, after trying his coffee, which had just arrived, he said, "About aesthetics being an illusion to distract us from economic slavery."

Prof was impressed. "And what have you concluded from my pearl of wisdom?"

"That our liberty is part of the illusion. While we think we have freedom, we don't go demanding it."

"Right, so now you have this little piece of awareness are you going to treat it like a delicate treasure or are you going to spread a message with it?"

"I haven't taken it that far, yet."

"Abbott!" the Prof said surprised. "I would have thought you would be horrified at the way the power brokers have duped you. I would have thought you'd want to inform humanity of their leaders' duplicity." The Prof paused, then moved his queen.

"Shouting from the rooftops would only achieve me getting locked up. That wouldn't help anybody, least of all me."

Lunch arrived, relegating the subject to a back seat in Abbott's mind. The Prof made his move and sat back. "When they wrote the American Constitution the Founding Fathers presented their idea of liberty as an aesthetic, scientific vision, rather than a sustainable, practical ethical model."

As the reporter positioned his bishop, the Prof's words brought to mind the print belonging to Leroy's grandmother. "Why did they blow such a great opportunity?"

The Prof took a bite of toast, scattering a few crumbs with his next pronouncement. "An incomplete understanding of physics and geometry."

"How did that ..."

On a roll, the Prof said, "Church dogma and superstition which ruled scientific persuasion wouldn't tolerate any published disclosure of a balanced scientific world view." The old man paused to scan the board, then said, "Since the discovery of nanotechnology, we know this upgraded world-view does exist. At the time, though, liberty only amounted to freedom of religion."

Abbott was impressed. After digesting part of his burger, he said, "You seem to know a lot about this stuff."

The Prof laughed, not letting on about his past academic expertise. He thought Abbott was smart and wondered if he would be the one. Looking straight at the reporter, he continued, "The definition of liberty was hard for them to work out. The founders debated this in eight five essays published by the New York Times. Alexander Hamilton, one of the founders, encapsulated it with, 'Liberty is ensured, not by civic virtue, but by the design of government itself, which in turn, rests upon the principles of physics and geometry.'

The journalist backed up his queen with a knight. "Check!"

"So, what do you think about that?" the Prof asked, sorting out his next move.

"The saying 'All is geometry' is clearer to me now but where does knowing all this stuff get us? The psychopaths that run this lost world don't give a shit!"

The Prof nodded sagely. He knew it was going to get a lot worse. "If the people don't know they're slaves they're not going to demand their libertarian rights."

Abbott looked at his watch. "Sorry Prof, I've got to go to see a man about a robot. Keep the game warm."

The Prof grabbed Abbott's arm. "The American Constitution was based on Newton's published physics principles, not Immanuel Kant's metaphysics. Think about that."

Abbott didn't think about it, not at that time anyhow. His focus was on his meeting with Matthew Sheen.

Heron Robotics was out on the Southport-Nerang Rd, tucked out of sight by surrounding bushland. A big sign screamed PRIVATE PROPERTY; TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED. Well, Leroy knew all about that. Following his SatNav directions, Abbott entered Heron Robotics from Ashmore Road. The reporter drove in, parked in the visitors' car park, and entered the reception, which sported the company's logo behind the desk. The receptionist scanned her appointment list, saw Abbott's name, and contacted Matthew Sheen. She then directed the reporter to his office.

It was 3.50 pm. Abbott knocked, and the personnel manager invited him in.

Matthew had thinning ginger hair and a sallow complexion. He was in shirtsleeves with a tightly buttoned waistcoat. He offered Abbott a seat. "Now, fill me in." the PR manager said.

"I take it you will be up to speed about this incident by now."

Matthew picked up the newspaper article. "Yes. Somebody jumped the fence and tried to let his friends in to do damage. Luckily for us, he was apprehended before he could open the gates."

Abbott smiled. "I believe there was somebody called Abe Lincoln working here at the time.'

The PR manager adjusted a pair of glasses that had slipped down his perspiring nose. "I don't know anything about that. What does he have to do with this?"

Abbott scanned the article about the arrest. There was nothing about Lincoln. "Quite a lot I would say, seeing as he was your spy planted in the ARL camp.'

"I sincerely doubt that."

Well, Mr Leroy attests that it is true. Abe Lincoln worked here in some security capacity. It was he who alerted the guards about the break-in. It was because of him that Mr Leroy had to spend two years in prison."

"He probably deserved it, and this Mr Lincoln would have saved this company lots of time and money, for which I assume Heron amply rewarded him." He looked at the reporter opposite, who put him in mind of young Elliot Gould in the 'Mash' movie. "I know nothing about any spies and, quite frankly, Mr Gallagher I do not see any reason why we would bother infiltrate some small crackpot group."

Abbott smiled, "Yes, I have been wondering about that. It doesn't make much sense, on the face of it. I shall just have to go to print with what I have."

Matthew shook his head, "This whole spying thing has to be utter nonsense."

"I'll quote you on that, shall I, Mr Sheen?"

After the news hound had left, Matthew spoke into his intercom. "Get me Mr Covington, Susan."

It was late afternoon by the time Abbott arrived back home at his Brisbane Street flat in Murwillumbah. There was just one recorded message on his phone. It was from Phil asking for a progress report. Abbott brewed coffee, then grabbed his mobile and pressed Phil's contact. Hearing the editor's voice, he said. "Nothing much to say."

"How did you get on at Heron Robotics?"

"Plausible denial."

"Is he lying?"

"Don't know, but I don't think so. I mean if the company planted a spy, it's not exactly illegal, and it makes them look smart."

"So Leroy's telling porkies."

"Won't know until I've spoken with Abraham Lincoln."

"How the fuck are you going to find him?"

"I'll work that one out tomorrow."

That dealt with; Abbott pondered the Prof's question. A quick Google search showed him that:

The Delegates based the American Constitution on a theory of political science derived from published Newtonian Physics. This scientific philosophy became the Whig theory of political science. Kantian 'metaphysics of morals', on the other hand, explained a more substantive procedure in due process of law.

After further searching, Abbott read that:

Although Kant agreed with certain Newtonian principles, he subscribed to there being a general duty of government care to aid the poor. However, he believed, a government could not ethically enact laws that created a charity class who become virtual slaves to the economic system.

Abbott, becoming interested, sipped his coffee, and read on:

Kant stated that when the law itself created poverty, Government, as the author of that law, has an absolute duty of care.

The light dawned, and Abbott got what the Prof had been saying. Of course, the Government would not hamper itself with such a responsibility, which is why charities are not set up by government bodies, but rather by good meaning volunteers.

Abbott, satisfied with at least some understanding of what the Prof was on about, made another coffee and settled down to writing the Leroy article. It didn't have much meat, but some readers would be intrigued by it.

Ulysses Covington, now a world player in the Transhumanist stakes, got picked up by a smiling chauffeur near the cab rank at Logan International Airport. The company driver then whisked him off to Boston Cybertronics in Waltham, Massachusetts. Ulysses had earned his place at the table for the part Heron Robotics had played in the production of the latest ATLAS model. He joined the select group comprising a secret enclave of top robotic scientists, politicians and a US Army general. They were there to teach the robot new tricks. Like a games coach training a rookie, DARPA had given the team one month to teach ATLAS the moves it needed to ensure its success in

the next DRC (Darpa Robotics Challenge). Covington learned these were ability trials, in which each robotic contestant had to perform a required series of disaster response like tasks.

Covington was enjoying his expenses paid stay at the Ritz-Carlton when he received a call from a Colonel Barney Cormack. They arranged to meet for dinner in the hotel's main restaurant. The DARPA head hunter had been watching Heron Robotics research programmes for some time, and it was time to pounce. He had been particularly interested in Heron's synthetic police force project.

"Ulysses, we've been watching your company with keen interest. We have a project in mind we think will interest you."

He looked at the middle-aged ex- marine. The smart suit ticked him as an executive, but the generic brush cut and craggy features showed him to be the veteran military man from bygone days. "I'm intrigued. Tell me more."

Barney eyed the other man. "Ulysses, how do you see the world in ten or fifteen years?"

Covington gave a nervous grin. "That's a big ask. In what respect?"

"Concerning outsourcing law and order."

"I haven't given that much thought."

"Not many people have. But it is coming. Mark my words. And when it does we have to be ready. Every police department already outsourced some administrative functions. Things like IT, administration, records storage and the like. But now 'real' police services are on the table."

"That is interesting, Colonel."

"Yeah, cost and political leanings are bringing this about, Many Senators are of the opinion that private secret services are more efficient and perform better fiscally." He paused to drink some beer. "Look, Ulysses, a hundred years ago, the secret police were replaced by government police to make them more professional. Now we're looking to private firms to improve the police force."

"Yes, it's ironic, isn't it."

"No, it's just circular progress. Of course, the very best of police and security services: FBI, CIA, NSA, etc. will still be provided by the government. But, as we work our way down to smaller and less well-funded police departments and sheriffs' offices, service levels are more uneven. Also, smaller police forces don't protect us from terrorist and international criminal syndicates. Often they function as meter maids, traffic cops and jail house guards, and these services have a lot of room for improvement."

Covington became intrigued. "Okay, so where does my company come into this?"

"Super cops." He let the word hang while he forked a mouthful of steak into his mouth. "DARPA has a \$2 billion yearly budget for research into creating a super solider as well as developing a robotic police force."

"Synthetic police force! We've been looking into that, but Heron is nowhere near moving beyond the concept." Ulysses responded, watching the other man.

Barney said, "That's why we took an interest in your company. We believe Robocops is where we are going to be in ten or fifteen years,"

Seeing some doubt in Ulysses' face, added, "Mark my words about this, and we want Heron to be part of this operation."

Covington sat wide-eyed a piece of t-bone dangling off his suspended fork. It was beyond his wildest dreams. He would have access to a large slice of the DARPA budget. "This is very exciting, Colonel."

Barney nodded, "Good. Let's drink to a fruitful and meaningful partnership," He said, raising his glass.

After a torturous but discipline building time in public school, Ulysses went to university to study chemistry. Genetics intrigued him and, although at the time nobody was able to map the genome, he knew his future was in genetic engineering. It was while working for Meditech that Ulysses began looking beyond medical science for genetic engineering applications. He had a vision in which future needs would demand all kinds of commercial uses for genetic manipulation.

His work centred on DNA manipulation and gene expression control, from which his team created specific functional cells. By just altering a fraction of genetic information from each cell, Ulysses took its characteristics, effectively reprogramming cells from one type to another.

This work led to Dr Covington's fascination with Kurzweil's vision, building machines at the nanoscale. Ulysses' idea took on the big screen with the tiniest of things. He saw the world and our bodies rebuilt, molecule by molecule, with benefits ranging from full repair of the environment to expanding our human capabilities far beyond the limits of biology. This vision was inspiring, particularly since nanotechnology worked hand-in-glove with genetic manipulation.

In the 1980s and 90s, Dr Covington's hero was Eric Drexler, who's visionary concepts included designs for many of the essential nano tech building blocks – including machines that could pick and place single atoms as part of the construction process by using nano-cranes, by employing a chemical process.

Finally, Ulysses became a pioneer in the robotics revolution. Inspired beyond measure, he set up Heron Robotics, just a name at the time, on the Queensland Gold Coast. Named after his ancient Greek hero, Heron, who's steam and water driven devices were way ahead of their time. His company researched NRG (nano, robotics and genetics) the big small three in cutting-edge science and technology.

It was this series of successes that got Ulysses Covington noticed by DARPA (Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency) Colonel Barney Cormack looked over the large desk at General Logan Schulz's facial expression. The old soldier didn't give much away, but there was a little tic at the corner of his left eye that indicated his excitement. "It looks good but is he up to it."

"The man's a genius. His record speaks for itself."

The General docketed his Havana. "Barney, I trust your judgement in his ability to deliver the goods. But does he have the will and constitution to move with us on this?"

"Personally, Logan, I think he's got it. But we can never be too careful. To be on the safe side, I can get him into Project MKUltra." Barney said, his 'cover-your-ass' self-preservation kicking in.

"As a subject?"

"It'll be for his good."

Logan sucked on his big cigar. "I want current reports, Barney."

"Yes, General Schulz."

"Okay, you're dismissed."

Both men now worked in civvy street, their active military careers behind them, but old habits of deference to rank persisted.

Heron Robotics, Abbott Discovered, did not just research into robotics. They also carried out R&D in genetic and nano sciences. Knowing nothing much about the business he had no idea as to whether it was standard practice or not. To Abbott, the people who experimented with this weird stuff may well have been wizards for all he knew.

But his curiosity got him wondering if everything they played around with was kosher. Else, why would they need to plant a spy in a small protest group? And did ARL go to Heron Robotics to blow up a robot, or was there something else they were so concerned about they risked carrying out sabotage. Of course, back then, they could all have been off their faces with some hallucinatory chemical and just put a pin on a map.

But Abbott thought it unlikely. He had to speak with Olivier again.

Matthew Sheen Checked, for the sixth time, to see if his boss was available.

Covington's secretary told him, "Dr Covington is due back this morning and will be in his office in the afternoon."

"Let him know I need to see him urgently."

Susan looked at her boss's diary. "Mr Sheen, he has six appointments already. I can squeeze you in around 5 pm."

How dare she push him to the back of the queue when the company's reputation was at stake! "It's critical that I see him as soon as he gets here!"

Susan said, "The Vice President and a bunch of directors may not agree, Mr Sheen (she nearly giggled when she spoke his name).

Matthew was not a happy man. Abraham Lincoln did not exist, not in the employment files.

He leant back in his padded office chair and scratched his head, perplexed. What sort of idiot would fall for a name like that? Come to that, what kind of idiot would use something that obvious as a pseudonym? The world was becoming crazier. Luckily the News had not published the article that morning. But it was only a matter of time, and he had to get his story straight.

The Prof, sitting alone In Jack's Cafe in Kennedy Drive, had similar thoughts. The world was becoming crazier but not because people chose inappropriate names, although Harold thought it could be a symptom. No, the reason why the world was going mad was that stupid people didn't heed wise warnings. Plato, one of the greatest thinkers ever, in the Prof's book, defined evil as the unformed matter in the atom, when released into the physical world. But nobody listened, and mad scientists started splitting atoms like there was no tomorrow, which may very well be the case if some idiotic national leader presses the red button.

The Prof chuckled as he stirred his cup of tea. Folks thought he was just a cantankerous but harmless old duffer, and, he reckoned they might well be right. But the Prof knew things of which the general populace was blissfully unaware. He was aware that, if humanity did not get its game together, human extinction was not far away.

He kept this knowledge to himself, not because if the public knew this their sense of doom would throw them into a blind panic. That would be a step in the right direction. It would show that most people are not brain dead and still have a survival instinct. No, the reason the Prof wouldn't tell them is that, were he to do so, it would not have any profound effect on them at all.

He sighed deeply and waited for his friend's arrival. It made him smile when people referred to him as the 'Prof'. What they didn't know was that he thought of himself as the Proph because he was Prophetic. He had been so since he was a child in Adelaide. Being abandoned by his mother could have had something to do with his gift. Or, seeing as she did not care for him, he might have been dropped on his head as a baby.

The point is that he had, what some people call, the second sight. He could tell what was going to happen, well in some instances. Clairvoyance is not an accurate science. He wanted to be able to share his visions with someone - anyone. But everyone he encountered was too prejudiced, dumb or full of self-importance for them to do anything useful with the forecast. Even Abbott, although he was improving, was not ready for the knowledge. The Prof sighed again. At least he wouldn't be around when the curtains lifted to reveal what was behind the illusion. He knew it wouldn't be pretty.

At just about that time Abbott turned up, ready to carry on the game and enjoy one of Jack's Big Burgers.

Dr Ulysses Covington was a happy man. A contract with DARPA would ensure big time funding for years to come. The trip had been a huge success.

Angela Durant knew that he had been to the states on important business and she was gagging to hear the details. "Okay, don't keep me in suspense any longer."

"Give me a chance, Angela. I've only just got back," he laughed. Ulysses looked at the petite middle-aged woman who had been his right-hand person for ten years. She had worked as long and hard as any in the company. "What would you say if I said we had a lucrative contract with DARPA?"

"Her eyes fairly bulged in their sockets. "I would say I'm dreaming." Then she said, "You not winding me up, are you?"

He tossed her a manilla folder. "It's only a temporary contract. We'll get the proper one when we're all agreed on the details."

Angela tended to act on impulse, which is why she had never made CEO of the company. It was also why she jumped up and gave Ulysses a huge hug. "Congratulations, this contract is fantastic news."

Ulysses secretly agreed with her sentiments. Despite his strict upbringing by an authoritarian mother he had managed to look kindly upon the world. Ulysses considered himself very fortunate to be in a position where his skill and endeavour could be beneficial to humankind. He looked down at Angela. "So far, only you and I know about this, and I want to keep it that way, at present. So don't breathe a word of this outside this office."

The Prof also felt he was a benefit to the world, or at least he would be if the world lets him be so. He looked across the table at Abbott. The reporter was working out his next move very carefully. The bishop he had just lost left him at a distinct disadvantage.

The Prof made one of his 'left field' pronouncements. "Newton understood what Kant meant, you know."

Abbott moved his knight. It wasn't a strong move, but it was the best he could muster. "I didn't know that."

"Oh yes, some unpublished articles of his, Heresy Papers, unearthed during the last century, proclaimed his firm conviction that the mechanical description of the universe had to be completed by a more natural philosophy based on the physics principles of particle movement." Prof then moved his rook into a protective position.

"Why are they called the Heresy Papers?" Abbott asked, finishing off his coffee.

"Because until nano technology discoveries validated them, challenging the second law of thermodynamics, was considered science blasphemy, by the likes of Einstein, Eddington and many others. Nanotechnology has demonstrated that Newton's conviction belongs to the physics functioning of a quantum biological evolution." The Prof then went in for the kill. "Checkmate, I believe, he trumped with a pop-eyed wink.

Reluctantly the journalist toppled his king. "One day, Prof, I'm going to whoop the pants off you." Abbott smiled. "Now what were you saying?"

The Prof had him hooked and was reeling him in. "It's taken around three hundred years for science to understand Newton's more profound physics."

"So, if science now agrees that Newton was right, what's the problem?"

The Prof chuckled. "Nanoscience finds it difficult to deny, but other hard sciences stick to their old mindset. Newton's balancing 'First Principle' was that of the ancient Platonic Science for Ethical Ends. Platonic means much more than love without sex."

"What else does it mean?"

"Plato knew that Anaxagoras' Nous concept was lacking ethics because it did not follow a fractal self-organising principle. Professor Petar Gugic, who published that the Nous (mind) is constructed upon fractal logic, made this connection."

There was a lot of stuff Abbott couldn't follow. He feverishly typed notes into his phone, to follow up later. "Wow Prof, you're like a walking encyclopaedia." Then Abbott remembered he had never seen the Prof walking. He made to get up.

The Prof grabbed his hand like a drowning man grasping onto a piece of flotsam. He wanted Abbott to be the one. "This demonstrates that the physics and geometrical principles upholding so-called Western Democracy has no ethical content, which is why the world is in such global chaotic turmoil."

"You are a little ray of sunshine today, Prof," Abbott grinned.

<http://www.sustainability-research.org/science-art/>

Kurzweil on coming revolutions in genetics, nanotech and ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.theequitykicker.com/2010/08/19/kurzweil-on-coming-revolutions-in-gene>

Chapter 5

Olivier Leroy was surprised to see other fit looking men awaiting their interviews. He had just finished filling in his form, which had some questions he thought a bit odd when a door opened, and the first applicant got ushered in. The black athlete went back to his form. Why would they want to know if he would be willing to have improved memory, hearing, stamina and a sharper intellect? Why wouldn't he? Olivier thought. Any such enhancements could only be useful. But for them to make a point about such improvements, on the form, had him a little concerned.

Then he received a phone call. It was that journalist. "Sorry man, it kind of difficult for me to talk now."

"Heron denies sending in a spy. And, honestly, I can't see why they would bother with infiltrating ARL."

Olivier walked towards the door, keeping one eye on the interview room. "Look, man, this is a terrible time."

"I just need to know the names of other people who were in ARL."

Agitated, the athlete said, "I don't know man. It was a long time ago."

Now Abbott was getting pissed. "The article goes in the paper tomorrow, and right now your story is not holding up."

The interview room door opened, and the applicant left. "Fuck man, I could get called any minute. I'll talk later."

Abbott thought, well fuck you, mister. I have better things to do than squeeze bits of info out of you, dick head. Abbott, becoming agitated and frustrated, needed to calm down. But he was blocked at every turn. It didn't make sense, though. Why was it so difficult to find out anything? Grabbing a snack, he checked his emails. Among the usual, bigger dick, stay harder longer, chain letter mail, he spotted one from a Helen Cleaver, web master for the ATL (Anti Transhumanist League), At last, he had a contact.

Abbott wrote:

Hi Helen, I'm trying to track down members of a now defunct action group called the Anti Robotic League. Do you know of an Olivier Leroy and Abe Lincoln? Please contact me. He gave his mobile phone number, then pressed send. Now all he could do is wait.

He organised some food for himself and transcribed his notes from his conversation with the Prof. He searched for Plato's nous. Wikipedia offered, Hermotimus of Clazomenae, who, during the 6th century BCE, was the philosopher who first proposed, the idea of nous being fundamental in the cause of change. He stated that physical entities are static, while the mind creates the change. He belonged to a class of philosophers who held a formal theory of material and active principle entangled in the origin of the universe.

Further research revealed that Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, born about 500 BC, was the first person who is known to have explained the concept of the Nous (Mind).

Anaxagoras said the Nous arranged all other things in the cosmos in their proper order and set them rotating, and continued to control them to some extent. The Nous had an unusually strong connection with living things.

This Nous concept was fascinating to the journalist. The idea that those ancient philosophers knew about the workings of the mind and the nature of atoms all that time ago, he found mind boggling.

Still, on the trail, Abbott checked on Plato who, he found, used the Nous concept in many ways, which was not unusual in everyday Greece at the time and often referred to 'good sense'. Plato expressed disagreement with Anaxagoras' Nous because of the philosopher's materialist understanding of causation.

Socrates reckoned that Anaxagoras failed to develop an entirely adequate teleological and dualistic understanding of the mind of nature. Plato argued that relying on sense perception can never lead to real knowledge, only opinion. He argued that Nous must somehow perceive truth directly.

This philosophy was heady stuff, and Abbott needed a short break.

He grabbed a coffee and went back to work and delved deeper into Platonic thought.

Plato posited that what our mind sees directly, to understand things, must not get caught up with constantly changing material things, but rather, unchanging entities that exist in a different way (forms and ideas). Plato knew that Nous and perception were dual aspects of one physical activity. He held that perception was the source of knowledge and understanding (not the other way around).

It was all becoming too involved for Abbott's brain. But what it came down to, he figured, was that a universal consciousness existed that had something in common for all life. This simple understanding seemed to fit in with what the reporter knew about fractal geometry. He'd read,

somewhere fractal logic referred to a self-similarity with each part of the pattern being almost identical to the whole. He made a record of this point to tell the Prof the next time they met.

Ulysses Covington looked at the letter again. It had the DARPA letterhead and was from Colonel Cormack. He congratulated Heron Robotics for getting the contract and requested his presence at an official signing presentation. He would be met at the airport and taken to his prepaid luxury suite to await further instructions. It sounded like directions from a James Bond Movie.

The letter was more of a summons than a request. There was more than a hint of a suggestion that non-compliance could result in a lost contract. There was a RSVP, and he only had five days to make up his mind.

Dayton Lynsey was a master of poise, even when confronted with a problem involving the use of the reasoning faculties. Lord Lynsey, a nobleman of high intellect, always sought to solve by obtaining as many facts as he could glean bearing upon the question.

Dayton despised those of immature mentality, the easily overwhelmed when confronted with even the most primary intellectual challenges. He learned to be qualified to solve the riddle of his destiny, unlike the sheeple who were led and taught in simple language.

Dayton often walked around his extensive gardens, alone, just him and his universe swapping notes. According to him, his mind was one of the few mature in the world. He saw himself as a philosophical pagan, an intelligent man who, over the years had esoteric and spiritual teachings revealed to him. While the inferior and unqualified minds received only literal, or exoteric, interpretations, he recognised, in the marble statues of gods and goddesses that adorned his grounds, symbolic concretions of abstract truths.

As he strolled past his garden statuary he gazed upon his altars, dedicated to Priapus and Pan; Dayton felt their procreative energies warm his being. Dayton, passing his sundial, realised it was time to leave the peacefulness of his garden and address his Soter work.

The Bogangar Headland was one of Helen Cleaver's favourite places. Sometimes Southern Right Whales passed by, and pods of dolphins frolicked in the turquoise ocean. From the cliff tops, the rugged surfers appeared small and fragile, as they rode impossible waves. Helen loved the smell of the sea and had been an avid swimmer, until the accident. She wheeled her chair away from the cliff top, the one she had, in her darkest moments, considered getting too close to the edge.

At 35, childless and wheelchair bound prospects seemed poor. They say the darkest hour is before the dawn. She thought that might well work for nature, but she could not see beyond her darkest hour. Life seemed pointless and useless. But some unknown force had made her turn her wheelchair around, just as she was teetering on the edge, in both mind and body. At that moment Helen determined to do something useful with her life.

Some years before, she had turned her attention to the threat of robots and now, to have any independence, she had partially become one. There's irony for you, Helen thought. Like all human-

made things and inventions, she saw inherent imperfections as being part of the robotics package. On her website, she had already raised concerns about the intricacy of robotics flooding society. It was high time to remove the rose coloured glasses and have a permanent watchdog committee looking at the potential impact of 'artificial intelligence' on human society.

Helen set up a blog to understand the implications of a world ruled by machines or real robots. Although many contributors argued it seemed highly unlikely that robots would ever achieve such autonomous power, as shown in famous Hollywood movies, such as Terminator or War Games, she wasn't so sure.

People would have to be blind not to see the writing on the wall as increasingly advanced and sophisticated robots driven by faster and smarter computers, played ever increasing roles in human society. Human dependence on smart devices, would, eventually, lead to such a robot controlled community.

Helen considered the biggest threat posed by computers and robots was increasing autonomy in unconscious emotionless machines that were bereft of ethical considerations. Robots, with no morals to govern their decisions and actions would become a major threat to humanity, especially as technologists had programmed all AI with a destructive directive.

Another ethical issue Helen saw to be a potential problem with robots was the ongoing debate whether it is ethically and morally right to design robots which take away the jobs of human workers. The view that robots could deal with the mental and onerous tasks currently performed by humans was all well and good to many narrow-viewed folks. But what about when robots became brain surgeons, she argued.

Her album of her reminiscences snapped shut as the man approached her. He had dark wavy hair, windblown and longish. His two-day stubble and worn brown leather jacket gave him a rakish look. "Hi I'm Helen", she said, smiling and extending her hand.

Abbott had only seen a head shot of her. He tried hiding his surprise to see her in a wheelchair. He felt some embarrassment at first. "Hi, I'm Abbott."

She laughed to cover his discomfort. "As you can see, I have wheels instead of legs. Well, the legs are still there, but they don't do much."

Her light-heartedness made him feel more at ease. Abbott had no idea as to why he felt uncomfortable around disabled people? Did he have a fear that it could so easily be him in the wheelchair? "I'm interested in your website," he said.

The day was warming up. She felt the healing heat of the sun on her face. "You can push while we talk if you like."

As they moved across the top of the headland, Helen said, "It surprised me that anyone would still remember let alone be interested in ARL."

"Leroy brought it to my attention. He said that Abe Lincoln was a spy for Heron Robotics. Can you confirm that?"

"We were indeed set up by somebody. How else would Heron know what we were doing? I didn't know who Abe was, but if there was a plant in our midst, he is the most likely candidate."

"So, what exactly was ARL? I mean what was your philosophy?"

"When early researchers in artificial intelligence tried playing god we knew the writing was on the wall. It was only a matter of time before the robots made to serve us would become smart enough to dominate us. Remember Deep Blue?"

"Wasn't it the IBM computer that beat what's-his-name at chess."

"Yes. Anyhow, we became concerned that robots would displace workers, leaving humans without jobs."

"But wasn't the argument that most robotic devices simply do a particular job better and with fewer errors (once programmed correctly)."

"Yes, that's true. But once robots take over from humans, it's the thin end of the wedge. We knew it was only a matter of time before robots took over people."

"Okay, so what happened then?"

A few like-minded students and I formed ARL and looked for a target to make our case. Heron Robotics was it."

"Why did you target that particular company?"

Helen turned to look at Abbott. There were very few companies specialising in robotics at the time - in Australia at least. And Heron is local and didn't seem that well guarded. But there was something else."

"Oh! What was that, Helen?"

"Our worst fears were founded. They were experimenting with turning humans into robots."

"Do you mean Transhumanism?"

"That's what they call it now. Once we heard Heron was carrying out secret experiments to combine genetics with bionics, we tried raising the alarm. But their PR stuff was good, and everyone seemed to be excited about this brave new technology."

"So your group decided to go activist?"

"That was when we got Olivier involved."

"From what he told me he was just in it for the money."

"We accepted that. We just needed the athlete to get us in."

"Was Abe with you guys that night?"

"Yes, he kept us motivated. He was excellent at that."

They came to a public bench on the headland. Abbott sat down. Now, at the same height as the paraplegic woman, he said, "Helen, how did you find out about the research Heron was doing, if they kept it a secret?"

Now facing him, she said, "Someone found out. Come to think of it; it was probably Abe."

Abbott nodded. "That would make sense if he worked there and if they were setting a trap. But what gets me is why they thought your small group would mount a terrorist attack against them."

Helen became animated. "They're the terrorists, not us."

"I guess that's a matter of perspective," Abbott smiled. "But it still doesn't answer my question."

Helen sensed the interview was coming to an end. This realisation saddened her as she had enjoyed his company. "Do you fancy going for a coffee?" she asked, wanting to find out more about him.

He checked the time, grinned, and said, "Sure, I've got time for a quick one."

They sat in the Pandanus Restaurant, drinking cappuccinos, chatting away. He learned that Helen was a kindergarten teacher, a job she loved. But the auto accident had put an end to that. She became deeply depressed and unmotivated. With her career in ruins and her life severely affected she knew she had to find something that got her up in the mornings.

"I can't imagine how terrible that must have been for you." Abbott sympathised.

"No, of course, you can't. The worst part was that I felt numb emotionally. I wanted desperately to feel something. After all, it was only my legs that had lost all sensation. I wanted to feel anything. Do you know what feeling came back first?"

"No."

"Anger. I felt intense anger. After going through three of the grief stages, the anger was still there, stronger than ever. So I had to channel it into something. As soon as I heard about Olivier's release from prison, memories of the ARL days came flooding back. I had a channel in which to direct my anger. So here we are," she smiled.

Abbott rechecked his watch. "Helen, I've enjoyed this meeting." He handed her his card. "If you think of anything to do with the case, give me a ring." He could see sadness clouding her smile, as she took the card.

Nous - Wikipedia. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nous>

Chapter 6

Dayton Lynsey had a job to do. It wasn't going to be pleasant, but Soter agents didn't question it. Dayton had to take certain steps to advance the cause, but he still didn't know everything about his mission. Lord Lynsey had no idea he was to be a catalyst to bring several elements together. He didn't even know the location for the catalysing to take place. Dayton had travelled widely to all cities of the ancient world and those in particular that had temples for public worship and offering.

In each community dwelt philosophers and mystics, who, profoundly versed in Nature's lore carried on the old traditions. In ancient times these individuals usually banded together, forming seclusive philosophic and religious schools. The more important of these groups were known as the 'Mysteries'.

Descendants of such people still existed. Dayton Lynsey had made it his life's work to seek them out and prime them for when their help would be needed.

Many of the great minds of antiquity got themselves initiated into these secret fraternities by strange and mysterious rites, some of which were incredibly cruel. Dayton saw the Mysteries as 'Sacred dramas' performed at particular times to bring about concrete results.

He was versed in the most important shows, those of Ast, Sabazius, Cybele, and Eleusis. He had been initiated and instructed in the secret wisdom, preserved for ages.

Although Dayton had never met the Prof and wasn't likely to, they both shared a deep respect and love of Plato, who was an initiate of one of the Khemmetian/Egyptian 'Holy Orders'. Later, he got severely criticised because he revealed many of the secret philosophic principles of the Mysteries in his writings.

Dayton pondered such profundities as he sat looking out of the huge window, at the gardens of Lynsey Hall beyond.

Lynsey Hall, like most stately homes referred to as such, was misnamed. Such residences may or may not have started out as halls, but they developed into sprawling homes, castles for noble families of many generations.

Margaret Daintree married into the family when she became wedded to Dayton ten years before. She had an aristocratic air about her and seemed to float down the spiralling marble staircase, into the entrance area, with its array of heraldic memorabilia. She was on her way to the kitchen when Lynsey called her.

They saw very little of each other these days. He was always chasing up something odd or was locked up in his study. It used to worry her, and she felt very lonely at times, in their sprawling stone ice box. But she had learned to compensate for his neglect with her social occasions, one of which she was about to organise when her husband stopped her. "Yes, what do you want?" she asked, sounding as haughty as she could.

"Something came up that I need to attend to, my dear. I'll be away for a couple of weeks."

Fine by me, she thought. "Oh, I hope everything is alright."

"Nothing for you to trouble yourself with, my dear."

A sharp looking Corporal picked Ulysses Covington up at Dulles International Airport and conveyed the Australian to Langley, a few miles from Washington DC. Ulysses was awestruck! The DS&T (Department of Science & Technology) was massive with a labyrinth of corridors and numerous departments.

Eventually, the robotics expert came to a door with a plaque reading 'Col. B Cormack'. In response to Ulysses' knock, Colonel Cormack came to the door to greet him. "I trust you had a comfortable flight," The retired officer said, inviting the Australian into his office.

"A bit jet-lagged," Covington answered, forcing a smile.

"Isn't this place something," Barney boasted, "Spending time here is like spending time inside the imagination of the CIA."

Ulysses, feeling overwhelmed and wondering if that was a good place to be, just nodded.

As he followed the colonel through the building complex, he explained, "All our DS&T workers are technical intelligence officers, but they work in many different disciplines ranging from computer programmers and engineers to scientists and analysts."

Ulysses wondered why, when Americans give information, it always sounded like some sales pitch?

Barney continued explaining, "The DS&T partners with many other organisations in the Intelligence, military, academia, and national laboratories. By working with the private sector, like Heron Robotics, we all get to achieve mission success. The DS&T brings unique tools, capabilities, and expertise to our most difficult national security challenges."

Ulysses wondered what it was all about, but instead of asking questions he meekly followed his guide.

As they passed computer programmers, Barney stated, "We are assigned around the world, meeting regional requirements for clandestine collection, conducting audio and video surveillance, providing secure communications for CIA assets, and training."

The Engineering section was next. The Colonel commented "We are stationed along with National Clandestine Service officers in the field, advising and assisting them on the full range of technical operations and how they can augment, and confirm aspects of their trade craft."

They finally arrived at the sign saying Department of Science and Technology. Barney turned to Ulysses, "Here, they enable tactical operations by analysing data as well as writing longer-term strategic assessments. They design, build and operate reconnaissance satellite systems to support global information superiority. They also research, develop and apply advanced technologies that provide the nation with a significant intelligence advantage, and much more."

"Okay, I know what you people are doing here but what am I doing here?"

Barney grinned, "All will be revealed soon."

Olivier Leroy was one of the chosen, but it was not a religious experience, despite the white gown. He signed the disclaimer giving Heron Robotics and Heron NRG the right to enhance his eyesight. The money was in his account, and an anaesthetist was counting him down to sleep. The surgeon and his team then began their work. With delicate and precise laser surgery a small spiral cuff electrode was placed around the optic nerve at the back of his left eye. The surgeon then connected it to a stimulator, implanted in a small depression in his skull.

Later, when he came round, Olivier was instructed in the use of the externally used camera, which sent information to the stimulator. This function, in turn, translated them into electrical signals that directly stimulated his optic nerve.

"What the fuck have you done to me?" he asked Dr Marco Contoldo, the head scientist.

Marco scanned the notes. Mice and rabbits didn't question the tests. But now he had to work with humans consultation had to be approached with decorum. "Mr Leroy, you have nothing to be concerned about, the procedure was a success, and you should start to gain the benefits from enhanced vision within a few days."

Not mollified, Olivier said "What's with this camera gizmo and the fucking implant in my skull. I didn't sign up for that."

Dr Contoldo smiled, "Actually you did." He passed the contract the ex-athlete had signed, across the desk. "But there is no cause for concern. The procedure is entirely reversible. In fact, the trial is for only three months. In the meantime, you will report on a weekly basis."

Harold A Scholfield sat, reading Abbott's story about Olivier Leroy while sipping tea. It would entertain some readers and help to pay Abbott's weekly bills. But other than that it offered nothing. The Prof knew things that would make a great story, beyond the nightmares of the common folk. Things 'he' would rather not know. Hidden knowledge came to him, not as lightning bolt revelations, but rather as quiet thoughts breaking through the noise of his mind. However, his years of meditation training had quietened his mind to some extent. He knew that human survival was at stake. Well, he didn't need to be an Einstein to know that the world was going to hell. Pollution, poverty and political corruption were clear signs that the Western Empire was doomed and would crumble in decay, the fate of all previous civilisations.

But this time, there was something else, a hidden element that had infiltrated the human mind over hundreds of years. It was like a cancer that could eat away its host without being noticed. Then it strikes with the deadliness and speed of a cobra, killing its host horribly and painfully.

The Prof knew cancer that had been eating away at the human psyche was ready to strike. And it would do so by causing destructive physics to go too far. Or it could occur because the Earth's biosphere turned into to grey nano-goo. Or humanity's final hour could come about at the behest of a mad scientist who finally achieved making a black hole.

There again it could be a nanowar in a briefcase, which had enough deadly toxin to wipe out the human race. There were many ways humanity could wipe itself out of which the socially engineered myopic minds of the populace remained blissfully unaware.

Harold sighed deeply. It was the way of things, and at this late hour, there was little people could do to avoid their extinction. Humanity needed new information, new survival information and it wasn't going to come from television or newspapers.

The way the Prof saw it, it had to come from moral mathematical consciousness, the language of a good universe. He looked up from his reverie, to see Abbott, grinning in his face.

"I see you've read the article, Prof."

"It's big on conjecture but lacking in fact," the Prof returned.

"I don't think that's the end of it. I believe there is a lot more to this than meets the eye." Then Abbott ordered a coffee and sat down. The chess pieces were smartly lined up, ready to do battle.

Before the white pawn made the first move, the Prof said: "When the scientific scrolls of the Alexandrian Library were burned in the 400's because, according to Church superstition, they were the Devil's work, Europe entered the Dark Ages, a horrific period of ignorance, fear and disease."

Abbott nodded, sagely, but offered nothing.

The Prof moved his piece, saying "Later, Plato and Aristotle were forgiven, by Augustine, for being born Pagan,"

"That was big of him."

Augustine also had the Greek Philosopher elevated to the level of Church Father, yet their work was considered evil. How do you figure that?"

Abbott moved his pawn. "How did the Church explain that?"

The Prof stared at the reporter. "That doesn't matter. The point here is that irrationality and confusion spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire. Because, although the Church considered Plato to be one of the good guys, anybody caught teaching Platonic ethical mathematics was imprisoned, tortured and finally executed in the name of God."

"Why was studying the Greek works considered an act of heresy, Prof?"

"Because the Church's mathematics came out of Babylon."

"How were they different?"

"Babylonian mathematics gave us the date and time. Platonic ethical science gave us infinity."

Abbott, puzzled, said, "I don't understand."

The Prof said, "Let's get back to our game."

As the match progressed, Abbott, pleased with himself, had the Prof's king backed into a corner.

It was at this moment that the old man came out with one of his pronouncements. "Science is still in the Dark Ages, as proven when Newton's unpublished work was discovered and got dubbed the Heresy Papers."

Abbott felt like a golfer about to putt into the hole when a team member coughs to put them off their game. Sighing, he said, "Okay, so how did the Church come to have so much power over the people?"

The Prof chuckled. "You get people when they are at their most vulnerable, feed them fear and superstition as truth, and they follow you forever."

"That's a bit cynical, isn't it Prof?"

"Cynical or not, it is nevertheless the way religions work."

The Journalist pondered over his move, then guarded a whole row with his remaining rook.

Looking up from the board, Abbott said, "What happened to Platonic science after it was banned?"

"Toledo scholars attempted to discover the hidden knowledge, in Spain during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries. Mohammedan, Christian and Jewish scholars all worked together to revive the Greek ethical science."

"Wow! That's amazing. So did they do it?"

"They set the groundwork for the quest to be transferred to Italy in the 15th Century, where, with the help of Sultan Mehmed II and the Medicis, it became known as the Renaissance."

The Prof snuck in a back way and snatched one of the reporter's bishops.

Damn, Abbott hadn't seen that coming. In the Davinci Code film, it said that Leonardo understood this secret knowledge."

The bearded man manoeuvred one of his knights into a stronger position. "Leonardo sold out to the Duke of Milan."

"What do you mean?"

"His understanding of technology contributed very little to the knowledge of the forbidden spiritual mathematics ethos, the exact reason for the science-art Renaissance. Leonardo's flying machines had been experimented with centuries earlier by Mohammedan scientists."

"Really!"

"Oh Yes, Abbott. In the 9th Century in Spain, Ibn Firnas constructed and flew a glider off a mountain."

"What? That's a thousand years before the Wright brothers!" Abbott became agitated. "Why weren't we taught this stuff in school?"

The Prof wiped his nose. "So what else haven't we been told? Think about that."

Abbott did, as he drove to Cabarita Beach, to meet with Helen. She had phoned him to say she had more information about the break-in at Heron Robotics. She wouldn't tell him over the phone, and they arranged to meet at her place. After the mental workout with the erudite Prof, he needed some respite. A pleasant chat with Helen might put him in a more relaxing frame of mind.

As he came off a roundabout and drove to the coast, mindful of koala warning signs, the Prof's ramblings plagued his mind. Maybe they weren't random ravings. He began to detect an order, a timeline of events, concerning the progression of science. But there were lots of pieces missing, like the bit about an Arabs flying some 500 years before Leonardo came up with his flying machine concepts.

Apart from a ramp to the front door, 30 Tamarind Avenue didn't stand out from other houses in the street. It had a lawn out front with a couple of flower beds and melaleucas. Helen greeted Abbott at the front door and invited him in. She wheeled through to the kitchen and put on the kettle.

"It's good to see you again," she said, smiling.

"Yes, it is." He genuinely meant it. She was pleasant to be around. "You told me you had something for me."

Helen said, "Yes, I do, but that wasn't the only reason I wanted to see you."

"Oh!" he said, wondering where the conversation was going?

"Don't get me wrong, Abbott, but you seem like a nice person. It's just that I don't have anyone I can share my feelings with."

Oh dear, he thought, feeling somewhat apprehensive. "I'm not sure about this. I'm only a journalist."

She reached out and took his hand. "You are much more than that. You have a warm heart. I know it." She paused, then said, "Before the accident, I had well-toned calves and thighs. Now they are flaccid and withered, hidden under a blanket most of the time."

He didn't know what to say. "Oh, I see." Jeez, that was pathetic, he told himself.

Embarrassed, she said, "How about a cup of tea?"

"That'd be great," he said, feeling let off the hook.

As they had tea and biscuits, she said, "I was thinking about my ARL days, and I remembered something Abe said. It was about Heron carrying out stem cell research. I didn't read much into it at the time but ..."

"Maybe he was feeding you guys misinformation. I mean if he were a spy he wouldn't be helping you guys, would he?"

She sighed, "Yes, I suppose you could be right. I just thought ..."

He patted her arm, giving her goose bumps. "Don't worry. It's Okay."

She became tearful and grabbed a tissue from a box on the nearby coffee table.

Abbott melted inside. "Someone needs a hug." He crouched down and put his arms around her, and she cried into his shoulder.

Helen felt cared for and protected for the first time in weeks. She put her arms around him and hugged him tightly. "I need a friend right now."

Abbott let her go. "How's the tea coming along?"

"Oh! Sorry," she smiled, wheeling into the compact kitchen.

"Abbott followed, I'll help you."

She stopped and turned to him. "It's okay; I'm not completely helpless."

It felt like a smack in the face to the reporter. Abbott had apparently hit a raw nerve. It was best to back off, and wait in the lounge.

Helen arrived with two mugs of tea, sugar and milk on a tray, and she hadn't spilt a drop.

Neither of them mentioned the incident, and they sat quietly enjoying their tea.

Abbott put his empty cup back on the tray. "Thanks for the tea, Helen. I have to get going but give me a ring if you need someone to talk to," he said, kindly.

"Thank you, Abbott. That means a lot."

Colonel Cormack marched up to the General's office at DARPA HQ, knocked loudly and, upon invitation, entered. "General, the guy from Heron Robotics, is being processed in Langley."

General Schulz looked up, through his smoky cigar haze. "And?"

"Do we have to give him the treatment?" Barney had checked on the protocol for MK Ultra. As a form of mental conditioning, the CIA had first used it in the early 50's. It later received bad press for using unwary test subjects and was officially halted in 1973, officially being the operative word.

"Colonel, I thought we had dealt with this. Do you realise what is at stake here, if Covington gets cold feet?"

Barney said, "I thought the government stopped all that MK Ultra experimental stuff in 1973, but it's still going on. So how come the CIA is still using it?"

"Barney, you know better than to ask questions like that. Hell, Mike Robbins from SID is doing me a favour, so keep it hush, hush."

"I won't say anything. But Jesus, the intelligence community is leaking like a fucking sieve these days. And it's my ass on the line too."

Ulysses Covington didn't know how he got to be sitting alone in the darkened room. He wasn't restrained physically in any way, but he wasn't able to move and couldn't take his eyes off the Wizard of Oz that was playing in front of him. A disembodied voice gave him a particular interpretation of the movie storyline. The voice kept repeating that 'somewhere over the rainbow' is the 'happy place'

At the same time, he felt increasing degrees of physical discomfort. His mind had to go to the happy place to dissociate from the mounting pain of the electromagnetic impulses.

The handler was pleased. The subject was responding well. Dr Covington had a strong sense of loyalty and dedication. The handler had to channel that commitment and focus it on the DARPA project.

The subject was only there for a few days, so the handler had to go for the Alpha effect. Alpha was within the base control personality, making it the easiest to manipulate quickly. The subject needed to be mentally healthy as well as dedicated. The next stage would be to give the recipient greater physical strength and visual acuity, which would be accomplished by deliberately subdividing the subject's personality.

This process, in essence, caused a left brain-right brain division, allowing for a programmed union of Left and Right through neurone pathway stimulation. Upon completion, the subject would be

unaware of any mind manipulation but would no longer pose any risk to the project. Ulysses remembered nothing of the process once it was complete.

<https://www.cia.gov/offices-of-cia/science-technology/who-are-we.html>

Chapter 7

Dayton Lynsey looked through the powerful magnifier at the delicate fragments of papyrus. They were spread out in front of him; they looked like pieces of a big jigsaw with most pieces missing. He looked up at Dr William Tate, The curator of the Queensland Museum's Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan.

He'd scrutinised over a hundred fragments of the ancient writing, dedicated to Ma'at, the Khemmetian Goddess of Universal law and order. Rubbing his tired eyes, Dayton looked up at the curator. "This is an extraordinary find, Bill. Thank you for alerting me."

Dr Tate had been instructed to let the English lord in on the fantastic find. He said, "So they are part of the main book of the dead?"

"Yes, further parts of a very delicate jigsaw". Dayton was looking for particular pieces, but he kept that to himself.

Dr Tate had never heard of the pompous Englishman with the shaved head and trimmed goatee. He thought he knew all the big names in Egyptology, but he'd never come across a Dayton Lynsey. Looking at the English academic, he said, "This is amazing. It will give the Museum some much-needed publicity."

Lynsey struck verbally like a death adder. "I don't think so, Dr Tate. You will not tell anybody at present. We will tell you when you can disclose this to the media."

"With respect, Dr Lynsey I'm in charge of this department", William stated, barely keeping himself in check.

Dayton remained calm. He'd dealt with office dictators many times before. Smiling, he said, "Doctor, do you know what a 'D' notice is?"

"Of course."

"Right. I'm putting a 'D' notice on these fragments."

William spluttered, "What do you mean?"

"It means that you will keep quiet and honour the Official Secrets Act, you signed when I arrived here."

"I didn't sign any ..." Then he remembered the document. "I thought that form was for me to authorise your viewing."

"I am not responsible for your assumptions, Dr Tate. Now, I need a list of anybody else who knows about this. And I need it now."

Feeling hot under the collar, William just wanted to distance himself from the officious, pompous, English prick, before he did something he would later regret.

Academics who tried to big note themselves cut no ice with Lord Lynsey. As soon as Dr Tate had left to get the list, Dayton took out his smart phone and took macro shots of particular pieces of the papyrus. These he then emailed to a private account.

Dayton got his list from the aggrieved Dr Tate. He sent that also. The group would make sure the people named in it kept quiet about the papyrus. With his work completed it was time for Dayton to relax. He flew private charter to Sydney, in preparation for his patronage of the Opera House that evening.

Gavril Takac, the recipient of the attached scroll fragment images, downloaded them to work with them at a higher resolution. The Russian emigree checked the portions against a screen image of the entire Pyramid text scroll. By superimposing the fragments sent by the 'Catalyst' over the parchment layer, the picture became more complete.

Now he could see that the subject of the book was the Chief Builder of the Temple of Amun: Amenhotep. He was believed to have held office in the reign of King Amenhotep II (the great-great-grandfather of Tutankhamun). But Takac was looking for something else. Some indication that the sacred geometry and symbology served as a form of mind control upon those who entered the temple.

The recipient studied hard into the night, looking for patterns that could affect the brain in certain ways. Although not known of, initiated scribes, throughout history, recorded several accounts of rituals and practices resembling mind control. One of the earliest writings giving reference to the use of occultism to manipulate the mind was in the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

The book was a compilation of rituals, heavily studied by secret societies. It described torture and intimidation (to create trauma). The use of potions (drugs) and the casting of spells (hypnotism), ultimately resulting in the total enslavement of the initiate.

Other parts of the papyrus related to black magic, sorcery and demon possession (where outside forces manipulated the victim). It was the forerunner of 21st Century mind control; that became a science in the modern sense of the term, with MK Ultra being a good example, in which the CIA systematically observed, documented and used in thousands of subjects in experiments. At last Takac had good news for the catalyst.

A little bit of intimidation normally did the trick. Physical violence was not necessary unless people didn't get the point. Nick Gibbon had no personal gripes with the people he threatened. As Nick saw it, he was just a messenger.

However, his message was not so much a telegram as a threat-a-gram. This time, Nick had the target's home address, so he didn't even have to contact the subject directly.

He sat in his car, just up from 30 Brisbane Street, listening to classical music on the car radio. Nick munched on hot chips while waiting for the subject to leave. He knew the subject would be going

out because he had arranged to meet with the reporter on the pretext he had some pertinent info on the Leroy case.

At 6:15 pm the subject left his home and drove off in a Mazda sedan. At 6:30 pm Nick Gibbon was inside, creating havoc. Before leaving, he left a note on the coffee table. After which he fled, leaving no trace of his presence.

Abbott sat in his car, waiting at the shopping centre in Kingscliff. The source who phoned him was running late. "Fuck, he must have got cold feet or something," he cursed to the heavens. Just then Helen called him. Shit! That was all he needed. The day had been a bastard. He hadn't eaten since breakfast, which meant he missed out on the Prof and chess. "Hi Helen, how are you?"

"Wondering how I'm going to be able to eat a jumbo size pizza all by myself. I don't suppose you're hungry."

He was ravenous. Why not? His meeting had blown out. "Love to, be there in 10 minutes."

"10 minutes. Where are you?"

"Kingscliff. Just down the ..."

"I do know where Kingscliff is."

As they ate pizza together and cracked a bottle of red, Helen said, "Thanks for coming round. It gets lonely here at times."

Abbott finished chewing. "Thanks for the meal. I hadn't eaten or played chess, all day."

She laughed, "You're a chess junkie."

"I like chess- yes. But it's not just that. The old guy I play with is intriguing. Everyone knows him as the Prof. He seems pretty destitute, but he knows and shares interesting stuff."

"Like what?" she asked, handing him her plate.

From the sink, he replied, "Oh, stuff about science and ancient philosophers."

"Sounds riveting," she laughed. She hadn't laughed so much for a long time.

As the evening turned into night and the dishes washed, Helen wheeled her chair up close to Abbott. She took hold of his hand. "Can you lift me up and place me on the sofa?"

He looked at her thinking how hard such a simple thing he took for granted must be for her. "Er, sure," he said, placing one arm under her knees and the other under her right arm. She was no light weight. Bracing himself, Abbott got her onto the lounge, feeling the softness of her breast as he did so, he felt his manhood stirring.

She felt his touch but never mentioned it. Helen thought about how Fred used to caress her when they made love. Although she had no feeling below the point of her spinal injury, Helen still had memory sensations of being turned on sexually. "Abbott, why don't you sit down beside me for a while?"

He could think of a lot of reasons, but he hadn't been in intimate female company for weeks. "Sure," he muttered, feeling her body warmth as their hips touched."

"Can you put my legs on your lap? I have no feeling there, but it's still pleasant."

Abbott did so and felt himself getting turned on. This sexual feeling can't be right, his judgement said. He tried moving her legs away from his unruly erection. Of course, she couldn't feel it but just to be on the safe side.

She couldn't feel it, but she could see the bulge in his jeans. She smiled, "Abbott, I do believe you're getting turned on."

He could feel the redness and wondered if she could see his embarrassment.

She rescued him, saying, "It's okay you know. I'm feeling it as well, and I would love it if you made love to me."

Abbott couldn't believe his ears - or his luck. But having sex with a paraplegic woman! He badly wanted her, but his prejudice, which horrified him, stood in the way. To refuse, would be a huge insult to Helen. "Are you sure?" It seemed a safe response.

She placed her hands behind his head and drew Abbott to her. As they kissed, her hand got busy with the zip of his jeans. The deep French kiss made her feel as though she'd gone back in time to the way it used to be between her and Fred. As they kissed, Helen moved events along by taking Abbott's hand and placing it on her breast.

Unable to stop himself, Abbott caressed them greedily, while struggling dismally to unhook her bra. With Helen's help, her breasts were soon unfettered. As he sucked and kissed them, she moaned and sighed softly.

Helen felt like she was in heaven, her upper body writhing. But her ecstasy was tainted by the harsh reality of how much she missed the sexual tingle between her legs. But this was the best it had been since the accident.

Although she had no vaginal sensation, her mind made up for it. Erotic memories abounded from her past. It was all she had, And sometimes, like the present time, it was enough for her to achieve orgasm.

Lynne Becker, stretched while standing on the balcony, 25 storeys above street level overlooking the Boston waterfront. She had moved there, from New York, after being employed as chief of robotics at Boston Cybertronics, a go-ahead company that built advanced robots.

Her department specialised in behaviours: mobility, agility, dexterity and speed. In her view, Transhumanism was the only viable way for humanity to continue on Earth. As a purely biological species, Humanity was destroying and polluting its home. If Transhumanism did not come to the rescue, Lynne gave humanity another twenty years, tops, so she was entirely dedicated to the robotic cause.

Her long time hero, Isaac Asimov, one of the world's most renowned science fiction writers, had long been her inspiration. During his busy life, Asimov wrote over 470 books and came up with the Three Laws of Robotics in 1942 which many science fiction story writers still used as a character platform for robot moral behaviour.

These three laws were:

1. A robot may not injure a human being, or through inaction allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the 1st law.
3. A robot must protect its existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the 1st or 2nd law.

Dr Becker firmly believed in these laws, but they became clouded where Transhumanism was concerned. Many scientists, including Stephen Hawking, warn that AI is the biggest threat to human kind.

Once bionics became more important than carbon based life when humans and robotics entangle and cyborgs become a reality as a 'natural Earth species, such laws will no longer be possible, or relevant.

Although it went against her principles, Lynne Becker accepted such a necessity. In her book, humans proved to be bad tenants of the Earth. Perhaps intelligent cyborgs could do better.

Lynne went inside and shut out the city noises below. Even 25 stories up, she could hear the sounds of human activity at street level. Lynne checked the time. Damn! She had to get a wriggle on, to be in time for the meeting with Colonel Cormack, in her office in thirty minutes.

The scene that met Abbott, when he arrived home, was devastating. His place looked like a tornado had ripped through it. There was a mess everywhere. The only part of his home not ransacked was his coffee table, with the ominous looking note on it.

Still, in profound shock, Abbott reached for the piece of paper. He took several deep breaths to try and calm himself. He felt hatred for the perpetrator who had violated his private world. It was as though somebody had gotten into his head and fucked with his mind. All feelings of guilt about screwing a person with paralysis disappeared.

He gingerly unfolded the note. It read, 'LEAVE THE LEROY CASE ALONE!' That was it, pure and straightforward. Then he noticed the small print. 'Hope you like the way I've rearranged your flat. If you persist, it will be your limbs that get the same treatment.'

A cold chill shot up his spine. With a shaking hand, he grabbed his phone. He pressed Phil's contact, waited, then spoke, "Some bastard has done my fucking place over."

"Abbott, do you know what time it is?"

"Yes, but I've been threatened."

"Jesus, can't we discuss this tomorrow?"

"I've been warned to forget the Leroy story."

"Fuck, Abbott. We were asleep."

"Well, you're fucking lucky. I can't even find my bed."

Matthew Sheen rubbed his tired eyes. He had spent hours poring over the employment records. Nobody called Abraham Lincoln had shown up. It didn't surprise him because it would have been a false name. If he were a company spy, Abe Lincoln would have been a code name. Matthew was looking for a link between the two. He figured that if Heron had used an employee to spy on ARL, it would probably have been someone from security.

He was checking the security staff records when he came across a passport type photo of a man sporting a bizarre-looking Abraham Lincoln beard. Profile details showed an address and phone number. He smiled, "Gotcha!"

Olivier Leroy started getting headaches a couple of days after receiving the implant. He contacted Dr Contoldo and got his receptionist.

"Dr Contoldo is not available at present Mr?"

"Mr Leroy. Look, when will he be available?"

"What is the nature of your enquiry?"

"I'm on the testing programme, and I am experiencing some uncomfortable side effects."

"I will leave him a message to call you. But I wouldn't worry about it if I were you. It's normal for the body to have to adjust."

Yeah, lady, well you're not the one with the fucking disc in your head, he thought. "Are you a doctor?" he asked.

"No, Mr Leroy, I'm not. But I deal with people with similar complaints daily."

"Yes, well do the job you're paid for and get Dr Contoldo to ring me."

He replaced the receiver. So much for Contoldo's 24/7 pledge. Olivier felt dizzy and had to sit down.

Ulysses felt on top of the world, a new man, since getting back from his American trip. For the first time, he had not even suffered any jet lag. His first job, after arriving at HERON NRG, the new branding for his company, was to send out a memo to all departments involved in R&D. It informed all agencies that DARPA projects had to be given priority over everything else on the table. All progress reports were to be sent directly to him. The initial contract was worth several million dollars, and he had it, signed and sealed, in his safe.

The brief for 'All Seeing Eye' sat on his desk. He looked at another report that was waiting in his in box. It's title 'Latest advance in Robotics' was highlighted in red. That meant it required his attention. He read that two makers on opposite ends of the globe, Ivan Owen in Bellingham, Washington and Richard Van As in South Africa, teamed up to build a custom robotic hand.

They made it for Liam, a five-year-old South African boy who was born without fingers on his right hand. Ulysses spoke into his intercom. "Susan, Get David Frome." David Frome managed the Robotics Department, which was now separate from NRG.

Phil Rosendale, unshaven and grumpy, scrawled article positions on the page-gridded whiteboard, in his office. Hearing someone enter his domain, he turned and faced Abbott Gallagher. "What were you on about late last night?"

When I returned home, my flat had been turned over. The intruder left this threatening note." The reporter handed the warning to his editor.

Phil put on his reading glasses. "Have you reported the break-in to the police?"

"I wanted to speak with you first."

"Yes, but not at one in the morning. Christ, I didn't even have time to shave this morning."

Abbott felt bad about that. "Yeah, sorry, but it was a bit of a shock."

Phil sat behind his desk. "Close the door and give me a blow-by-blow."

Not on your life, Abbott thought, remembering the wild, crazy sex. "I received a call from somebody who claimed to have some dirt on the Heron case."

"Bloody hell mate. Don't tell me you fell for that one."

"Well, how the hell was I to know? Anyhow, the source didn't turn up at our arranged meet."

"No surprises there. the intruder was probably busy doing your place over."

"Brilliant, Einstein."

"You dumb ass. You fell for the oldest trick in the book."

"Okay, maybe you can stop rubbing it in and listen for a minute."

Phil stopped smirking.

Abbott stared at his boss. "This tells us two things: One, Heron Robotics has something to hide. And two, they employ heavies to ensure it remains hidden."

"How do you know Heron hired the intruder? It might have been some nutter listening to your radio show."

"Maybe because I haven't mentioned the Leroy case on my show."

"Okay, you've made a good point. So what do you plan to do?"

"Drop the story, of course!"

"Don't be too hasty, Abbott. This assignment is very sensational journalism; it could get you an award."

Abbott, not so enthusiastic, retorted, "It could also get my arms and legs reshaped if I pursue this story."

"Come on Abbott. Where's your backbone?"

"Fuck knows, once the ransacker gets his hands on me."

<https://amos37.com/monarch-mind/>

Mallett, D. (2015, April 1). *Robby the Robot. Octane*, (142), 154.

<https://www.coursehero.com/file/p7415i0/2-A-robot-must-obey-the-orders-given-to-it-by-human-beings-except-where-such/>

MK-Ultra Project, Monarch and Julian Assange ? Medium. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@sebastianedward/mk-ultra-project-monarch-and-julian-assange->

Robot Handjobs Are The Future, And The Future Is Coming ... (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/12/robot-handjobs-vr-tenga_n_4261161.html

Three Laws of Robotics - Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Laws_of_Robotics

Two Makers Come Together To Make A Robotic Hand For A Boy ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://techcrunch.com/2013/02/04/two-global-makers-come-together-to-make-a-robot>

Chapter 8

The dust-covered Mercedes taxi came to a halt by the small run down church. Dayton Lynsey paid the driver, told him to wait, donned a broad-brimmed hat and dark glasses, grabbed his leather briefcase, then stepped from the cab, into the searing heat of the day.

Ahmed Ali waited in the shade, on the crumbling steps leading into the little chapel. Although it was only a short walk to the entrance of the old Gnostic Church, Dayton was sweating profusely by the time he got there.

The cleric stood in front of the door in a feeble attempt at guarding the entrance to the religious building. Dayton presented his bonafide. The elderly cleric, satisfied Dayton was expected, stood aside to let the sweating Englishman in the white linen suit, inside, where it is much cooler."

Dayton entered the ancient building. As he passed a window he looked upon the timeless scene, the silver ribbon of the Nile; the triangular sails of the feluccas, as they moved up and down the sacred river. He turned to the priest, "It's very peaceful here, away from the noise of the city."

The Gnostic priest smiled, showing gaps between his teeth.

Dayton, having had his moment, focused on his mission. "Okay, Ahmed, let's see what you have." While waiting for the priest to return with the artefact, the agent placed his case under a wooden bench.

The Gnostic priest returned and proudly held up the jar. "It was discovered last week, buried in the ground, near Nag Hammadi."

"Who discovered it?" Dayton said, examining the jar.

The Arab grinned, "If they knew he took it, he would be in big trouble. So I don't want to say his name." The priest didn't know why the Englishman was in his chapel, but he felt uneasy.

"I need to know where he found it," Lord Lynsey said removing the contents of the jar and placing them on a silk cloth.

"I will ask him for you."

The Englishman looked at the leather bound codices. There were six in all, and they could have been some of the earliest copies of Gnostic writings. Previously they had only been known of through derogatory references made by early Christians. Dayton knew that the entire history of Christian and pagan Gnosticism was shrouded in the deepest mystery and obscurity, because, although the Gnostics were prolific writers, little of their literature had survived.

As exciting as this was, the Englishman was looking for something in particular: a clue about a mystical power, not even spoken of by the few who knew of its existence. He turned to the priest. "Pack them up. I will take them with me."

Unsure, Ahmed said, "I was just told to show them to you. I have no authority to let you take them away."

"They cannot stay here. I will hide these codices somewhere safe until we can study their content."

Ahmed argued, "Nobody comes here except holy men like myself."

Ignoring the Arab's view, Dayton said, "You must not speak of these writings to anybody."

The Arab grinned. "As I say, nobody comes here." He hesitated then packed up the codices.

"Nevertheless I'm taking them with me. Dayton picked up the jar, and its valuable contents, and walked out of the chapel. He took out his mobile and pressed a contact marked 'Soter'. As soon as he received a response, Dayton said, "Operation Recovery complete. Carry on as planned." He entered the taxi, clasping his treasure. Tapping the driver on his shoulder, Dayton said, "Drive."

As the cab drove off, Dayton pressed a sequence of numbers on his phone. A moment later a deafening explosion blew the small church apart, All that was left, once the massive fireball disappeared, was the corpse of a priest, buried beneath tonnes of rubble. The driver, looking at the explosion in the rear view mirror, sat wide-eyed, but said nothing, while he focussed on the hot, dusty road ahead.

Abbott managed to get to Jack's for lunch. It had become something of a ritual, and he hated to miss out. The Prof was waiting at his usual table. One or two regulars cheered when the journalist

walked in. One said, "What happened to you, mate. The Prof didn't know what to do without his boy."

Abbott said, "Fuck off, Ernie. I'm not that predictable, am I?"

"Not predictable," said Ernie. "I set my watch by you."

Ernie's words, even if spoken in jest, had a profound effect upon Abbott. Bloody hell I am that predictable, he thought, as he sat down opposite the Prof.

The Prof was stoic about the whole thing. He did not get involved with the cafe banter.

Jack brought Abbott's coffee and maxi burger to his table. I'm going to order something different tomorrow and shock every bastard here, Abbott thought, as he manoeuvred a pawn.

It was not long before the Prof made one of his disjointed statements. "When Columbus discovered America, in 1492 it caused major conflict between Spain and Portugal,"

"Oh," was all the journalist could manage, chewing a mouthful of burger with all the trimmings.

"The Roman Church tried solving the problem by issuing Papal Bulls declaring servitude for all infidels, under Christian Law."

"I bet they liked that,"

"Whether they liked it or not they were enslaved, in the name of God. And the two nations became very prosperous. Other Western countries got into this 'survival of the richest' act and joined the fight to derive power and riches from the slave trade."

Abbott moved his knight. "So the Church was responsible for slavery."

The Prof also moved a knight. "It went beyond that, The 'slave rush' excited daring and patriotic aristocratic adventurers, who supported economic science under the illusion it was for the advancement of their national cultures."

"In what way, Prof?"

Well, in England, such skills as harvesting fish from the oceans became an industry supported by religious doctrine, forbidding the eating of meat on Fridays and Saturdays."

"So that's how the custom came about," Abbott commented, trying to show interest. He had no idea where the conversation was going, but it took his mind off shagging a disabled person and his trashed home. Not to forget about the threat from the intruder, which left him very disturbed. He put the Prof in check with his castle and bishop.

The Prof got out of check and prepared his attack. "Yes, and this custom had another advantage. The men who fished at sea became experienced sailors, ripe pickings for the press gangers, who forced them to man ships of war. Naval superiority was necessary to control the lucrative aspects of the slave trade."

Abbott was beginning to see a picture emerging. He protected his king with a castle. "So the Navy protected the slave traders to ensure profits from global trade by exploiting national resources with cheap native labour, all of which came from the methodology of religious persuasion."

The Prof chuckled. "Now you've got it."

"Yes, but where does it get us now?"

The Prof wondered if Abbott was ready for real knowledge? Perhaps soon, if he sticks with it and develops the necessary mental toughness to carry out the arduous task ahead, he thought. Looking up at the board, he continued, "This practice shows us the sham we call civilised society got built upon unethical practices and the rotten foundations of a doomed culture."

"Okay, I get that we all fucked up. Is there anything we can do to change it?"

"We build anew upon a foundation based on ethics. We get rid of corrupt, religions, parliaments, academia, merchants, etc. and we start anew."

"Easier said than done."

"Is it? Descartes, Bacon, Newton and Leonardo, told us we live in a mechanical, not moral universe. People believed them, and that led to the dire straits we find ourselves in now. Newton came up with a more profound understanding of physics, but by then it was too late. The idea of a clockwork cosmos winding down to maximum entropy was much more acceptable to Western society because it ensured built in obsolescence."

The Prof paused, then added, "So, it doesn't take many people to change the way the world thinks if they have a powerful enough message. And, if you can modify the way people think Abbott, you can alter the world."

The Prof's words stayed with Abbott all afternoon. Back home the journalist researched Leonardo da Vinci and discovered the artistic genius became mechanistically-minded after coming up with ideas for war machines for the Duke of Milan.

Abbott couldn't concentrate for long, though. He was so caught up in his crazy life problems he had forgotten to check his messages. Helen thanked him for last night. Phil wanted to know if he had gotten any further with the story. But the third message, somebody had recorded on his mobile brought him instantly alert.

The voice claimed to know the identity of Abe Lincoln. Abbott felt the hairs stand up on his neck. He pressed the phone icon, heard the ring tone, then a voice. "Matthew Sheen speaking."

"I got your message. When and where?"

"I get off at 5 pm, so I'll see you at 5:30ish near the Southport surf life-saving club."

Having made the appointment, Abbott thought of the night before and the warning. Fuck! What was he doing? It could be a trap. The voice sounded different, but that didn't mean anything. Then he looked at the time the call got logged on his phone. It was 6 pm.

The reporter, checked his log and found the person who had trashed his place had called to make the appointment at 6:13 pm, thirteen minutes after Sheen's call. So they weren't the same person. Abbott sighed with relief. But his comfort was short-lived. What if more than one person was after him. Who else, though? He could hardly see Mr Sheen ransacking his place.

Harold Scholfield went home every day and prayed. He prayed that the world that was rapidly unravelling would stagger on, at least for another day. Harold didn't know how much longer he could hang on to the poison chalice that had been his lot these many years. Now, he was too old to lock horns with the Diabolus Society. The Prof sensed his time was near and welcomed it. But he had one more job to do.

Dayton Lynsey also had a job to do. A job that only he could do well. With the Gnostic jar under wraps, another piece of the jigsaw was in place. Now he was on another assignment for the Soter Group. Gone was the white linen suit. Instead, he dressed in the everyday clothes of ordinary Israelis - jeans, Nikes and baseball cap. Dayton was waiting at the Yad L'banim in Ra'anana, a city in the heart of the southern Sharon Plain, for Ben Solomon. They hadn't laid eyes on each other for ten years. Ben had requested the visit, so Dayton knew it had to be something important. Seeing the Israeli approaching, The Englishman said, Shalom Ben,"

"Shalom Dayton. It's good to see you, my friend. I have a Jeep waiting to take you to my home."

Dayton followed Ben to the old US Jeep that had certainly seen better days. As they drove along the scenic route, up into the Shomron hills, Dayton found the whole experience exhilarating.

Ben said, "The Green Line, which separates Israel proper from Judea, Samaria and Gaza, is nothing more than the 1949 cease-fire line. The media would have you believe it's a recognised international border. It was always meant to be temporary and never legally binding."

"This has been going on for decades, so why bring it up now?"

"Because now it is different. I can detect the signs. They always bring about chaos where situations are tense. I know it is them."

Dayton felt his friend's concern.

The Soter Alliance agent needed no further explanation. The 'Them' he referred to was called 'Diabolus' who had just one aim, which was to destroy everything, even if it meant eradicating themselves in the process.

"So that is why you wanted to see me. Have you located a source?"

"I do not have the resources at hand. I look to the ones making the most noise about this. I think they have infiltrated the PLO."

This latest infiltration was not good news. The Alliance did not want a Middle East war on their hands. "I will give this some thought Ben. Thank you for alerting us."

Within 30 minutes they arrived at the Chai Bar Yakir mini safari park. Ben said, "Tomorrow we come here for lunch. We can forget about the troubles of the world, even if just for a little while."

Dayton smiled. He couldn't let up for a minute. He looked out at the Nachal Kana Nature Reserve, as the old Jeep's engine revved in low gear, it's worn tyres churning up small stones and gravel. As Ben negotiated the old Jeep over the rough terrain, Dayton said, "Ben, I think I know how to approach your problem. We find a friendly journalist in Ramallah."

"Do you know any?"

"Back in 1993, we funded a news agency, whose purpose it was to find out the new Palestinian Arab entity's attitude to Israel. We had to determine if their recognition of Israel was genuine. We raised funds to hire Palestinian journalists and Arabic-speaking Israelis. There should still be one or two around."

"How do we find out?"

"Don't worry about that. I have ways of finding out about all kinds of things."

Leaving the overheated Jeep at the entrance, Benjamin took Dayton Lynsey through the lush grounds of the sanctuary, to his home.

Dayton, impressed by what his friend had achieved, commented, "You have done miraculous things here. I already feel much more peaceful.

Benjamin gave a half smile. "Peace is in short supply here. We have to find it where we can."

Ruth and the children came out to greet Benjamin and their guest. Benjamin introduced them in turn, starting with his wife, Ruth. He said, "Ruth will show you where to freshen up. Then we will eat."

Dayton felt very content to be spending time in such a beautiful place separated from all the hatred and fear. Tomorrow the unsavoury work would have to continue. But for one night at least he felt secure in the bosom of love and peace.

While Ruth and the children set up the outdoor picnic tables, Ben was busy cooking his famous Kosher pitot on his taboun grill. It was unlike anything Dayton had ever tasted, and there was more than enough to go around. Ben had made a big batch, more than they could consume.

Dayton enjoyed the pita-meal, which was washed down with a cup of tea brewed with herbs and leaves picked right off the plants, by the kids. Dayton, used to living on the edge, hadn't felt so laid back in a long time.

Olivier swallowed a Tylenol to ease the stabbing pain behind his eye. Dr Contoldo was not overly concerned about the headaches, saying they would soon go away. He was more interested in the athlete's enhanced vision. Olivier was not convinced. He complained, "My headache hasn't eased in over a week. Something must be wrong.

Contoldo smiled. "Mr Leroy, sometimes it takes a little longer for your body and mind to adapt. let me know of any changes that occur and come to see me again next week."

"What about the painkillers. Is it okay to keep taking them?"

"If you have the need, by all means, take one. But use them sparingly. In any case, the pain should start easing soon."

Olivier hoped so.

Abbott Gallagher ate hot chips while he waited at the Surf Life Saving Club in Macarthur Parade, Main Beach. Mr Sheen drove slowly along the seafront looking out for the reporter's metallic blue Mazda 626. Spotting it, he parked nearby.

Abbott noticed the late model Honda Civic parking two spaces away. A man with thinning ginger hair got out and looked over at him. Abbott recognised him as the guy he spoke to at Heron Robotics. It seemed as though this meeting was genuine. The reporter leant over and opened his passenger door.

Mr Sheen climbed in, immediately explaining, "Mr Gallagher, I'm not a whistle-blower. Your story about somebody called Abraham Lincoln didn't convince me. I thought that Leroy fellow was giving false information."

"Let's cut to the chase, Mr Sheen. You said you had a name for me."

"Yes. After you had left, I became curious and decided to check the personnel records. There was nobody called Abraham Lincoln registered as working for us in the last ten years. So I looked at the profiles of security staff who worked at Heron at the time of the attempted break-in."

"I don't need your life history. Do you have a name or not?"

Yes, You see, one of the security staff at the time sported an Abraham Lincoln type beard. Well, it could be a coincidence of course, but ..."

"The name please," Abbott demanded, losing his patience.

"Yes, indeed. "The guard's name is ..." he said, fumbling in his pocket. Having found his prize, a scrap of paper, he read, "Barry Ryan and that was his address five years ago."

Abbott pocketed the note. He turned and shook the PR guy's hand. "Thank you. Well done. Now perhaps we can get to the bottom of this spy business."

Mr Sheen got out of the car. He turned to the journalist. "Please don't say you got this information from me."

Abbott smiled. "Don't worry. Nobody needs to know my source."

Back home, Abbott contacted Leroy and arranged to meet him at the Palm Beach Hotel. In the meantime, unable to put it off any longer, Abbott attempted to tidy up his unit. It was daunting. After putting his furniture up the right way, he needed a beer.

Cursing his intruder yet again, he grabbed a beer from the fridge, which thankfully was still working. With beer enhanced bravado he yelled out, "YOU FUCKING PRICK! IF WE EVER MEET WE'LL SEE WHO'S LIMBS GET RE-ARRANGED."

The following evening Abbott who sat nursing a beer in a sheltered area just outside the hotel had another ready for his guest. There was a chill in the air, and it had started to rain. Live entertainment had begun in the hotel bar, which was rapidly filling up. Abbott looked at his watch just as the lanky black athlete arrived, wearing wrap-around-shades.

"I've been trying to contact you for days," Abbott said.

"Yeah man. Well, I've been busy looking for work."

Abbott thought he saw the guy wince but made nothing of it. He showed Olivier the passport picture of Barry Ryan. "Is this the man who called himself Abe Lincoln?"

"Where'd you find that, man?"

"Never mind. Is that the guy or not?"

"Yeah. The bastard's easily recognisable by that beard."

"Which none of you bothered to mention. It would have made my job a hell of a lot easier." Abbott said, swilling his beer.

"So, who is the prick?"

"His name is Barry Ryan. He worked in security at Heron Robotics."

Olivier said, "He's the bastard who dobbed me in. I'd love to get my hands on the fucker." Then he spasmed with pain. Shit, he shouldn't get excited like that.

"Are you okay, Olivier? You look troubled."

"Yeah. It's just a fucking headache."

Abbott nodded. "Do me a favour and let me track down this Barry Ryan. Okay?"

"I'll leave a piece of the shit, for you."

"He's small fry, but he can tell us about the big fish. Right?"

Olivier cringed with pain. He gritted his teeth. "Fuck man. I can't put up with this," Olivier stated as the sharp pain got worse behind his enhanced eye. In a blinding rage, he swept the glasses clean off the table.

Abbott got up and manoeuvred the black guy away from the hotel and towards his car. One of the bar staff was at the site of the broken glass. Witnesses pointed in the black man's direction. Abbott opened the passenger door and bundled Olivier onto the back seat. Desperate to get away before a ruckus started, Abbott was just about to swing into the driver's seat, when the angry bar steward confronted him.

"What happened back there?" the steward demanded.

"Sorry, but I've got to get him to the hospital."

"Someone's got to pay for the damage," the waiter said.

Abbott opened the driver's door. "He's had a fit. I have to get him treatment. Got it?"

Chapter 9

Ramallah was one of the most vibrant cities in the West Bank. Dayton realised why, as he experienced the religiously relaxed atmosphere, in which alcohol flowed freely; people packed the movie theatres, and cafe's abounded in the business district. Modern Ramallah, founded in the mid-

1500s by the Haddadins, a clan of brothers descended from Ghassanid Christians, was the de facto capital city of the Palestinian administration.

Dayton's cab drove by the Mukata'a, a two-block compound and the West Bank headquarters of the Palestinian Authority. At night, its white tower lit up and was visible from most parts of the city. Apart from containing government offices and conference rooms, it housed Yasser Arafat's mausoleum, next to where the Israeli Army held him under siege in 2002. This building was where Dayton Lynsey had arranged to meet with Abadi Akram, a reporter for the Maan News.

The journalist stood by the entrance of the mausoleum, smoking, as he waited. Seeing the Englishman alight from his taxi the Palestinian journalist stubbed out his cigarette.

Dayton approached the journalist. "Are you Abadi Akram?"

The hawkish looking man in jeans, INXS t-shirt and Cowboys baseball cap looked at him. "He did so much for our nation."

Dayton returned, "Indeed a great man."

It was the agreed password. "Let us go inside," the reporter suggested.

They passed the regular honour guard, standing watch at the memorial, as they milled among the tourists. As the pair passed by the plaque where the Israelis had cornered Arafat in 2002, Dayton said, "What have you got for me?"

"The main person pushing the border dispute at present is Mahmoud Habbas."

"What do you know about him?"

Abadi surreptitiously handed over a file. "Destroy this as soon as you can. The Hamas does not take kindly to being investigated."

"Thank you for your help." The Palestinian nodded, and Dayton walked away. But he was not unnoticed. A man, in the shadows, with a camera, followed the Englishman out of the mausoleum.

As Barry Ryan, retrieved the spare key from under the flower pot by the front door, it amused him that she still kept it in the same old place. But then she never changed, not while he was with her, anyhow.

He unlocked the door, entered, and got the surprise of his life. She had changed! Helen was in a wheelchair! As she rolled up to him, wearing a short, sleeveless yellow sun dress, he leant down, and they shared a warm hug and a kiss on the cheek.

Barry took a step back. "My goodness, Helen, you look beautiful, but what in the world happened to you?"

Helen backed up her chair a bit and replied, "I broke my back in a bad car wreck about a year after Olivier got arrested."

"My God! I'm sorry to hear that, Helen, how bad is it?"

"I'm paralysed from the waist down. My spinal cord got severed at what the specialist called the T-10 level. It's a complete injury".

Barry, in denial, pretended not to understand what that meant entirely, but he knew what she was saying. Helen would never walk again, and couldn't move or feel anything below her injury. He forced a smile. "I had to see you, after seeing your new website."

"It's not safe for you here, Barry. Olivier is telling his story to the papers. People are looking for you."

"Who's looking for me?" He asked, startled.

She looked at his beardless face. "At least they won't be able to recognise you from your picture."

"What picture? Helen, what is it that you are not telling me?"

"Nothing. I'm just concerned about you. That's all."

"No need to worry on that score. I just wanted to see you again before I left."

"You're going, Barry. Where?"

"I've had it with the Tweed. I'm heading up north. But I need to speak with Olivier first."

"I don't think that's such a good idea. Olivier believes it was you that doxed him in."

"Then I'll have to put him straight about that. Do you have his contact number?"

She shook her head. "I haven't seen him or spoken to him since he went inside."

Who is the creator and determining God of such new creatures as cyborgs or Frankensteins? It was a question that Dr Lynne Becker often pondered. As a dedicated Transhumanist, she advocated the improvement of human capacities through advanced technology. But it wasn't just gadget technology she wholly supported. It was the grander sense of strategies for eliminating disease and providing economical but highly efficient products to the poorest people in the world.

Lynne wanted more than anything to help improve the quality of life and social interconnectedness. There were still a significant number of Luddites out there, who, in their ignorance never considered technology. They took no notice of the cyber world because it seamlessly blended in with the fabric of society. But they would immediately take note of its absence if it became unavailable.

Lynne pondered these things, as she waited to see Dr Covington. She didn't like hanging around, but there was nothing she could do about it.

Angela Durant seemed to be getting nowhere with her argument. She persisted, "Ulysses, I hear what you are saying about the DARPA contract, but I still think putting all our eggs in that particular basket is not sound policy for our business."

He looked straight at her. "DARPA is giving us more work than we can easily handle. We have a cast iron contract, so where's the problem?"

"Ulysses, I don't know how to put it in plainer language. It's not just me who is concerned about this policy change, which seems to have been an autonomous decision on your part. Other directors are with me in this."

Ulysses got up. "We will have to continue this later. Dr Lynne Becker is waiting to see me."

Angela stood up and straightened her pencil skirt. "Ulysses, this will not just go away."

He took three deep breaths. He liked Angela, even fancied her but kept that under control. However, she would have to go if she didn't get on board. The last thing he needed right now was a boardroom fight. He had to keep it quiet from DARPA. He spoke into his intercom. "Send Dr Becker in now please."

As the tall, now, a red-headed woman entered his office, Ulysses Thought she was sexy. He reminded himself, keep your mind on the business at hand. "Dr Becker, my humble apologies for keeping you waiting. Please sit down and tell me what this is about."

She sat, put her leather briefcase on her lap, opened it and extracted a folder. "Dr Covington, Colonel Cormack sends his regards and has sent me here in his stead."

"Okay, so how can I help?"

"I will need your project progress reports. It's just a formality to make sure we're all on the same page."

"Sure, what do you need?"

"Your reports and a bit of desk space."

"I'll deal with it right away."

Abbott Gallagher was getting nowhere trying to contact Barry Ryan. He wasn't at his old address, which held no surprise for the journalist. There was no listed phone number for him. Damn! He was drawing blanks all round. All he had left was to go back to Leroy. Maybe he knew something else.

Abbott dialled Olivier's number, but there was no answer. He recorded a message. Frustrated, he decided to go to Jack's for lunch.

The Prof was in his usual spot drinking tea. At least something was ordinary about the day, the journalist thought, about to sit down opposite his mentor. Soon coffee and a burger would arrive. Damn, he was too predictable. So he went to the counter and called Jack, the bearded, pony-tailed proprietor.

Once Abbott had the man's attention, he said, loud enough for the other customers to hear him, "Today I think I'll have fish and chips with a pot of tea."

Jack stared at him. "Are you all right mate?"

"Fine, Jack. Why?"

"Fuck me!" "Am I hearing right?" "Someone call a fucking doctor!" was among the surprised comments of the regular customers.

Jack looked rooted to the spot. "Are you sure?"

"The cafe owner's look of surprise amused Abbott. Feeling very proud, he went to the Prof's table and sat down.

The Prof looked up, seemingly oblivious to the customer responses. "Your move," he said, quietly, indicating the game in progress.

Abbott scrutinised the board and tentatively moved his remaining bishop into a stronger position.

The Prof moved a pawn, freeing a passage for his queen.

Abbott was waiting for the Prof's latest pronouncement. He didn't have to wait very long.

"There hasn't been any spiritual scientific advantage for human survival, utilised from ancient Greek philosophy until the recent advent of quantum biology."

Jack arrived with Abbott's lunch. Many pairs of eyes, not believing what they saw, followed his fish and chips, as the proprietor placed the plate on the table.

The Prof quickly glanced at the different food, then he said, "This chemistry, as a medical science was found to guide healthy human evolution within the 'molecule of emotion' discovered in 1972 by Dr Candace Pert."

Abbott backed his bishop with a knight. "So is this, 'molecule of emotion', whatever that is, the human solution?"

The Prof moved his bishop a safe distance from his opponent's king. "This, along with other recent discoveries, has brought about the emergence of the 21st Century Renaissance. The exciting prospects of physics technologies, linked to a holographic spiritual reality for human well-being, is now possible."

"If what you say is true, why isn't it happening?"

The Prof smiled, wistfully. "Although humanity can liberate itself from its barbaric slave mentality, it needs the will to do so. Without this will, humanity won't survive."

"How come, you're so certain about this?"

"Abbott, we need to choose between Einstein's mythological reality and Buckminster Fuller's critical path. Back in 1959 C P Snow, a molecular biologist stated that the fate of civilisation depended wholly on our ability to understand the difference, which Fuller said, is about humanity choosing utopia or oblivion."

Abbott retreated his threatened bishop. "And no choice means oblivion."

"Which means humanity must be made to make a choice, by referendum or something. But humanity has to be educated to make its decision." Harold, pleased with the reporter's grasp of such profound issues, added, "Here's the catch 22. If humans did have the nous to make such a decision they would already have made their choice - and chosen survival."

Abbott, moving his knight into a challenging position, responded, "And if humanity doesn't have the sense to see this, it's doomed."

The Prof shook his head, "I'm afraid so. We humans are so unaware of our intuition for survival that we have no alert warning system of our impending doom."

"So we have to get people to listen to their intuitions."

"Sadly, Abbott, I don't think we have time for that."

The reporter frowned, "I don't get it. We blindly follow this or that faith, when it comes to religion. Why the hell can't we have confidence in an evolved humanity?"

The Prof shook his head. He then moved in for the kill. "Checkmate."

Benjamin watched the people visiting the grave. He spoke quietly into his phone. "No sign of him yet." The arrangement was that he checked in every ten minutes.

Dayton Lynsey made sure his phone was in scramble mode. "Are you sure the time is correct?"

"A big crowd is gathering. Mahmoud wouldn't let them down. He has to make a good impression."

"Are we sure he is a Diabolus agent?"

Dayton was concerned. It seemed that Benjamin Solomon was not completely committed and that could cause problems. "Benjamin, you seem unsure of something. Tell me what's troubling you."

"This is Mahmoud Darwish's grave. He was an excellent poet, full of love for the people of this nation. He understood loss, exile and dispossession. It's just that ..."

Dayton pre-empted him. "I get it. It's a sacred place. It's also where Mahmoud Habbas is going to be spreading his message."

"Dayton, you haven't answered my question."

"His background was fed into our database. he ticked 80 percent of the boxes."

"I Thought the line was 85 percent."

"Benjamin, It's close enough. Besides, we cannot take the risk."

A black Mercedes limousine pulled up at the entrance of the Ramallah Cultural Palace. Two bodyguards got out and opened Mahmoud Habbas' door. Flanked by his guards, he walked through the cheering crowd, to a podium, set up especially for the occasion. Adjacent and nearby was Mahmoud Darwish's memorial, which had reached completion in 2004.

The eight year long RCP project had been supported by the Government of Japan and overseen by the United Nations Development Program. The complex, a landmark in Ramallah, was a source of pride for the locals.

By the time Minister Habbas started his prepared speech the 736 seat auditorium, was full. The Centre had hosted various events, ranging from Classical music and hip hop to business conferences and exhibitions. A political campaign speech was a first for the compound.

Mahmoud, getting into his stride, said, "The Green Line is just a line in the sand that separates the armies of Israel and Jordan. It has no bearing whatsoever on any territorial claims by Israel. The media spin experts try to fool you. Don't let them! Don't listen to their lies."

The crowd chanted and cheered.

Mahmoud continued, "Resulting from the 1994 peace agreement with Jordan the Green Line got replaced with a 'mauve' international border line on the map corresponding to the Jordan River. The armistice agreements of 1949, preserved the territorial claims of all parties and didn't establish definitive boundaries between them."

More shouts and chants from the burgeoning crowd.

"My friends, the false importance placed on the Green Line, marking it as a legitimate border was just a ploy to incite Israel to violence against Palestine." Mahmoud shook his fist. "The Jordan River is the real internationally recognised eastern boundary of Israel. You've all heard the lies and the spin. This explanation is the true story."

The crowd wanted to hear this. A huge cheer erupted in response to Mahmoud's emotive words.

It was time to bring down the curtain. Dayton pressed the Soter contact on his phone. "Operation Birdsong is confirmed." Then he terminated the call - and waited, unaware that a spy was watching him. He received a text. "We are watching your back. There's an assassin behind you. Move slowly out of the area."

Dayton knew the drill. No sudden moves. Walk calmly to safety with no attention paid to the hunter. He had absolute trust in his back-up. Even so, he felt a chill shoot up his spine. If the man watching his back did not time his move perfectly, Dayton knew he would be dead.

Mahmoud Habbas was busy stirring up his supporters with promises of controlling the Gaza Strip, once he was in power. Watching their hero in full swing, Habbas' bodyguards missed the tiny red dot dancing around the speaker's temple. One of the guards noticed something, but it was too late. By the time he heard the muted gunshot, Mahmoud Habbas' was already lying bleeding and lifeless, on the platform.

Dayton heard the report and the yells of the crowd, as he walked towards Benjamin's Jeep. Behind him he heard a muffled scream, drowned by the outpouring of grief, coming from the Centre. He breathed a sigh of relief. His job was done - for now.

Benjamin looked as white as a ghost. "It is done then."

Dayton nodded, "We had to do it."

Having dealt with a few day-to-day chores, Ulysses returned to his office.

Dr Becker, looked up as he entered. She smiled, "Very impressive, Dr Covington. You have things well organised."

"Of course Dr Becker. DARPA is our most important client. We know the import of having everything up-to-date."

In the same calm tone, Lynne said, "I glad you brought that up. DARPA has brought forward the deadline for Operation Blue Metal. The prototype has to be ready three months before schedule."

Ulysses sat down. "That means you'll need ..."

She finished the sentence. "The arm and hand by April next year."

He quickly did calculations in his head. With his present staff levels and testing time, it wasn't going to be possible. "I don't see how ..."

Lynne had been concerned about this. She thought that DARPA was unreasonable, but it wasn't her call. "Dr Covington, your contract with us states that you will meet all our deadlines. is that not so?"

He felt a sharp pain like his nervous system had become hot-wired. Immediately, the rainbow tune came into his head.

Dr Becker saw his lined forehead relax. She smiled sweetly. "I take it you can accommodate us, Dr Covington."

"Of course. I will make sure we bring the date forward, as you request."

"Excellent. Now, why don't we go to your favourite restaurant so that I can buy you lunch."

There was no response, except Spartacus' insistent bark, in reaction to Abbott's door knocking. Although Olivier had not sounded well over the phone, he had told the reporter he wanted to see him. So why wasn't he responding to the dog's bark? Abbott wondered. He must have heard the noise! Hell, any residents at home would have heard the dog.

Then the reporter became aware of footsteps from above. He looked up to the third floor and saw an old woman looking down at him.

She pointed at Abbott with her walking stick. "Who are you? Why are you stirring up that damn dog?"

"Sorry, but I'm trying to get Olivier to open the door."

"What was that?" she asked, her poor hearing made worse by the dog's gruff barking.

"WE HAVE TO TALK AWAY FROM THIS DOOR," Abbott shouted.

She got the message, and they went downstairs, with the woman taking her time. Stopping, short of breath, she said, "The dog has been barking off and on all day. I don't know what's got into the beast."

Abbott shrugged, "I don't get it. I spoke to Olivier less than half hour ago. He asked me to pop around."

The old lady said, "I hope he's okay."

"Do you have any reason to think otherwise?"

Before she had a chance to answer, a taxi pulled up near the entrance and a black woman got out.

Ignoring Abbott, the old lady hobbled to the door. "Emily, it's great to see you." The elderly resident turned to the journalist. "Come on, young man, make yourself useful and get Mrs Leroy's cases."

Then it clicked. The woman laden with luggage was Olivier's mother. She would have a key. Maybe the dog's excitement was about sensing his owner's arrival. He'd heard the animals had a sixth sense for things like that.

He followed the two chatting women upstairs, laden with her bags. They eventually reached her door. Puffed, she struggled with her key. By now the dog was going frantic.

Emily said, "Hush now baby, mummy's home." Upon opening the door, the giant beast leapt up and started licking her. "Get down baby. Good boy."

Mysteriously mollified the wild beast became instantly docile. It was then that Mrs Leroy turned to the strange man. "Thank you for your help. I can take them from here."

Abbott plonked the large cases down. "I came to see Olivier, but he didn't answer the door."

She looked at Abbott, bemused. "And who are you?"

The nosy old woman hung around. Abbott said "I would prefer to talk privately.

The old lady huffed but took the hint.

Emily desperately needed to put her feet up and have a cup of tea. Abbott offered to make it. As the journalist did so, he explained how he'd come to meet her son and why he was interested in his story.

As the black woman received her tea, she said, "So you're going to find out who set up my son."

He sat down with his drink. "He asked me to come around. So where is he?"

Unperturbed, she said, "The boy was going to be here to carry my bags in, but he wasn't. He's probably just gone off somewhere. He'll turn up when he's ready."

Benjamin felt horrified, not because of the assassination, but owing to what would probably happen next by way of reprisal. He glanced towards the Englishman, who would soon be out of harm's way. "Who do you think they will blame?"

"The Israeli's probably, But we have something in place."

You don't understand, Dayton. If they saw me with you, that will be enough for them to come looking for me."

Dayton looked at Ben, his face showing concern. "I would never do anything to put you or your family at risk. An alternative reality story is already news as we speak. To be on the safe side you and your family can be relocated, on a purely temporary basis."

"Relocated! Where?"

Dayton smiled, "An all-expenses paid holiday to England."

"Holiday? England? When? How?"

"Tonight you will travel to an Israeli air base? From whence the Israeli Air Force will fly you to a US air base, and on to London. Once there our people will escort you and your family to a safe house. We will have people in place to guard your property while you are away."

Benjamin's mind was trying to grasp this bizarre situation. "Thank you Dayton, but I cannot just leave things like that. We have plants to tend to and ..."

"Ben, I can't force you to do this but for your family's safety ..."

"It's okay. I just had a brief panic." Benjamin stopped the Jeep and looked straight at Dayton. "We never know what will happen from day-to-day, living where we do. Every day is a blessing from God. We are thankful for that."

"At least let me have men guarding your perimeter for the next few days."

Benjamin laughed. "Will I have to give a password to enter my property?"

A media release went to air that evening. The narrator announced, "A Minister for the Hamas Party, Mahmoud Habbas was fatally wounded while addressing a large crowd of followers at the Ramallah Cultural Palace, this afternoon. At first, it was thought to be a Mossad hit.

But later revelations show that Mohammed Ibrahim Likud, a rival for the leadership at the upcoming elections, was found hanged, in his apartment. He left a note explaining that Mahmoud Habbas would be an evil leader who would provoke a war with Israel. He had to stop him but couldn't live with the guilt.

Helen Cleaver had her kitchen designed in such a way she could easily reach what she needed, from her wheelchair. She carefully selected the ingredients she needed for that night's meal, a lamb hotpot. It had to be perfect for Abbott Gallagher, her new friend and lover. Since the accident, she never thought she would be in another relationship. She was amazed when Abbott (she loved his name) showed interest in her, sexually. The poor darling felt uncomfortable shagging a disabled woman, but it didn't deter him. She felt like a slut, throwing herself at him in such a lewd fashion but he made her feel good. And more importantly, special.

As she diced and sliced vegetables, her thoughts went back to Barry. Being in a relationship with him had been good. But the shock on his face, when he saw her wheelchair bound, told her that Abbott was a much better boyfriend. She hoped the subject of Barry Ryan would not spoil the evening she had planned.

Lynne Becker had Ulysses' full attention, as they ate dinner in the Travel Lodge restaurant where she was staying. "The bottom line is that if we continue to allow bodies attached to brains to run nations we will not and cannot avoid profound social consequences."

"While I agree that political consciousness is a sham these days because no politician has answers or solutions to the severe problems the world faces, the likelihood of bad bots taking over scares the hell out of me."

Lynne chuckled, "The bad bots scenario is a myth. We will always have control of our creations. We have to prepare now. We have to foretell it and anticipate its consequences before we unleash Terminator cops on the streets. Movies like Terminator have helped condition the human mind. People go on about mind control," she laughed, "but Hollywood has been doing it for decades, and nobody realises the fact."

Ulysses waited until he had finished chewing. "The way I see it is that 'Transhumanism' envisages a leap of such magnitude that AI has no restrictions imposed within given directive implications."

She fixed him with her gaze. "I'm beginning to worry about you. Try seeing Transhumanism as a top to bottom revolution, eventually encompassing everything. Then it will be the way of life. Everybody challenges change and loss. Doomsayers have nothing useful to contribute, only fear."

Ulysses topped up the wine glasses. "It seems that we are more socially and politically deranged than in any other period of history. While science might progress in increments, the social consequences require great concentrations of social energy, if we wish to preserve what we value and aspire to in other fields.

"That's romantic nonsense, Ulysses. Just look at the rubbish society values - a Big Mac, the Internet, gambling, football, etc. And as for aspirations, beyond getting the latest pair of Nikes, it's a joke." She took a sip of wine and continued, "The reality is that we need to employ ethical calculus in rewriting subordinate legislations."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean regulations and protocols for trialling new medicines and applying them to the therapeutics goods. The administration has to market new medical products or technological and biological objects interacting with humans. Incremental change this is not! Transhumanism is revolutionary for better or worse."

Ulysses was feeling uncomfortable and completely out of his depth. Her fast answers were blasting him out of the water.

Lynne, seeing his discomfort, started humming 'Over the Rainbow'. He began to relax and not fight her. She had done her job.

Chapter 10

Barney, one of the team's diggers working in the underground chamber, scraped away some loose rock, revealing a small section of a mosaic floor. Barney and the other members of the group had been toiling beneath the Genevan medieval cathedral for three days. Casting his flashlight beam over the area, the partial design he'd revealed looked like a section of the drawing he held.

The assistant, excitedly scraped away more rubble, revealing more of the design. His heart was beating fast. He had found the target of Tom Graham's quest. He took a photo with his mobile and showed it to the site archaeologist.

When Tom saw the mosaic and, in particular, the Black Sun, an icon loved by the Merovingians, his excitement grew. Had he, at last, discovered the principle commanderies of the Priory of Sion? Buoyed by the incredible find, The archaeologist focussed his search in the area of the mosaic floor.

An hour or so later the mystery deepened when, in one of the cathedral's dark recesses, Tom came across the strangest set of relics he was likely to find: a golden chalice and plate. Upon closer scrutiny, the precious items seemed to represent a link between the legends of Cain, Solomon, Christ, and Lucifer.

"My God! I think we have found it!" Tom expounded, attracting the attention of his team, who gathered around him, mouths agape.

"What is it?" Barney asked.

Tom gave one of his lop-sided grins. "These precious artefacts show the so-called 'mark of Cain' - believed to have been inflicted upon Adam's first son. A stone fell from Lucifer's crown during the heavenly battle between his and God's angels. The rock bounced off Cain's forehead."

A team member said, "Are these items linked with the mosaic?"

Tom explained, "According to this legend the mark was in the shape of a red serpent and the gem from Lucifer's crown became a sacred relic, handed down dynastically from father to son. Eventually, King Solomon got hold of it, and he commissioned a master artisan to carve the huge rock into a plate and drinking vessel."

Barney said, "So, is this really Solomon's drinking cup?"

Tom, in his verbal stride, continued, "According to this story these very utensils were later used by Christ at the Last Supper."

"My God! So this is connected with the Grail legend!" one of the workers gasped.

Tom said, "Well, this tale, bizarre though it may be, is emblematic of unambiguous Luciferian symbolism, which regularly recurs in Grail bloodline lore. This symbolism was consciously cultivated by the Merovingians throughout their bloodline."

"One of the team, mesmerised by the artefacts, said, "What a significant find."

Before Tom Graham had a chance to secure the valuable items, piercing screams filled the dark chamber, chilling him to the core. Instinctively he thrust the plate and cup into a rucksack.

Then he saw them. The black shrouds they wore in the darkness made them look like wraiths. Wielding wicked looking swords and clubs, they attacked the team, slashing, cutting and bludgeoning anyone in their path. Tom, panicking and petrified, knew they were after him. He tried beating a retreat with the sacred items in his backpack. The weight of his pack slowed Tom down. With the murderous fiends closing the gap he had to make the most difficult decision of his life, He ditched his prize and raced for a narrow cavern that took him to the surface. The wraiths were too large to follow him. By the time they had found the exit, he had used he was long gone, swallowed up by the city of Geneva.

Under the vicious onslaught of the brutal murderers, none of Tom's team was left alive. A man wearing a black cowled cloak trimmed with gold retrieved the religious relics from the archaeologist's discarded backpack. He turned around to face his men. "Who was responsible for guarding the chamber?"

"Parsons," his right-hand man, Philux, replied.

Parsons, fearing his master's wrath, said, "Humble apologies My Lord. They set up a decoy."

Ignoring him, the dark clad man said, "Make sure nobody else desecrates this temple. Then, looking at the bloody, mutilated forms on the chamber floor, he ordered, "Parsons, burn them and clean up this place." Sonata took Philux aside. "Make sure Parsons sees the error of his ways."

Spain boasts having the most formidable castles in the world. There were over a thousand in Castille alone. Castille, abounding with such massive constructions, was named after them. The main reason for such an abundance of castles was to stop the rampaging Moors, who invaded Spain in 711 AD, from advancing North.

Professor Diablo Francisco Castillo Sonata lived in one such Castle, but Castilla Atienza looked very much like a ruin. The 12th Century castle, built over an Arab fort, that was conquered by the Castilians in 1085 AD, when Alfonso VI conquered Toledo, stood upon a 200-metre high rock. Diablo Sonata leased the ruined castle once he realised Spain was considered the European centre of superstition, sorcery, and magic.

This realisation suited his plans admirably, especially as Castile's reputation as an occult centre was due the discoveries of the famous Moorish alchemists, the first scientists in Europe.

With the onslaught of the of the Spanish Inquisition, alchemy hid in the background. Any interest in occult belief, as it was considered heresy by the Roman Church, was barbarically repressed in the most rigid manner. From the early alchemical magic, Spain wove many fascinating legends.

But many occult customs had been lost, never to be recovered. That was until Diablo Sonata took an interest and studied them diligently. Witches, sorcerers and demons were summoned once more, as the new alchemist built his Spanish power base. But even that was a cover for what was really going on.

During the lamb hotpot course, Abbott told Helen the story of Olivier's mystery disappearance.

Helen, feeling uncomfortable had to come clean. "Abbott, I have a confession to make."

"A confession! About what?" He sat up straight.

"Barry Ryan came here the other day."

The reporter couldn't believe it. "What? And you didn't let me know!"

She became tearful. "Please don't be angry with me. Barry came to say goodbye. He's heading up north."

"North. Where up north?"

"I don't know. Barry wouldn't tell me."

Abbott stared at Helen. "Why did he come to see you? "

"We were friends once when he was part of ARL."

"You were friends with him? Christ, Helen, he was only there as a fucking spy."

Helen began crying "Please don't let it spoil things between us."

Between us, Bloody hell it was only a one-night-stand, he thought. Seeing her sadness, he softened, and hugged her to him, hoping she wouldn't read more into his kind gesture. "Why didn't you tell me he was Abe Lincoln?"

"I wasn't sure at first."

"So when did you find out?"

"After they had imprisoned Olivier."

"You knew I was looking for him. So why didn't you tell me he'd been to see you?"

"If I'd found out where he was going, I would have," she lied - or maybe not.

Abbott went back to his seat. Fixing her with his gaze, he said, "When you were friends did he ever reference any place up north. Does he have any friends or family up there?"

She shook her head, "No, I don't recall him saying anything." Then she said, "But he did say he wasn't the spy."

"Well he would, wouldn't he," Abbott said, with unmasked cynicism.

With dinner over, the used dishes out of sight, and wine in hand Abbott plopped down on the couch. She hadn't asked him to lift her out of the chair, so he didn't offer. Much to his surprise, Helen angled her chair, locked her brakes, lifted her legs one at a time with her hands to get her feet off the foot rest. Then, pushing down on the couch with one hand and using her other hand to push up from one of her big wheels, she managed to make a safe landing on the cushion.

Abbott watched, fascinated, as her lifeless legs wobbled and spread open momentarily; one of her ankles turned over, but she quickly placed her hands on her knees and made the necessary adjustments.

"Well done, Helen. That was a tremendous effort."

"How do you think I do it when nobody is here?" She added, "I'm not entirely helpless you know."

He grinned, "You are unbelievable, except when you let the bad guy get away."

She flushed with anger but let it pass.

He said, "You should see the look on your face just then," Then he burst out laughing.

She laughed as well, realising he was winding her up."

Later, as they lie in bed together, Helen said, "Give me a full body hug. The embrace led to a kiss, tentative at first; then it became increasingly passionate.

Abbott felt his manhood asserting itself. He had sworn to himself this was not going to happen again. His penis decided otherwise. He broke from the kiss, reached over, grasped the hem of her top, and pulled it upward. Helen raised her arms, allowing the garment to come off.

"So," he said, looking her in her ocean blue eyes, "you have no problem with me doing that?"

She laughed and said, "Nope!" She then took his hands and cupped them over her very attractive breasts.

He kneaded them lightly, gently.

"You have a nice, soft touch," Helen murmured, rubbing the back of his head, moaning softly, appreciatively.

Abbott rolled over on top of her. He gently pushed her useless legs apart and entered her with an urgency that surprised him.

"Fuck me now," Helen gasped into his ear.

He complied.

Diablo was outside, watching the moon, as its reflected sunlight played on the wall of the ruined castle. He turned to the girl from the nearby village. "Dance in the Moonlight for me."

She had done this before. The Diabolus master paid well. She shrugged off her peasant dress, the only clothing she wore for the occasion and began a sensual dance in front of him. Some of the girls from the brothel didn't want to be with him. Sometimes he was very cruel and hit them with a riding crop he always carried.

Sometimes he was very kind and gave them extra money. It seemed to have nothing to do with the way they behaved toward him. She never knew what to expect. Sometimes he told a story, while she danced, like on this occasion.

He began, "Doctor Eugenio Torralvo was the physician to the family of the Admiral of Castile. He formed an intimacy with a Senor Alfonso, a free thinker, who had changed his faith from Judaism to Mohammedan and then to Christianity."

He looked at the girl, the way the moonlight danced over her body, the way she gyrated around him.

He continued. "Alfonso introduced him to a Dominican monk called Brother Pietro, who told Torralvo that he had in his service a good angel named Zequid. This angel had no equal in the spiritual world as a seer. But Zequid had a disinterested temperament and only served those who had complete confidence in him and deserved his attachment."

The girl was slowing down. Diablo switched the crop against his leg. She knew what was coming. If she tried to escape, he would set his dogs on her. That or she would be thrown down the rocks. She sensibly stayed within the marked dancing area.

He continued, "This excited Torralvo's curiosity. He was fortunate or otherwise, to have a love of mystery deeply implanted. When Pietro proposed to hand over Zequid into Torralvo's keeping the offer was eagerly accepted."

"Dance faster," Diablo ordered, the crop hitting against his left boot.

He continued the tale. "Zequid approved the change of master, assuring Tarralvo he would always do his bidding."

Diablo lunged forward and caught the girl across her buttocks with the switch. "She yelped in pain, as she tried dodging him, while still keeping within the dancing boundaries. He hit her across the shoulders, the breasts, the thighs, laughing as she cried out in pain. "He said, "Life is painful senorita. Get used to it."

The Prof sat in Jack's cafe. That was nothing new. He was hunched over the table, his beard nearly touching it. There was nothing new about that. He wore his long grey greatcoat. That was usual as well.

However, there was something different about him. The regulars sensed this, but nobody could put their finger on what it was. Even Abbott, when he arrived, couldn't understand it. They started their lunchtime game, as usual. Abbott was back to burger and chips.

The Prof asked, "Do you know what the four turning points were that Western history developed from?"

A question, not a bald statement! This approach is different, Abbott thought. "I haven't given it any thought."

"Okay, One, the concept of ideal beauty, two, rational enquiry into nature, three, compassion for individual human liberty and four, moderation."

"Oh," was all Abbott could offer.

The Prof continued, "Platonic philosophy explained that the basis for these pivot points belonged to what earlier civilisations referred to as 'sacred geometry'." The old man paused to move a pawn.

Abbott munched on his burger. "What, like the flower of life pattern?"

"Yes, but Sacred Geometry is not just about shapes. It is about sound vibration, The Platonic solids, five basic shapes of Sacred Geometry, are three dimension geometric forms of which all faces are alike. And each platonic solid represents one of the five elements of creation, the fifth being Aether. They comprise the alchemical dance of the elements and of Creation itself. My introduction to the spiritual power of sound began with an experience of this truth."

Abbott moved a bishop to threaten a knight. "What experience was that, Prof?"

"I found that I loved Plato. Well, not the man, his 'Science for Ethical Ends'. I discovered that Plato believed music was the strongest of all life's influences. In his treatise the Timaeus, he described the numerical (vibrational-musical) creation of the physical universe and the soul that animates it."

Abbott added, "Many traditional cultures believe a profound acoustic event, personified by sonic gods, created their world."

The Prof poured himself more tea. "Indeed. People in such cultures live intimately close to nature and regard natural objects and processes as having thoughts and wills just like those of humans. Therefore, natural sounds are interpreted as the voices of spirits and gods."

Becoming excited, the journalist said, "Those voices must have originated from a powerfully creative sonic source. Maybe the Big Bang?"

The Prof, on his track, said, "Plato got his students to activate ancient shrines and temples with sacred song, to echo the harmonies of the Heavenly Choir."

Abbott brightened, "So if sound creates shape and light makes the colours, everything that exists is light and sound."

"You learn well. Indeed, Plato, in his 'Republic' said the cosmos was held together by eight spinning 'whorls', like a giant spinning wheel. These eight female weavers brought the fabric of the cosmos into being with pure sound. Each of the whorls contained a planet. And on each planet was a siren who sang her particular note and emitted her particular colour."

Abbott said, excitedly, "So that's what Plato meant when he stated 'All is geometry'."

"Well, Abbott, it certainly starts that way with us. In mammalian conception when the sperm meets the egg, the tail morphs into the centriole, which has ends shaped like a hexagon."

Changing the subject, the journalist fixed the Prof with his gaze. "So what is it that's changed about you?"

The Prof smiled, It was time to invite Abbott to his place. "Are you ready for some seriously weird stuff?"

Weird stuff! He was having a sexual relationship with a disabled person, his home got trashed, and his life threatened. On top of this, his client had disappeared. Hell, his life was weird. Abbott grinned, "It can't get much weirder, Prof."

He was wrong!

Nobody at Lynsey Hall had any idea what Dayton Lynsey did, on his 'business' trips abroad. Not even Margaret, his wife. When they were first married, Margaret showed an interest in going away with her husband on, what he called, family business. She was family and thought she'd like to go. He couldn't allow it of course and had to put his foot down. She hadn't asked him since, and never even asked him where he'd been.

And that suited him just fine. The work he carried out was imperative, but only those in the Soter Group knew about it. Dayton knew, to protect his family, it had to be that way. He was on his way to the east wing, where he had his study when one of the housemaids informed him he had a visitor.

Dayton wasn't expecting anybody, and no one just turned up without an appointment. The maid added, "He said to tell you he's Mad, your Lordship."

Mad! Dayton wondered what had made the interloper angry? Although not a smoker, Lord Lynsey donned his smoking jacket. It gave him an aristocratic air while still acting casually. It sent visitors a message that Dayton was king of his castle.

He entered the parlour, where his mystery guest was waiting. Then he saw who it was. Mad Rodney Maddox! Dayton hadn't seen him for years. He had done well in politics and ended up directing 'Six', as MI6 was affectionately known. The question was why the chief of spooks had turned up unannounced on his doorstep?

Rodney Maddox had put on a bit around the middle since Dayton had last seen him. He stood erect, though, a hangover from his Sandhurst days. "Well well, if it's not Madman Maddox, in the flesh. What brings you to my lair?"

Rodney took in the dapper, trim looking gentleman with the shaved pate, sporting a Vandyke beard. "You look positively evil old man,"

He took the director by the arm, "Come with me to the Arbour, where we can have some privacy." Dayton clapped his hands, and a nearby maid came running,

"Angela, Coffee and eclairs for two, in the arbour."

"Yes, my Lord," she said, scampering off to the kitchen.

They sat in a safe outdoor setting in the rose arbour. It had been raining, leaving the rose fragrance heavy in the air.

"I never tire of smelling the roses," Dayton said.

Rodney said, "That business in Palestine has had repercussions." He waited for Dayton to take the bait.

"What business would that be?"

"Come on Dayton. I know the score, So you can't fool me."

"If this is about some foreign adventure why aren't I talking to MI5?"

"This is off the record. I'm doing you a bloody favour, though God knows why," the director said, feeling things were going well.

"And you reckon I owe you," Dayton didn't like where this was going.

The refreshments arrived. Rodney was about to smack the maid on her cute behind. Dayton's intense look made the Six-boss back off.

Rodney picked up his coffee, "Now here's the thing, old boy. Derek is spitting chips and is after your blood."

Pleading ignorance, Dayton said, "What exactly am I supposed to have done?"

"Oh come on old man. You were bloody well in Ramallah when the Hamas man was shot."

"Yes, by his rival. Don't you guys read the papers these days?"

Seeing as he wasn't making any headway, Rodney sighed, picked up a chocolate éclair and smiled.

Dayton, catching his gesture, said, "Cook makes them. Bloody good they are too."

The MI6 Director said, "The FS is off to a trades meeting in Moscow. We want you to go with the UK party specifically to do what you do best. You know, the larger picture stuff."

Dayton cocked an eyebrow. Go to Russia and do what?"

Watch the FS's back mostly. Find out who's likely to try and shaft us and by what method. That sort of thing."

"It isn't my bag. Surely you've got trained bodies at six who are good at this type of stuff."

"The PM asked for you."

"Me specifically! Why? I've been out of field work for years now. Why would the PM want a rusty old warhorse like me?"

Rodney laughed, "Who are you trying to kid? We don't know what you're doing out there in the big wide world but we sure as hell know you are doing it. Carry out this little favour for us, and we won't look too closely. Well, at this time anyhow."

"Impossible, Ulysses," Dr Feely said when being presented with the new deadline for the 'Atlas' arm.

With just him and her in her office, shut off from the rest of the production floor, Ulysses said, "Janet, this a directive, not an option."

"Then we won't have time to complete the tests. Are you willing to take the risk of the arm fucking up in front of DARPA?"

Ulysses shook his head, disappointed, "You never used to be defeatist, Janet. You were always a can-do person. That's what Impressed me when I gave you this job. Where's that can do spirit gone?"

She wasn't falling for that. "Ulysses, I take pride in my work. So I want all eventualities covered when we attach our arm to the DARPA robot."

He tried a different tack. "Janet, I apologise for assuming you were up to this task. I will bring in a senior robotics person to work with you. It's going to cut into the bottom line but if that what it takes to complete the task, so be it."

Fuck you, Ulysses, she thought. Staring daggers at her boss, she snapped, "I don't need anyone to help me run this department. What I do need is enough time to get the job done. I may be able to shave off, say a week. That's my bottom line."

"We need two months."

Exasperated, she retorted, "How about I resign, and you can get this hot shot honcho to come in and do a crap job to meet your American friend's unreasonable deadline."

He knew that to replace her at this stage of development would be even more disastrous. "There's no need to be hasty, Janet. We have always reached amicable arrangements before. I'm sure we can do so this time. Leave it with me."

Of course, she was going to leave it with him. It was his problem; he was the one letting the Yanks run roughshod over their project.

Abbott could hardly believe his eyes. Surely the person who opened the door couldn't be the Prof. The elderly man was wearing a ironed and creased cotton embroidered Indian shirt over loose pants. He'd even trimmed his straggly beard. "Prof, is that really you?"

"Come in, Abbott, and I will tell you a story. I only ask that you suspend any disbelief until I have finished."

"Sure," the reporter answered, wondering what he was getting himself into."

They sat in arm chairs in the Prof's small lounge room, and he began, "My name is Harold. I don't know where I was born and I never met my birth parents. A priest found me abandoned on the steps of St, Michael's Church, in a little place called Bray. That was over 70 years ago. And a lot of extraordinary things have happened to me since then."

Abbott sat there bored but remained patient.

The Prof smiled, "I know this is probably tedious for you but it gets better, much better. My stepmother, Eveline Scholfield, did volunteer work at the church. When Father Brassington showed me to her, her response, so she told me, was "'Poor little mite, all alone in this big cruel world".

Apparently, the Scholfields were childless but wanted children. So they adopted me. As I grew up, my stepfather was very strict with me. I was bundled off to boarding school. It was there that my real adventure began. My favourite tutor, Geoffrey Huffington, loved mythology and told exciting stories of far off lands, brave heroes, wizards, sorcerers, holy and wise people. I couldn't get enough of this magical, mystical world of the past.

But it was the subject of Atlantis that most interested me. Although it was considered a myth, many naturalists, geologists, zoologists and botanists thought it might have been more than mere legend. They wondered if Plato was signalling to us, with slight amplification, a page from the actual history of humanity. No affirmation was yet permissible, but it seemed increasingly evident to me that a vast region, continental, or comprised of large islands, had sunk, west of the Pillars of Hercules, now called the Straits of Gibraltar. And that Atlantis disappeared in the not too distant past."

"Atlantis!" The reporter sneered, "Many wackos have been looking for that pot of gold."

"Admittedly, I was young and impressionable, and I'm thankful for that, Abbott. Because once we lose our sense of magic, the sense of incredible adventure in life, we embark on our entropic journey to death."

Abbott stared at the man he knows of as the Prof. "So you still believe it it!"

Harold smiled through his much neater beard. "In any event, I became obsessed with that great mystical island civilisation. At University I became convinced that if Atlantis sank, then it is still there, in the depths of the vast Atlantic.

As it was unlikely, we couldn't solve the mystery without the aid of oceanography, the AOG (Atlantis Obsessives Group) of which I became a proud member, chartered a vessel, fitted with sonar, to see if we could detect the ruins of such a civilisation."

Abbott, beginning to show interest, said, "So, did you find anything?"

"Only how vast the ocean is. I also learned that this was not the way to locate Atlantis."

"What other way is there?"

"I began wondering if Atlantis was there all the time but we just couldn't sense it."

"Surely it's either there, or it's not."

The old man smiled, wistfully. "This may seem a little crazy, but I assure you it isn't that simple. I became interested in dimensional shifts. I had an idea that Atlantis still existed but in a different dimensional reality. Convinced of this I set out to find how I could tap into the reality, in which Atlantis still existed."

"I see what you mean about weirdness," Abbott scoffed.

Ignoring the reporter's cynicism, the Prof continued, "Many learned people believe in an impending dimensional shift that will defy the physics of past, present, and future; all three will exist in a moment of non-space-time when all experience will be available spontaneously."

"Are you referring to the Singularity?"

"Put on it what label you like. The thing is that I found a way to experience it and It is as Plato reported."

Abbott stared at the Prof, wide-eyed. "You went to Atlantis?" he said, sensing his suspended disbelief faltering.

It is the most advanced culture you could come across. I was welcomed there because I had passed through the veil that separated the two realities. They said I was the first, since Plato."

"You mean Plato experienced it first hand?"

"He couldn't write that of course. They would have killed him as a madman."

Now Abbott was interested. "So what was it like there?"

The Prof smiled, "Would you like to know?"

"Of course."

Are you willing to do what it takes for however long it takes?"

Abbott thought about that. "What does that mean?"

Are you willing to surrender to my teachings for your preparation?"

"What does it involve?"

The Prof tutted. "Clearly you're not ready for such an awesome responsibility. I had to be my teacher. I made many mistakes; I only had my instincts and intuition to go by. But I can save you a lot of time and trouble."

Chapter 11

Olivier Leroy checked the small print on his phone app map again. He's eyesight was much sharper now, and the headaches were less frequent. The old Commodore wagon was overheating again, so

the athlete had to stop and let it cool down. He was only a few kilometres from Cairns, a provincial city, in North Queensland. The city had a long urban layout that runs from the south, at Edmonton, to the north, at Ellis Beach.

Somewhere between these two points, Olivier hoped to find Barry Ryan, the man who helped have him put away. It was not going to be a friendly reunion. He remembered Abe Lincoln said something about working at a restaurant called 'The Green Ant Cantina'. The odd name stuck in his mind. The chances were that Barry Ryan chose Cairns for a reason. Olivier guessed he had contacts there. With nothing better to go on, checking out his old working haunt gave him a place to start.

The old Commodore limped into the city and somehow managed to get to 183 Bunda St. The old timber building had THE GREEN ANT written across the front. Olivier checked out the menu. He went for something called 'world famous chunky chip'. The waitress, named Lou, according to her badge, was all smiles and freckles, as she placed his meal in front of him. He was very conscious of her stunning breasts, as he asked her, "I came up here looking for a friend. He's name is Barry Ryan. I heard he worked here."

The waitress shook her beautiful head. "Nobody working here is called Barry, sorry."

"He told me he worked here. But it could have been a few years back."

"I wouldn't know. I've only been here a few months. Danny might know, though. He's the manager."

"Any chance that I could ask him?"

"Sure. Danny's out back. I'll tell him."

Olivier flashed a huge smile. "Thanks, you're a sweetheart."

As he settled down to his chips and coffee a young, upbeat guy, in his late twenties, sat down opposite.

"Lou tells me you're looking for someone who used to work here."

Olivier put down his cutlery. "Yes, he's called Barry Ryan. Do you know him?"

"Yes, He worked here a few years back. He had a weird type of beard back then."

Olivier's mind was in overdrive. This guy Danny said 'back then', which suggested he might have seen him since. "Have you seen him in the last few days?"

"Yes, he dropped by looking for a job. It's off season at present, so I took his details."

"That's great. Can you let me have Barry's contact info?"

"Sorry mate, we don't give out private information to strangers. Look. You leave your name and number, and I make sure he gets them. It's the best I can offer."

Olivier felt like grabbing the smug little bastard and beating it out of him. He sighed, "That doesn't work for me. But I'll leave my number with you," he said, grabbing his pen.

Hotel Lotte, near Lotte Plaza, an upmarket shopping precinct, was booked for the trade talks. The Russians chose it as it's a very convenient location, near Novij Arbat, Starij Arbat and the Metro

station Smolenskaya. Dayton was impressed with the state-of-the-art technology and the degree of comfort the hotel provided. He would never have guessed the luxury hotel was in a former communist country. He stepped outside with Viktor Smenki, a senior officer in the SVR directorate.

Viktor showed off Moscovite affluence as the pair strolled down Arbat Street, famous for its cute cafes and street entertainment. Dayton was surprised to see a Starbucks with a sign written in Russian. The Englishman found out this was Viktor's goal all along.

As they drank American coffee, Dayton quizzed Viktor on a few things. "Why does this charade warrant the presence of our Foreign Intelligence Service?"

The almost Brezhnev look-alike wearing an Italian suit, said, "A lot is at stake here. We take this trade summit very seriously."

Dayton sipped his coffee. "So who are the power people pushing these talks?"

"Do you mean the politicians?"

"The pawnicians, you mean."

Viktor looked blank, then burst out laughing. "Excellent English humour. Like the pawn in Chess." Then he said, "You don't have a very high regard for politicians?"

"I don't have a high regard for red-tape when we need to get a job done quickly and efficiently." He eyed the Russian spook boss. "You and I could help each other."

"How?"

We make a trade. My information on who's pushing this trade circus from our side of the fence and you tell me what's going on here."

Viktor could see sense in what the mysterious Englishman was saying. But the man was a wild card, with no discernible credentials. "Why do you want to know these things?"

It was a reasonable question. Dayton said, "To be frank, Viktor, I'm here under duress. I have particular skills in grasping complex relationships and making them understandable for dummies, namely ministers and their political staffers. So I want to wrap this up as soon as possible. With your intelligence concerning the big players behind the scene, I can build my jigsaw much more quickly.

My information for you will of course help boost your data banks regarding the kind of heavy hitters who are likely to want to get their grubby little hands on your natural resources."

Viktor grinned. He was beginning to like this eccentric Englishman who, like him, had better things to do than babysitting a bunch of spoiled politicians. "I think we can do business."

They reached over the narrow table and shook hands. Neither of them noticed the woman in the next booth, taking photos of them with her mobile phone.

Olivier had been staying at the Caravella Backpackers for two days with no word from Barry. He was disappointed but not surprised. Even if the guy at the Green Ant had passed on his number, he didn't expect the man who snitched on him and got him two years in gaol, to call for a chat.

Still, the weather was great, and there were plenty of sexy women walking around in bikinis. Eye candy always helped improve his mood. As he walked along the esplanade, past boats taking punters out to the Great Barrier Reef, his phone rang. It was Barry. "Hi, Oli. Danny gave me your number."

"I'm glad you called man. I went to see Helen, but she wouldn't give me your contact, and we need to talk."

"Sure thing. Let's meet at the 'Ant' for lunch."

Olivier couldn't believe it. The prick was treating him like some long-lost buddy.

The first thing that Olivier noticed about the tall, gangly Barry was his clean shaven face. The ridiculous beard had gone, along with his Abe Lincoln identity. Anger was welling up in him, as Barry plunked himself in the seat opposite. "It's great to see you mate. It's been a long time."

Olivier searched the dobber's face, for any trace of guilt. The bastard wasn't showing any signs. It was as though he had wiped the whole saga from his memory.

"First of all, I'm not your fucking mate. Secondly, I've come all the way up here to find out why you set me up."

Barry knew all that. "So how did you find me?"

He was avoiding the issue, making Olivier, even more, pissed off. "That doesn't matter. I want you to tell me why you were spying for fucking Heron Robotics."

Barry looked the Black guy straight in the eye. "I wasn't the spy."

Olivier didn't know whether to laugh or yell out "Of course you were their fucking snoop. You worked for the bastards. Or are you going to deny that as well?"

Barry smiled, "Mate, sure I worked for them, as a security guard. That was to find out what they were up to."

"Do you expect me to believe this crap? If you weren't their fucking Snoop, who was?"

"I can't tell you that. But I can tell you what I found out."

"What was that?"

"They were doing some illegal experiments with stem cells. They were concerned that ARL knew about it."

That at least made sense to Olivier. "How did they know about ARL? Shit, we weren't exactly the big time in the activist league."

"I told them."

There was silence. Then Olivier said, "So you were their spy."

"It wasn't like that. I never doxed in ARL. I just told my boss that ARL might know about the illegal research. It was a dumb thing to do, and I regret it, but I wasn't responsible for you being put away."

"Who was then?"

"I can't say. But I was not the only ARL member working at Heron Robotics."

Not the only one. The phrase hovered in Olivier's mind. "Who else worked there then?"

"I can't say, mate. I made a promise. I have to keep it."

That was it. Olivier had been boiling up inside. He jumped up, "FUCKING LIAR! THIS STORY IS ALL FUCKING BULLSHIT! YOU'RE JUST TOO MUCH OF A COWARD TO ADMIT YOU DID IT!"

Some diners looked up. Others focussed on their food. It wasn't their fight.

Danny raced in from the kitchen. "What's going on here?"

"It's private, so fuck off," Olivier said, pushing the young manager back.

Lou reached for the phone. "I'll get the police."

Christ, he was on parole. "No, it's okay. I'll calm down."

Daniel said, "I don't know what your problem is but take it outside."

Barry was angry. He shouldn't have suggested the Green Ant for their meeting. He stood up and left the restaurant. Olivier followed him outside.

Catching up with Barry, Olivier said, "I haven't finished yet. I want to know who else worked there."

Barry turned on him. "And I told you I wouldn't dox on them."

"Well fuck you, man. I'll find out for myself. And if I find you've been lying I will come and get you. Got it?"

"Whatever, man," Barry said, walking away.

Olivier just stood there, fixed to the spot, not knowing whether to follow Barry. Then the headache struck, making him dizzy and nauseous.

Abbott was feeling decidedly odd. He had eventually sorted his place out, but he didn't feel comfortable there. The knowledge that some stranger had violated his private space was still unnerving. But it wasn't just that that had him feeling unsettled. To find out the Prof, one of his few anchors in life, wasn't the strange old guy he played chess with, messed with another of his comfort zones.

Then there was the beautiful but needy Helen. She had left three messages he had not answered. The case was going nowhere. Phil was on his back about that and, to top it all, the person who

trashed his home could well be lurking somewhere, waiting to damage his person. Then there was this whole crazy Atlantis fantasy.

Speculation was rife at Jack's that day. Various opinions abounded. "The old bugger is probably lying dead on some bench," was one view. Another was, "He's probably caught some bug that's laid him flat." Jack asked Abbott, "What's happened to the Prof?"

Abbott couldn't help. He was equally surprised by the empty table and unplayed chess game. And he was hardly going to tell Jack the Prof was looking for Atlantis. "My guess is as good as yours." And it was. He had no idea what had happened to the old man. As he left the cafe, Abbott's mind, filled with wonderment about the Prof, missed the fact that three biker types were bearing down on him. One of the three yelled "GALLAGHER."

Abbott snapped back to the present, spun round. Seeing the three bikers, the journalist sensing trouble, instantly took to his heels and ran.

This response was what Nick wanted - a bit of sport before the kill. He and the others took off in hot pursuit.

Abbott instinctively ran across Kennedy Drive, narrowly missing cars coming from each direction. He headed into the park and ran towards the water. Jibes and barbs from his pursuers, stung Abbott's ears, as the reporter raced past picnickers, dog walkers and small groups of people taking no notice of this plight.

Panting heavily, out of breath, he had to stop, had to rest, had to find a weapon. A piece of wood, a stone with which to defend himself. He felt cornered. Surely they wouldn't attack him with all those people around. His eyes darted around as the trio of tattooed toughs advanced, swinging chains and holding baseball bats.

Nick Gibbon, with a chain wrapped around his right knuckles, advanced, "So, Mr Gallagher, you took my warning much too lightly."

Abbott tried speaking, but no words came out.

"What, cat got yer tongue?" He jerked his fist at Abbott's face, causing the journalist to flinch. "You must have thought it was an idle threat."

"No. It scared the shit out of me."

"Is that right? Then why are you still snooping into the Leroy case?"

"Because it's my job."

"And this is mine." Nick turned to his men. "Grab him. He's coming for a little ride."

Abbott felt helpless, manhandled to where the thugs had a transit van parked. Many people had watched the drama unfold. None had offered to become involved. Nick Gibbon was a good judge of human character. Abbott knew once they got him in the van, he would be totally at their mercy, probably never to be heard of again. Nick opened one of the back doors, as the thugs holding Abbott's arms forced him into the back of the van.

Suddenly the journalist saw a slim chance of escape. It was perilous, but it was the only shot he had. Abbott, kicking upwards with both feet, hit the closed door as hard as he could. The resistance threw him backwards, taking two of the bikers with him. All three crashed to the ground, with Abbott crushing the wind out of one of the thugs.

As Abbott instinctively rolled away one of the bikers grabbed the journalist and dragged him to his feet. Abbott yelled for help as Nick's chained hand hit him hard in the stomach. Number two came at him with a baseball bat. Passers-by stopped, taking notice of the fight. Mobile phones were in hands.

Abbott, protecting his face from the blows, felt his ribs crack. The whine of police car sirens saved him from a further beating. The thugs, alerted by the sirens, jumped in their van and roared off with a screech of tyres. Abbott had never felt such pain. He was still conscious and wished he wasn't.

Francisco Castillo Sonata added the Diablo to his name, once he knew his mission in life. As a graduate student, in Florence, reading comparative religions, his curiosity about the old Mystery Schools filled him with a boundless passion. He was one of those people, fortunate or otherwise, in whom the love of mystery has been deeply implanted, from a young age. Even then he had no idea of his particular calling.

Then, one day he heard a voice from within. It was more of a sensation than an audible voice. It told him it was called Zequiél and was happy to serve him in any way he pleased. Whatever it was, he knew it was an asset, and he called himself Diablo in commemoration of this revelation.

Whoever, or whatever this Zequiél was it pledged to follow Francisco's service as long as he lived, and wherever he was obliged to go. There was nothing very startling about the voice. It was laid back but quietly persistent. From this time onward Zequiél made his presence felt to Diablo at every change of the moon, and as often as the academic required his services, which was generally for the purpose of transporting him in a short space of time to distant places.

This ability was a trick that Diablo practised often. During this period he resided in Florence, but he felt a strong desire to return to Spain, the land of his birth. He had big ideas but no finances. So he left Italy, vowing never to return to Spain until he was wealthy and influential. America was still then the land of great opportunity for a man with a compelling vision.

Because of Castilla Atienza, standing on a 200-metre rock, over a former Arab castle, Professor Sonata had a lift installed. The workers were not allowed to leave the castle while they were under contract. The three engineers did not take to this kindly, but the above average fee mollified them somewhat. Then there was the problem that they might tell others about the remote castle in the Atienza ruins. Then one day there wasn't a problem. The local police officer found the work truck abandoned. There was no explanation, and the workers were never heard of again.

As the Professor and Philux were descending in the lift, he turned to his superior, "Set up a meeting with the Mayor at 2 pm. And while you're in town, post this."

Philux looked at the small package in his hand. He knew what it meant and secretly smiled. The lift came to a halt. Philux left and walked up to what looked like a solid stone wall. He went to a hidden lever, pulled it downwards and a cliff door opened onto the dusty plain. He then walked to the transport section. The resident mechanic handed him some keys with the number four. He went to the fourth vehicle in the large garage. He got in and started up the Suzuki Vitara, then drove carefully out of the rock wall, the door of which closed behind him.

The big conference room was locked, once all the delegates had taken their seats. SVR agents stood by each entrance. Dayton met up with Viktor outside the venue. As they passed, each surreptitiously gave the other a disc. Then they went their separate ways. Dayton went back to his suite, ordered up room service and sat down at his laptop.

It was common knowledge that Russian politics had been dominated over the last decade or more by the relationship between the so-called oligarchs and the state. Oligarchs, the super-wealthy business people, governing the economy, as well as the political system, under Yeltsin, had far more to cope with under Vladimir Putin.

Dayton had been studying them on the plane to Moscow. Existing research had shown the oligarchs, and their relationship with the Russian state, to be damning on two grounds: they obtained their wealth and power corruptly, and rapaciously stripped the assets over which they had so dubiously gained ownership. That was the general picture. Now Dayton needed specifics.

He inserted the disc, then responded to the knock at his door. Lunch had arrived. After tipping the waiter, he took his lunch and sat down to study the contents of the disc Viktor had given him. One key player stood out. Alexander Karimov, head of Ivraz Holding, Russia's largest steel and coal producer. Beginning in 1998, he had amassed the largest steel and iron empire in Russia, which employed 125,000 people, controlled about thirty-two percent of the country's total steel output and had an annual turnover of \$20 billion.

The Forbes list of billionaires for 2011 estimated Karimov's net worth around \$8.5 billion. Dayton figured he was worth investigating. Not so much regarding his possible power play behind the scenes. Rather as a prospect in a much more dangerous game. Dayton quickly finished his lunch. He had to see someone.

Fersman Mineralogical Museum was founded in 1716 in St Petersburg, as a mineral cabinet, of Kunstkamera. As a base for this 'Mineral Cabinet', a collection of 1195 specimens was bought by Gotvald, a doctor of medicine from Danzig, at the behest of Tsar Peter the Great.

This collection was enriched by the material from Russian deposits and opened for public view in 1719. A great fire destroyed virtually the whole collection in December 1747. Only the most valuable items were saved, including the 'Silver Horn'.

In 1836 the Kunstkamera was divided into seven separate museums, including the Mineralogical Museum, which the Russian government moved to the new building. In 1898 the museum was significantly expanded and having been renamed the Geological Museum, was transferred from St Petersburg to Moscow in 1934 together with the Russian Academy of Sciences. Thirty railway carriages were required to move the museum's collection of more than 60,000 specimens.

The relocation and setting up of the exhibition took three years of active work. In 1936 and 1937 the museum organised independent exhibitions in Moscow. It was here that the English Lord arranged to meet his contact.

Petr Molova was instructed to make sure the Englishman recognised him by his moskovium fur hat, which, as the day's temperature was mild, made him feel hot and uncomfortable. Soon a man of small stature, also wearing similar headgear, approached him.

Having removed their hats, the pair, feeling much more comfortable, exchanged greetings and entered the museum. There were few visitors, so the two men were able to talk relatively freely. "I need to know the background of Alexander Karimov," Dayton said, coming straight to the point.

"He is well publicised as the great energy hero of our nation. That information is easy to come by, so why do you need us?"

"Because I want the details we cannot find in Pravda: his childhood; his education; his military service; and most importantly, how he amassed his great wealth. In short, I need to if he has been recruited and when. We need to ascertain if he is a Diabolus target."

Petr said, "What makes you think he is one of them?"

Dayton looked around at the cases of magnificent specimens, to see if anyone was taking an interest in their conversation. Satisfied the coast was clear, he showed the Russian a picture of Karimov on his phone; he made it larger with his finger and thumb.

Petr stared at the image. Then he said "I see what you mean. You may well be right."

Dayton knew the ring on Karimov's finger would swing the argument. "Of course it's not enough by itself. But if the sect has turned him, neutralising him would be a major coup."

"I will get back to you soon."

Harold realised he was out of practice. He had been too direct and scared the poor guy off. Maybe the Prof had left his run too late. They had told him to beware of that, but he had not listened. Or perhaps taken his eye off the ball. He had become too indulgent in his sense of self-importance. He had been privy to a wonderment that defied all description. Something that, in the minds of most people had been relegated to the level of myth.

There were enough archaeological, religious, geographic, and mythological pieces of evidence to suggest, even at a mundane level that Atlantis existed and disappeared between twelve and thirteen thousand years ago. There was no doubt in Harold's mind. He had been there but told no one, except Abbott, whom he hadn't seen around. Had he divulged such a thing, the jealousy, fear and ignorance of others would have had him institutionalised. But he had to tell someone. Someone who would listen.

TALES OF SPANISH MAGIC AND SORCERY. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/lrs/lrs14.htm>

LIBRIS - Russia's oil barons and metal... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://libris.kb.se/bib/12519286>

Fersman Mineralogical Museum - Wikipedia. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fersman_Mineralogical_Museum

History of the Tlingit Collections of the MAE (Kunstkamera ... (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.kunstkamera.ru/files/press/Tlingit-release-attachment_eng.pdf

Chapter 12

"Where am I?" Abbott groaned, focusing his one open eye on the nurse at the bottom of his bed.

Replacing the clipboard, she said, "You're in Tweed Hospital. The doctor will be in to see you soon."

Tweed Hospital? How did he get there? Then the memories flooded back. Still sedated he drifted back to sleep.

"What the hell happened to you?" Phil said, sitting by the bed, eating the grapes he had brought for Abbott.

Abbott, hearing a familiar voice jerked back to consciousness.

The reporter knew he must look a sight. "The prick that trashed my place made good his threat."

The editor shifted on the plastic chair. "How's the story going?"

Just then another man entered the room. He introduced himself as Detective Sergeant Jones. He turned to Phil. "I need to ask Mr Gallagher some questions if you don't mind," he said, nodding towards the door.

"I have only just got here. I need to ..." the editor protested, cut off mid-stream.

"This is police business, and I need to ask Mr Gallagher some questions."

With Phil Rosendale reluctantly gone, DS Jones asked, "Do you know the men who attacked you?"

"No."

"Do you know why they attacked you?"

"Not really, unless it's to do with a story I'm writing."

The officer's eyebrows raised slightly. "Oh, and what story would that be?"

"Nothing that would incur this sort of wrath."

Disappointed in losing a possible motive, DS Jones moved on. "Can you give a description of the men who attacked you?"

"There were a lot of witnesses. Surely they ..."

"Your description would be very helpful sir."

"Well, they were dressed like bikers. The ringleader, Nick I think his name is, had long dark hair, was unshaven and had tattoos on his arms, hands and neck. I can't recall much else."

"Can you remember what the tattoos looked like?"

Abbott grimaced, "No. My mind was on other things - like survival."

The detective placed his card on the table, next to what was left of the grapes. "If you remember anything else that might help ..."

Abbott interrupted, "They had a grey Ford Transit, early model. Didn't get the number."

DS Jones smiled, "Yes, we have that description."

When Phil came back in, he said, "So what's happening with the story?"

"This," Abbott said, referring to his two cracked ribs and bruised face. "Look, I need you to follow up something for me."

"About the story?"

"Yes," Abbott lied. "Have you got pen and paper?"

Phil took out his notebook and pen. "Why?"

"I need you to contact this guy. Tell him what happened. He'll know what to do."

"It all sounds a bit, cryptic mate."

"Just do it. it's important."

Phil took down the details. "Sure. I'll see to it."

Mayor Santisima was not looking forward to the meeting. He had met Francisco Sonata on just two occasions and found him to be extremely manipulative. Although Senor Sonata hadn't lived in Atienza for long, he had quickly cultivated favour among the more influential in the town. He was also a leading arts benefactor who had donated to various local causes, such as the San Gil Religious Art Museum and the San Bartolome Paleontology Museum.

The Mayor looked at the clock. It was almost two. He straightened his waistcoat and steeled himself.

Professor Francisco Sonata was all smiles, as he entered the Mayoral office. "Hello, Senor Santisima. Thank you for seeing me at such short notice."

As if I had a choice, the Mayor thought. "A pleasure, as always," he answered. "So how can I help you?"

"Oh, a mere trifle my friend," Francisco said, brushing it off. "How is our latest project going?"

Mayor Santisima had spent Council funds on setting up the 'Strategic Frontier' project, at Francisco's behest. "We are ready to start on the village's urban structure, emphasising the role Attunes has played. We now need you to fulfil your pledge with your generous offer."

The Professor sat down, "Organise some refreshment please," he said, removing his black fedora. "I will arrange a transfer of funds, but I will need to know your account number."

The Mayor ordered coffee and biscuits. Then the Municipal leader tentatively handed the professor the bank details. "We look forward to receiving your generous contribution."

"There is just one proviso."

"Oh."

"You know the origins of Atienza go back to the pre-historic era."

"Yes, of course."

"The clearest detail of this village's military and frontier calling are the 11th - 13th-century walls that surround it." And the ruins of the castle but he wasn't going into that. "As far as religious architecture is concerned parts of several Roman temples remain. I want something to be placed within each of these holy sites, according to my explicit instructions. Is that clear?"

Puzzled, the Mayor said, "What is this something?"

"Oh, just a shield design, which I will provide."

"I will have to put it before the Council. once I have seen what you propose"

"Of course Mr Mayor. Now, when did you want that transfer to take place?"

Santisima got the unspoken meaning. What harm could putting up a few shield emblems do? "I'll see to your request right away, Professor."

Harold A Scholfield entered Abbott's ward and walked to his bed. Under his arm, he held a wooden box. "Abbott, I came as soon as I heard."

"Hi, Prof. It's great to see you. Sit down."

"Your boss seemed surprised to see me. Still it least Phil informed me about you, for which I am grateful."

They were interrupted by a nurse coming to collect the lunch tray.

Harold stilled the nurse's hand, "Could you leave that, please. We need it to play chess."

He was setting up the pieces, without asking Abbott his preference.

"So you miss the chess?"

"It will give us a cover, while we talk. And I need to tell you something about myself."

Okay, but this time I get white."

"Remember what we talked about last week. Just say yes or no."

"Yes."

"Okay. Now the currency we use to gain a ticket to ride is FRV or frequency resonance vibration - a kind of 'soul vibe' if you will. To visit this particular place you have to raise your vibration."

"How do you do that," Abbott asked, making his initial move.

"You raise your FRV through having a high intention, by transmuting your negative emotions into positive ones. When you can do this, it's possible to increase your FRV momentarily."

"Easier said than done," Abbott said, watching the Prof make his move. He added, "I'm feeling a great deal of negative emotion towards the bastards who did this to me."

The Prof, ignoring Abbott's comments, pressed, "Your intention is crucial to this. The rewards for you are: elevated moods, conscious clarity, empowerment and sound judgement." The Prof smiled, "Oh, and a ticket to Atlantis."

"Sounds great. When can I try it?" the reporter said, half joking.

The Prof repositioned his knight. "For you to raise your FRV from a neutral to a positive mood, you are utilising what is known as the 'Law of Attraction'. You may have heard of it."

"Yes, I have."

"You can use this, the premier law of the universe - Einstein thought the heat death law was the highest one, but he got it wrong - to manifest your reality through intent, or initiate communication with higher active entities."

Abbott moved his bishop. "I'm interested. When can you teach me?"

"Raising FRV from negative to neutral can only be achieved by degrees to get you out of your depressed, reactive mind state.

"I don't have a reactive mind state!"

The Prof grinned, "You just proved you do."

Abbott reached for his grapes. "Okay, you've got me interested. Show me how to do it."

First, you need to grasp the theory, then the practice. The first thing to notice is that you can feel a rising sensation. It's more than just an auto-release of endorphins. You feel yourself being raised, but not in any three-dimensional direction."

"What direction then?"

"Okay, Abbott, let's say that raising your FRV shifts you in a fourth-dimensional direction, like that of dreams or astral projection. By heightening your FRV, your consciousness can rise above the 3D plane and enter into a 4D balanced realm."

Abbott moved his threatened queen. "It sounds simple, Prof. but I guess it's more difficult in reality."

"Harold smiled knowingly, "In fact, it's as difficult as you want it to be."

"That's pretty glib, Prof," Abbott replied, picking out some grapes.

"Nevertheless it's correct. You cannot shilly-shalley with this stuff. You have to be real and stop deluding yourself."

"What happens if we lower our FRV?"

Strangely enough, reducing your FRV by intensifying and purifying your lowest frequencies of resonance would eventually pop you into the 4D realm."

Abbott jiggled around in bed to get more comfortable. "How can that happen?"

"The important thing here is that it is natural for humans to evolve to higher vibrations. Lowering FRV simply makes you feel less at ease, or with dis-ease."

Abbott, trying to get his brain around these strange concepts, said, "So what do this 3D and 4D simply mean?"

The Prof grinned. Abbott, his protege, was now asking the right questions. He answered, "Unless you are accustomed to thinking of 'densities', as degrees of consciousness, this may not be apparent. But here we are talking about dimensions, or 'degrees of freedom in motion'."

Abbott's eyes were becoming heavy. "Can you just give me an exercise to practice?"

"Certainly. Close your eyes and visualise yourself becoming calmer. With each out breath expel a negative aspect of yourself. Feel the difference and register that feeling. With practice, you will soon get into the zone. This exercise is your first step to freeing your mind. There are many more steps to come before you are deemed ready."

The Prof smiled. Abbott had drifted into sleep.

Angela's position at Heron NRG (New Robotics Generation) was becoming untenable. Ulysses was on a different page when it came to product diversification. This change in company policy had caused a major conflict over the direction and development of the enterprise. This negative downturn filtered into poor personal relationships and lower morale.

As the VP of Heron NRG Angela had to work out the best course of action to be taken by the company. After establishing a legal position on the matter, her corporate lawyer told her that although a change in company policy is, of itself, not a legal breach of any contract, the method with which it is employed may contravene certain business protocols.

Having one person making significant unilateral decisions that affected the agreed to direction for the growth and sustainability of Heron NRG and possibly the livelihood of many employees was a breach of company law. She would have to provide proof in an industrial court; this is where she came up against a high hurdle.

Most of these policy changes resulted from the DARPA contract. And any work carried out on behalf of DARPA was protected under the Official Secrets Act. So a court case was out of the question.

Angel Durant felt very uncomfortable and impotent at the board meeting. Ulysses had just read out a glowing President's report, emphasising the need for all departments to meet DARPA deadlines, without question.

Angela protested, "When since has Heron stopped members of staff putting their views forward. Did we become a company with a totalitarian policy while I wasn't looking?"

Ulysses glared at her. "There are certain people in this business, some in senior positions, that are fighting me tooth and nail because we are adapting our policies to meet the requirements of this DARPA project. These people seem incapable of seeing the big picture and are affecting the morale of personnel at a time where, if we are to succeed, will require everybody to put in 110 percent, not because it pleases me but because it benefits this great company and the direction it is taking."

Angela responded. "That rosy picture Ulysses just painted is just that - rosy. As long as we remain optimistic, everything will be all right. But putting all our eggs in one basket is never, in my experience, sound company policy." Now Angela had the floor she made the best of it.

"One more point I would like to make is that new policies have been implemented autonomously, without the prescribed board approval. This dictatorship is in breach of many company laws we should challenge this in an industrial court. However, this cannot occur because the DARPA project comes under the Official Secrets Act. This restriction leaves me with no other choice than to resign from this board and the company."

There was hushed silence around the boardroom.

Ulysses said, "If that is your decision, Angela, so be it. Just so that nobody does anything rash, please be warned that any disclosure concerning any aspect of the DARPA project will be liable for prosecution under the Official Secrets Act. That includes blabbing to the press."

Angela leapt up. Pointing at the Chair, she said, "Do you think I'm stupid. But I do believe we need to inform our American client of this meeting. But don't trouble yourselves. I am perfectly capable of doing that myself." With that, she grabbed her things and stormed out of the boardroom.

Chapter 13

"You missed an appointment, Mr Leroy, Dr Contoldo said, expressing a look of disapproval.

Olivier couldn't give a stuff. The headaches and nausea had settled down. He had received his fee, so screw them, he thought. "I had to go away for a while."

"Didn't they have phones where ever you were?" he checked the athlete's eye with his bright light torch. "These appointments are critical. If you can't keep one, you must let us know." Then he checked the skin around the implant. "How are the side effects. Do you still get the headaches?"

"Infrequently. The pain's not a problem now."

Olivier looked at his watch. It was nearly time. Then the doctor's phone rang.

Dr Contoldo apologised, "I have to take this call."

"No problem Doc." That was true. As soon as the doctor went away to make the call in private, Olivier was on his toes, to the company reception desk, Behind the desk, he saw an attractive

mature woman with the name badge, Pamela. He approached, "Excuse me, Pamela, who do I contact here to see about getting a job?"

A little put out by his boldness but instantly attracted to the handsome black guy she said, "That would be the personnel department. You would have to contact Matthew Sheen." She handed him a company card. It had the Heron logo and read, Heron NRG - the future now.

"Thank you, Pamela," he smiled, flirting with his eyes. Then he said, "I bet I could learn some things from you - about applying for a job I mean." She was blushing. It was time to move in. "When do you get a break?"

Flustered, she said, "I'm off in an hour."

"Then it's coffee in an hour. I'll meet you here." Then he heard a voice.

"Mr Leroy, I've been looking for you."

"Sorry, Doc. I needed the gents." Olivier winked at Pamela, then followed Dr Contoldo.

It was Friday, so Pamela suggested a cafe at nearby Carrara Markets. Olivier was game. He didn't care where they went, as long as he got what he wanted. As they drank reasonable cappuccinos, Pamela asked, so what do you want from me?"

He grinned with a lascivious look in his eye.

"You blokes always want that. But I'm sure you didn't chat me up just for a shag."

"Oh, are you now," he said, enjoying the effect he was having on her.

Okay. Why me?"

"I guess there was something about you."

"You don't fool me with that line," she laughed.

Okay, you've got me. I was bored. I thought I'd take a punt. I'm pleased I did. That's it in a nutshell."

After the coffee and a couple of stronger drinks, Olivier found himself back at Pamela's place. They were only a couple of steps inside the front door when she pushed Olivier against the wall and rubbed herself against him. He could hardly believe his luck. This sexy woman was massaging his crotch over his denim jeans. Watching Olivier's surprised but happy reaction, Pamela knelt down, pulled down his zipper and took hold of his half erect organ.

After felating the black man for a few minutes, Pamela dragged Olivier into the lounge, where she pushed him onto the couch and started removing her work clothes. The woman wasn't a model that was for sure. He didn't care what she looked like though because he had an ulterior motive. For another, he was so damn horny.

Down to her bra and panties, she pulled her undies aside, climbed over Olivier, reached down and found his erection, which she guided between her legs. Instinctively he pushed upwards. As he stroked harder and harder, she began whimpering and making noises that excited him further.

As her climax approached, she gasped, "Fuck me hard Olivier. Your cock feels so big!" That did put him over the top.

"My God, that was so good Olivier, " she said, rolling off him.

He just lay there with a big old grin on his face.

She exhaled, "Wow! That's just what I needed. You're heaven sent. I've been divorced for a few years. I caught my shit of a husband cheating on me. I divorced him and got a large chunk of money, so I bought this place. I don't need to work at all, but I get bored, so the job helps."

Olivier sat up. "There is something you can help me with."

"And what would that be?" she simpered, reaching for his flaccid penis.

"No, it's nothing like that. I'm trying to trace someone who worked at Heron Robotics between three and five years ago."

Dayton Lynsey had to be certain about Alexander Karimov being part of the 'Diabolus Sect'. The secret organisation - or was that disorganisation - had claimed many influential players over the decades. The sect was like the Hydra. As soon as one part was cut off, it grew two more.

Whatever lay behind the enormous power and influence of the Sect it had very deep pockets. Nobody outside of Diabolus had been able to find out who was pulling their strings. But one thing was sure. Whoever or whatever the force, it was the greatest threat to human civilisation.

It was Dayton's sworn duty to find out who or what was behind the growing chaos in the world. His latest target, Alexander Karimov had left a chequered career spanning three decades with little trace of his passing. Making sense of his life's journey was akin to Dayton trying to find his way around a maze that was constantly changing. There was some evidence he was associated with the Russian Mafia when he was younger.

But *Russkaya Mafiya* is a term used to refer to the collective of variously organised crime syndicates originating in the former Soviet Union. There was nothing to link him to any known faction. Besides, organised crime in Russia began in its imperial period of the Tsars. However, it was not until the Soviet era that *vory v zakone* (thieves-in-law) emerged as leaders of prison groups in Gulags that their honour code became more defined. Following World War II, Stalin's death, and the fall of the Soviet Union, more gangs emerged in a flourishing black market.

It would have been about this time that the young Alexander may have joined one of the Mafia groups. Even if he had been in a Mafia gang, there was nothing significant pointing towards any association with the Diabolus Sect. Dayton didn't even know if the Sect was operational in Russia at the time.

But there was that tell tail ring Karimov wore. The signature ring of the Diabolus Sect. Records showed that by exploiting unstable governments of former Republics, the Mafia groups controlled as much as two-thirds of the Russian economy.

Dayton had read a report by Louis Freeh, former director of the FBI, that claimed the Russian Mafia were the biggest threat to US national security in the mid-1990s. It was around that time that Karimov became very wealthy and a big player in post-Communist Russia. But nobody knew how he managed to achieve such a status in a relatively short period.

There was a knock at his door. Rodney Maddox stood there, a bottle of Vodka in his hand.

"What brings you here?"

Rodney walked in. "Keeping an eye on you old boy. I have to answer to the PM if you fuck up."

Dayton smiled, "Then you're wasting the good tax payers money. Everything is running smooth as silk."

The Director of 6 plunked his bulk in a leather armchair. Handing the Vodka to Dayton, he said, "Rustle up a couple of these, old man."

"No extra-curricular then."

Maddox said, "This is the first time I've been to Russia, let alone Moscow. And I'll be glad to leave this God forsaken place."

"I have heard that the Almighty is back now the Reds have gone."

Dayton handed him a drink.

"Zazdarovje, old chap. So are you getting us lots of useful intelligence while you're slumming it here?"

"My brief is to make sure the British Government doesn't have any nasty little surprises or repercussions."

"Excellent." He looked at Dayton's laptop screen. "Kamarov eh. He's a tricky one and bloody smart. We certainly have to watch him."

Dayton searched Rodney's eyes, "So why are you here?"

Maddox smiled. "Couldn't put anything past you. Well, as trades talks go this is really like putting our heads in the lion's mouth, or should I say, bear. I mean who the hell are we dealing with here. There are as many as 6,000 different groups, Over 200 have a global reach. Many are run by various types of criminal: former prison members, corrupt communist officials and business leaders."

"Looks like we'll have to discard the Queensbury rules, old boy."

Rodney winced. "The existence of such groups has been debatable, until now. But now our people are sitting at the table with them; we can no longer ignore their presence."

Dayton sipped his Vodka. "I still don't see why you're telling me this story."

Maddox topped up his drink. "In December 2009, Timur Lakhonin, the head of the Russian National Central Bureau of Interpol, reported that there was a crime involving our former compatriots abroad. But he couldn't find any data suggesting an organised structure of criminal groups comprising former Russians.

We were happy with that assessment until in August 2010, Alain Bauer, a French criminologist, said that the Russian Mafia is one of the best-structured criminal organisations in Europe, with a quasi-military operation." He paused and smiled, "So we have another little job for you, while you are here."

"No!" Dayton replied, adamant.

"It's only a little diversion from what you are already doing."

"Which part of NO don't you understand?"

Rodney stared at him. "The part that involves a certain Benjamin Solomon in an assassination in Ramallah."

Dayton felt his blood go cold. How the hell had they tracked down Benjamin? He glared at the supercilious fat prick "I've got far more important things to do than wiping the arse of MI6."

"But you will do it, won't you?"

"Maddox, you're an utter bastard."

"Yes, it's one of my more endearing qualities."

Colonel Barney Cormack looked at the report again. He scratched his head in thought, for a moment, then pressed Lynne's number on his phone pad. What the hell was wrong with the Aussies? She wasn't answering. He left a short, sharp message "Code Orange, Contact ASAP or sooner." Maybe he should go to Australia himself. But that might seem like there was a problem.

Well, there was a fucking problem, and it could become a big one if he didn't nip it in the bud. If Lynne Becker went, it would just look like a routine check, and General Schulz needs not be alerted. Schulz just wanted positive results. He wasn't happy being dragged into the shit jobs along the way.

"Barney, what's so urgent?" Dr Becker asked, having returned his call after seeing his message on her phone.

"I need you to go to the land down under, again."

"You have to be joking."

"They're having a fucking boardroom war, and NO, I'm not kidding."

"Barney, we need face to face on this. And I'm not flying to Washington."

Colonel Cormack sighed, "You want me to come to Boston."

"That's where I am for the next two days. Then I have a vacation in Mexico unless you can convince me to act differently."

Chapter 14

"But what if the myth refers to something greater than just a physical cataclysm, even a hyperdimensional one? What if Atlantis had sunk into a quantum abyss with the new timeline that emerged, containing little or no physical evidence of the previous one?"

Abbott queried, as he and the Prof sat drinking hot chocolate, around the elderly man's coal fire. Since he came out of hospital Abbott had developed a new perspective on life. He waited patiently for the Prof's response.

Harold, impressed by the depth of the journalist's query, answered, "It reminds me of the film 'Matrix Reloaded' where we discover that Zion, the underground sanctuary, is just the most recent version. The older versions were deleted to make way for the next attempt - the next iteration of the fractal loop back."

Abbott shrugged. "I don't think I saw that one."

"Well, you should. The Matrix Trilogy is modern mythology. It includes data about hyperdimensional history."

"How do you mean?"

"For instance, the Keymaker mentions a '314-second' time limit, which may well be the code for a 'time loop' seeing as 314 is the circle constant PI and seconds is a measure of time."

Abbott commented, "I do remember seeing Donnie Darko. It has similar themes like when a temporary time loop is spawned by a dimensional glitch from the future."

The Prof lit a pipe, something Abbott had not see him do before. The journalist said, "This is interesting Prof but is it useful?"

"If you rigorously research this stuff you might conclude that our current timeline could have resulted from a significant abuse of hyperdimensional technology. And that we exist in a temporary time loop, perhaps very different from the original. You have to learn this stuff to experience the latest version of Atlantis, which I assume you do otherwise you wouldn't be here."

Abbott shrugged. "It still seems a bit fanciful to me."

"Yes, well another interesting thing is that the sinking of the previous Atlantis happened half a precessional cycle ago. Each year at the spring equinox the sun rises at a slightly different point in relation to the starry background. The sun travels the complete, zodiac over a period of 25,700 Earth years. Each sign of the zodiac represents an age lasting around 2100-2150 years. Currently, we are experiencing the Age of Aquarius. The latest Fall of Atlantis occurred during the previous Age of Virgo going into Leo."

"And this is significant because?"

"Abbott, by drawing the precessional cycle as a wave, it becomes apparent that start of the wave and its centre point cross the zero line, therefore sharing common qualities."

"Okay,"

"If the beginning marks the Fall of Atlantis, then the midpoint marks 2012 AD, the symbolic mile marker of our imminent Dimensional Shift opportunity."

"So is Atlantis in this fourth dimension. Is that why we can't find in the third dimension?"

The Prof relit his pipe, puffed a few times, then he said, "Of course. Look, the Dimensional Shift provides an opportunity to rise in numbers towards fourth density, to become native to the fourth dimension."

This transformation is primarily a positive shift, a rising toward something higher. Notice how this is opposite to what happened to Atlantis before. But whereas Atlantis sank into the abyss, you now have an opportunity to rise into the heavens."

"I'm not sure that's for me yet, Prof. I know the world isn't any great shakes, but I'm kind of attached to it."

"I'm offering you something quite amazing, and you want to be a rat going down with a sinking ship."

"But Atlantis was fucked up."

"Not the most eloquent way to put it, but yes. However, please see that the Fall of Atlantis marked a descent into a negative half of the cycle.

The reporter said, "That much is obvious. History, since the fall, has been quite dark, fearful and increasingly chaotic."

"True, but the miracle is that we have somehow survived and are at that point, half a precessional cycle afterwards. You can now cross that zero line again, this time into an active phase."

"Granted, but tell me, Prof, why exactly do I want to go to Atlantis?"

"To learn from their mistakes. The level of corruption the Atlanteans reached produced a memory complex graduating to a 4D state of consciousness. However, not everybody on Atlantis qualified due to insufficient polarisation. Those lost souls were recycled into the next time loop, the one we are currently experiencing."

Abbott, Trying to keep on track, asked, "What happened to those who reached 4D?"

The negative ones who graduated became part of the quantum abyss, their abode for the past twelve thousand years from where they manipulated and corrupted their counterparts within the 3D time loop."

"How did they do that?"

"Through quantum entanglement, they were responsible for spawning the contrary secret societies who have controlled all the great civilisations of history, from behind a dark, invisible curtain of deceit. The worst and most destructive of these abominations is the Diabolus Sect."

Abbott stared at the Prof. "I've never heard of them."

"Of course. This dominating dark force has only one motive, to bring about chaos and destruction wherever and whenever it chooses."

"It sounds horrible, but what has it got to do with us?"

"Everything, at this particular time. Since 2012, certain gifted individuals have sensed an active, energetic shift towards a restoration of balance. However, the main point for you is at this time is to learn to think fourth dimensionally, and, by doing so, unlock the many secrets of mythology, history; and current and future events."

"What does that have to do with this Diabolus Sect?"

"Everything, but that doesn't concern you yet. Just concentrate on the task at hand."

Abbott overwhelmed, looked at his mentor. "Somebody, a wise person, once looked me in the eye and said, I was destinic. I had no idea what he meant. So is this it?"

The Prof nodded, "Yes, Abbott."

"Then, I can't wait to start my initiation."

The Prof smiled, "You already have."

Colonel Barney Cormack's cab stopped near 78 4th Avenue, Waltham Massachusetts, the home of Boston Cybertronics, where he had agreed to meet with Dr Becker. Inside he was fuming. How dare she demand that he dropped everything and fly to Boston, at her command. He was still in a negative frame of mind when a receptionist took him to Dr Becker's office.

Lynne greeted him cordially, "I've always wanted to visit Mexico," she said, smiling.

Biting his tongue, Barney ignored the comment. He sat down near her desk. "We have to act on this quickly, Dr Becker."

"Okay, run this emergency by me again," she said, taking control of the conversation.

He handed her an e-Mail printout. "It checks out."

She scanned it, put it down and said, "The revenge of a VP scorned."

"It's not so much that there is a shit fight in their boardroom," Barney pointed out. "They happen all the time. What concerns us is that Dr Covington didn't keep us informed. This time, you'll have to take the gloves off."

She stared at the colonel. "I haven't yet agreed to go back there. Barney. Why can't you deal with this? I'm sure you are perfectly capable."

With rising anger, Barney, running his fingers around inside his restrictive collar, erupted. "This is not some fucking game, Dr Becker. I have duties that keep me here. Now, DARPA and BC have enjoyed a good and profitable relationship. When it comes to the next round of budgeting, we now have other options, in China, Japan and possibly India. And their rates are very competitive."

She stared at him. "Barney, I never thought you would stoop so low as to threaten me in such a way."

"Needs must when the devil drives, Dr Becker."

"Fuck you, Barney."

Pamela came good with the information Olivier requested. It took another two visits to her place to secure the information. Olivier did not mind that, and both of them knew their liaison was not going to go anywhere. But it met both their needs. He satisfied her carnal desires, and she went through the personnel list for the period he wanted. He checked the list of names and came up with a match; one that left him shocked.

Barry Ryan had been telling the truth! He wasn't the spy, but he had lied when he said he knew who it was. He couldn't possibly have known. Olivier needed to contact Helen Cleaver. He found her contact number through her new website and made arrangements to meet.

Olivier drove slowly along the avenue, looking for the house with a ramp leading to the front door. His SatNav informed him he had arrived at number 30; it had melaleucas in the front yard and a ramp. It had to be the place.

Helen beamed when she saw the handsome black man at her door. Even though Olivier knew the terrible accident had paralysed Helen, seeing her in a wheelchair for the first time, gave him a bit of a shock. He kissed her on the cheek, "It's great to see you, Helen."

"You too Olivier," she said, wheeling through to her lounge. "Take a seat. I'll organise coffee."

"Not on my account. I won't be staying long. I just need to run something by you."

"Oh, all right then." she smiled, showing a touch of concern at his coolness.

"I caught up with Barry, in Cairns."

"Oh, so that's where he went. How is he?"

"It's okay, I didn't kill and feed him to the crocs. I wanted to, but he somehow managed to convince me he wasn't the snake that dobbed me in."

"Yes, he told me the same thing before he left."

Olivier faced Helen square on. "But you knew that already, didn't you, Helen?"

She gulped. "After Barry told me - yes."

He stared at her. Speaking quietly, "It's no good lying to me, Helen. There was someone else from ARL working at Heron at the time, apart from Barry Ryan and we know who that was, don't we, Helen?"

Her hands were feeling sweaty on the wheels of her chair. "It's not what you think. You have to understand ..."

"I'll tell you what I understand. I understand that I have just spent two years in prison because 'you' dobbed me in. Am I correct, Helen?"

She broke down sobbing, but it cut no ice with Olivier. He was the wronged party here - not sensitive, poor me, little Helen. "Why the fuck did you do it? Why did you fucking spy on us? I want your answer, and I want it now."

Between sobs, she uttered, "I know this handicap is a curse for my wrongdoing but ..."

"Oh please spare me the fucking martyr routine. Why did you dob me in?"

She took a deep breath. "I worked as a lab assistant. I knew the experiments we were doing on stem cells was illegal, but stem cells have enormous potential in health and medical research. Irrational Government restrictions stopped our research reaching its full potential. Protest groups were trying to impede our progress in helping to combat cancer and congenital disabilities."

"So what's that got to do with getting me banged up?"

"I couldn't let ARL get in the way of the research."

Olivier sat there gum-smacked. "I thought this was about robotics taking over humanity."

Helen wiped tears from her eyes. "I was in a terrible dilemma. On the one hand, I supported ARL and what it stood for. But I knew if the break in were successful, ARL would have discovered our illegal research. I couldn't risk that."

Olivier, perplexed, said, "We didn't know anything about fucking stem cell research being carried out there."

"Nicki did."

Nicki. He hadn't thought about her for years. She was the one who recruited him because of his athletic prowess.

Helen explained, "Nicki told me about her discovery, in confidence. She had no idea that I would report ARL's intentions to my boss."

"So that's why Heron became interested in our tinpot organisation."

"I'm so sorry, Olivier," Helen pleaded, crying again.

Olivier thought about Helen's damning confession. Then he had an idea. "If you want to redeem yourself you will give me a written statement of all this."

She stared at him wide-eyed. "You expect me to write a statement about the stem cell research? That would ruin Heron Robotics!"

"I don't know about destroying them, but it would certainly give them a scare. Olivier paused, then added," But what I do know about the company, coupled with what you know, now that could bring Heron down."

"What do you know?"

He chuckled, "You have to be joking, Helen. You could still be their fucking spy for all I know."

Rodney Maddox had Dayton over a barrel, making Lord Lynley feel distinctly uncomfortable. How the hell had the spook found out about Ben Solomon? The bastard knew it was Dayton's Achilles heel. Damn it! He had more important things to deal with than getting involved in MIG's cloak and dagger games.

More disturbing was the fact that Maddox hinted he knew something of Dayton's clandestine activities. He had to find out what the head spook knew. This step meant obtaining intel from his secret contact inside Six. A move he would only make in an extreme emergency. Damn it! This situation was an emergency. But first, he had to do Maddox's bidding.

Dayton left the Lotte Hotel and took a cab to the cake-like St Basil's Cathedral. He alighted from the taxi and made his way through rugged up crowds who had come to see one of Moscow's most famous landmarks. Although it was known to everyone as St. Basil's, the religious building's official title was 'The Cathedral of the Intercession of the Virgin by the Moat'.

The familiar name referred to Basil the Blessed, a Muscovite 'holy fool', buried on the site a few years before Ivan the Terrible constructed the present building. Built to mark the capture of Kazan from Mongol forces, Ivan completed it in 1560.

However, Dayton wasn't there for sightseeing. He made his way through clusters of warmly clad tourists to the main edifice, which paid homage to the seven churches of Jerusalem. Once inside, he walked to the 17th-century hip-roofed bell tower and climbed a stone staircase with vaulted roofing.

It was a long steep climb; only the hardy attempted it, which was why Dayton chose it for his meet. He looked at the stunningly beautiful brunette waiting for him. "You are Natascha Valonova?"

"Who are you?" she asked, suspiciously.

"The person who can help you get what you want."

"How do I know I can trust you?"

"If you can't trust me you're already in big trouble. You want to marry Matthew Snow - yes."

"Of course."

"We will be able to arrange that providing you do something for us." He eyed the beautiful Russian spy, who claimed to be in love with the man who spilt top-secret documents to the Russians.

"What do you want in exchange?"

He smiled, at the 28-year-old woman who had successfully posed as a real-estate agent in the United States. She got caught in 2010, accused of gathering intel for Russia. After months of confinement, she and seven others were deported back to Russia in a prisoner swap. "We need to know who Snow's controller is, in the United States."

"I have no idea."

"We can have Snow at Sheremetyevo Airport tomorrow if you give us what we want. Or we can find alternative accommodation for him in a notorious Cuban prison camp. Your choice Natascha."

She thought about it. "I want my Matthew here first."

Dayton could see her point of view. "Very well we will make arrangements and let you know."

She looked at the Englishman warily. "Then, it's a deal?"

"Yes. Now, you will come with me to a safe house, where we will protect you until arrangements are completed."

As they left the cathedral and walked towards a waiting black Zil 4112p, a woman discretely followed the pair, taking photos with her phone. Hiding in a shop doorway, the woman called her contact. Upon hearing her superior's, she said, "Black Zil 4112p, number D233GH, just leaving Red Square."

Dayton leant forward and spoke in Russian to the driver. "Take us to Bolshoy Govolin Perulok but take the scenic route."

The driver chuckled, thinking Dayton was some old guy trying to impress a beautiful young woman. Sure he'd take the scenic route.

It wasn't long before Dayton clocked the Mercedes following. It could have been Russian intelligence, but he doubted it. But if it wasn't them, who was it?"

The Mercedes followed them down narrow streets, past wastelands, building sites and along Sretensky Boulevard. Dayton told the driver, "Pull over to the kerb."

The driver did so. As the taxi drove away, Dayton scanned the immediate vicinity. It seemed clear. "Looks like we're walking," he said to the young Russian woman. Then he saw the Mercedes driving slowly towards them. Dayton, on full alert, was ready to run.

But the car tailing them had stopped. Wondering what was happening, Dayton activated navigation on his phone, zoomed into the local area and typed in their destination. The app quickly provided a road route. That was no good though so he accessed maps and found 'off the beaten track' directions to the safe house.

Dayton silently cursed Maddox for leaving him high and dry with no back-up. "Okay stick close to me" he ordered.

Sergi, watching the targets walk into a narrow passageway, got out of the Mercedes and followed them on foot.

Dayton knew that one or more of their pursuers would follow, but he didn't want to let on to Natascha for fear of spooking her. Who was he kidding? She wasn't some timid girl. She was a hardened spy. So he took a chance. "We are being followed by ..."

She interrupted, "First a silver Mercedes, now a man on foot."

"You knew all the time."

"Of course I knew. Do you think I am stupid?"

"Okay, this is what we do. You go ahead, slowly. Give the man following us a chance to catch up with you. I'll hang back and get the drop on him."

"Won't he be suspicious, seeing me alone?"

"Do you have any better ideas?"

Dayton grabbed his phone and pressed the contact Maddox had given him. "Tolstoy here. We have a problem."

The agent said, "Zhivago here, what's up?"

"We have a tail, on foot. We need back up."

"Sorry, we don't have provision for that."

"Dammit, man! We're exposed here. If you want the package, you will have to help."

"I'll see what I can do."

"I need someone watching our backs when we reach Bolshoy Govolin Perulok. Otherwise, I will not deliver the package."

Dayton hung back in the shadows until his pursuer walked by, Once he was past, Dayton followed him at a distance.

As Natascha reached the junction of ul Sretenska and Bolshoy Govolin Perulok, Dayton watched the man close in on her. He sped up, his finger on the trigger of the Beretta in his holster. He had to get closer. The small automatic only packed a punch at close range.

Dayton saw his quarry stop and hesitate. Then the English lord understood why. A man stood across the road in Bolshoy Govolin Perulok, a gun in his hand. The Englishman, who had secret service combat training, leapt into action. He thrust the barrel of his gun in the man's lower back, "Make a sound or a sudden move, and you will never walk again."

Dayton frisked the man with his free hand and came up with a Makarov automatic. Then the silver Mercedes slewed to a screeching halt at the corner of ul Sretenska.

The driver jumped out and walked towards Dayton and his prisoner. Not sure how to play it, he stopped about 15 metres from the pair, raised his Makarov and fired three shots. Dayton dived for cover. His prisoner, the driver's target, was not so lucky. He caught one bullet in the head and two in the chest. He went down like a sack of potatoes. Seeing the killer run back to the Mercedes Dayton gave chase. By the time he got to the corner, the car had gone.

A man from the safe house approached Dayton and asked, "Are you all right?"

"Get an ambulance man, on the double." Then Dayton ran back to the fallen man. A cursory inspection told him what he didn't want to know. The man was stone cold dead.

"Where's the package?" the man from the safe house said.

"Don't worry, she's not far away."

"Well, go and get her."

As he backtracked to find Natascha, Dayton muttered under his breath, "You bastard Maddox. I will have my revenge one day soon."

<https://lifetechnologynews.blogspot.com/2006/09/raising-ones-vibration.html>

Chapter 15

Atienza was a village in waiting. Although the locals never knew what they awaited. Of the 437 inhabitants of the little town, some 390 had turned out for the event. The large turnout was mostly due to the Mayor, who suggested that the townsfolk became involved, his influence holding some sway in the small community.

Under the leadership of Philux, the people had laboured building a huge bonfire in the middle of the small town. Firewood was stacked up against a central pole. When it became night, it would burn and light up the dark sky for miles around. Several rumours abounded as people opined their version of the reason for the fire to others.

Mayor Santissima spoke to the, by then, unsettled crowd. Professor Sonata had instructed him when to make the announcement, to the minute. Now it was time. "Citizens of Atienza, tonight we celebrate this great town for the role it played in holding back the Moorish hoards."

A huge cheer went up.

"This particular occasion is to mark the first part of our project to honour the brave people who fought to stop the Muslim invasion reaching Northern Europe. I would like to thank our great benefactor, Professor Francisco Sonata, who has generously provided the funds for us to start this great project."

Another huge cheer filled the air.

Absolutely on cue, a black limousine drove slowly into the square, with all eyes upon it. Philux opened a rear door and Professor Sonata, attired entirely in black, with cape and Cordobes hat, stepped out onto the dusty square, to the cheer of the crowd. He loved a sense of theatre. Sweeping his hat low and bowing he said "I hope you all enjoy the show. I know I will." Only the ones at the front heard him, but that didn't matter. He walked over to The Mayor, grabbed the megaphone and yelled, "LET THE PARTY BEGIN."

There was a distant wailing, then it became louder, interspersed with noises of struggle. All ears and eyes searched in the darkness for the source of the disturbance. Then the crowd saw two men dressed in black, pulling a struggling, shackled man towards the bonfire.

The Mayor asked, "Francisco, what's going on?"

The pair tied the protesting victim to the central post in the middle of the firewood.

Diablo, responding to the mayor, grinned, "You'll soon find out." Using the megaphone, he announced, "Fear not good people of Atienza. Theatre has to be authentic, and for a fire to be blessed by the god of fire there has to be a sacrifice. "

Nervous chatter filled the square. Confused, unsure and worried, the local people responded just as Diablo wanted.

The professor, enjoying himself immensely, yelled into the loud speaker, "FEAR NOT GOOD PEOPLE OF ATIENZA FOR THERE ARE NO FLAMES. THIS CEREMONY IS THEATRE, AFTER ALL!" Then he lifted his face to the darkening sky and shouted. "OH, GREAT AND POWERFUL HURAKAN BLESS US WITH YOUR PRESENCE THIS NIGHT! OH, WONDROUS HURAKAN LET THE POWER OF FIRE PURGE OUR SOULS! OH, MAGNIFICENT HURAKAN SHOW US YOUR POWER, NOW!"

He thrust his hands straight at the bonfire. At first, nothing happened. Then, little tongues of fire began to burn the smaller sticks, which children had added to the pile.

The Mayor horrified, said, "Stop this trickery at once."

The flames, ravenous for oxygen consumed more wood as they spread like fiery tendrils towards the screaming man tied to the stake.

The villagers, transfixed in awe and fear froze where they stood. A few kind souls desperately tried to help the screeching victim but were driven back by intense heat and acrid smoke. The terrified townsfolk, getting scorched by the searing heat, backed away from the nightmare before their eyes.

Mayor Santisima, wide-eyed and shaking in fright, stepped down from the podium on wobbly legs.

Diablo Sonata cried to the heavens, "LORD HURAKAN, ACCEPT OUR HUMBLE SACRIFICE THAT WE OFFER IN AWE OF YOUR GREAT POWER!" His eyes feasted on the burning pyre and the remains of the victim now completely incinerated by the fire. He turned to Philux, who looked on in awe. "I have these weaklings. They are now under my power."

Ulysses had a strong sense that Heron NRG was no longer his company. He still owned it on paper, but he didn't have the autonomy he used to enjoy when he started Heron Robotics. He couldn't make any major decision without having to run it by the board. Worse still, since Angela's departure, some members of the board were hostile to some of his suggestions. Now, Big Brother, from across the ocean was telling him what to do. To make things even worse, blabbermouth Angela Durant had reported their boardroom battle, to DARPA. Which, was why he was told to expect Dr Becker that morning and to clear his diary for the rest of the day.

By the time Lynne Becker had landed at the Gold Coast Airport, her mood had improved a little. She didn't like being forced to do DARPA'S dirty work, and Barney's threat stuck in her craw. The taxi dropped her off outside Heron Industries.

Lynne took deep breaths and psyched herself up to deal with Ulysses, professionally. There was a lot about the man she liked, but it didn't include his management skills. That would have to be his lesson for the day. She approached reception, where she got directed to Mr Covington's office.

"Well, this is an unwarranted pleasure," Ulysses lied, putting on a brave face."

"Dr Covington, coming here under these circumstances is no pleasure for me."

Feigning ignorance, he said, "Oh, and what are we talking about?"

"The internal politics of your company, where DARPA interests are concerned."

He forced a smile. "Oh, you're probably referring to the change in our board of directors."

"Yes. The resignation of your VP to be precise."

Covington sat back and laughed, his hands casually clasped behind his head. "You came all the way from Boston for that. It's nothing you people need be concerned about."

She hadn't expected such an off-hand response. "Well DARPA is very concerned that Angela Durant sent them an email declaring instability and low morale in your company. DARPA has invested a lot of time and money In Heron NRG, and we expect you to be straight with us."

He spread his hands in a helpless gesture. "I have no control over what emails Angela sent to you. Yes, we had some disagreement over company policy, and she decided to resign. It happens all the time. We are still on track for the project, despite your people bringing the deadline forward. So, I don't see any problem here."

Confronted by Dr Covington's calmness and confidence, she wondered why she was there when she could have been living the high life in Acapulco. She silently cursed Colonel Cormack, the fucking panic merchant.

"Ulysses, I'll take this opportunity to look at your progress reports. I want to present DARPA with a bright picture. I also want to talk to your departmental managers."

Still smiling, while secretly wincing, he said, "Of course, then perhaps I can treat you to lunch."

As they dined on Asian delights with local spanner crabs and fresh tiger prawns, Ulysses said, "Well now the business part of your trip is over, I want to show you some Gold Coast hospitality."

Lynne Becker looked at the man sitting opposite. Perhaps she had misjudged him. His social graces and compassion impressed her immensely. He wasn't exactly devastatingly handsome, but that kind of superficiality had never been her thing. However, his slightly receding dark hair and firm jaw line held an appeal for her. "Maybe this trip isn't so bad after all," she smiled.

Ulysses grinned, "The day's indeed taken a turn for the better." He was getting to like the American's company. With her hard business side out of the way, her sexy softness was showing. They seemed to have a lot in common. He hoped the afternoon would develop into something other than colleague pleasantries. It may have been presumptuous of him, but he had booked a suite at the Watermark Hotel, where they were dining.

After lunch, they walked on the beach, paddled in the blue Pacific and sat in a park among the enigmatic Pandanus trees and scavenging Ibises. As they sat looking at the surfers and other ocean users, Ulysses smiled, "Let's go back to our suite and relax."

"Our suite!" she said, surprised, with a mixture of apprehension, anger and excitement. It had certainly crossed her mind that Ulysses wanted more than just companionship. He had overtly shown he was attracted to her and she had to admit that he could be her kind of man.

Hell, why did she always think of relationships with men in the long term? Of late her work was her life. She hadn't been with a man for months. Ulysses seemed a decent sort, so why not just go with it. After all, she would be back in the States in a couple of days. An Australian fling would not be such a bad idea. Lynne smiled at the Aussie businessman. "Sounds good to me."

They kissed, passionately at first, and then ravenously as they began tearing off each other's clothes. Lynne had already undone his shirt completely before Ulysses had even undone the top button of her blouse. She ran her fingers through his chest hair as he pulled her blouse over her shoulders. Her lacy black bra had a front release. He deftly snapped it open, releasing her small breasts. Ulysses squeezed her close to him. He had not felt so sexually aroused in months. She felt so damn good he did not want to let her go.

She had other ideas. Sliding to her knees, so she was at a more suitable height, she unzipped Ulysses' suit pants and reached inside to grasp his erection. She took him in her mouth.

He thought he'd gone to heaven, not that they did that sort of thing there.

Feeling him get ready to explode she pulled back before he lost control. She stood up and turned around so that her back was facing him, then immediately unzipped her skirt and dropped it to the floor. He pulled her black lace panties to one side, as she braced her hands against the bedroom wall. Her waist and slightly wide hips were very trim for her age. Unable to wait any longer, Ulysses took hold of her hips.

"Fuck me," she said,

He complied, thrusting into her with a vengeance.

Ulysses awoke to the sound of his phone alarm. It was dark. He wondered where he was? Then he remembered and reached over in the king-sized waterbed, to see if she was there. His hand felt the softness of her tummy just above her silky pubic hair. He moved his hand to her breast. Feeling Lynne sigh softly, Ulysses spooned into her back.

"Mmm. That was delightful" Lynne purred.

"Yes, I'm rather partial to it myself." He asked her, "Can you stay for a few days?"

"I have a spot on Acapulco beach waiting for me."

"Now, there's a thought."

"Steady on cowboy," she said, turning to face him, "You have a robot arm to build."

Alexander Karimov considered himself very fortunate. He had already made his mark in the most affluent parts of Europe and America, with his high-end real estate in London and on the French Riviera. Karimov loved his family and would do anything to make them happy. His two young sons were soccer crazy, so he spent some \$350 million dollars on a major football club.

As a key mining magnate, Alexander was often in the news, but in his social life, the oligarch downplayed his celebrity status. He never went for big yachts and planes. He just chartered one when he needed it.

Automobile expenses were also just petty cash for Karimov, the oligarch. He did not buy Ferraris, Bentleys, or Maybachs, preferring instead standard BMWs, Mercedes' or Audis, all of which suited him fine. Instead of keeping sports cars in his garage on the Riviera and feeling the exhilaration of negotiating the curvaceous provincial mountain roads at speed, he much preferred acquiring companies and arranging contracts. Yes, Alexander was triumphal with his life.

Dayton Lynsey, back in his ancestral seat, after the trade talks were completed, was also taking a close look at Karimov's life. The Russian magnate spent very little time at his luxury apartment in Vologda, his home city. Although he spent more time in his 'dacha' on the Black Sea, he was spending most of his life in Europe and especially London. Wherever he went heavy duty armed bodyguards always accompanied him. He was going to be a tough nut to crack. Dayton sighed and reached for his phone. He recognised the scrambled voice and said, "Put Operation Oligarch into phase one."

With the Russian trade-talks completed, Karimov, as predicted, came out of the summit with a huge smile on his face. The big Russian hero had struck a lucrative coal and steel deal with England. There was word on the media grapevine that he was to be up for a knighthood the next year.

Karimov was Britain's latest blue-eyed boy. He was also, according to Dayton's intelligence, a key player in the Diabolus Sect, a secret side to his life of which the British government was unaware. Worse still, MI6 had supplemented his bodyguards while he was in England.

Simon Brace travelled around on his FLSTF Fatboy Harley, plying his legitimate trade as a commercial photographer. Since the age of the digital camera, it was tough making a living that way so he took assignments where he could find them. However, Simon had a much more lucrative sideline in which he carried out special assignments for which he was well rewarded.

It was this sideline that had him parked outside the tall gates of the \$65 million, Bishop Avenue residence belonging to Alexander Karimov. With plenty of experience at stalking celebrities, getting shots of Karimov and his family wasn't difficult. It just took a lot of patience.

He'd e-Mailed his client photographs of both parents and the two children. Simon also sent visual details of the Karimov's other home in the French Riviera, as well as their properties in Russia. He didn't know why he was paid \$100,000 to take pictures of the super wealthy family and he was smart enough not to ask.

Peter Lavell left his Range Rover parked to the side of the muddy track leading into the woodland. There had been a light frost overnight, and he could see his breath as he blew on his hands. It was a cold morning, but nothing like what Peter had experienced in the Hindu Kush mountains of Afghanistan. The marksman had his standard Varmint rifle, strapped to his back.

After walking for a couple of miles, the sniper came to the clearing, where he had set up his static targets. For practice purposes, he preferred his CZ 527 in .223 with a 14x scope. He removed his backpack and assembled his rifle, ready for the day's practice. Being a top rifle marksman took a lot of practice, patience, and knowledge. He had to be aware of distances, wind direction, bullet velocity, etc.

Peter knew all too well that the amount of effort put into improving his shooting skills directly related to his ability to make a clean hit. He had to be ready to use his rifle in any situation, especially while under pressure, such as he had experienced both in competition and combat. I

mpassioned, as Peter was, about hitting his target, the \$100,000 his client was paying him added to his motivation. Fifty grand up front, the other fifty when he'd completed the job seemed very fair to him. Looking through the cross-hairs, he steadied his aim, fired, and got a perfect bullseye 200 metres away.

Susan Sparkes got a cash advance and a brief containing all the relevant, vital information for her to identify the target and keep tabs on him. A professional private investigator of many years standing, Susan knew how to get close to her target. She knew all the places he could be contacted. Susan obtained and kept a record of his appointments and daily movements. It hadn't been difficult since she'd gained employment as Alexander Karimov's personal assistant. As a level four working with the Soter Group, she had carried out such surveillance work many times before.

Ruby Kith, Karimov's previous PA had just disappeared, leaving a vacancy to be filled. Nobody knew where Ruby went and nobody had heard of her since. Susan Sparkes, with an impressive resume, filled the bill and got the job.

Susan, the only person who knew Ruby's fate regretted what happened to her. But she was engaged in a war against dark forces, and there are casualties in any war.

Atienza would never be the same again. None of the citizens knew exactly why, but there was something very different about their town. By morning Diablo's people had cleaned up the town square, leaving no visible evidence of the previous night's macabre theatre. The unseen, unheard, but sometimes felt, evidence still lingered and would do so for some time to come.

Later that day, when the sun was high, Diablo Sonata came into the town to check on his handiwork - and his subjects. He was pleased with the fear he saw in their eyes, as he glanced at them.

Those who were most traumatised by the burning had little recollection of the event. Abject fear had blocked it out. Those who were horrified by the fiery spectacle were well aware of the professor's power and would not do anything to upset him. He expected and received tribute, as food and other commodities, from the village farmers and craftspeople. They didn't know why they treated him like royalty, but they did so anyhow. He knew why.

He was the Prince of Darkness, Diabolus of the ancient Greeks. Soon more people would feel the extent of his growing power.

Deep within the rock supporting the tower was an inner chamber. Inside there was a circle of twelve wooden chairs and a large, throne-like seat on a raised dais. The chairs had emblems on the back, each different. This secret chamber was where the inner circle met, an elite, comprising Philux and eleven other superiors, presided over by Diablo Sonata.

The Superiors, wearing black robes, filtered into the chamber, each carrying a flaming torch. These were placed in metal holders bolted to the wall behind them, from whence they illuminated the dark hall. Diablo wore a blood-red robe and a headdress incorporating the horns of a goat. He took his seat on the throne.

The group then intoned a dirge-like chant that reverberated through the chamber. Then Diabolus said, "Brethren, we are gathered here in this place to praise and honour the great Diabolus, The Prince of Darkness, the Destroyer of worlds. We, your humble servants, are here to do your will, which is to eradicate all imperfections in this world to bring about balance and harmony our way."

Chapter 16

When anybody left five messages on his phone, Abbott Gallagher figured it was either spam or someone had something important to tell him. But these messages were from Olivier Leroy. Well, fuck him! Abbott thought as memories of being stuck with the athlete's mother and the dog came flooding to mind. There again he would like to hear what excuse Olivier would give for his disappearing act.

He pressed the phone icon on his mobile and waited for a response. "Hi, you left me some messages."

"Yeah man. You've been difficult to reach."

"Yes, like you were when you pissed off, leaving me to deal with your mum and the fucking dog."

"I'm sorry about that man. I'll explain it all to you if we can meet somewhere."

"Why would I want to do that?"

"Because I have a better story to tell."

"What story?"

"Barry wasn't the spy."

"What do you mean? Do you know where he is?"

"Forget him. He's not the fucking spy."

"Okay, if that's true, who is?"

"I'll tell you face-to-face, over a drink."

Abbott thought about it. It could certainly jazz up the story. "Okay, but after the last episode, you come here, to Murwillumbah."

The iconic pink Imperial Hotel, in the heart of the town, was buzzing with drinkers, thinkers and punters chancing their luck on the pokies. Abbott chose the venue because he was doing an article on the pub, concerning spirits. Not the drinkable kind, but the alleged ghost of the old lady Mrs Lee, who died in Room 23 in the late 70s or early 80s.

Some say she still lingers in the hotel. The landlord of the establishment said he believed the story, but thought Mrs Lee probably meant no harm, even if she did like to put the scare into visitors and staff. He joked that the old lady probably goes down to the bar to get her sherry. It was a nice little touch to an amusing story.

But the story Abbott was interested in was the tale Olivier had to tell.

He placed the two schooners of New on the table and sat down. "Right," Abbott said, "I'm ready to hear your excuses now."

Olivier grinned, "I was going to meet you. But I couldn't get Barry Ryan out of my mind. I had to confront him about what happened. Nothing else mattered. But all I knew was that he was up north. Then I remembered him saying something to me about a place he used to work as a waiter, in Cairns. So I had to go there. And it's just as well I did."

Abbott took a swig of beer. "So you had it out with him, and he told you he wasn't the spy. And you believed him."

"Look mate. I'm not a fucking gullible idiot." He winced and grabbed his head."

"Hey, are you all right?"

"Just these fucking stabbing pain headaches. They catch me unawares at times."

"You'd better get it checked out. I had an Uncle Bob. He was as fit as a Mali bull. One night he gets a headache. In the morning he's stone cold dead."

"Thanks, mate, that's just what I needed."

Abbott took another swig. "So how did Barry convince you?"

"We were sitting in the 'Green Ant', where he was trying to get his old job back. We were arguing. I was ready to floor the lying prick. I lost it, and we were kicked out by some little snotty nose manager."

"As fascinating as all this is, can you get to the point."

"He told me that he wasn't the only ARL member working at Heron Robotics at the time of the attempted break-in."

"What proof did he have to offer?"

"He said he found out that Heron was carrying out illegal experiments on stem cells. The other person from ARL, who worked there, was a lab assistant who believed in the healthy benefits of the research and didn't want ARL to queer the pitch. So this traitor thwarted the break-in to stop ARL from finding out."

Abbott sat up straight. It seemed a plausible explanation. "So who is the traitor who got you banged up?"

"Helen Cleaver."

Abbott sat stock still. He thought he had misheard. "Nonsense! She was a kindergarten teacher."

"I confronted her, and she fessed up. She was the spy for Heron. I've already explained why."

The journalist felt nauseous. Helen was the spy! "So, what did you do?"

"Well I don't beat up women in wheelchairs," Olivier grinned. "Anyhow, I guess she's got enough to cope with being relegated to that wheelchair. Mind you, she's going to write a statement implicating Heron in illegal practices."

"I need to speak with her."

The black guy smiled, "I thought you would, mate. Well, that's up to you. I've done my bit. Now I'm going to put all this behind me and get on with my life."

The first US oil discovery was made in Clarion County, Pennsylvania, by Colonel Edwin L Drake in the year 1859. Subsequently, prospectors also discovered 'black gold' in Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Arkansas, Colorado, Montana and California.

The the last great find was in Alaska. The industry grew rapidly until by 1900 it was one of the largest in the country. The invention of the automobile with the gasoline engine made oil an essential commodity.

In 1870, Star Oil was incorporated in Ohio by John T Rottafeller, and corruption became rife in the industry. For instance, it was illegal under Ohio law (and almost every other State) to control a company in another state). Rottafeller managed to secretly buy up and control the independent oil producers and refiners. In 1883, he moved his headquarters to 26 Broadway in New York City. There he set up a trust or holding company and began to ruthlessly devour all the independent oil producers and refiners both nationally and internationally. It was here that David T Rottafeller was to have secret talks with Alexander Karimov.

As Karimov's stretch limo cruised slowly through the lower end of the thoroughfare, a massive structure of grey stone came into view. No 26 Broadway, former home of Star Oil, solid as a prison, was topped by a step pyramid. Its cold and forbidding facade seemed to rebuke the thoughtless levity of passing crowds, and frown on the frivolity of the stray sunbeams which in the late afternoon played around its impressive cornices.

Passers-by pointed to its stern portals, glanced quickly up at the rows of dark windows and nudged each other to hurry by as though they were Spaniards going by the offices of the Inquisition.

Karimov wondered why David T Rottafeller wanted to meet him there. In the limo with the Russian oligarch was Susan Sparkes and two armed bodyguards, who stuck to him like glue.

Peter Lavell, alias John Travers arrived at JFK International Airport and took a cab to an arranged address, as instructed. The address was a rented apartment opposite 26 Broadway. The unit was on a floor level with the old boardroom of Star Oil. The apartment became available when the former tenant, an elderly woman, died suddenly in her sleep.

It was fortunate for the leasing company to fill the vacancy so quickly. John Travers, having settled in at his new address, contacted an arranged number, to pick up an important package. Having ascertained the address, he ordered a cab.

Sam Spinetti loved the latest Virginian stats on gun control. Major gun crime collectively had dropped for a fourth consecutive year statewide, while firearms sales climbed to a new record in 2012. Over a period of seven years, the total gun sales in Virginia had risen a staggering 101 percent, while gun-related crime has dropped 28 percent during that time.

Sam, being a gun shop owner, welcomed this good news, which could well boost his sales. The rebuttal by some pinko university professor didn't interest him at all. He was just working out how his advertising could make mileage from the news when his phone rang. It was about that special order.

Getting hold of the SIG716 Tactical Rifle was not easy. The Swiss made SIG716 had the tightest tolerances, making it one of the most accurate and durable AR-10 type models on the market. Sam realised two things: the client knew his tactical rifles and obviously had a thick wallet.

Peter Lavell loved America because it was so easy to get firearms. In England, gun sale deals were carried out in dark corners, with money and guns changing hands.

But in New York, you just walk into 'Guns-R-Us and purchase the weapon of your choice. Best of all the weapon had been pre-ordered to his requirements, paid for and was ready for pick up. What could be easier? Now he just had to wait for further instructions.

Lady Lynsey caught Dayton as he was heading to his study. "Daniel is bringing his new lady friend to visit this weekend. So I hope you are not gallivanting off on one of your 'Boys Own' adventures."

Gallivanting, She always used that term as a form of derision. Dayton knew she disapproved of his globe-trotting lifestyle. But Margaret seemed to be more content when he was not around. Boys Own adventures indeed. If only she knew the half of it!

It was Dayton's 'gallivanting' that provided his dear wife with the indulgences she enjoyed and the safety in which to enjoy them. She was expanding her wardrobe to dress up for the soirees, she frequently held.

Well, that was his take on things. But he never voiced that opinion. "Yes, my dear. I should be free to enjoy the company of my wayward son."

"What do you mean? He's becoming prominent in the city."

"Yes, of course, my dear. Now I am expecting Matthew. Get Grenville to show him through to my study."

As Dayton entered his study, one of the maids was stoking the fire in the massive fireplace. The mornings were becoming chilly, so the fire was very comforting. After the girl had curtseyed and left him alone, Dayton studied the family crest above the marble mantelpiece. The three knights helmets across the top of the shield, surmounted by red and white floral flourishes crowned by a fourth helmet had always been a bit of an enigma to Lord Lynsey.

Apparently, his family's history went back to 1074, when Roger de Monteire, one of William the Conqueror's principal counsellors, was granted great powers and a vast territory, which extended from Shropshire into Mid-Wales.

Dayton's family Bible listed the Lynsey family tree, but he was only interested from when Earl William Lynsey was succeeded by his son from his first marriage to Lady Gertrude Manning. This entry was the first time the 'Soter Group' got a mention in the secret 'Lynsey Family Diary', which Dayton kept in a concealed draw inside his oak desk. William represented Derbyshire, in the House of Commons and served as Lord-Lieutenant of Derbyshire.

There was only one obscure reference to the Soter Group work. It read, 'We stand strong together to fight the darkness of Diabolus.' Dayton discovered the diary and the text when he was just fifteen. He was quite surprised at the response he got from his parents when he excitedly informed them of his find. Young Dayton was taken from his home to a remote place, where he was instructed in certain arts and skills.

Lord Lynsey's reverie got interrupted by Grenville, the household butler who announced, "Minister Snelling to see you, Sir."

Dayton said, "Thank you, Grenville." Then, once the servant had departed, Lord Lynsey said, "Thanks for coming, Matthew. Can I order you anything?"

The balding politician said "No thanks, Dayton. So tell me what this is all about."

"In two words, Rodney Maddox."

"Mad Maddox! What's he been up to?"

"The bastard is dragging me into his sordid little operations."

The Minister, who was suffering from gout in one of his toes, sat down slowly in one of Dayton's leather arm chairs. "Why do you let him bully you, old boy?"

"He has something on a friend and colleague. I need to know what he knows,"

Matthew frowned. "I'm not sure how I can be of help?"

"You have the Home Secretary's ear. Whisper into it."

The minister slowly shook his head. "Not that easy, I'm afraid. Six covets its secrets very seriously. For the HO to intervene there would have to be the need for an investigation into the director's integrity. Although Mad Maddox is a right bastard, there is no reason to suspect that he's not squeaky clean."

Dayton got up and warmed himself by the fire. "Nobody is that pure."

"Dayton, I hope you are not going to ..."

"Dammit, Matthew, I can't keep focussed on the main game with the Maddox spectre hanging over me."

"Yes. Perhaps you should take a break while I investigate. Take Lady Lynsey to some exotic clime."

The thought of taking Lady L anywhere held little appeal for Dayton. Also, he had the Karimov assignment to direct.

"Thank you for caring, but I haven't got time for a break at present. I have the Russian task to oversee."

"Okay I'll do some sniffing around, but I can't promise anything. I refuse to do anything remotely illegal, but I will look into Rodney's background."

Dayton smiled, "I knew I could rely on you."

The Minister was about to leave. Then he turned to Dayton, "Word to the wise. The Russian is the PM's blue-eyed boy. I hope you have fall-out covered."

"I am aware of what's at stake here just as I am about the ramifications if he isn't stopped."

"All I'm saying is tread extra carefully. Don't leave any trails that lead back to you."

conic Imperial Hotel for sale in Australia, ghost ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://nationalparanormalassociation.blogspot.com/2013/03/iconic-imperial-hotel->

Rome, Rockefeller, the U.S. and Standard Oil. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://reformation.org/rockefeller.pdf>

Chapter 17

Now that Helen had lied to him, Abbott did not feel so sad about not seeing her again. It wasn't that he didn't feel attracted to her. Abbott, feeling confused, didn't want any more distractions in his life. However, he was furious at the way she had played him. Nevertheless, he felt he had to get her side of the story.

They met at the Red Monkey Cafe in Kingscliff and sat outside in the walkway, where there was more room for Helen's wheelchair. As he hadn't contacted her in a while, their get together started off a bit stilted.

"It's good to see you again," she said timidly. "I miss our times together."

He decided to dive straight in. "Olivier came to see me the other day."

"Oh! how is he?" she said, a little startled.

Ignoring her question, he continued, "He had quite a story to tell."

"Oh!"

"Yes, Oh! You lied to me, Helen."

"I can explain, Abbott."

"Don't worry; Olivier has already told me about the role you played."

She was determined to be strong. "Then you know why I did it."

"I know why Olivier spent two years in gaol," Abbott retorted, curious as to why Helen hadn't broken down in an emotional mess.

The journalist got up to go.

She said, "Olivier wants me to write a statement about the stem cell research."

Abbott ignored her. "We can't see each other again."

She felt her eyes start to moisten, "Surely it doesn't have to be that final because of my lie. I know I treated you badly but ..."

He looked Helen in the eye. "It's not that. I don't want any loose ends," he interrupted.

She stared at him, trembling. "That's all I am to you - a loose end?"

"Helen, don't make this personal. I have to go somewhere. I'm tidying up all my loose ends, even my job."

"Where are you going?"

He could hardly say Atlantis! Although, if he did, she probably wouldn't want to see him again. Problem solved. "On a personal retreat to evaluate the direction of my life."

"Oh, I hope we can still be friends," she said, almost pleading.

"Helen, right now I have something more important to attend to than dealing with any personal relationships." He left it like that.

It seemed to Abbott that everybody wanted to fit him in a neat little box tied up with a pretty ribbon. But he wasn't a cute decoration on a Christmas tree. Phil was on his back about the story, which he now actually had but in which he had lost interest; Helen wanted him as some emotional crutch, and the Prof. wanted him as sort of Atlantis nut initiate. He just wanted to be Abbott, whoever that was.

He was back in his unit, with all this stuff going round and round in his mind when his phone rang. It was his editor.

"Hi Phil, I was going to call you."

"What's this bullshit about a Helen Cleaver being the spy?"

"How the hell did you find out about that?"

"She sent me a fucking confession. Are you saying it's kosher?"

"How would I know? I haven't read it."

"Well come over and read it quick-smart. It's fucking dynamite."

Abbott Gallagher parked his car and strolled into the Tweed News building. He felt nonchalant. The reporter was geared up to tell Phil Rosendale what to do with his job. He wondered what motivated Helen to expose herself and Heron Robotics in such a way. He passed layout artists and graphic designers at their desktops. Then he climbed the five steps to Phil's office; His secretary was just leaving. Abbott stood aside to let her past. Then he knocked and went in.

Phil thrust a print-out at him. "Read that and tell me what this is all about."

Abbott took a seat. He had a pretty good idea what it was going to say. But part of it did take him by surprise. It read:

"It's amazing to what lengths a reporter will go to get his story, even having sex with a cripple." He couldn't believe she would write such a thing. She made the whole episode seem sordid, and it wasn't like that at all."

Phil said, "So, is that right?"

"From what she told Olivier Leroy - yes."

"All of it," Phil said, raising an eyebrow.

"Yes, but it wasn't as cheap and sordid as she made it sound."

Phil sat back, with his hands behind his head "Well that's what I call dedication to getting a story."

You smug, slimy, bastard Abbott thought. But what he said hit much deeper, "I came in to tell you I quit."

"You what?" Phil sputtered, sitting up straight.

"As of now." Abbott, usually timid in the editor's presence, had never felt so brave.

"But you're in the middle of a story. Fuck, this stem cell stuff is dynamite. We can have Heron Robotics over a fucking barrel."

Abbott stared at Phil. "Correction, you're in the middle of a story."

Phil was totally flummoxed. "Why would you give up now, when you could make it big. It just doesn't make sense."

"Phil, right now my fucking life doesn't make any sense."

It was one of the rare occasions that Matthew Snelling became his own chauffeur. He was driving his Bentley (he found the Rolls to be too cliquish), enjoying the splendid views of the Shropshire countryside when his SatNav told him to turn left down a narrow lane, and his destination was 200 metres on his right. The old farmhouse was owned by an Arnulf Schmidt.

Arnulf, well into his seventies, answered the door, leaning on his gnarled stick.

"My name is Matthew Snelling. We spoke briefly on the phone."

The old Dutchman stood aside. "Oh yes. Come on inside. Make yourself comfortable. Would you like some tea?"

"If you're making one, yes," Matthew said, moving a tired, grouchy cat from one of the two armchairs, in the small lounge room. Looking at the photos on the crowded mantelpiece, Matthew said, "You were military when you knew Rodney Maddox?"

"Mercenary by that time."

"It seems odd that a mercenary soldier would intimately know a British Foreign Minister."

Arnulf popped a teapot down on top of a magazine on his cluttered coffee table. "There was a lot of odd stuff going on in the Central African Republic."

"So did you come to have personal dealings with Maddox?"

We were cosy with Bukassa at the time. Rodney didn't trust Bukassa's security, so your Brit Government paid some of us professional, independent soldiers to watch his back. As the senior officer, I got to pow wow with Rodney at times."

Matthew sipped passable tea. This information sounded promising. "So what was the business about the gifts?"

The old Dutch soldier shoved his dog aside to make more room for himself. "You have to realise that Jean Bedél Bukassa was one of Africa's most brutal dictators. He was even accused of cannibalism and feeding his opponents to animals."

"Sounds like the sort of person to avoid if possible. Did Rodney know of the man's brutal reputation?"

"I can give you a quote from a speech that Rodney Maddox made in parliament."

"What is it,"

"I thought you might want to know. So I am chasing a few things up since your call," the old Dutchman explained foraging through bits of paper on the coffee table. "Ah, here it is," he proclaimed triumphantly, holding up a scrappy piece of paper. Fumbling with his reading glasses, Arnulf read:

The Central African Republic has decided to support President Bukassa, despite his coming to power in a military coup and ruling so brutally.

Matthew smiled, "It certainly seems to show he knew what was going on. But what about the timeline. Did he make that comment before or after kowtowing to Bukassa?"

The elderly man slurped his tea. "Not sure about that. But there is something else that might be useful."

"What?"

"I was with Bukassa on a visit to Uganda. He had gone there to meet Idi Amin. He was a fanatical collector of medals, but so was Amin but the Ugandan dictator had a bigger chest so he could wear more medals." Arnulf chuckled at his joke. Then he said, "I saw Rodney Maddox there."

"In Uganda?"

"Yes, of course. I remember wondering what Rodney was doing there? It wasn't an official visit."

"Did you find out?"

Arnulf finished his tea. "Let me give you a sense of what it was like back then. Backed by France, Bukassa came to power in a coup in 1965. He ruled with an iron fist, torturing and killing political rivals and cutting off the ears of thieves. He was accused of cannibalism when photographs in Paris-Match magazine showed a fridge containing the bodies of schoolchildren."

"How ghastly!"

"It was said he cooked his political rivals and served them in meals to visiting foreign dignitaries. Some rivals get fed to lions and crocodiles in his personal zoo."

"Why would Rodney have aligned himself with such a monster? What was in it for Britain?"

"Diamonds, gold, uranium. You name it."

"My God! Well there's a motive. But I don't get it. Why did Maddox have to become chummy? Bukassa would have sold it to the British in any case."

"All I know is that French Foreign Minister was a guest of the President."

So that's it, Matthew thought, trade wars between France and the UK. So what else is new? "Okay, Mr Schmidt, so why did Bukassa give our Rodney some valuable carvings?"

The old Dutchman said, "I don't know, but he must have been pleased with something Maddox did for him."

"Indeed Arnulf. You have been a great help."

In 1913, a pivotal year for the US economy, Grand Duke Alexander of Russia made a pronouncement. In the form of a warning, to the American people, he stated:

"There was one unexpected change which seemed to have escaped the attention of the native observers. The building of the Panama Canal and the stupendous development of the Pacific Coast had created a new form of American pioneering; their industries had grown to where a different outlet had become a sheer necessity. Their financiers who used to borrow money in London, Paris and Amsterdam had suddenly found themselves in the position of creditors."

At the time the rustic 'Republic of Jefferson' rapidly gave way to the Rottafeller dynasty, but the average man-in-the-street had not yet entirely caught up with this new order of things, and the bulk of the nation was still thinking in regards to the nineteenth century. Such was the extreme secrecy of the Rottafeller Syndicate, which almost a century later, still had most Americans unaware that Star Oil had hijacked their country.

The Grand Duke did not know— or could not tell— the Rottafellers had also hijacked his country!

Now another unsuspecting Russian, The Csar of mining, came to America and David D Rottafeller, rubbing his hands together with the thought of obscene wealth, was ready and waiting. Since Irvaz Holdings had hit the Forbes 500 list, David had taken a keen interest in the industrial empire. Now Alexander Karimov was his special guest. And the American magnate was showing Karimov around the famous 26 Broadway address. As he showed the Russian, the large boardroom David said, "How would you like to double your money with the British deal?"

Karimov intrigued and certainly not adverse to a greater profit margin said, "Go on."

"Next winter, will be an unusually cold one." Noticing the question mark look on the Muscovite's craggy face, he qualified, "I have influential colleagues who know these things. Britain will be in desperate need of coal supplies."

"Yes, we already have a deal in place."

David smiled, "Yes but what if we have a fake bidding war with them over your coal? You could double your money, and Britain, one way or another, suffers greatly, throwing the government into chaos."

Alexander stared at the taller, thinner man, with horn-rimmed glasses. Then he beamed, "Do you think it will work?"

"Of course, they will need your coal."

Karimov hesitated. "What's in it for you, David?"

America's first multi-billionaire had been expecting this. He apparently did not need the money or even more power. "You supply us with uranium from the Central African Republic for five years at a fixed rate."

Karimov's eyes widened. How did the American know about his recent deal with President Bazize, of the Central African Republic? He wondered whether to try a bluff but figured Rottafeller was smarter than that. "I will have my people look into it."

Rottafeller smiled again "Excellent. I'm sure you'll find the numbers work in your favour. But by all means, work it out and show me the figures, here tomorrow."

"It doesn't give me much time."

"I only put great deals on the table for a short time, Alex. I find it whets the appetite. Talking of which, I think it's time for lunch."

Just as die-hard Martini lovers merely waved a bottle of vermouth over their glass rather than add a splash, Rodney went very easy on the anchovies. He made this point while dining, at White's, with Matthew Snelling.

"To taste a spot of their salty Atlantic flavour is wonderful. Finding a whole one in my Caesar salad is like nibbling an eyebrow spread with Gentleman's Relish."

Matthew, savouring his potted shrimp, thought the metaphor amusing. But it was time to get down to the business of the day.

"Rodney, Lord Lynsey tells me you have been putting a bit of pressure on him."

Rodney Maddox wondered why the Minister had offered to buy him lunch at the gentlemen's club in St James'. Now he knew.

"The man is too free range. His missions sometimes interfere with Six. I had to clip his wings."

Unfazed, Matthew said, "He tells me you have something on a Benjamin Solomon. What is it?" He knew the Director of MI6 would not tell him. But there was an ulterior motive behind his question."

"Matthew, you ought to know better than ask me that."

"Yes. Of course. Silly me. The point is I would like you to back off Dayton and leave him to his work."

Rodney took a sip of brandy. The Minister's soft approach was like hitting him with a pillow. He chuckled "There's no harm in you wanting that."

The minister looked straight at the smug Scott. "I did not want it to come to this, Rodney but your unreasonable attitude leaves me with little choice."

"Oh, be out with it Man," he responded, wondering what the soft pillow would feel like this time.

"Rodney, a little bird told me that you have some interesting artefacts from the Central African Republic."

The Scotsman, recollecting the gifts, became more alert. "That happened years ago. So why are you bringing it up now?"

"Apparently they are quite valuable. Gifts from a late President, I believe."

Rodney began to feel a little uncomfortable. He took a larger sip of brandy. "They're not that valuable."

"I checked with the Chief of Protocol. There must have been an oversight because the sculptures were never listed." He watched the MI6 director turn a shade paler. Now it was time to go in for the kill.

"As I said, Rodney, it could be a mere oversight on your part but accepting gifts from a dictator who named himself emperor in 1976, could be a problem for you."

"Dammit Matthew, If I hadn't taken the gift I'd probably have ended up in a freezer waiting for Bukassa to feed me to foreign dignitaries. You have no idea the lengths that evil bastard would go to have his way. He had himself a lavish coronation, costing tens of millions of dollars, in which he

wore costumes styled on Napoleon's and rode in a carriage flanked by soldiers dressed as 19th-century French cavalrymen."

Matthew sipped his brandy. "Yes, and he was overthrown three years later after his guards killed scores of schoolchildren who were demonstrating in the capital, Bangui."

The minister fixed Rodney with his gaze. "Your association with him will not look good on your CV, old boy."

Rodney glared at the politician. "Are you threatening me?"

Matthew continued, "If this particular can of worms came to light at a time when Karimov is our new favourite chum, it could leave a very nasty stink around Westminster. The PM would not be pleased."

"What's Karimov got to do with this?" Rodney asked, puzzled.

"Oh, didn't you know, he owns mining rights in the Central African Republic."

Rodney froze. The implications were clear. If he didn't back off Lord Lynsey, his career would be in ashes."

He glared at Matthew. "What the hell is in this for you?"

"The greater good, old boy."

"I don't understand."

"No, of course, you don't," the politician smiled, knowing the Scot had come round to his way of seeing things.

From Russia with Love? GRAND Duke Alexander warns ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://reformation.org/from-russia-with-love.html>

'Cannibal' dictator Bokassa given posthumous pardon ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/03/jean-bedel-bokassa-posthumous-pard>

Chapter 18

Having driven along the high ground, Abbott was relieved when they reached the La Cumbre junction on Carretera 14, where the paved road dropped steeply towards the secluded Salama Valley. The reporter, suffering from the oppressive humidity, turned to the Prof, who was driving the old Jeep. "I'll be glad when I can get to a cold shower."

Abbott couldn't believe they were in South America. When the Prof had first mentioned the idea, the journalist thought he was joking. But here they were!

When Abbott thought of pyramids, he thought of Egypt. Well, that's entirely natural. So he was surprised to discover that the Americas had more pyramid structures than the rest of the planet combined. He began studying this because, as part of his initiation, the Prof had organised for Abbott and himself to stay with a friend of his, an archaeologist in Guatemala. So, by Googling, Abbott discovered that the Olmec, Maya, Aztec and Inca civilisations all built pyramids to house their gods, as well as to bury their kings.

During one of their regular chess matches, the Prof casually mentioned his plans for them both to go to South America to visit the great Latin American pyramids. Even Abbott, who was used to the Prof's surprise announcements, was stunned by that one.

The Prof also felt the intense humidity, but his mental discipline helped him to ignore the discomfort. "We will soon be in Salama. Then we can rest."

The Prof had known Filipe Miguel since they had worked on a dig together, 30 years ago. Filipe was of the same Soter order as the Prof. They had stayed in contact, occasionally, over the intervening years. Like, Harry Scholfield, Filipe was no longer a young man, although, at 75, he still dabbled in archaeological adventures.

When they arrived at the Archaeologist's home at 5 Avenida, Filipe was all smiles. He welcomed his guests into his modest cottage and provided the travellers with special Guatemalan coffee, tortillas and beans. Then he and Harry had a catch-up chat.

Afterwards, Filipe addressed Abbott who was feeling left out. "Harry, tells me you have not visited a Mayan pyramid."

"That's right. I've only seen the pyramids on TV. They look awesome." he responded, still feeling like a fish out of water.

"It's about time," Filipe said, knowing Harry had gotten his drift.

Abbott didn't get the reference. "About time for what?"

The old men laughed. Then Filipe said, "Some people believe the time is speeding up."

"What do you mean?"

The Prof said, "For instance, what used to take several years to accomplish now seems to be taking place much more quickly."

"Surely, that's to do with improving technologies, not time," Abbott argued.

Harry explained, "In the 2012 paradigm, this idea served to correlate the prophesied dissolution of time with direct individual observations. It seems that two simultaneous phenomena contribute to this perception."

"Are you referring to the Mayan Calendar?" Abbott asked.

Filipe said, "What we are referring to is that there has been an ongoing reduction in trinkets among little trends."

"What is he on about?" Abbott asked the Prof.

"He means an increase in routine and repetition in all things mundane, both personal and cultural. For example, television and the internet have become more deeply embedded in modern life, increasing the amount of time we are dumbed down during the day."

Defending the technology, Abbott said, "What do you mean? The internet is a fantastic educational tool. We never had so much access to knowledge before the internet came about."

The Prof countered, "I'm talking about a decrease in the quality and quantity of memories, owing to beguilement, repetition, and routine. The recent past offers less significant content with which to reflect upon, so it appears that time is short."

Getting the point, Abbott clarified, "Filipe, are you saying is that because we don't have important things to remember, our perception of time between the past and the present seems less?"

"Something like that, yes." the Prof agreed.

"You said there was a second thing."

Filipe stated, "Yes, there has been a simultaneous increase in novelty among spiritually significant trends."

Again puzzled, the reporter asked, "What do you mean?"

The Prof intervened. "The rate of growth among sensitive individuals regarding awareness and emotional maturity is accelerating. You may have changed more in the past two years than you did in the five years before that. When we cram more personal growth into a shorter period, it appears that things have picked up the pace with ground covered more quickly."

Abbott could see some sense in that. What with the personal, rapid changes he had been experiencing. "I get that but why all this emphasis on time?"

"Because different consciousnesses have different times," Filipe stated.

Leaving the Prof to have a rest, Filipe showed Abbott around his city. As they perambulated along the main street, Filipe explained, "The word Salamá comes from the Maya quiché language "TZ alum Ha" which means "Río de Tablas" (River of Boards) or "Tablas Sobre el Agua" (Boards over the Water)?"

"Oh! What does 'river of boards' signify?" the journalist asked.

Filipe stared at the reporter, thinking him stupid. "Crossing the river on boards. River surfing is not new," he laughed. "The Maya crossed the river this way hundreds of years ago."

They were wandering, among the crowds, at the very popular twice-weekly market where the archaeologist was after fresh produce. While he purchased, sapotes Filipe cursed a young boy in Spanish, causing the urchin to scamper away. Turning to Abbott, he said, "Guard your belongings well. This place is running with little thieves preying on the unsuspected."

Abbott made sure his backpack was secure. "Thanks for the advice."

"These kids are destitute. They just try to survive." Filipe added, "But I am not a wealthy man. I cannot subsidise them."

Despite Salama being the capital of the department of Baja Verapaz, it was a very subdued city. Abbott noticed they hadn't bumped into other 'gringos' or tourists as they made their way past the colourful textiles, woven hats and baskets, beans, tortillas and corn, all sold by the stallholders. The sites, sounds, and aromas were a feast for Abbott's senses. He bought a colourful woven hat with a wide brim ready for their trek into the jungle.

Filipe was almost apologetic for the city. "There isn't much to see in Salama, but it is handy for visiting the Chilasco waterfall." Then he grinned, "We can go there now if you like."

Abbott was very impressed and considered the view of the falls well worth climbing the very steep path, much of which was muddy and slippery. Filipe seemed indefatigable, not at all out of breath, even after the difficult climb. Abbott drank from his water flask, enjoying a long draft, after the tiring walk to the magnificent waterfall. They shared the experience with a few other tourists, who kept asking Filipe questions. Abbott reckoned it was because the genial Guatemalan looked like a Mayan elder. The old archaeologist told Abbott it was a good time to see the natural spectacle because the water flow was heavy as it plunged one hundred and thirty three metres to the river below.

Filipe turned to the Australian, "You'll find most of the locals don't say much. Those that do will have you believe Salto de Chilasco is the highest waterfall in the whole of Central America."

"Is it?"

Filipe laughed quietly. "No. There is at least one with a one thousand feet drop, in BeDoriane." The Archaeologist looked at the sky. "The sun sets quickly here. We had better go back down."

Ivan Saskori stood with his back to the window. He was a big man with broad shoulders. He had been a shield for Alexander Karimov for six years. He knew that one day he might have to take a bullet for his boss. He was hoping this was not it.

Karimov watched the man across the big oak table. He wondered why David Rottafeller kept it when the rest of the place had been gutted. He put it down to the eccentricities of the American super-rich. Alexander looked at the contract in front of him. It seemed flawless. "My people have gone over this with a fine comb. They can see nothing wrong with it. So I would say we have a deal."

David smiled. "I thought that would be the case. This business arrangement will be excellent for both of us." He opened his Classic Orton briefcase and took out a bottle of Bollinger and two crystal flutes. "To toast our partnership in this joint venture."

Peter Lavell looked through his sights. The big man was still blocking the target. Peter made his decision. He loaded three cartridges and took aim. He checked his watch. It was two minutes to the call. His mobile was beside him, waiting. It was the waiting that got to him, not the shooting. That was the easy bit. He was a professional sniper. That's what he did in the army, and that's what he did now. He made one final check of his weapon. Everything seemed in perfect order.

Then his phone rang. A voice said quietly. "Code Green."

This was it! He got the big guy in his sights. Using the third shot for the target was always risky. But he had no other choice. He looked through the sights, one bullet was ready in the breech, slight pressure on the trigger and it was out of his hands.

David Rottafeller and Alexander Karimov clinked glasses. Then, before the Russian could say 'za vashe zdorovye', the big glass window shattered, Ivan Saskori leant forward, then fell on his face. Karimov took on a perplexed expression as a red patch spread on his shirt. David Rottafeller, stood statue-like, unable to move. The Russian's other bodyguard was on the phone, dialling 911.

Within minutes, armoured, heavily armed police were searching the apartments opposite number 26 Broadway. The cops, concentrating on three floors in line with the smashed window opposite, quickly and roughly carried out their search. A security guard came running, screaming to the police, "Come here, I've found a gun." Two cops followed him. The SIG716 was still on its tripod. The security guard left the police to it. He murmured pleasantries to another two cops, on his way down to street level. Then Peter Lavell made good his escape.

Atienza, located in the province of Guadalajara, according to the 2006 census, the municipality has a population of 437 inhabitants. All of them appeared to be under Diablo Fransisco Sonata's influence. Wherever the professor went people bowed to his will. The local farmers and gardeners kept his larder stocked with fresh produce. Local vintners filled his wine cellar with the local vintage. And his men's beds were shared with the pick of the local girls.

All was given freely and without question. And Diablo was becoming bored. The town had become dull, the people automatons. He had to do something to liven things up. He needed to find something that would shake the townspeople out of their lethargy.

The professor took Philux to one side. "I'm bored with this town. We have to come up with a plan to liven it up."

Philux agreed, "There's no initiative left in these people. They're dullards!"

"Well, I don't want this town to decay in attrition. I want to destroy it in a more entertaining way."

Philux knew what his master meant. The people were like robots. They did what he told them to do, but they were mere husks animated only by his orders. "We need to wake them up."

"Then they will rebel against us."

Philux grinned evilly. "Not if we set them against themselves."

Diablo stroked his Vandyke beard. "Search their history. Find any old rivalry. There must be something, a family feud perhaps."

So Philux dug into the town's archives, and, upon investigation, he came across something that would be pleasing to the Diabolus. In a volume titled 'Spanish Recolonisation in New Mexico, one Juan Antonio Escobar had left Atienza in a hurry, after killing his brother in a fight over Antonia Valasquez, a local woman with whom they were both in love. He fled without her and later married Barbara Catherine de La Cuz, in New Mexico. Antonia was heartbroken over Domingo Escobar's death.

Juan Enrico Escobar, the father, blamed the Velasquez family for the loss of his sons, claiming Antonia had bewitched them. For over five generations there was rivalry and hatred between the

two families. The Spanish Civil War saw both families fighting against a greater enemy - Fascism, and the feud died down.

Philux, pleased with what he had unearthed, checked local church records to see if any descendants of the two families still lived in the town. After some diligent searching, he came across Franco Escobar, who owned the local bakery. Also, an Emile Velasquez, the local blacksmith and farrier. Now it was time to stir the pot.

Abbott spent an excellent night, in a hammock, at Filipe's, before being rudely awoken, by roosters crowing, dogs barking, and competing church bells. Fortunately, the song of exotic birds, living in a nearby forest made him quickly forget the cacophony of noise. He looked out of a small window. The weather was much better than it had been.

The sultry heat was building, but there was no sign of rain. Abbott walked into the kitchen, where the pungent aroma of freshly brewed coffee and the smell of eggs frying, gave him an olfactory thrill. Abbott was starving. He said, "Thanks, Filipe, you're a bloody marvel."

The Guatemalan grinned and served out breakfast for him and the Aussie.

"I haven't seen the Prof, er Harry, this morning, " Abbott commented.

Filipe said, "Harry is feeling worse than he did yesterday. He is too weak to walk with us."

"I'll go and see if he wants anything."

Filipe smiled, "Better to let him rest, I think."

The Prof was not well enough to travel that day. Luckily, Maria Chavez, a good neighbour of Filipe's, was happy to keep an eye on him, while Filipe got Abbott acclimatised to the jungle, in readiness for their long trek to the pyramids. As Abbott packed the things he needed for the walk, Filipe said, "No clocks, watches, phones or anything that works on Western time."

The Australian looked at him with surprise. "No phone! What happens if we need help?"

"Why would we need help?"

"I don't know. It just seems ..."

The Mayan said, "You need to forget all concept of time as you know it."

Abbott shrugged and put his mobile in a drawer. Then he said, "I'm worried about Harry. The journey took a lot out of him, and now this sickness. He shouldn't have left Australia."

Filipe smiled, "Old age comes to all of us who live long enough."

As the pair walked out of the town, past a Spanish-style church, they passed many people, women and men, coming back from the forest. Machetes hung on their belts, as they carried firewood, bound with vines, on their backs. Filipe acknowledged them as they passed by him.

Indicating an unmarked track, Filipe said, "We go this way."

This way to where Abbott wondered, following the Guatemalan's lead.

They had walked - trudged more like - about three kilometres, much of the time in the shade of the trees when they came to a hut. A wizened little man with a multi-coloured poncho emerged to collect a fee for an entrance ticket. Filipe handed over some quetzal.

A fee for what? Abbott wondered. It just looked like more jungle. Abbott figured the Archaeologist knew what he was doing and went along with it.

It turned out to be about 6 kilometres of marked paths. Filipe was following a little map that came with the ticket.

Abbott asked, "Why did you pay the man?"

Filipe grinned, "Everybody has to eat."

The steep climb was tough going for Abbott, whose legs had become like lead. Sweltering under the intense sun, he staggered onward, wondering why he'd ever left Tweed Shire? Having reached the peak of a steep hill, the reporter collapsed, exhausted. The pair were sweating profusely but Filipe's stamina, even for a man half his age, was impressive. Abbott had just managed to keep up with him. The reporter was looking forward to seeing the colourful birds and other native wildlife. Unfortunately, the heavily humid heat kept toucans, monkeys and other animals hidden in the shade.

Then Abbott saw the reason for the torturous trek. Ahead of them lie a small lake. There was the sound of laughter as children swam and splashed around in a space laid out for bathing. It was a green space, created by natives who also provided a few shelters to protect bathers from the sun. There was also a pontoon floating gently on the placid lake surface to make access to the water easier. The surroundings were beautiful and the water, turquoise blue, due to a whitish deposit on the bottom of the lake

Abbott was shedding himself of his heavy backpack. "I can't wait to get in that water."

Filipe cautioned him. "Walking in the water is not very pleasant because you can sink dozens of centimetres in the thin white silt."

"Like under water quicksand."

"Yes, only much quicker. Better to stay in the shade and eat lunch."

As Abbott enjoyed the tortillas Filipe had prepared, he asked, "Where do these kids come from?"

The older man shrugged, "All over. From different villages."

"But there's none nearby. The kids must have to walk a long way to get here."

"Yes, but it is nothing to them. Our children are used to it. The way of life is different here. Just accept that."

Then Abbott asked, "Is Harry going to come with us, to the pyramids?"

"Only the gods know of such things."

Chapter 19

"At any given moment the human brain manages to control two hundred and forty four different mechanical degrees of freedom, involving more than six hundred bodily muscles," Jerry Stone, Heron's senior neurologist stated, explaining the problem to Ulysses.

The CEO looked at the data on the screen. "So what are you telling me, Jerry?"

"The muscles in the arms control 30 mechanical degrees of freedom utilising rather complex muscle combinations. With 'our' arm, we achieve this through feedback control, based on a variety of different sensors such as stress and strain sensors in the muscles. Underlying this lies the robot's central processor, what we call brain power."

Ulysses sighed, "Jerry, please get to the point."

"We only began to realise the complexity of this control as soon as we made an attempt to equip our robot arm model with just a fraction of human dexterity. As a simple example let's look at the skill required to grasp and insert a screw."

"So?"

"Ulysses, first the robot has to be able to sense the screw. It then has to be able to determine the position of the screw, then select an efficient gripping position."

Staring at his boss, Jerry said, "I won't go into the thousands of calculations the robotic brain has to make to carry out this simple function."

"No, I think you've laboured your point enough."

"Yes, well as we don't have access to 'Atlas' itself, we can only go by computer models. This limitation means we have to carry out many tests followed by many adjustments. The bottom line is, we do not have enough time to get this arm in sync with the rest of the robot."

Covington blanched. "You are telling me this now, at this late hour?"

"With respect Ulysses, I have been trying to tell you for the last month, but you haven't been listening."

The CEO thumped his fist heavily on the desk. "Jerry, if you can't do it I'll get somebody who can."

"Jesus man, what is wrong with you. If it were possible, I would be able to do it. It's just not possible within our shortened time-frame."

Covington glared. "What the hell am I supposed to do about it?"

"Ask for more time. Otherwise, DARPA will get a half-arsed job."

Ulysses was not a happy man. And he became even less so when he received a call from Phil Rosendale, of the Tweed News. "How can I help you?" he asked automatically, not really in the mood to help anyone.

"Dr Covington?"

"Yes. Speaking. What is this about?"

"Some information has reached my desk that I think we should talk about it, face-to-face."

"What information."

"All I'm saying over the phone is it's about Heron Robotics and illegal practices."

"Now you see here!" Ulysses exploded, "I do not talk to the gutter press."

"Very wise too. Where shall we meet?"

'The changing of bodies into light and light into bodies is very comfortable to the course of nature, which seems delighted with transmutations.'

Professor Sonata remembered the Newton quote very clearly. It was what first got him interested in alchemy. He became deeply interested in the philosophy of this ancient discipline while at the University, where he got his doctorate in applied chemistry. But once he became introduced to the wonder of alchemy he realised how inferior classical chemistry was by comparison. It only took into account the seen, physical, realms, not the invisible world which lies beyond the observances of the senses and which cannot be described through logic alone.

Francisco, as a young man, knew that alchemy was not about changing base metals into gold, which was a metaphor about humans reaching a state of perfection. It was also nothing to do with the religious concept of soul regeneration. No, to Francisco, alchemy was about manipulating the forces of nature, to his advantage, through magic rituals. In this sense, he saw alchemy as a spiritual process disguised in the language of chemistry.

It was Diablo Sonata's, utilisation of his academic and alchemical knowledge that allowed him control over the people of Atienza. Now, as Diablo Sonata, he was ready to bring about the chaos he so heartily embraced.

Emile Velasquez knew a little about his family's history, but he wasn't interested in any past squabbles. He was setting up his forge for the day when Franco Escobar showed him the local paper. Pointing to the letters page, he said, "What did you write this for?"

Emile, nonplussed, scanned the article. "I did not write this," he stated.

"It says here," Franco said, stabbing at the page with his finger, "that Domingo Escobar was killed by his brother because he knew of Juan's plan to rob his family and go to America with the proceeds."

Emile shrugged it off. "I know nothing about this letter."

"It has your name at the bottom. So, if you didn't write it, who did?" , Franco pressed.

Emile picked up his bellows "I have no idea, and I also have no interest in your ancestors. Now I have work to do."

"I want you to write a letter to say that what you wrote is false."

The Blacksmith having had enough of this, repeated, "I did not write it, and I don't care what your family did or didn't do. It has nothing to do with me."

Franco stewed over the letter all day. It seemed unlikely that anyone but Emile would write such a letter. What would they have to gain from it? But why was he lying about it? Franco had no idea what his ancestors got up to and, like Emile, he didn't much care. But family honour was another thing, even if the family in question was not honourable. If Emile wouldn't recant, Franco had to take steps himself. He decided to write his version of events in a letter to the editor. Having emailed his response he thought, Now we will see who gets upset.

Phil Rosendale brushed the cigarette ash from his pants. With Abbott gone to god knows where to do god knows what, he decided to take on the Leroy assignment (now more the Heron case). He received a postcard, from Guatemala, from the cheeky bastard, with a message reading, 'Glad I'm not there'.

Despite moaning about Abbott leaving him in the lurch, Phil felt good to be out in the field, getting a story. And he didn't have to do much investigative work. Heron Industries was already on the hook. Phil just had to reel in his catch.

Having finished his fag, the editor went back to reception to sit down. Before he could do so his name was called, and an employee took Phil through to the CEOs inner sanctum.

Ulysses, attired in a charcoal grey Armani suit with a cherry red silk tie, looked up at the fat man with receding hair, wearing a suit like a sack. "Please take a seat and tell me what this is about."

Phil smiled. "We already have the story but, being fair as we are, we want your take on events."

"Are you going to tell me what events or am I supposed to look into a crystal ball?"

Unfazed, Phil said, "A few years back your company employed a Helen Cleaver as a lab assistant. She assisted your scientists in illegal stem cell research." He watched Ulysses' face match the colour of his suit.

"You can stop right there. I know nothing about this. I will get our legal people in here right now."

"There's no need for a Shakespearean performance, Dr Covington. I'm only after your response - not you," Phil stated, smiling. Shall I continue?"

"Very well."

"This is where it becomes interesting, as a story that is. Helen Cleaver was a member of ARL (Anti Robotics League), But she was also passionate about the benefits of stem cell research. She found out that Barry Ryan, aka Abe Lincoln, a Heron security guard had inside info on the illegal research and was going to use it to hurt your company. When she found out ARL was going to raid your facility, Helen was afraid they would discover the illegal research.

So she ratted on her group and set it up so that Olivier Leroy walked, or rather jumped, into a trap. He was charged with trespass etc. and gaoled. He was a criminal. Nobody would listen to his claims. Your company is spared." He added, grinning, "Reads like a fairy tale, doesn't it."

"It's all utter nonsense, of course, the ravings of a deranged mind," Covington stated, haughtily.

Phil handed Covington a print-out of the email, "A crazy mind in a wheelchair, by all accounts."

"What do you mean?"

"A paraplegic witness for the prosecution would not be good for you if this went to court," Phil smirked.

"Now look here!"

"Look, this is a hot story, and I can't sit on it too long. God knows to whom she has sent her confession. You sort out the facts within say 48 hours, and it goes in the article. Can't be fairer than that."

Ulysses had to act fast. He showed the editor the door, then spoke into his intercom. "Susan, get me, Matthew Sheen, now." He waited until he heard Matthew's voice. "Matthew, come to my office right away."

"I'm a bit tied up at present."

"You'll be a bit jobless if you don't get down here right now!"

Ulysses thought about his next move. He hesitated, then pressed a contact called Nick. "Hi, I have a job for you. Her name is Helen Cleaver. She's a paraplegic. She has a website called ATL (Anti Transhumanist League)." He listened for a response, then said, "No, I don't want any heavy stuff, for God's sake. Just a gentle reminder, that's all."

He loosened his tie, wondering what he had become?

Rodney Maddox was passing his lounge, on the way to his luxury kitchen, when he caught the news flash. "Alexander Karimov, head of Ivraz Holdings, was shot while engaged in a business meeting in New York today. A sniper assassinated him and his bodyguard from a building opposite 26 Broadway, The old headquarters of Star Oil. Mr Karimov leaves behind his wife and two children. Investigations are under way to find his killer."

"Karimov dead! No, it couldn't be. Shit!" The political and financial fallout could be horrendous. He grabbed his phone, pressed the appropriate contact, waited, then said, "Have you heard the news. Karimov has been murdered. Get the A-team together. It's going to be a late night." Thank Christ, it wasn't under his watch, Rodney thought.

His phone rang. It was Clarice Bourne. "Good evening Home Secretary."

"There's nothing good about it, Rodney, as you well know, unless you didn't catch the news about Karimov."

"Yes. A tragedy."

"We need a strategy. I'll see you in my office in, say one hour."

"I have to meet with my team."

"Rodney, I want you here."

What sounded like a request, was a precise order. Clarice had only been on the job for a few months but already secret epithets like Dragon Lady, Attila the Dwarf and Rodney's personal favourite, 'The

Clarinator', were flying around. She was, firm, tight and took no nonsense. This emergency was her first government threatening crisis, and Rodney was not looking forward to their get together.

Clarice had quickly learned the ropes. She had come up through the ranks, having been involved in politics at all levels for many years, beginning with stuffing envelopes at her local Conservative Association before going on to be a councillor in the London borough of Fulham from 1986 to 1994. During her time at Fulham, Clarice was Chair of Education from 1989 to 1992 and Deputy Group Leader and Housing Spokesperson from 1992 to 1996.

She had done the hard yards. She dealt with difficult situations before, but not as the Secretary of State. Labour would use Karimov's death to destabilise her government. Worse still, a significant number of Tory MPs were against getting into a cosy bed with the Russian. They were well aware of his alleged 'Raffia' (Russian Mafia) roots.

Rodney, dishevelled and unshaven, burst into the Home Secretary's office. "Sorry, Clarice. Got here as soon as I could," he said, slumping into a seat.

She narrowed her eyebrows. "Tell me we had nothing to do with this."

"You can relax on that account. Mind you nobody seems to have any idea who was behind it, or why?"

"That's not helpful. I understand the police found the weapon."

"Yes, a Swiss precision job."

"Then they can track the shooter from the weapon."

"Not that simple, The serial number was filed off. Of course, there is the rifling in the barrel."

"Can't we trace the weapon by that. It's not like you can bore out the barrel to get rid of it."

"They've already traced it to the supplier. It was purchased legally, but not by the person who picked it up."

Clarice stared at Rodney, sending a chill up his back. "Okay, who's going to be the New CEO of Ivraz Holdings."

He shrugged, "We don't know yet."

"Find out and keep me informed."

"Oh, we need to make a fuss of the family. Get the FO onto it."

Rodney frowned, "It might be prudent to see which way the wind blows first. Especially if it was an inside job."

"Yes, I had considered that. I do hope we don't have to deal with Karimov's killer."

Rodney's mind wandered, back to the days he had to kowtow to a certain African President, whom he considered was the most evil man on earth.

Chapter 20

Nick Gibbon stood alone, on the headland, looking out to sea. He thought he saw dolphins in the ocean, but he couldn't be sure. A stiff breeze was blowing churning up the surf. He had never been interested in surfing. A whole bunch of poofy posers, he reckoned. Now, riding his 'fat boy', that showed a man's true colours. He had left his bike gear behind, opting for a more casual poncy look, for the job in hand. He looked up and saw his target manually wheeling herself along the path running along the headland.

Nick reckoned it was her, from the photograph Ulysses had given him, but he decided to play it carefully. Ms Helen Cleaver, if it was her, was wheeling in his direction. He waited until she was close. Then he said, "Excuse me miss, can you help me?"

Seeing the clean-shaven guy with dark, deep eyes and wearing his hair in a ponytail down his back, she answered, "What do you want?"

"I'm looking for a paraplegic woman called Helen. I thought as you were in a wheelchair, you might know her."

Suspicious but curious, she played along. "Why would I know her?"

"Well she's in a wheelchair as well, and I thought ..."

"She smiled, "Because we're both wheelies, you think I should automatically know of her."

"Didn't mean no offence, miss. it's just that ..."

"As it happens I do know her."

You smart fucking cow, he thought. "Well, when you see your wheelie friend, will you give Ms Cleaver a message?"

"What message?" she asked, now concerned.

"She is upsetting some powerful people. It's not a good idea especially as she lives alone."

Helen froze inside. Keeping up false courage, she said, "Are you threatening her?"

Nick said, "That all depends on whether she takes the message seriously. Tell her to write a letter to the paper saying it was all made up."

Playing dumb, she said, "What was all made up?"

"I think you know what I'm talking about," Nick said, walking away.

Helen sat as though glued to the spot. The creep had gone, and she couldn't stop trembling. She needed Abbott, and that made her angry. Where was the bastard? Becoming her friend/lover then dropping her. How could he treat her like that? Now, Somebody at Heron was threatening her! She could go to the cops, but that would probably make things even worse. Shit, why had she not just let things be?

Abbott had been thinking about Helen. He thought about sending her an email on his phone. But she was part of his old world that seemed to be going nowhere. Filipe told him that the past is called

the past because that is where it should be left. Abbott didn't entirely agree with such sentiments, but he could see the Guatemalan's point. Then his thoughts fled back to the Prof. He was feeling better but was still fragile. They were playing chess when the old man said, "I am going to die here. I sense it."

Abbott's hand froze on the pawn he was going to move. "What are you talking about? You've got plenty of life in you yet. Besides, there's our Atlantean adventure to plan."

Harry grinned, "I don't know about that, but I've had plenty of experience in my life. And that's the important thing." Then, in a more sombre tone, he said. "Tomorrow you are going on your adventure to see the most magnificent architectural wonders in the world. Before you go, I want to give you something."

"What?"

"Instructions. You are only to read them after I have passed on. Do you understand?"

Abbott, puzzled, said, "Yes but ..."

"There are certain things you need to study. I will show you where to find them. Meanwhile, Filipe will look after the next step in your education. Trust in him and do his bidding." Then, watching the chess board, the Prof smiled, "Now, are you going to move your piece or not?"

Although Filipe Miguála was born in Guatemala, he moved to Idaho when he was five. Larger than life books of Mayan pyramids, dog-eared copies of *Incidents of Travel in the Yucatán* filled his early childhood memories. His parents took him, and his brothers on controlled expeditions through the vines and jungles surrounding Tikal.

Filipe's passion for Meso-American civilisation grew, and he became a history major at Oberlin College with a minor in Geology. His postgraduate plans involved a PhD in the history of science. So he was well equipped to tutor Abbott in such subjects. But he also had Mayan blood flowing in his veins, which connected him to his land at a much deeper level. There was so much more to his ancestors than their extraordinary architectural skills. There was a cloak of mysticism obscuring a quantum reality - a timeless time the Western mind finds impossible to grasp. When he told Abbott their destination, the journalist showed surprise.

"Holmul! I thought maybe Tikal or Palenque. What's at Holmul, wherever that is?"

Filipe smiled and hefted his backpack onto his shoulders. "A very good friend and colleague - and much, much more."

Abbott replenished his water flask at a creek, where the pair, having trekked for ten kilometres, had stopped for a short break. "How much further to the site?" the Australian asked.

"What will you gain by knowing that? My friend, enjoy the journey. When we measure and estimate things, we lose the magic of where we are. We will be there when we are there."

Abbott couldn't argue with that. But he had a Western mind state and liked to know the measure of things. Giving up his phone and watch had been very hard. Now he had to forget all forms of

measurement. Being smart, he challenged, "Where we're going, don't scientists measure the age of the artefacts they find?"

Sensing Abbott was spoiling for an argument, Filipe said, "Of course they do. They have Western minds."

Filipe was well-liked in the area. While unearthing Mayan artefacts, he provided employment for many locals. So when the archaeologist asked favours of them in return, they were usually quick to comply. This reciprocation was how Filipe and Abbott got taken part of the way to their destination. With freshly washed clothes to wear, courtesy of a woman in Melchor, where the pair stayed overnight, they woke refreshed for the next leg of their journey.

After a breakfast of hot tortillas and strong fresh coffee, a local farmer took them on a three-hour trip, during which time he had to stop and clear the road of trees and vines. (He, like most local men, carried a chainsaw in the back of the truck.) There had been a hurricane force, apples sized hail storm; he told Abbott. Welcome to the tropics, Abbott thought.

The sixty kilometre trek to Miguel Estrada's camp seemed to the journalist to be cut right into the jungle. It was barely wide enough for a car to pass. They also had to contend with vines hitting the windshield and monkeys jumping on the slow-moving truck. Even so, fifteen miles per hour seemed, to Abbott, frighteningly fast through the trees. The road was so rutted and muddy it appeared to be paved with speed bumps. Somehow, with much entreating of the gods, they made it to their destination, intact.

Dr Miguel Estrada held out his arms to embrace his friend and colleague. "It is great to see you again my friend." Looking at Abbott, he said, "Welcome to Holmul."

Abbott, disappointed by a lack of majestic pyramids, said, "Thanks."

Filipe said, "We need to freshen up."

Abbott agreed. His shirt seemed to be part of his skin, and his back and feet ached from the exercise.

"Of course," Miguel said, "Follow me."

Miguel took the pair to one of the many wooden huts with grass roofs. Miguel pointed out where the communal kitchen and toilets were, then said, "Make yourselves comfortable. Then I have something special to show you."

Comfortable! Abbott's mind screamed. Looking at the two hammocks and bare floor. Some chance of that.

Filipe said, "I guess this isn't what you were expecting."

"You could say that, yes."

"That is the problem with expectations my friend. They are just another form of measuring."

Abbott put his backpack on the floor. "So what's so special about this place?"

"This is one of the most recent successful sites. Miguel and his team have unearthed some of the most significant finds to show us elements of real Mayan life over fifteen hundred years ago." Filipe

showed Abbott a map. Pointing, he said, "We are here, in the Peten region. Here, around sixty kilometres west, is BeDorlane."

He put the map away. "Now we will freshen up and have some lunch."

Emile walked, resolutely, to the bakery. Manuella was stacking the shelves with fresh bread and rolls, ready for the day's trading. Without saying hello, he said, "Is Franco out back?"

"Yes. Why?"

He ignored her question and strolled straight through the shop. Franco, covered in flour, was rolling some dough. Emile thrust the newspaper at him. "What is the meaning of calling Antonia a whore?"

The baker looked up into the blacksmith's dark face. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"The lying letter you wrote to the paper."

"You're mad. I Did not write that letter."

"Are you telling me you didn't write a letter?"

"Not that letter, Emile."

"Then who wrote that?" the Smith demanded, showing Franco the article.

"I have no idea. It certainly wasn't me. Now go away. I have to get this bread ready."

Emile clenched his massive fists. "Own up to your lies, or it will be worse for you."

Franco, though shorter than the Smith, stood up to him. "You don't think your threats scare me, do you?"

There was only one bakery in Atienza, The Escobar Bakery. Some local women, mostly the older ones, still baked their bread at home, the traditional way but most of Atienza's citizens preferred to patronise the local bakery. Philux knew all this, which was why he parked his Jeep three shops away. It was also why he carried a jerry can full of petrol, a short jemmy and a torch, as he sauntered to the bakery.

It was in the dead of night with nobody around, and the main street was deserted. He checked the locks on the doors, front and back. Philux chose the back way because the bracket, securing the padlock was rusted. He soon prised the nails out with his jemmy. Having gained access, The arsonist checked around the place with his torch. Then he removed the top from the jerry can and liberally sloshed the petrol around the bakery. Philux moved away from the fumes to the back door.

Standing on the step, he lit a match and flicked it onto the fuel. Nothing much happened at first. Then a roar as the fuel ignited. Hungry flames sucked in the available oxygen. Soon the whole kitchen area was ablaze. Philux, pleased with his handiwork, quietly blended into the night.

There was no local fire brigade, as such, just locals forming a human chain from the town pump to the fire. Philux was amazed at how quickly they responded to his ringing of the church bell. He wanted as many people as possible to witness the burning of the Escobar Bakery. The shops on

either side, a hairdresser and ironmonger both received some smoke damage but, unlike Franco's bakery, they were at least still operational.

"So what is this discovery?' Filipe asked Miguel after his shower. Abbott was all ears as well.

"One of my more capable students, Jane Forrester has made a paramount discovery. She has found a wall of mural hieroglyphs, in a buried room of Structure one."

"I look forward to meeting her," Filipe said.

"She is no longer with the team."

"What?"

"She left at the end of last season and has not returned."

"Did she give a reason," Filipe asked.

"She just left. I don't know what happened to her."

"This could be hazardous for your operation here," Filipe said, frowning.

Miguel responded, "I have no control over her. I can only trust that she has didn't say anything."

There was a stony silence as Filipe processed the disquieting information. He changed the subject.

"Where is this great find?" he asked, excitement in his voice.

"Follow me, and I will show you."

They reached part of the Holmul site called La Sufricaya, and there was the wall. Uncovered enough to show a date (16Mak 11 Eb) in the Maya calendar.

Miguel said, "The time would equate to early January 378 AD, according to the Western calendar. It took us completely by surprise, and as we had come to the end of the season, with no site photographer we had to leave it there."

Filipe took a close look at the glyphs. "They are in excellent condition."

Miguel stepped closer to the wall. Now we can excavate the murals we can finally see what else is written." The Dig leader, hardly able to contain his excitement, said, "This date is one of the most important in Maya history. The glyph tells of Sihyah K'ahk, a visitor from Teotihuacan ' arriving at Tikal, the great Maya city in the Petén region of Guatemala."

"Do we know what happened after this stranger arrived at Tikal?" Abbott asked.

"All we know is that also recorded at Stela 31 in Tikal; the local ruler mysteriously died on that day. Afterwards, the lowlands were flooded with Teotihuacan-style buildings and objects."

Filipe became animated, "So this find of yours, these murals, could fill in the missing history."

"We have hopes, my friend. Of course, it depends on what is written and the condition of the Stela."

Miguel agreed. He then explained, "If what happened at Tikal is depicted here it will show Holmul to be a major city at that time. It will also help link it to the rest of the Maya world as a major centre

and not just as 'another city'. Smiling at his friend, Miguel added, "It will also resolve the controversy over the relative importance of Holmul."

Filipe put his arm around Miguel. "I am so proud of what you have achieved here, my friend."

Dr Estrada beamed, "Thank you, Filipe. Now let us eat."

Sitting down to a tortilla, salad lunch, gave the pair a chance to be introduced to the other members of Miguel's team. There were Anita, Miguel's wife and chief assistant (a graduate student at Tulane). The dig comprised another five graduate students; a Harvard major, a Vanderbilt undergraduate and five others from the University of California, who were participating in a month-long field school.

Apart from the scientists, Miguel employed thirty Guatemalan workers and a couple of cooks. The camp comprised huts with open-weave thatched roofs, and a lab, which, although crude, served Miguel's purpose. The facilities, such as they were, included a mess/dining area, kitchen, four toilets and four showers. They had scattered the worker's tents along the road.

As they ate lunch, Miguel explained, "The night before you arrived a big storm knocked over several trees. One of them destroyed one of the tents,"

This disturbing information made Abbott wary of huge vegetation looming over him as he slept.

Miguel also had trouble sleeping. He tried playing the significance of Jane Forrester's disappearance down. But he knew cartels and their agents would pay top dollar, between \$100 and \$500 per artefact, depending on the quality and the demand for that particular item. They then sold them on to private collectors who were willing to pay between \$10,000 and \$100,000 for these artefacts on the international black market, with no questions asked. As far as Miguel knew, Jane had taken no artefacts from the site, so all she had to sell was information. That being the case their lives were all at risk.

<http://www.electrummagazine.com/2011/03/adventures-in-archaeology-the-early-classic-maya-site-of-holmul-in-guatemala/>

Chapter 21

Ulysses came into the bedroom with two large glasses of wine. Lynne was lying on his bed.

"Chardonnay, from the Margaret River, " he smiled

"I might start thinking that you are inventing production problems to get me here," she said, leaning over to kiss him.

He responded passionately, kissing her fiercely, while her hand rubbed him over his boxers. Just as the intense pleasure got too much for Ulysses, she finally, mercifully, knelt down on the floor in front of him and pulled down his pants. Without a word or further ado, Lynne attended to his growing problem. With his free hand, Ulysses reached for his wine glass; entwining her hair with his other hand. As Lynne came up for air, he said, "Are you, thirsty babe?"

She nodded and opened her lips, while her lover brought the glass up to her mouth. Then he placed his wine glass back on the stand, stood up, and raised Lynne off the floor. "Your turn," he murmured, pushing her gently onto her back. Pulling her lingerie over her head, he revealed her

nakedness; Ulysses kissed her lightly from her breasts to her soft belly. He continued paying lip service down her thighs. Then he paused, taking a second or two to admire the Lynnescape.

Her aroma was sweet and pungent, signalling her arousal. Ulysses went down on her slowly, inhaling the indefinable scent of a woman's desire. Her stomach tensed as she gripped the bed sheet with one hand while pulling his face deeper between her legs, with the other. Ulysses heard her begin to mumble softly, "Fuck me. I need you now!"

He lifted his head from her clutches. "What are you asking for, Lynn, darling? I can't quite hear you down here."

"Give it to me now!" Lynne said, huskily.

"Why didn't you say," Ulysses grinned, complying with her wishes.

As Ulysses found out through the duration of this evening, and into the wee hours of the morning, Lynne was very talented in sexual matters. She knew just how and when to maximise sexual pleasure for both of them. He was exhausted but couldn't sleep.

His lust was completely satisfied, but the project deadline problem remained. She stirred. So, thinking she was awake, he said, "Lynne, is it possible for DARPA to give us extra time?"

In a tired voice, she slurred, "For fuck sake, leave it till the morning, at least."

Lynne Becker was all business and efficiency in the morning. It was as though the rampant sex goddess had disappeared without a trace. She seemed very calm and collected as he outlined the problem, while they ate a light breakfast in his hotel suite. She read the technological report from Jerry Stone, on his laptop and smiled. "DARPA has to keep to its timeline."

"If we can have just a little more time I think I can ..."

She interrupted, "Ulysses, that's not how things work in the big world. A contract is a contract."

"Yes, and then they changed it. Two months is a hell of a lot to shave."

"Yes, but as I recall you were confident in meeting the new deadline."

He threw his hands up, exasperated. "I'm stuck between the fucking rock and a hard place here."

She looked at him. "Ulysses, don't worry. This kind of thing sometimes happens when DARPA takes on new contractors. I will inform them. They will gnash their teeth and curse you for a while. Then they will go to the second company of their choice, which, as far as I know, is on target."

Ulysses stared at her, open-mouthed. "You've had another company working on this project?"

"Don't be naive. Of course, we have. It's DARPA policy. "

He felt a hole open up in the pit of his stomach. Stifling a bout of nausea, he said, "What happens to us?"

"Have you not read the small print?"

"What do you mean?"

"Get your legal people to look up what happens if a contract is not fulfilled."

He sat there in stony silence. Then he asked, "Who is the other company?"

"We don't have to tell you that," she smiled.

Christ, he wanted to wipe that smile right off her face.

"But, in the spirit of friendship, your competitor was 'Akawi Technics'." Seeing his sad look, she said, "Sorry Ulysses, I'm just the fucking messenger here."

Ulysses felt a stabbing pain behind his eyes and a shortness of breath.

Lynne began humming the 'Rainbow' song, and he started to calm down.

Dayton puzzled over the connection. Why had David Rottafeller met in secret with the late Alexander Karimov? And why was 26 The Broadway, the former headquarters of Star Oil, used for the meeting? The fact that Rottafeller was involved suggested two things. One, Rottafeller was hatching an underhand conspiracy and two, the Diabolus Sect was behind it. If Ivan's assassination had thwarted their plans, the chances were that they would try to strike up some deal with whoever took over Ivraz Holdings.

The Rottafeller patriarch warranted closer scrutiny from the Soter Group. They had followed the Rottafeller family fortunes for many years; the consensus was that they left a trail of conspiracy, bloodshed, and evil, none of which Soter could ever corroborate. Dayton, as a key player in Soter intelligence, had free rein, except in one respect. There was to be no direct attack on the Rottafeller family, itself. His next step was to find out about the Karimov deal.

President Vladimir Putin's message, at the Gas Exporting Countries summit, struck a chord with Ivan Karimov. Putin stated that it was crucial that members were getting increasing pressure from gas consuming countries and that they needed to stick to the basic principles of long-term contracts. Ivan Karimov, the new CEO of Ivraz Holdings took Putin's directive to heart. The jump up from Coal Production Manager to Chief Executive Officer was a huge leap that left Alexander's younger brother, faltering at times. The pressure on him was immense. Contractees all wanted assurances that their deals remained intact.

Since his brother's death, there had been some reshuffling on the board; he couldn't give such assurances. Following Putin's take on things, Ivan announced, at an emergency board meeting, "The pressure put on us by gas consuming countries is growing. Dealing with this pressure is a grave challenge for all of us."

One of the directors said, "They are trying to dictate economically unacceptable terms."

There was some disagreement to this. Especially by Vladimir Rattzic, a long-term manager. He stood up. "Comrades, it is now time to revisit all long-term contracts that have fixed rates, especially the coal deal we have with the United Kingdom. It needs to be reviewed on an annual basis so that adjustments can be made."

Ivan said, "We do not have a crystal ball, and even if we had, I doubt anyone here has scrying skills." He added, "World Economics are so unstable at present even a five-year commitment can be hazardous for our bottom line."

Richard Brent, the UK Energy Minister, was fuming. "The damned Russians wanted to renegotiate the coal export deal. They can't just do something like this, can they?" he asked, the fat woman in the tweed twin set.

Nina Graham, a doctor of International Business Law, looking at the balding politician, answered, "Richard, we are dealing with the Russians here. That's always a bit of a wild card."

Richard bemoaned, "Besides, we may well be changing our energy policy at any time."

Nina said, "And it's not just us, is it?"

"What do you mean?"

"I'm talking about changes in European Union energy regulation and law, the so-called Third Energy Package. Major players like Ivraz tend to seriously restrict the activity of traditional gas suppliers to the EU market."

"What's that got to do with our contracts?"

"We are part of the European Union, Richard. If we start going legal on the Russians, they may well turn around and demand fixed energy regulations for the duration of the contracts."

"Surely they cannot dictate EU energy policy!"

"Why not? We want what they have. They want to sell, but they make the rules."

But we have signed contracts. Surely they are obliged under law to fulfil them."

"Yes, Richard. But what are we going to do if they want to renegotiate the deal - go to war with Russia?"

"Well of course not. I suppose we will have to get around the table again and negotiate. But we need to be in commanding position."

"We'll go through the contracts with an ultra fine comb, of course, but if they are not going to stand by them, there's little we can do from a legal standpoint."

Richard stared at her. "Are you telling me that International Law doesn't apply to Ivraz Holdings?"

Nina sighed, "I strongly suggest that you get their people around the table ASAP."

Lord Lynsey senior had a vision, to create a modern version of the magnificent 18th-century landscape gardens, at Lynsey Hall. Although not with the same degree of obsession as his father, Dayton's son, Daniel, also enjoyed walking around the compartmented gardens.

One day, as Dayton and he passed by the carefully trimmed hedges and informal tapestries of trees and shrubs and entered one of the linked, shady pathways, his son said, "Shale Gas is a top investment, Father. I can get you a great deal."

"You're the expert so I bow to your wisdom when it comes to the stock exchange. So go for the deal. But I want to talk to you about something far more important."

"Oh dear Pater, it sounds dangerous."

"It could be. Can you work from home?"

"You mean here?"

"Yes." He searched his son's eyes to see if there was anything other than dollar signs. "I have to go away for a while. I want you to be master, here in my absence."

"Oh, come on Father, you're always disappearing somewhere. Mother is quite upset about it. You never tell her where you are going. You go away to God knows where without a bye or leave."

"Daniel this is different. I could be away a month or more."

Daniel hated the way his father kept everything close to his chest. "So where are you going this time?"

"I wish you wouldn't ask questions like that."

"And I wish you would be a damn sight more open with your family," Daniel retorted.

Dayton sighed, "Let's not this spoil our weekend together."

"Why can't you tell us where you go?"

"Because to do so would endanger you."

"What do you mean? What the hell are you involved with, Father?"

"Don't worry yourself, Daniel."

"Don't worry. Of course, I'm bloody worried. Who are you working for and to what end?"

"ENOUGH! I cannot answer any more questions. You will just have to accept that."

Daniel turned heel, "I don't have to accept a bloody thing." With that, he walked off leaving Dayton with his troubled thoughts.

Lord Lynsey knew the time would come when his son would ask awkward questions about his clandestine activities. He could hardly say he was a secret agent for a group called Soter. Dayton wandered back through part of the nine acres of landscaped grounds, with its classical statuary, topiary and flowerbeds.

He sighed slowly, thinking he should never have got married. His Soter mentor had told him not to get emotionally involved with anybody, but he'd ignored that warning. The Soter agent now knew that his covert lifestyle wasn't conducive to having a family. "Damn it!" he muttered, annoyed that Daniel wasn't prepared to hold the fort in his absence. Grenville would have to be his proxy.

In the dark of night at a clandestine airstrip in Mexico, a 1967 Bell 205/UH-1H helicopter, stolen by a drug cartel from South America, took off. With six heavily armed men on board, it flew unobtrusively over the border into Guatemalan air space. Usually, they would land in a clearing where trucks filled with Mayan artefacts, earmarked for the hungry markets of Europe and the United States, would meet them. But this night was different. The prize was still at the site, hence the black-clad armed heavy brigade.

Apart from the night guard, Alberto, who had worked at Holmul for two years without any robberies occurring, the rest of the team slept soundly in their hammocks. He sat back in his camp chair, listening to music on his iPod. Then he heard a droning noise. Removing his earphones, he listened. It was a helicopter, and it was landing. He couldn't believe it.

Armed with a pistol, he boldly ventured in the direction of the noise. He noticed it changed in tone, suggesting the helicopter had landed in the clearing set up for emergencies. In the dark, he could vaguely see the chopper's silhouette. Then he saw people leaving it and heading towards him.

He had to get back and warn Miguel. In his hurry, he stepped on a dry twig. Normally the 'crack' sound would not have had any great impact. But in the dead of that silent night, it sounded like a cannon going off to the men from the chopper. Unslinging their automatic rifles, they fired in the direction of the sound. Bullets rent the night air, narrowly missing the guard. Gripping his pistol, he fired in their general direction.

This action proved to be a fatal mistake. The flashes from his gun gave away his position. That was all the sniper needed to mark him. Alberto felt like he'd been kicked by a mule. Then he felt nothing at all, as part of his brains exited through the back of his head.

Miguel, woken by the sound of gunfire, knew they must be under attack.

Anita startled, sat up. "What's happening?"

"I don't know yet, but it's not okay. We must stay calm."

Abbott and Filipe also woke with a start. Filipe said, "Thieves. Black market criminals. We must help Miguel."

"What can we do. We're not even armed. And if we were I've never fired a gun."

"We must help to keep people calm."

Abbott said, "You can start with me."

The gang of thieves, wearing ski masks and brandishing sub-machine guns marched into the camp randomly firing shots. Their leader, seeing Miguel and a few others, said, "Who's in charge?"

"That would be me," the archaeologist volunteered.

"Line all your people up out here, now."

By that time most of the crew had assembled including Abbott and Filipe.

The armed thieves trained their weapons on the hapless group.

The leader said, "Give us the things you have found here. If you resist, we will kill you and take the stuff anyhow."

Miguel knew he meant it. In remote archaeological camps deep in the jungle, dead bodies could rot for years before anyone stumbled across them. He did not want to be one such corpse. With suppressed hatred and a heavy heart, he said, "Follow me. I will show you where they are."

Two men went with Miguel; one held a big canvas bag, the other, a sub-machine gun, pointed at his back. He showed them into a hut that contained various Maya antiquities. Although he had worked hard and long for them, they were not worth having the blood of colleagues and loved ones on his hands.

While held at gunpoint, he had to meekly stand aside and watch while the thief carefully wrapped up Miguel's livelihood placing the precious items in the bag. The robbers then marched him back to the rest of his team.

The gang leader opened the bag and checked the contents. He then fronted up to Miguel, "That's all you have?"

"That's what we have found, so far."

He turned to one of his men. "Your gun,"

The man handed over his automatic rifle,

Miguel's wife looked on, horrified.

The leader grabbed the gun by the barrel and struck the Archaeologist in his stomach, hard. Miguel, groaning, crumpled in a heap.

Filipe's instinct was to go to his friend's aid. Abbott grabbed his arm, whispering, "You'll just cop some yourself."

The leader pointed the gun at Miguel's temple. "I will kill him if somebody does not tell me where to find the codices and any documents showing evidence of Maya and alien contact."

There was stony silence. Then Anita cried, "Do not kill my husband. I will get you what you seek."

The gang boss said, "I should kill you all for trying to cheat me. Bring those things to me now, and I may show mercy."

Mayan Artifacts Thefts Finally Ended - TreasureWorks. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://treasureworks.com/newandlinks/39-wreckdivers-blog/947-mayan-artifacts-the>

Chapter 22

Dr Hashimoko was one of those concerned about birth-rate attrition. Statistics had shown that only 1.03 million children had been born in Japan the previous year. During the same period, 1.24 million people died. Since the country's net migration rate was close to zero, the Japanese population had therefore decreased by more than 200,000 citizens in 2012. This trend was accelerating fast. Government projections estimated that Japan would lose nearly a million people

per year, over the next two decades. Hashimoko knew that with far less work potential and young people not having the same work ethic (they did want to work in factories anymore), robots were going to be the only way of the future.

He walked around the workshop with Mr Kawada, director of Maruo Money Machines. They observed as a few meters away from the human workers, four robots with articulated heads, micro cameras for the eyes and two arms mimicking human movements, while attached to a torso, mounted high on wheels, were assembling the small elements of a money-sorting machine incorporated in a cash register.

Dr Hashimoko proudly announced, "Each robot can carry out up to 15 different tasks and is also able to plug – if necessary – various tools into its hands."

The shorter man, responded, "When will the assembly line robots be ready?"

Hashimoko smiled, "In two weeks. We are just going over final testing, monitoring their ability to pass components to the next humanoid on the production line."

Turning back to the automatons, Mr Kawada watched in awe as a robot, having finished its assembly task, put away trays of screws, rubber or plastic components. Then, detecting that some pieces were missing, it turned around and grabbed a full plate from the stock just behind it. After which it proceeded to slowly peel off the plastic film protecting the most fragile pieces.

"This is most satisfactory, Dr Hashimoko, I cannot wait to put them to work."

"I think you will find they can be up to 80% as productive as humans," He turned to his client, a big grin on his clean-shaven face, "The real difference lies in the fact that they don't take weekends or days off and they also work at night."

Once his client had left, Dr Hashimoko got back to his other task at hand - the DARPA arms. Some executives at Akawi Technics were not happy with the DARPA project, but, unlike directors of Western companies, their work ethic maintained they would not openly argue about it with the company's chairman.

The Japanese had much more subtle ways of dealing with business upsets. The main objection was that they were moving from industrial robotics to military robotics. Some directors were not happy with this change in policy. But Hashimoko was both a realist and a pragmatist. They were very lucky to have Maruo as a client.

But what then? DARPA amply rewarded the massive amount of investment required for such an assembly line project. But there weren't many customers, globally, who were prepared to commit themselves to robotics in such a big way. The DARPA arms would help give Akawi the promotion and business it required worldwide. At least for now, he had the company behind him, but it was a constant battle and differences could erupt at any time.

Like most visitors, Dayton did not find Moscow suburbs to be very attractive, but that's where he had to go. He came out of the metro, into the bone-chilling cold, thankful for his skiing parka and furry hat to cover his bald pate. Stark grey concrete high-rises dominated the landscape. This soulless environment was where most Muscovites lived, including the person he had come to see.

Apart from the ugly looking tower blocks, there were the usual grocery shops, supermarkets offices, as in any other city.

Dayton looked around in the darkness. There was little traffic about (most people couldn't afford cars), so the yellow Skoda was easy to spot. After about 10 minutes of stamping his fleece lined booted feet to stave off the bitter cold, he saw the Skoda approaching.

It stopped, and the driver said, "Was the Krylatskoe line crowded?"

He gave his rehearsed response, "Only with rollers and snowboarders."

The driver was satisfied, and Dayton got in. They drove in silence past many tower blocks, a forlorn looking piece of wasteland, many boarded up shops, and homeless people crowded around burning braziers.

Eventually, the Skoda pulled up outside a large building that looked like a school or hospital. The driver made a phone call, then told his passenger to get out, saying somebody would soon be there to meet him.

Out in the bitter cold again Dayton waited, vigorously rubbing his fleece-lined gloves together. Then there was a torchlight and a voice telling him to follow. He did so and entered the building. Their footfalls echoed off the tiled floor, making the dimly lit corridor noisy and intimidating. The person guiding him stopped and knocked on a door.

He exchanged a torrent of Russian words and the barrier opened. Dayton got ushered inside, and the door closed behind him. A bear of a man stood up from the chair in which he was sitting. "Welcome my friend. I hope the journey has not been too daunting."

Dayton said, "Hello Ivor. Is this where you operate from now?"

Ivor, all six feet four of him, crushed the English Lord in a vice-like hug. "We have to move around. We don't know if they are on to us, but we cannot become complacent."

"Of course. So Ivor, do you have the intelligence I need?"

"Of course, but first some Vodka, to warm you." He grabbed a bottle of Smirnoff, in his big paw and poured two generous measures. He handed Dayton his drink and saying, what to the Englishman sounded like, Nostrovina, he downed it in one go - then poured a second.

Dayton was a little more circumspect with his drink. A generous sip burned his throat; then the effects spread warmly through his body. "Why did Karimov meet with David Rottafeller?"

Ivor laughed, "To do a deal of course. They were plotting to make the UK pay more for its coal."

"How were they going to do that?"

"They were going to wait until winter, then withhold exports to Britain, unless the Government agreed to a massive price increase."

Dayton sat down next to the Russian. He took another body-glowing sip. "What was going to be in it for the Rottafellers?"

Ivor stroked his Rasputin-like beard. "Ivraz Holdings own most of the mineral rights in the Central African Republic."

Dayton nodded, "Let me guess. The Rottafellers were going to get a fantastic deal on Uranium and other resources."

Ivor grinned. "You guess well."

"Okay, more to the point, is David T going to go for the same deal with Ivan?"

"I would say so, wouldn't you? Unless of course, he gets an evil idea to make his family even richer and more powerful."

Dayton frowned "So you don't know?"

"One thing we do know is that the Rottafellers will do anything to stay on top of the Energy production heap. Ivan is wet behind the ears and will be much easier for the Rottafellers to take advantage and exploit him."

Dayton finished his Vodka and asked, "So what was the deal with David Rottafeller?"

Ivor shrugged, "We can only surmise that the Rottafellers agreed to back off when Ivraz put pressure on the U K. The sweetener from Ivraz, a good deal on Mineral rights in the Central African Republic, would ensure they kept their word."

Dayton drank more Vodka, saying, "Okay, Ivor, knowing the players involved, what do you think will happen when the Russians blackmail the UK?"

Ivor stroked his beard, thoughtfully. "Knowing the trickery of the Rottafellers I believe that they will jump in with a better deal and freeze Ivraz out. But only after they have signed the African deal."

Dayton nodded, "We need to meet with an influential anti-American member of the Ivraz executive committee. Can you find me such a person?"

Ivor frowned, knitting his bushy eyebrows together, "You are playing a dangerous game, my friend."

"Quite possibly the most dangerous yet," Dayton agreed. He wished he'd left his son and his wife on better terms.

"I ask you not to do this. The Rottafellers even have spies in the Kremlin."

"Ivor, if they're plotting to reduce Britain to freezing chaos I must do all I can to prevent it from happening," Dayton stated, adamantly.

"I am not going to sway you from this perilous path, am I," Ivor said.

Dayton shook his head.

"Then, I will see what I can do."

Atienza became a town in turmoil and Diablo sat back and watched in fascination. Philux had fanned the flames of hatred. Franco Escobar saw the burnt out shell and cried. He collapsed in the street and shuddered uncontrollably. His family livelihood had gone, and he was a broken man. The warmth usually seen in his eyes had become something else - something dark and menacing.

The fire chief - he was the volunteer with the helmet - could still smell the petrol in the destroyed bakery.

He asked Franco, "Do you keep petroleum in the bakery?"

He rubbed his red-rimmed eyes. "No, of course not."

"Then the fire was probably deliberate."

"But who would have done such a terrible thing?" Franco asked, shaking his head in disbelief." Then he answered his own question. But surely Emile would not have sunk so low. They had a stupid argument about ancestors they neither cared or knew much about.

And now this! His bakery burned to the ground! Franco slumped down on a bench outside what used to be his shop. He just sat there, staring, as though intense looking at the charred wreck was going to bring his wonderful bakery back magically. People patted him on the shoulder, saying how sorry they were. But he was inconsolable. He was feeling empty and hollow inside.

But somewhere inside his wretched self part of his mind was plotting.

Most of the local gossip that day centred around the bakery fire. Speculation was rife among those who milked the topic, while drinking their ale, at the local Cantina. Most of the conversation centred around what impact the loss of the town's only bakery would have on them. A few of their wives knew how to bake their own bread, but not many.

The nearest bakery was Riaza, and most of the women did not want to take on that journey every two or three days. There were those who believed faulty electrical wiring caused the fire. "He never spent any money on the place," they would mutter to each other. For them, it was Franco's fault they no longer had anywhere to get their bread. Others wanted to find the culprit and serve him with local justice. Franco's good wife, though just as devastated as her husband, managed to keep a cool head and phoned the Madrid Police.

Franco was no expert when it came to acids, but he had a friend who was. Fernando, manufactured cleaning agents, detergents, abrasives, surface sprays, etc. Franco needed expert advice so, despite feeling washed out and feeble, he trudged around to 'Fernando's Cleaning Products' shed and told him he wanted the strongest acid he could buy.

Fernando looked at his friend's sad, drawn face. "Sit down Franco, before you fall," he said, removing a box of stock from the only chair in the shed.

The Baker rested. "So what is the most power acid you have?"

What are you talking about? You have suffered a great personal tragedy, and you ask about acid."

Franco, having held his anger in all day, let fly, Getting up he turned on Fernando, "FORGET IT! I WILL GET IT SOMEWHERE ELSE!"

"There is no need to take that tone with me. Acid is very dangerous. It concerns me what you might do with it."

"It is my fucking business. Sorry to have troubled you."

Fernando, trying to placate him, said, "Okay, please calm down, Franco. What do you mean by POWERFUL? Hydrofluoric is certainly very dangerous and can even dissolve glass. But don't confuse concentration with strong/weak. A low concentration solution of a strong acid, like perchloric or sulphuric is still a strong acid and will usually have a much lower pH than even the highest concentrations of weak acids, with some exceptions. So I need to know what you want it for so I can recommend the best kind for you."

Franco could hardly tell him he wanted to destroy a forge, the only one in town. "I need something that will dissolve metal."

"I have some flourosulphuric acid. That will do it."

what is the world most powerful acid in the world? | Yahoo ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081220232239AAQZGH9>

Chapter 23

Dayton Lynsey boarded the metro, taking the Vykhino (purple line) and then, as per instructions, changed to the Kozhukhovskaya (green line). Thankful to be out of the packed carriage, he emerged into daylight and found himself in a noisy, run-down, marketplace. People were shouting and racing around. The customers looked destitute, desperate to buy food at the lowest possible prices. Even the stall holders looked homeless, peddling food past its sell-by date. The walkway spattered with squashed rotten fruit and bits of rancid vegetable added to the general disgust surrounding the place. Dayton had never experienced a market like it, and he wondered why his contact wanted to meet in such an appalling place.

Relieved to have come out of the market unscathed, Dayton found the Kokoza Cafe, the appointed meeting place. He entered the establishment and glanced around, looking for a man he'd never met, in the sea of customers in the busy little cafe. Only one of patrons looked at him and gestured him to sit down.

He had finally met Yuri Andropov. The executive was in disguise. Andropov, wearing a mangy fur hat and thick coat that had seen better days, looked like an op-shop refugee. He fitted in well with all the other down-and-outs clutching their mugs of strong hot tea. Yuri looked to be around the 60 mark but having lived a hard life he could have been younger. The Russian seemed right at home among the dregs of Moscow society.

Andropov raised his hand and asked for another tea.

Dayton looked around, "It's very public here," he said, in poor Russian.

Yuri smiled, "We can speak in English if you like. I doubt any of these people can speak your language."

"I think that would be safer," Dayton said, chuckling.

"Okay, you tell me what you want."

"Did our mutual friend mention much to you?"

Yuri, sensing that the Englishman was very cautious, said, "Vorobyevy Gory is quite spectacular, with a great view of Moscow. Perhaps you would like to visit."

"Perhaps, but let me ask you this, Mr Andropov. What do you want from our little talk?"

Yuri answered, "I cannot tell you that, at present. But I can tell you what I don't want. I don't want Ivan to fall into a trap set by the dogs."

Intelligent, Dayton thought. He smiled, "Okay, let us go for a walk in the park."

As they walked by the Moscow River, Dayton pulled his zipped his parka up to his neck.

The rugged up pair" sat on a bench by the water.

Yuri said, "You asked me what I want from this. Before I answer this, I want to know what you know about the deal Alexander was going to make with the David Rottafeller."

"I knew of no such deal until after his death," Yuri. Dayton paused, then said, "He was going to freeze England out, you know."

"What are you talking about?"

Was Andropov fishing or was he genuinely ignorant of the UK blackmail attempt? Dayton wondered. "He was going to break the British contract and demand much higher prices, before delivery."

Andropov stared at the Soter man. "And you have evidence of this?"

"What I want is for the British Government to get a straight deal."

"Who are you working for?" the Russian asked, suspiciously.

"A private party with British interests at heart." Dayton looked straight into Andropov's eyes, "Does Ivan Karimov know about Rottafeller's plan."

He's the new CEO. Surely he would know about it."

Has he mentioned it in the boardroom?"

"I don't have any recollection of that."

Dayton stared out across the vast river. "I was told you could help."

"I'm not sure what I can do."

Dayton fixed Andropov with his gaze. "You can spread a story, which may or may not be true. We believe that once Ivraz raises its prices, The Rottafellers will do a back door deal with the British Government, by offering lower prices. The British, grateful that the Eagle had rescued them from the Bear will accept the Rottafellers offer."

"And you want me to tell the Ivraz board this?"

"Talk to those you trust, Yuri. Gain support. If you don't the repercussions could be grave for all but the Rottafellers."

Andropov did not know what to expect, but the Englishman's story left him staggered. "Who are you, Mr Lynsey?"

"Look, we are both taking a big risk here. Be aware that the Rottafellers have spies everywhere, even inside the Kremlin. Be very careful who you trust but make sure Ivraz Holdings does not trip up over this."

"Would you have burned the Mayan books?" Filipe asked, as Abbott, Miquel and he was eating tortillas for breakfast.

The pair looked at him, bemused.

Seeing their puzzled looks, he explained, "Just imagine that you're Pope Gregory, a learned man, and you attack and enslave these heathen Mayans. Then you find these codices, full of the Maya history. Even though it is in code, would you destroy them or steal them?"

Abbott and Miguel looked at him, in silence.

"Look, they took a German mathematician, who assembled a team and then they used texts that theoretically do not exist. My belief is that many of the Mayan books weren't burned at all. They were crated up and taken back to the Vatican as part of the pay-off for the expedition and the slicing of the planet between the Spanish and the Portuguese by the pope of that time."

"Are you suggesting the Vatican is the client for the codices?" Miguel asked.

"Well, how long has the Roman Catholic Church deceived humanity? If the Spanish supposedly destroyed all of the Maya's books, texts, calendars and manuscripts, then why do works such as the Dresden Codices still exist."

Abbott said, "Filipe, it still doesn't prove your theory is correct. That Codices could go to any number of collectors."

Filipe countered, "Pope Gregory brought aboard a team of mathematicians who spent five months to get the Gregorian calendar to align, specifically, with the end of the Mayan calendar with these particular numbers."

Miguel sipped some strong coffee. "Filipe, if your assumption is correct we have to find out who the Vatican Library uses as an agent in these matters."

Abbott said, "Even if you are accurate and the Vatican does have this codex you can hardly march up to the Pope and demand it back."

Miguel said, "First I must report the theft and murder, to have it recorded. Then go to the media."

Filipe became concerned the events that had overtaken them had overshadowed his reason for bringing the Australian to Holmul. Dos Pilas, Ixkun, El Mirador, or any of the other Maya sites in the Peten Department, would have been safer. But he had wanted to mix Abbott's education with a social visit to see his friend.

Now everything had gone wrong, or so it seemed to Filipe, Miguel and his team needed moral and emotional support, areas in which the Mayan felt incompetent. But he felt he had to offer something.

Later in the day, Filipe found Anita in the camp kitchen, keeping herself busy making tortillas. "How are you going?" he asked, approaching her.

She turned, "Hello Filipe." She smiled weakly, "We still have to eat."

"Yes, but how are you faring?"

She finished one of the wheat flour flat cakes and wiped her hands on her apron. "Life has been getting more challenging for me. I find myself becoming much more emotional lately."

"You have much to put up with, isolated here from your world and family."

She sighed while shaking more flour into a bowl. "I made my choice to be with Miguel. Now he hates me for losing the artefacts."

"That's nonsense. You saved your husband's life and possibly the lives of us all, by your courageous action. Besides, those animals would have gotten what they wanted anyhow. Your courage saved us and if Miguel cannot see that he is a blind fool."

Adding the baking powder and salt, she said, "This has just added to the tension, anxiety and unsureness I am already experiencing. I don't know if I can stay here any longer."

Filipe said, "These symptoms you feel, Anita, is part of the 'shift' all of us are experiencing to one degree or another. You have just personalised them. People are finding it difficult to sleep soundly. They have the compulsion to stay busy, like you right now. They feel a sense of urgency but don't know why. They go from delighted to downhearted and find it harder to enjoy life."

Anita looked at him. "Even if what you say is true it doesn't make me feel any better."

He put his arm around her shoulders. "Knowing it is not about you, but about a consciousness shift that is affecting all conscious life on the planet can at least be comforting, to a degree. Keep smiling Anita. We are all part of something huge and important, as prophesied by my people."

As Filipe left the kitchen, people were rushing around closing doors and getting things undercover. The wind had risen. Filipe dashed back into the kitchen. Two minutes later the deluge hit.

Ulysses Covington knew two things for sure. He had to get back the DARPA contract, and he had to stop Akawi Technics from keeping it. If Ulysses wasn't able to pull his company back from the brink, Heron Industries was down the tube. But, on top of this, he still had an odd but powerful compulsion to succeed at any cost. Ulysses, programmed to win from his CIA mind control session, was even more driven to achieve his goal, by fair or foul means.

Fair was now out of the equation. DARPA was not playing fair, so playing foul seemed the only option. For Ulysses fairness had nothing to do with it. It was purely a matter of honour. In his mind, DARPA had entrusted him with a sacred task, and he was not going to let them down. He took a

bottle of scotch out of his drawer and poured two fingers into a tumbler. He was drinking too much lately, but he was under tremendous pressure and needed something to help lighten his load.

For one thing, he hadn't told anyone about the rival Japanese company or the probable loss of the contract. Outwardly he did his best to carry on as though nothing had changed. He'd even relegated the newspaper article stuff to the back burner. After a second whisky, Ulysses looked at the advertisement in the Yellow Pages, then keyed in a number. Hearing a voice, he said, "I need somebody to carry out an international investigation."

The thing about back burners, Ulysses hadn't factored in, is that when he used the front burners, they came into play. This particular back burner cooked up an article titled 'Robotics company carries out illegal experiments' made it to page 3 in the Tweed News and onto the desk of Matthew Sheen, at Heron Robotics.

The article left him shocked. He should never have given Ryan's identity to that journalist. On the other hand, he had never condoned the stem cell experiments but had kept quiet about them, making him complicit in the crime. But how could they prove he knew? Clearing such thoughts from his mind, he called on Heron's legal department.

Emile Velasquez looked around his forge. At first, everything seemed normal. Then he noticed the damage to the steel gate he was making. The metal was pitted and warped. He scratched his head. It was okay when he left it the night before. Then he noticed other things. His tools were damaged. Sharpened edges were blemished and blunted. The forge was also rendered unusable. It was as though some demon force had entered his forge and morphed his things out of shape, making many of his tools-of-the-trade useless.

Why the hell would anybody have done such a terrible thing, he wondered? Then he realised what the pungent smell was that assailed his nostrils. Acid! Somebody had dowsed his shop in acid. And he had an idea who that person was. He grabbed his rifle that he used to deal with vermin. Now, he was looking for the two-legged kind.

Franco, having recovered a little, was in the wreck of his shop, trying to salvage anything that could still be useful, when he saw Emile approaching, cradling a rifle. Although he couldn't believe it, he now knew this was the showdown between the Escobar's and the Velasquez's that should have been dealt with generations ago. Now it was down to him to uphold the family's honour. He reached into his pocket for the loaded pistol he carried. It was time for action, not words.

Like a scene from a 'B-western', Emile stood still and erect, his rifle pointed at the Baker. Franco stood his ground, pointing his pistol at his new enemy, while townsfolk began to gather on either side of the street. Among these folk, was Philux, silently gloating over his success.

Franco yelled, "THE LETTER WAS ONE THING BUT FOR BURNING DOWN MY BAKERY! YOU WILL DIE."

Emile aimed his rifle, "I DIDN'T BURN DOWN YOUR SHOP, BUT AFTER YOU HAD DESTROYED MY FORGE I WISH I HAD."

"LIAR!" Franco shouted, loosing off a shot in Emile's direction. It was wide by over a metre and just stirred up some dust.

Emile fired back. The gun bucked a bit. The shot went a foot above the baker's head. He ducked instinctively, then fired another round, which missed again.

Emile taunted, "IF THAT'S THE BEST YOU CAN DO, I'D STICK TO BAKING BREAD IF I WERE YOU. OH, YOU DON'T HAVE A BAKERY NOW." he edged closer, aiming his gun, watching for the slightest movement from the bakery remains.

Franco saw red. The bastard was rubbing it in. He leapt into the doorway firing, as he went. Emile retaliated loosing off shots as he surged forward. Two of the rifle bullets slammed into Franco knocking him backwards into charred wood and ash. Emile almost made it to the door but the sting he felt in his cheek and shoulder, as two stray bullets found their mark, had him sprawling in the dust.

There was shock and uproar as townsfolk ran to the aid of the fallen men. Emile was in a bad way. The shoulder wound was bleeding profusely, but it was the slug in his face that threatened his life. Franco lay groaning, but at least he was conscious. He'd caught a bullet in his ribs and another in his thigh.

Somebody phoned for an ambulance, while spectators speculated on the reason for the first gunfight the town had seen in decades. Franco and Emile had been friends for years. Only Philux knew why the men had shot each other. Damn, why did he have to pick on, possibly, the worst shots in Atienza? Now the people would be fussing over them, instead of being angered, having lost their only Baker and Blacksmith.

Don't watch this Film II -- UFO Mayan Secrets & Ancient ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzIkQaosRRU>

Chapter 24

Gus Sellers took a seat in Heron Industries reception area. His specialist area was background checks. And right now, as an investigator with Down Under Cover Pty Ltd, he was reviewing the history of Akawi Technics. Companies are usually very guarded about their private business. So, as the direct approach seldom worked for him, Gus had to find a side door. To see where the side door was he needed to speak directly with the client, which in this case was Dr Covington.

Gus, a big-built man in his early fifties, had mixed it with the 'Cross' boys in his heyday, but not now, A diabetes problem now only lets his fingers do the walking, usually around a keyboard. At the "Come in,"Gus entered, looming over Ulysses Covington.

"Ah, you're from Down Under Cover, right."

"Gus Sellers, at your service."

"So, what have you found out."

"The client was big, so Gus had to fill out his report, to suggest value for money. "Okay, we look for the obvious first. Japan was our Enemy during WW2, so I looked for a connection."

"Did you find one?"

Gus shook his head. "Squeaky clean. No sign of any military contracts."

"Then what?"

"The next avenue was to see if the company had run under different names. Now, before Akawi Technics became such, the firm was called Technics Nippon. So far, my investigation into their board hasn't revealed any useful leads. So I dug deeper and came up with another name change. This time, it was 'Tokyo Technical Instruments' It ran from the mid-thirties to the mid-sixties. Amazingly it avoided the Tokyo firestorms."

"Did you discover anything useful?"

"Just minor contract stuff with the Japanese Imperial forces. Then I took an even deeper look at Technics Nippon and," He handed Ulysses a dossier on the Japanese robotics company, "We came up with this."

Ulysses read the highlighted area of text. "They were making sonar for killing whales!"

"Yes, but unless I can find some continuity between Technics Nippon and Akawi Technics, this investigation isn't going anywhere."

With both impatience and anticipation vying for pole position in Ulysses' brain, he snapped, "Please come to the point."

"Okay, I checked the boards of both companies at the change-over and, lo and behold, at least three of the board members were directors of each company, including the CEO of Akawi Technics, Dr Yashimodo."

"Then we can tie Akawi to killing whales," Ulysses said, excitedly.

"Sure, but I don't know how you will use the Intel."

"What do you mean?"

"Anyone working on US military projects has to keep their lips buttoned. So you can't threaten them with a media expose."

Ulysses picked up the dossier. "Have I got the evidence in here?"

"Sure, as far as it goes. We can get someone on the ground in Japan. But that takes a lot of time and money. My suggestion is that you see how far you can get with what you've got. If you need more, give us a call." He handed the CEO his card."

The House of Rottafeller was, first and foremost, the Invisible Government of the United States. It used its massive ill-gotten wealth as predatory capital, controlling the wheels of government behind a smoke screen. Run by David T Rottafeller, it operated with impunity. Rottafellers current underhand project was to get his clutches on Ivraz Holdings, especially its coal shale mining operation.

The US shale gas boom had been phenomenal, bringing huge profits to big players like the Rottafellers. By freeing up production and infrastructure in North America, a move engineered by lobbyists on the Rottafeller payroll, David T Rottafeller was looking forward to his best annual energy profit, yet.

At an extraordinary board meeting, Ivan Karimov announced, "Commodity prices will fare poorly this year as new capacity in primary resources such as coal, and iron ore has come to market. This development has encouraged countries like China and Korea to promote the development of mines in other countries."

A director said, "So there will be more supply, more competition, and we can expect the price of those commodities to come down much closer to the cost of production."

The board's chief accountant was tapping on his phone. He looked up. "A report from the US Energy Information Administration shows that US coal exports hit a record 126 million short tonnes last year, as production and domestic consumption fell."

"And how have we fared in the same time span?" enquired the CEO.

To answer his CEO's question, the accountant crunched more figures. "Mr President, our export tally was 17 percent up on the previous year and 12 percent ahead of the previous high mark, set in 1981. Domestic consumption fell by 114 million tonnes or 11 percent, and production by 7 percent.

"Thank you for that," Ivan said. "Now we have to decide if we continue to offer Britain the current deal, or if we re-negotiate terms."

"Alexander supported the original deal, didn't he?" a director mentioned.

Yuri Andropov knew this was his cue. Getting shakily to his feet, he stated. "I have it on good advice that Alexander was about to make a deal with David T Rottafeller, just before someone assassinated him."

"What deal was that?" Ivan demanded.

"David Rottafeller wanted Alexander to hold up Britain's energy supplies from us, to force them to pay more."

"This is outrageous, Yuri," Ivan responded. "Do you have proof of any of this?"

"I think perhaps a better question would be, why would the Rottafellers want to help a major competitor?"

"And you have an answer, I suppose," Ivan taunted.

"The only obvious answer is that the Rottafellers wanted our deal with the UK to fail so they could then step in with theirs." He asked, Ivan, "Have the Rottafellers invited you to a private meeting with them.?"

Ivan was silent. He had received such an invitation and was planning to go to America the following week. He stared at the senior director, "Yuri, I do not have to discuss my private arrangements with you."

The board went chillingly silent.

Yuri said, "Mr Chairman that is not my intention. But know this, the Rottafellers are treacherous dogs with much influence and experience. Alexander was about to sign a contract that, when completed would have been presented to the Bank of England to show Ivraz's intended blackmail. The fallout from this would be catastrophic for us and a boon for England's new friend, the Rottafellers."

"You are paranoid, Yuri. Maybe you should write fiction stories."

There was a chuckle from the board.

Yuri exasperated, said, "There must be no signing of any deal with the Rottafellers, or anyone on behalf of this company, without this board's approval."

There was general agreement to this.

Ivan didn't care. Unlike his deceased brother, he had no intention of signing any deals, but he wanted to test the waters.

Miguel was in anguish, He complained to his friend, "Filipe, Anita is going to leave me. She is going back to see her parents."

"Is that such a bad thing," Filipe responded, as they exposed more of the wall.

"I need her here, with me."

The Mayan turned to his concerned friend. "Go with her; have some fun together."

"She doesn't want me to go."

"Has Anita told you that?"

"No, but I can sense it."

"Don't be a stubborn fool. Go and ask your wife. After what you've both been through a break would be good for both of you."

Indicating the mural, Miguel said, "But I can't just leave this."

"Why not. Nothing will happen to it. And those thieves can't take it, can they?"

"It's not that simple."

Filipe looked his friend in the eye. "No, not if you don't want it to be. Anita needs your strength and leadership right now. If you're worried about this Abbott and I will guard it for you."

Miguel sighed, "You are right, my friend. Thank you."

"And make sure you give the rest some R and R as well."

It would work out well. With the camp to themselves, Abbott's education could begin in earnest. Filipe, pleased with his solution solving, headed back to the camp to find his student.

He found him in the crude kitchen, learning how to make tortillas. "I see Anita is teaching you to cook."

"He is a good learner," she said.

"Anita, I have been talking with Miguel. He has something important to tell you."

"Why did he not come himself?" she huffed.

Things were obviously not right between them. "It's hard for Miguel to do this. Please just hear what he has to say."

Taking off her apron, she said, "I suppose it is the only way I will know what you two have been cooking up together."

With her out of the kitchen, Filipe said, "We have some serious catching up to do. The others are going to take a break, so we will be alone. So we will be able to get on with our important work."

"For how long?"

Filipe frowned, "It is worse than I thought."

Abbott, puzzled, asked, "What do you mean?"

"How quickly you revert to your old ways of thinking. How long belongs with your watch and telephone, not here."

"Filipe, I'm experiencing things that make me feel uncomfortable, but I don't know why?"

The mentor smiled, "The work will help you find out."

Abbott stirred up his mixture. "I've certainly been feeling that I don't seem to belong anywhere."

Filipe put his hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Take heart, my friend, because, believe it or not, it's a sign that something very positive is happening to you, and to the planet."

"I find that hard to believe," Abbott responded with cynicism.

"Well of course you do. How are you to realise the symptoms of spiritual awakening, unless somebody or something guides you?"

"Is that what this feeling lost shit is all about?"

"Abbott, This awakening, or consciousness shift this planet and us humans are currently undergoing has been prophesied for ages. Whether we think so or not, we are all very privileged to be living at a time when it is happening. It goes by many names, all of which means Awakening to the New Consciousness. But it all amounts to the same thing. To appreciate it you need an entirely different perception of time."

Rolling out the dough for the flat cakes, the journalist asked, "So where is this shift taking us?"

"We are changing from our current limited state to that of a higher vibration and level of consciousness. It's a more spiritually evolved state, free from many of the individual and collective problems of our present existence."

"Are you suggesting that, in this higher state, we can get rid of our global problems?"

"What I am saying is that in this higher consciousness such problems do not exist. Abbott, once we evolve beyond the state in which fear, violence, struggle, and strife can thrive, we become liberated from such considerations."

"How will I know I am becoming more enlightened?"

"You will feel such things as a sense of unity, peace, cooperation, compassion, harmony and freedom."

Inwardly Abbott yearned for this, as do all humans, at a deeper level of consciousness, but, like them, he did not believe it possible. Such a utopian reality was a mere pipe dream. To even begin to think it might be possible, angered and frustrated him. "This is airy fairy nonsense. Such pointless hope can only create further self-torment in this big, bad fucked-up world," he stated.

Good, Filipe thought. At last, he was getting an honest emotional reaction. He said, "Abbott, look at me please." Having received his initiates attention, Filipe said, "What you are feeling are like cosmic growing pains. This shift is happening, and nothing we do or believe is going to stop it. The divine evolutionary light, the force behind all evolution, is increasing, pouring into this planet's atmosphere. Every created thing is unfolding, like the petals of a flower, to its full divine potential, as it raises in consciousness."

"How can I believe in something I don't think possible?"

Filipe smiled, "Then don't believe. Just feel it."

Abbott shrugged, "I thought this was about me having a new take on time."

Filipe smiled wistfully. "You are not ready to take on time. It is a formidable enemy."

When Colonel Cormack entered the portals of the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency, he had no idea how his day was about to unfold. Waiting on his desk, was a report, inside a plain manila folder. He picked up the envelope, which was only available to someone of his clearance level. He adjusted his glasses, removed them, wiped the lenses with a tissue, then replaced them. It was from Rodney White, PhD of the Air Force Office of Scientific Research. It read:

Rodney White, PhD.

‘Air Force Office of Scientific Research

Colonel Cormack, I am pleased to announce that significant proof concerning long-term basic research funding of the continuous wave nanolaser, which is powered by electricity. Dr Cun-Zheng Ning and his team have demonstrated the first convincing operation at room temperature. By so doing, Arizona State University has achieved a breakthrough that may very well result in keeping Moore's Law on track.’

Barney knew Moore's Law, predicted that, over the long-term, the number of transistors embedded in integrated circuits would double about every two years. The Colonel was also aware that shrinking the size of lasers was critical to the integration of photonics and electronic components as

they decreased in size and increased in speed. Now they could place more lasers into the same space, far greater processing speeds could be attained in Atlas's CPU (robot brain).

"Fantastic," Barney said, excitedly, to his empty office. The AFOSR had delivered on time and budget. Feeling smug and contented, Barney ordered coffee and doughnuts with cinnamon. The nanolaser result was the best news he could have got that day. The second bit wasn't! Cormack's phone rang. Perhaps the fact that Dr Covington, from Australia, was on the line, should have been a clue. "Yes, Dr Covington, how can I help you?"

"By reinstating our contract for a start."

Barney did a double take. "Dr Covington, your people, took their eye off the ball. What more can I say?"

"You can say you'll come to Australia and hear me out."

"Dr Covington, have you not read the part of the contract that talks about clients unable to fulfil their obligations?"

"Colonel, do not take me for a fool."

"And do not waste my time."

"Don't hang up, or I will go straight to the press about this."

"Do you know the penalty for contravening the official secret protocol."

Dr Covington laughed. "You don't understand, do you, Colonel? Well, watch out for an interesting news article about a cutting edge, Japanese robotic company that is involved with the slaughter of Minke Whales."

Covington expleted, "What the fuck are you on about?"

"Colonel, I think you need a holiday. And the Gold Coast is beautiful at this time of year."

Barney coughed, peppering his desk with half-digested doughnut crumbs. "What kind of fucking game are you playing?"

"The sort that will, I believe you say, get your ass out of a sling, Colonel, I'm your friend here."

Cormack seriously doubted it. The Aussie had apparently become unhinged. But his reference to the Japanese company was worrying. How the hell had, he found out about Akawi Technics and had they actually been killing whales?

The US EIA releases energy data analysis for Syria ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.energyglobal.com/upstream/drilling-and-production/29062015/the-us-ei>

<http://www.ogj.com/articles/print/volume-113/issue-5c/general-interest/eia-eagle-ford-s-eagleville-oil-field-largest-in-us.html>

Chapter 25

Merilyn Watson believed that Australia needed a separate statutory body to investigate scientific fraud and misconduct. She was on Bermuda Drive, looking for the Broadbeach-Nerang turn off. An

academic at the university's Department of Medical Education, Marilyn knew that Australia did not have adequate structures in place to supervise scientific behaviour and that the incidences of scientific misconduct were difficult to detect.

She was on her way to Heron Industries to do just that. It would take a bit of bluff and bluster, but that is the only way errant scientists would take her seriously.

She came to the junction, filtered left, and headed up the Nerang Road, past Coco's food store and Karara Markets, landmarks pointed out to her by members of her department, pleased they were not in her small shoes. Dammit! Why didn't the Government adopt the US model, the Office of Research Integrity, which had the power to monitor and investigate scientific fraud and misconduct? It had teeth. She just had a dummy.

Currently, the NHMRC had a protocol that was designed to allow institutions to do their investigations into allegations of scientific misconduct. She knew Dr Covington would probably put on a shocked look and declare that he would launch his investigation. It was all probably a waste of time, but she had to go through the motions.

Dr Covington greeted Dr Watson, trying not to make some pun. She had heard them all. She said, "I am from the NHMRC, and I am here to investigate an area of research in which your company is allegedly engaged." She opened a briefcase and removed a folder that had Heron Robotics on the cover. "I will ask you a series of questions. If you cannot answer any of these questions, then provide me with a member of your staff who can. Okay?"

"Sure. Fire away."

No objection and totally obliging. Marilyn made a mental note. "Have you or any of your staff been engaged in any illegal tests, as in stem cell research?"

He looked at the freckle-faced redhead. "Not me personally and this company has never, to the best of my knowledge, engaged in any such activity."

"Who would know?"

Covington smiled, "I can't access that instantly." Then he asked, "Why did you decide to come and investigate us, Miss Watson?"

"Mrs Watson. We received a complaint, and we acted on it. Now if we can progress."

"Indeed. Now that you have brought this allegation to my notice I will carry out an investigation and report back to you."

She foraged through her case and extracted some forms. "Fill these in and send them to that address," she said, pointing. From these, we will be able to assess from your answers as to whether further investigation will be warranted."

"No company wishes to receive such news but thank you for taking the time to bring it to my attention."

She felt like vomiting. But Dr Covington was no worse than any other supercilious prick she had to contend with in her job.

Ulysses scanned through the forms. It was going to take a lot of research to answer all the questions. He contacted Matthew Sheen. "Can you come up to my office. I have a special project for you.

Ivan Karimov was the second Chairman of Ivraz Holdings to be invited to No 26 Broadway, former home of Star Oil. As his chauffeur drove him along Broadway Ivan looked out of the limousine window. Looking up Ivan saw the iconic step pyramid on top the massive grey building. He knew he had reached his destination.

The Star building, at the lower end of the greatest thoroughfare in the most powerful city of the New World, was cold and uninviting. The massive structure of dull grey stone, solid as and resembling a prison, towered steeple-like, a frozen icicle over a soulless institution.

David T Rottafeller waited in the board room, with two armed security guards on hand. Other minions searched any room opposite that had a view of their boss.

David knew people saw him as being harsh and heartless. It did not worry him. He could laugh at them all. It was his great granddaddy John D Rottafeller who became the first billionaire in the whole wide world. He rubbed his balding pate, a nervous reaction when he felt anxious. He hated having to deal with messy human emotions. He remembered hearing about John T losing all his hair in 1906, from worrying that oil reserves were going to run out and ruin his empire.

He looked at his watch. The Russki was late. This one, who was wet behind the ears, would be easier to advise.

The Rottafellers, the uncrowned Princes of America, had done very well for themselves after landing as migrants under the family's real name, Roggenfelder not the Anglicised one. When every Catholic country expelled the Jesuits in Europe, their only refuge was Russia, Great Britain and the United States.

Thousands of them, including Johann Roggenfelder, had flocked to America to continue their fight against the Reformation, under the standard of American freedom of politics and religion for all. Among these migrants were also the Morgans and Roosevelts. Roggenfelder was later changed to Rottafeller to make the name sound more Dutch and less German.

Ivan Karimov entered the antique boardroom, flanked by four security guards.

The mega wealthy American greeted Ivan, then said, "No need for the heavies. I have everything covered."

"Like last time."

Touche, you bear fucker, David thought. "That was a tragedy, Ivan. Condolences for your loss."

"Where was my brother when the assassin murdered him?"

A strange request, David thought." He was right here, The tall man said, indicating the position.

Ivan couldn't be sure, but he thought he could still see the remains of a bloodstain.

"This meeting is in remembrance of your brave brother. I only knew him for a very short while, but he was a man of firm conviction."

"So, what is this meeting about?"

David smiled warmly. "I have a deal for you that will make your mouth water. But more importantly, will add much more rubles to your coffers."

"Explain please."

David put forward the same proposal.

Ivan, having heard the same kind of contract his brother was offered, smiled. "It's a very tempting deal. And I have no doubt my board will agree. I will call a special meeting as soon as I return to Russia."

David wasn't happy but didn't show it. "Ivan, the reason we are talking is that you are a strong leader. And as such you need to make the right decisions for your company. This opportunity is not something to put on the board. What happens if the less forward-looking directors reject it. You lose out on the deal. This initiative is a decision only you can make, as their leader."

Ivan was confused. What David Rottafeller said, made sense. His brother had seen that too. Besides, he had no love for the British. Those up-themselves pricks had screwed his company to get the best deal. Now it was his company's turn to screw them. But he had promised the board he would run any major decision by them, and they would vote on it. At length, he said, "David, it is very tempting to go ahead with this right now. But I really must ..."

Rottafeller had the Russki on the ropes. He cut him off. "I don't have time for this. It's a one-off offer today or no deal, Ivan. Take it or leave it."

Ivan scratched his head. "Well David you push a hard bargain but the deal is good, and I think my people will go for it. So where do I sign?"

Dayton changed hotels every couple of days, while he waited to hear from Andropov. In the interim he played the tourist, visiting some of the displays and exhibitions that showed how cosmopolitan Russia had become. In the 20 years since the fall of Communism, Dayton knew only too well that Moscow had become one of the most expensive cities in the world to live in and a haven for the super-rich. He read in the Forbes magazine that Moscow had the world's largest number of billionaires in one city.

Moscow was also pricing out its people. Average salaries were just over \$1000 a month, which was about the same as rent on a studio apartment. And since having a job couldn't guarantee a comfortable life, the city unemployed were running out of hope. In Soviet Moscow, poverty was rife, and the very rich had the spoils. In modern Moscow, the same distribution of wealth as that of the conservative West applied.

After seeing avant-garde artworks by Kandinsky and Chagall, at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Vysoko-Petrovsky Monastery, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theatre, etc. Dayton had cultural overload. He would give Andropov another day; then he would have to leave. So far, nobody had been sniffing around, but Dayton was sure the Diabolus Sect knew he was there.

He received the call around 8 pm, just after dinner. He was to get a taxi and go to South-east Moscow, where he was to board the metro, taking the Vykhino (purple line) and then, as per instructions, changed to the Kozhukhovskaya (green line).

At journey's end, Dayton emerged from the metro station. It was after dark, and there were few street lights to illuminate his way. Of the lamps that were there, many were not working. So Dayton had to use his powerful LED torch, to find his way. He cursed Andropov for making him come to such a godforsaken place.

The Englishman kept his hand on the Berretta in his coat pocket. This time, the disgusting market was deserted or at least he hoped it was. Anybody could have been lurking in one of the many alleyways. He shuddered, then shook the thought from his mind.

Coloured lights ahead told him he had found the Kokoza Cafe, the appointed meeting place. It was 10 pm, and the establishment was nearly empty. A few customers, sipped their beverages very slowly, putting off going out in the bitter cold as long as was possible. The proprietor, bored, sat reading a newspaper.

Dayton entered furtively. Yuri Andropov was at the same table as before. Dayton sat down opposite. "You believe in giving me a hard time, Yuri."

Yuri grinned, "I thought my little detour would give you a genuinely cultural experience." He went back to eating his burger and chips.

"I have to leave soon. I want to know what news to take back home."

"The children are behaving themselves. The head son has gone to America to meet David T Rottafeller. He has instructions not to make any major decisions by himself."

"Will he hold to that?"

"That, my friend, is impossible to know. But you were right, so I trust you," Yuri said, stirring his tea.

"That's reassuring. But trust me with what?"

"I will contact you tomorrow."

"What for?"

"I have to check on something first. If I am right, Britain needs to know this."

"If you're right about what?"

"Walls have ears. It's not safe here."

One of the patrons, unshaven and wearing workers clothes, listened carefully and concealed his micro recorder. He watched as the Russian and the Englishman got up to leave. He took out his phone, pressed a contact, then waited. "Change of plan. Leave them alone tonight. Tomorrow we will have more information."

Tom Graham woke, sweating and screaming. In his recurring dream, the narrow gap in the cave closed before he reached it. He fumbled for the glass of water by his bed. His rapidly beating heart slowed to a normal rate. It was only a dream but one that kept haunting his sleep. Since his narrow escape from those monsters in Switzerland, his life had become a nightmare.

What looked like being a promising and fruitful career was in ruins. The Cantonal Police Agency had, upon hearing the archaeologist's report, investigated the murders but found no evidence of any crime, mostly because they could not find any cavern under the cathedral.

Tom hadn't remembered much after escaping through the tunnel until he woke up in the Geneva University Psychiatric Hospital. They had carried out tests on him, but they meant nothing to his blank mind. Nothing made sense, and he seemed to have lost his grasp on reality, as well as his memory. His wife had visited a couple of times, but he wasn't the Tom she used to know. Soon, she disappeared out of his life as well. Anti-anxiety medications help to calm and relax Tom Graham to the point where he was able to answer questions put forward to him by Claude Scheer, the Swiss detective, who was investigating the disappearance of six scientists, who had been led by the patient.

As the detective fired more questions at him, Tom's anxiety level grew, but with it, the jigsaw of that horrific night began piecing itself together. The nightmares returned, but during his waking hours, Tom's mind began to face what had happened.

The police officer came back to ask more questions. As part of the investigation, police had searched the cathedral much more thoroughly. One of their scientists discovered the cover over an entrance to an underground chamber. Forensics found some large patches of dried blood but no bodies. Results showed the blood to be that of the missing scientists.

It looked, to the pathologist, that the missing scientists were victims of a frenzied attack, in which they were hacked and slashed to death. Now a murder inquiry was underway.

The first time Tom Graham realised he was a suspect was when he was arrested and taken away by the Canton police. They fired questions at him. Claude Scheer, the detective conducting the interview, said, "Why did you murder the members of your team?" He suggested, "Is it because you didn't want to share what you had found?"

"I didn't kill them. The black-clad figures attacked us!"

"Who attacked your people, Mr Graham?"

"I have no idea; They wore grotesque masks."

The Detective scratched his head. "We only have your word that these masked murderers exist. Maybe you do believe your story because you cannot face what you have done. So tell me, "Where did you put your colleague's bodies?"

"I didn't put them anywhere. I escaped from the vault, and I have no idea what happened to my people after that." Tom sighed deeply, then suggested, "Maybe the people who killed them got rid of the bodies."

"Why would they do that?"

Tom shrugged, "I guess you have to ask them once you've caught them."

The detective glanced at his assistant and sneered, "So we're on the lookout for masked, black-cloaked thugs with swords and hatchets. They shouldn't be too difficult for us to find." Claude leant

closer to Tom. "Do yourself a favour and tell us what we want to know. Otherwise, we'll have you sent back to the mental institution."

Tom said, "I think it is time for my lawyer to get involved."

It took two hours for Emily Frotard to arrive at the police precinct. Tom had refused to answer any more questions until she was present. There was an icy stand-off for over one hour.

Emily Frotard had barely graduated from law school when she took on Tom's case. She was all he could afford. Tom, in private conference with her, outlined his dilemma. Once the interview recommenced Emily, nervous but brimming with righteous indignation, told Detective Scheer his case was based on supposition and could not be substantiated one way or the other. Emily's simple argument soon had Tom out of gaol, on bail, on his recognisance, providing he did not leave Geneva.

Tom knew the police would not leave him alone. He was their only suspect, and he had a shaky story. The only chance the archaeologist had of proving his innocence was by finding the murderous thieves responsible. But he had little to go on - black hooded, cloaked, monsters in a killing frenzy.

Even if he did discover who they were, they would be long gone. Long gone to wherever thieves and cut-throats go when pursued by the law. Long gone with the treasures he and his team had worked so long and hard for - the strange set of relics: a plate and cup connected to the legends of Cain, Solomon, Christ, and Lucifer.

Astrology, Hoaxes, Pseudoscience, UFOs & Aliens, all subjects open to disinformation, an area in which Raul Julian Leversi was an expert. He had become a Diabolus Sect recruit many years before. Becoming involved, Raul made a mistake common to most people, namely the assumption 'evil' was a subjective or 'grey' concept.

Once initiated, he soon came to learn that a dangerous environment was not responsible for all the destructive and malicious behaviour upheld in the name of misguided 'profit' or 'status'. He also learned that the work of Diabolus was not violence to achieve some bad end or other but merely violence for its sake to fulfil the negative role of entropy in the universe.

It was simple, pure and not open to interpretation. Everything will end up this way, so why not speed up the extinction process? That was Julian's real argument.

Diabolus was not some thought up concept because that would have involved the creative juices, the idea of creation being anathema to the evil hoard. No, Diabolus didn't evolve. It got squeezed out of the dark recesses of society, the homunculi of human detritus, and festered in the fears of everyday folk.

Like a pestilence, it quickly and quietly and with great subtlety, invaded the consciousness of people by way of media bias, misinformation, prejudice and any number of ways mind manipulation could be employed.

The Diabolus Sect had no halls of secrets or bizarre, macabre rituals. Initiation was self-motivated, not performed as a theatrical re-enactment of some myth or legend. Members were usually anarchists, drop outs, challengers of the status quo, etc., who condescended to become part of a

group, a loosely organised band of people who find mindless destruction to be more self-satisfying than hiding their actions behind some cause or other.

Once Raul understood that what passed for modern society had been built on the rotten foundations of a flawed past, he was free to express himself in any diabolical way possible. Every time he posted disinformation, plausible to the easily duped, it spread like wildfire, giving him great satisfaction.

As he went about his morning shave, Dayton wondered what Andropov meant when he said there was something Britain needed to know. Well, there was a lot that the British Government did not know, about Diabolus, for example. The Soter Agency had studied the Diabolus Sect for two hundred years, to understand their psyche. They were unique in their criminality. It took an unusually perverse mindset to derive pleasure from mindful yet mindless actions that fitted somewhere between psychopathic and sociopathic tendencies. Diabolus members carried out destructive acts without any apparent reason other than their lust for chaos.

Soter, ancient Greek for 'Saviour,' had to work outside of the law and government red tape because its agents had to be able to act without being hampered with the naive niceties of liberal society. Everybody, bar the Soter Group, went about their lives ignorant of the threat in their midst. Nobody wanted to entertain the idea of a dark side to humanity as a whole, which, left unchecked, would destroy the world and everything in it, simply because it could do so.

However, Diabolus went far beyond that. The sect did not need any deliberation or calculation to explain their chaotic works. In fact, they had no reason to justify themselves at all.

Dayton and his colleagues in Soter knew that state-run intelligence agencies were woefully incompetent at dealing with the likes of Diabolus. MI5/6, the CIA, Euro police, etc., were only useful if the enemy played by the same kind of rules. Diabolus didn't play to rules - even their own, making them a tough to track down.

Diabolus Sect members were scattered all over the world. What leadership there was self-emerged from dominion over the minions, based upon who could conceive and carry out the most Heinous acts of destruction. Minions were in endless supply, the fearful dregs of humanity, easily cultivated into self-satisfying machines of destruction.

Diabolus, unlike the financial elite, were not after bright baubles and peer recognition, so they were able to carry out their proverbial 'bombing raids' while flying under society's radar. However, Soter's radar was much more sophisticated. Besides, Dayton and his brother and sister agents were honed to detect and destroy Diabolus activities. Soter was acutely aware that one of the most devious and brilliant cons used by Diabolus, in league with elements of the global elite was to base inferiority and superiority on how much wealth and power a person had.

Such social engineering by academic think tanks was quite brilliant - mass hypnosis on a grand scale. Not only do the poor in society accept their inferiority, they believe, without question, that they must listen to and serve their 'betters'. This brainwashing is why time and time again, without question, millions of young soldiers lie their lives on the line for some make pretend patriotic cause.

Dayton was well aware of the genius of such duplicity. This trickery was why the great 'unwashed' were oblivious to the biggest crimes, which were perpetrated by the 'betters'. The very idea that international financial gurus and political superiors would deliberately foment economic inequality, social chaos, and world war, in their desire for globalised power, was simply too much for society, in general, to handle.

Society's self-appointed Elite had things their way because society was trained to think that the terrible global events throughout modern history were merely the result of random coincidence and human error.

Dayton and those like him knew this was wrong. They directly traced most catastrophic cultural policies and tragedies to a particular subset of people, who used their positions of influence for selfish purposes and personal gain, as well as the profiteering of their social class.

However, Diabolus sects went a step further. They engineered chaos simply because they could. And they manipulated the weaker elements of the Elite who, albeit unknowingly, did Diabolus' evil bidding. Dayton wasn't interested in the sect's small fry who obsequiously followed their cult leader's dictates. His sacred duty was to seek out and destroy the 'fat cats' of the Elite, who, through their avarice, were easily manipulated by intelligent agents of the Diabolus sect.

Anyone driven by the greed and wealth lust was easy prey for Diabolus scouts. The Rottafellers were a case in point, which was why Dayton kept a careful but shrewd eye on them. In the case of Ivraz Holdings, it was a huge coup for the Diabolus cult.

So once Soter saw through David Rottafeller's duplicity, it had to act and eliminate the threat. So Alexander Karimov had to be removed before the Rottafellers tricked him.

Dayton Lynsey reckoned the Russians were the most paranoid people in the world. After having lived through Stalin's pogroms and the KGB, perhaps the survivors had enough reason to see spies around every corner. But it didn't help Dayton, who had to meet Andropov in yet another different venue. The trick was not to meet in the same place twice. Although this was good from a security angle, it meant that Dayton had to get to a place he had never visited before, quickly.

Andropov had chosen Gorky Park which stretched along the banks of the Moscow River. Divided into two sections, the first of which, a permanent fairground, was of primary interest to children and their entertainers. The other, older, half of the park Dayton discovered, had formal gardens and natural woodland that combined the former Golitsynskiy and Neskuchniy Gardens - names that cropped up regularly in Russian literary classics. It was here that Andropov had arranged to meet Dayton, by the two summerhouses, designed by Mikhail Kazakov, the famous Russian architect.

Andropov approached Lord Lynsey. "This has to be our last meeting," he said, casting a wary eye around the area.

"Why are we meeting this time?"

Making sure he was not being overheard, he said, "Diabolus have the ear of the British PM."

Dayton, surprised, said, "How do you know about Diabolus?"

The Russian stared at the English noble. "Never mind about that. The person's name is Bourne. Now I must go."

Dayton's mind was racing. Was Andropov part of Soter or was he part of Diabulus. Grabbing the Russian's arm, he said, "I need more to go on. A first name would help."

Andropov fixed the Englishman with his gaze. "We may not make it out of this park alive. One or both of us could already be targets. If you manage to get away, you must get out of Russia as soon as possible."

"And you?"

He reached into his inside pocket and withdrew a small metal flask. "Ah, Vodka the answer to man's ills."

Dayton, noticing a dent in the metal flask, commented, "Bullet."

Yuri grinned, "Nostrovia." and swallowed a draft. Then, handing the container to Dayton, he said, "This flask saved my life that day. I fear it no longer has such a power."

They hugged, as old warriors do, then left in separate directions. There was only one gunman. Yuri drew the short straw. As he walked through the wood, listening to birdsong and inhaling nature's scents, with an intensity he had never before experienced, a single shot rang out. More a hissing sound than a shot. The back of his skull exploded as the impact of the bullet thrust the elderly Russian forward. He was dead before he hit the ground.

Chapter 26

Colonel Barney Cormack had never been to Australia and had never wished to. Like most Americans, he was ignorant when it came to the subject of Australia. Barney had a vague idea it was full of Aborigines and kangaroos. One thing he did know is that he resented going there under duress. Heron Industries was out of the DARPA picture, so why was Barney wasting his time with a deadbeat like Covington. His primary concern was that the effects of MK Ultra would keep Dr Covington pushing to reach his goal, even though he had no goal to reach. He was programmed to reach his goal, and now he was becoming a problem. The Aussie needed deprogramming, and it wasn't Barney's field of expertise.

Ulysses Covington felt sharp, a man with an edge. When he heard that Colonel Cormack was coming to see him, he figured he had DARPA a little bit jittery. It would have been good to have had some more sexual athletics with the delightful Lynne, but she wasn't coming.

Ulysses welcomed Barney Cormack into his office.

Offering no pleasantries, the DARPA man said. "This had better be good, Dr Covington."

The Heron CEO smiled graciously, "It sounds as though you are treating me like I'm the enemy."

"Let's not beat around the bush. Have you got something that might interest me, or not?"

"I don't know about you, but I think a coffee might help. How do you have yours, Colonel?"

"Black, no sugar." You mentioned something about a Japanese company."

Ulysses ordered refreshments. "I'd like to treat this as a hypothetical."

"Treat it how the hell you like. Just get on with it."

Ulysses sat back. "A certain Japanese company is building part of a robot for, say an American scientific, military company. But it turns out that the Japanese firm has been involved in the slaughter of whales."

Barney, seeing the Aussie, was toying with him, interrupted, "Cut the crap. We both know what Jap company you mean. We checked them out with a fine tooth comb. I don't know where you got this bullshit from, but Akawi Technics has had nothing to do with killing whales.

"Your people are correct; Akawi Technics had nothing to do with the slaughter of whales. But Technics Nippon did."

"Who the fuck are Technics Nippon? And what have they got to do with Akawi Technics?"

Now that Ulysses had the Yank Colonel interested, he enjoyed keeping the American in suspense. The coffee and biscuits arrived, and the Aussie took his time fussing around with cups and plates.

"Can we get back on track here, Dr Covington?"

"Oh yes, where was I? Ah! Although we are talking about two different companies or, to be more precise, one company that changed its name, three of the current directors also served on the TN board."

Barney cocked an eyebrow. "What the hell has that got to do with killing fucking whales."

Ulysses, getting the Yank rattled, lined up his big guns. "Technics Nippon were contracted by the Japanese Government to make special SONAR equipment to detect whale activity." He handed Barney a copy of a report.

As Barney put on his specs to read it, Ulysses pointed out, "See the name of the directors I have highlighted, Dr Hashimoko in particular."

Barney did a double take. He nervously fiddled with his collar. "They were making SONAR for detecting whales."

"Yes, so fishing fleets could kill them."

"That's a moot point."

Ulysses grinned, "A moot point the media will be more than happy to debate."

Barney glared at him. "One word to the press and You'll be imprisoned before you can take a fucking breath."

"Do you think I give a fuck? Without the DARPA contract, Heron is finished. So you see, I have nothing to lose." It was part bluster, but Ulysses could see the colonel getting hot under the collar. He pushed the knife in further. "I can see the headline now. 'DARPA ditches Heron NRG, favouring Japanese whale killer company Akawi Technics, instead!'"

Barney's eyes blazed. "Just who the fuck do you think you are to try and blackmail us. You're just a fucking minnow in a big fucking sea. You are way out of your league."

Ulysses just smiled. "Yet you are here talking with me about this." He eyeballed the DARPA man. "Colonel, we haven't lost any ground here, and we only need one more month to come up to scratch."

The colonel glared at the Aussie upstart. "And if we don't reinstate your contract?"

"Then, as I told you, my company goes to the wall. If that happens, I don't give a flying fuck about your Official Secret Act. And you can take that from this minnow."

Barney, blue with rage, tried calming himself. "This could get squalid."

"Sure, and neither of us wants that. Right?"

Filipe took Abbott on a winding mountain track. The journalist looked at the completely open landscape below. "What's going on there?" Abbott asked.

"Massive deforestation," The guide answered. "To make way for another Palm Oil plantation, in preparation for the biofuel market."

Horrified, Abbott uttered, "What a disaster?"

Filipe shrugged, "They have to live."

They trekked onward. The heat was torrid. Abbott's clothes were sticking to him like glue. He hadn't eaten since breakfast, and hunger pangs were taking hold. "I need a rest, Filipe."

"Not much further then we come to a lake."

The lake, when they came to it, was a sight for sore eyes. Although the water was limpid and cloudy, it was a very welcome sight. Abbott was stripping off his clinging shirt when Filipe said, "It might be a good idea to make sure there are no crocodiles."

Abbott froze in his tracks. "Crocs. Shit, I hadn't thought of that."

"That's what they bank on - stupid food," Filipe laughed.

Abbott torn between cooling off and self-survival picked up his shirt.

Filipe laughed again, thinking it a huge joke. "If it were croc infested some of them would be basking on the banks. I don't see any crocs, do you?"

"Fuck you!" the journalist exploded, ripping off his shirt and plunging into the water. It was deliciously refreshing; Abbott stayed in the water as long as time permitted, which meant as long as Filipe remained resting in the shade of overhanging branches.

The mentor awoke from his nap.

Seeing as he was awake, Abbott approached him. "What time is it? he asked, as a matter of habit.

"How the hell would I know?" Filipe responded. "Does it matter?"

Abbott shrugged, not knowing what Filipe meant.

The guide said, "Peaceful here, isn't it?"

"Sure, but what does this have to do with anything?"

"Here, you are shifting from your current limited state to a higher vibration and level of consciousness."

"How do you know that?"

Filipe sat up. "The calmer and at peace you are, the more spiritually evolved you become, free from many of the individual and collective problems of your present existence."

Abbott had to admit life didn't seem such a jumble of incidents to him. "It is certainly much simpler living here."

"That is because you are evolving beyond the state in which fear, violence, struggle, and strife can thrive. You are growing into a more enlightened state of being, characterised by unity, peace, cooperation, compassion, harmony and freedom from many of your current limitations."

"I'm not sure I can feel that."

"It doesn't matter, Abbott. Just go with it. Do not resist. Then you will feel this shift, which is being accelerated because the Earth's atmosphere is being filled with Divine Evolutionary Light."

"Filipe, you seem to know a lot about this stuff."

"This stuff, as you put it, is our only hope for survival."

"Yes. Sorry. I didn't mean ..."

Filipe cut in "The consciousness shift is a 'process', similar to that of growing up. The difference being that we are never fully developed spiritually."

"Is this to do with the 2012 thing?"

Filipe chuckled. "Various teachings are predicted for the December Solstice in 2012 to be the time when the shift reaches what science calls 'critical mass', zero point, or the singularity."

Abbott looked at the Mayan teacher. "Explain this critical mass."

Filipe got to his feet. "It's best if we get going, but I'll give you this: Critical mass occurs when sufficient bits of a whole system upgrade, starting a chain reaction that automatically raises all the other bits to that level."

Abbott brightened, "So, hypothetically speaking, when enough individuals reach a certain degree of consciousness, a chain reaction will occur, bringing the rest of humanity up to that level as well."

"Yes," Filipe smiled.

"Then there's no problem."

Filipe smiled, "There will be if we don't reach the critical mass."

"It's not guaranteed then?"

"Nothing is, Abbott. You need to get used to that."

Diablo Sonata was ready to move on. Atienza had become a war zone or at least seemed like one. The shoot-out in the main street of the town, as bizarre as it was, fermented a range of chain reactions, as the good citizens took one side or the other, depending on whether they thought Emile or Franco was the villain.

Philux's experiment had worked beautifully, except for the fact the baker and the blacksmith were still alive and were whisked off to hospital in Madrid. The Madrid police became involved because medical staff had to report all gunshot wounds. Then the Policia who visited the crime scene took eyewitness statements, as well as a general interest in Atienza.

When the police arrived in the town, they discovered violence in the streets and slogans painted on the walls of buildings. Signs that read 'Long live Franco', 'Emile is right' or 'death to the blacksmith', all of which the investigating officers found very strange.

Stranger still was the stories townsfolk told them, all of which centred around a town event in which a man called Professor Sonata had a man burned at the stake in the Atienza town square, in a macabre and bizarre ritual. The witnesses were vague about the time it took place and what exactly happened. But they all remembered snippets of that experience.

Diablo looked out from the tower for the last time. Zequiél had told him it was time to move on. The demon had served him well, and he did not question its motives. Zequiél told Diablo he was to go away to meet with someone. The devil would inform him who when the time was right.

Philux was staying behind to sort out unfinished castle business. Diablo had to go to a distant place. Zequiél agreed to help him in this, but first, he had to ingest a monatomic gold solution that the Spaniard made, alchemically.

Millie Smith, God she hated the name 'Smith'. It was boring, like her husband. But not like Professor Sonata. 'Sonata', that was a name that evoked romance and adventure, two things sadly lacking in her life. Stuck in Eastport, Long Island. Living in a town with ducks as its claim to fame, seemed to Millie to fit in with the rest of her sad life.

"I'm going out tonight," she said, poking her head around the study door.

Bill turned, "Yeah, sure. What's for dinner?"

"Aren't you going to ask me where I am going?"

Wanting to get back to his project, Bill said, "I guess you'll tell me if you wanted to."

Angry, she said, "Dinner's in the oven. I'm sure you'll be able to heat it up."

With her gone, Bill looked back at the screen. He hadn't written anything for hours. Nothing seemed to get his creative juices working, not even the juice. Shit, he'd downed half a bottle of Scotch in little over a week. Things were not right in his marriage, and he turned to the sauce. Now there's a writer's cliché if ever there was one. He poured himself a shot. He needed it for what he planned to do.

Millie first met Professor Sonata at Jennifer's party. She had asked Bill to go with her, but he had refused. Jennifer was a good friend from way back in her school days. Bill had not liked Jennifer since she referred to his stories as comic books. Although he didn't write superhero stories, his main character Mike Strong did come over a bit too two-dimensional, for her taste. So Millie had gone to the party by herself, open to some new male company. And she found a man much to her liking.

He looked too young to be a professor, she thought. But she was intrigued by him, more so than by anyone else at the party. He was not a great conversationalist. In fact, he offered hardly any verbal exchange. That appealed to her. He wasn't one of the boring bombastic men, always braying about their dull exploits. She mingled but kept being drawn back to him, as though his cold dark eyes were magnetic to her. She was both, strangely attracted and scared of him at the same time, a potent cocktail of emotions. They went back to his place that night, a huge mansion on Long Island, the professor had servants bring her anything she desired.

Sonata found her to be amusing. She had a pretty little face framed with blond bangs. She was slim but not skinny, the way he liked his women. She was lying on his huge bed when he entered from the ensuite.

She looked at his naked body, hairless apart from his devilish pointy little beard. But she was most focused on his groin area. "What's that?" she said giggling.

She needed a good strapping for laughing at him. He smiled falsely, "It's a cock cage. It goes on my cock so I can't use it."

"Can't use it, we can't fuck?" She was shocked again.

"I can't fuck," he said emphasising the word 'I, but 'you' can."

She looked confused for a moment, and then quietly said, "Oh."

"In fact, you can fuck all you want to. I only have a couple of simple requests," the Professor said.

"Okay," she was playing with the cage now. Turning it in her hands and looking at the motion, with a question in her eye. "What are they?"

"You're in charge. You decide what you want to be done to you. You also choose when I wear the cage and when I don't."

"Sounds reasonable," she said.

"When I have the cage on you can treat me any way you like," he continued. "But when the cage is off, I'm in charge. It shouldn't be a problem, though, as you decide when I take it off."

Something was going on. Bill just knew it. For a start, Millie was being kinder to him and hadn't asked him to take her out in a while. So she had probably found another guy to satisfy her needs. Bill was more interested than angry. He wanted to see where she went at night. The writing wasn't bringing in much income, so a private investigator was out of the question. So Bill determined to follow his wife himself. Apart from anything else, it would be good fodder for his story.

That evening, when Millie left home, Bill followed her, with his jacket collar up, and his hat pulled down. He saw a limousine pull up. A door opened, and his wife got in. He keyed the license plate number into his phone. Then he stood there stunned at what had just happened. His wife had been picked up in a fucking limo. Now his curiosity was piqued.

The next day Bill contacted the vehicle licensing board and told them he needed the name of the owner of the license plate number of the limo. A VLB worker said they did not give away such information. Expecting this, he explained that he had accidentally done some damage to the vehicle and he wanted to contact the owner. It seemed plausible, and as he seemed like such an upstanding citizen, the receptionist surreptitiously passed him the name and address. Now he had it.

The man was Professor Fransisco Sonata who lived at 'Winterdown' an enormous Gothic mansion on Long Island. Now he had a name and a place, he drove to the hall and took photos of the 19th Century grey stone building with a huge car park out front. It looked like his wife had hooked a big fish. The mystery man fucked his wife in secret, so he did not want the affair to become public knowledge. Bill had to get in and take some photos of them going at it. Then he would have his proof and his plot for his next great story.

The next time Bill saw his wife get into the flash limo, he got his car and drove to 'Winterdown'. The car park was filling up with German engineering genius, and Italian thoroughbreds as the top of the range Mercs and BMWs found themselves in the company of Lamborghinis and Ferraris. Bill kept his Ford out of sight, just up the road.

There was some big do on, and Bill wanted in on it. He wanted to catch his wife with this well-heeled professor. Invitees got checked off at the front door, so Bill Smith wasn't going to get in that way. He turned left and walked across the trimmed lawn to reach the side of the building, Bill kept to the shadows and made it to the edge of the mansion, undetected. The cuckolded husband figured it best to wait a while, to give the party a chance to get going. Then he would make his move.

Operations were taking place up and down the UK, targeting illegal employment as well as other forms of immigration abuse. So far that day enforcement officers had arrested two hundred and thirty nine suspected immigration offenders in London, Durham, Manchester, Wales and Somerset. Immigration officers who were conducting the cull to deport those who had no right to be in the country questioned those charged as illegal migrants.

The sudden, brutal underground station raids had reactive migrant's rights groups accusing the Home Office of turning Britain into a hostile environment. They demanded an amnesty for all those there illegally. Activists claim officers targeted people of black or Asian appearance.

The underling who brought Clarice Bourne the latest news stood nervously as the Minister scrutinised the report. Then she said "Good." That was it. Just good. The hapless messenger thought, good could mean anything but didn't query it.

Clarice dismissed the messenger. Then, using her scrambler phone, she pressed a contact number, waited for a response, then said, "We can go to stage two now." Then she hung up. The recipient knew what she meant and would act accordingly.

Her PA came into the office. "You're wanted at Number 10, Home Secretary."

When the Master summoned, Clarice had to respond. "Rearrange my diary. Text me any priorities. Now get my driver," she snapped.

Her PA didn't take her boss's rudeness seriously. That was just how the old bag was.

Clarice didn't have time and couldn't be bothered with niceties. She had too many important things that needed her urgent attention. The sensitivities of others fell way down the list. Her most current bugbear was Dawn Lawrence, the mother of murdered teenager Stanley, who died tragically in a racist attack.

The West Indian-born Dawn, shortly to become a Labour MP, said, in a TV interview, "I'm sure there are illegal immigrants in Britain from a range of countries, yet the Immigration Department deliberately focussed on people of colour. I think racial profiling is coming into it."

Daniel Campbell looked up as the Home Secretary entered his office. "Good Morning Clarice. Thank you for dropping by."

He looked harried with a furrowed forehead. He gave his minister the latest copy of the Daily Mail, "I want you to find whoever leaked this."

She scanned the article in question. It made vague references to 10 Downing Street, a sex scandal, complete mess, great personal distress to innocent parties. Clarice said, "It's all pretty vague."

"Nevertheless it could do some damage."

"Are we dealing with a sex scandal, Prime Minister?"

"I was hoping you might know the answer to that."

"Nothing of that nature has landed on my desk."

"Damn it, Clarice! The media is linking this alleged sex scandal to number 10."

"It's probably just a gutter press rumour, Prime Minister. I wouldn't pay it any heed."

He looked at her frowning, "Find out about this nonsense and nip it in the bud before it careers out of control."

Yes, so your career doesn't spin out of control, she thought. "Right away Prime Minister."

Lord Lynsey discovered that the surname Bourne only occurred three times currently in British politics. Matthew Bourne, Conservative Member for Kensington. Tammy Bourne the under secretary for Health and Clarice Bourne the Home Secretary. So it was one of those three, Dayton mused. Knowing the way Diabolus worked, it would have to be the one who could do the most damage. This logic made Clarice, Dayton's prime suspect. It also made her the most difficult one to touch.

Chapter 27

Lady Lynsey knocked on her husband's study door, then entered. "Dayton, you haven't forgotten about tomorrow, have you?"

She always did that, told him what he hadn't forgotten, then queried it, "Oh, tomorrow! Some luncheon, I believe.

"It's a fundraiser to help our Betsy Cohen get into parliament. Grenville will organise the car for one sharp. Don't be late."

"No dear."

After she had gone Dayton Lynsey went back to his research. He picked up his phone, pressed the chosen contact. When he heard the woman's voice, he said, "I need someone who can access high profile dossiers. Get them to contact me. I'll be on the home number."

"I don't want this to another Major/Currie episode, Rodney," Daniel Campbell said, in private conference with the head of MI6.

Rodney Maddox knew that the PM was referring to the massive scandal in 2002 that revealed former Prime Minister John Major and former Parliament member Edwina Currie had a four-year affair in the late 1980s. "Well, Prime Minister the Mail has very carefully also noted that the relationship doesn't involve anyone serving in the Cabinet."

"What about the passage in the article saying for legal reasons, they avoided releasing any other significant details, Rodney. Well, I'll give you an important detail. I want the treacherous rat who is responsible for this damned mess severely punished. I don't care how you do it - but do it."

The late edition of the Mail scored another broadside. It followed up the previous article with 'Two or more middle-aged people connected to Number 10, not Cabinet members, are involved in a sex affair so scandalous that it would, blow out of the water any political agenda pushed forward by the Prime Minister in the next few months.' Rodney Maddox read the article and groaned. He hadn't a clue where to start the witch-hunt.

The Mail went on to say, 'As you might expect, Campbell hasn't addressed or even acknowledged the report, though it seems worth noting that recently he's been unusually forgetful. Last week, police officers had to rush 30 miles from Campbell's home in Downing Street to Gatwick Airport after the PM had realised he'd left his passport at home. Then again, this is the same guy who once accidentally left his eight-year-old daughter at a pub, so who knows how much the alleged sex scandal is to blame.'

As he was driven back to Vauxhall, Rodney contacted his intelligence team. "We need to find out who was privy to this current sex scandal expose, and I mean everybody. I want their files on my desk, pronto."

When Rodney Maddox got back to Six, the place was a hive of activity. He quickly got his team together, had a white board set up and got to work. "How many suspects so far?" he asked.

"One hundred and six, including a couple of drivers, sir."

"Okay, this is what we do. Sort out any with a known gripe against the Government."

"That would probably be all of them, sir," someone quipped.

"No fucking smart arse remarks. This matter is serious. Next to those, target suspects with expensive addictions or other financial burdens."

The smart arse was smart enough to button his lip.

"Next, sort out anyone who wants to bring this Government down."

While Rodney was trying to make sense of the onerous task he received a call from Dayton Lynsey. He couldn't believe the gall of the man. "Yes, Lynsey, what do you want?"

"To have a meet, old boy. Say 7.30 at the Sheridan Tea House. It's only just down from your castle. I'll make reservations."

"What the hell are you on about, man. I'm up to my eyes in ..."

Dayton headed him off. "Yes, the Daily Mail article - shocking. That's why I'm calling."

"What do you mean?"

"It's obvious old boy. All hands to man the pumps. I do have some useful contacts you know."

Rodney sighed, "I can't make it tonight." He tried regaining control of the situation.

"Come on Rodney; this is a national disaster. All our personal feelings aside. United we stand and all that."

"You're a bastard, Dayton."

"7:30 it is then."

The Sheridan was for those chaps who despair of the vulgarity of modern life and long wistfully for a more elegant and languid world. These good old chaps, are likely to idolise David Niven and Terry-Thomas and always wear a tie, even when shaving (with a straight razor, of course). Chap magazine was named after such chaps; it was the editors of that magazine who founded the first Sheridan Club.

This gentleman's club was, in fact, a huge, ancient, crumbling building filled with cigar smoke, stuffed leather armchairs and obsequious stewards bearing tumblers of whisky on trays. Dayton did not fit the mould at all. But he was very wealthy, and that tended to make other requirements null and void.

Dayton, sitting at his reserved table, drank whisky while waiting for his guest.

Rodney Maddox had never been inside the Tea House Theatre. It seemed quite pleasant until he set his eyes on Lord Dayton Lynsey. Being a bull of a man, people moved out of his way. He plonked his bulk down opposite Dayton.

"Hello Rodney," Dayton smiled. So glad you could make it, old boy. Nice to get out of the office, what."

How was Russia?" Rodney Maddox said, just to let Dayton know he had his spies out.

Dayton riposted, "If Six kept its eye on the ball, instead of nosing around in far off places, we probably wouldn't have to be eyeballing each other now."

Rodney quaffed his scotch. "You were seen with one of the directors of Ivraz Holdings."

"My, what big eyes you have."

"He was later found dead, in Gorky Park - a single shot to the back of his head. Very precise marksmanship."

Dayton wanted to leap up and knock the smirk off the Scot's face. But he held himself in check. "Water under the bridge, old boy. Now we have this juicy little bit of illicit sex in the halls of Government to contend with."

"What do you mean we. 'I' do, 'you' don't."

Dayton smiled, "I want a high profile dossier."

Rodney tucked into his Angus steak. "What makes you think I would even contemplate helping you with that?"

The English Lord leant forward, "Yuri Andropov told me something fascinating, just before a gunman murdered him. So red hot that he paid the ultimate price for telling me."

"What was it then?"

Dayton chuckled, "You must think I come cheap. Get me the dossier, and I will tell you who the traitor is."

"Traitor! Do you mean the person who leaked the scandal stuff to the Mail?"

Dayton nodded slowly, before digging into his Lobster Thermidor.

"How do I know I can trust you?"

Dayton winked, "Because, old boy, they are one and the same."

"What do you mean?"

"The person Andropov fingered is a Russian spy working deep within the bowels of HM Government."

Rodney needed to be a bit cagey. "So who's records are we talking about?"

Dayton felt uncomfortable discussing anything even remotely linked to the Soter Group, especially with Maddox. But he needed that dossier. "Clarice Bourne."

Rodney looked at Dayton as though the aristocrat had suddenly grown another head. "Clarice Bourne! No, absolute nonsense. She's the Home Secretary, for Christ's sake."

"A perfect position for a mole, wouldn't you say?"

Rodney glared at Dayton. "I don't know what sort of fucking game you're playing but ..."

"The sort that got Andropov murdered in Moscow. He gave me her name. Why the hell would he do that if it wasn't true?"

"No, I don't believe it!"

"Nevertheless, Rodney, The PM needs to know. So a word in his shell-like from you and he is at least prepared."

"You want me to tell Daniel his Home Secretary is a fucking Russian mole!"

"Well, I can't do it for you."

Maddox mopped his brow. Of course, it was all nonsense, but if there was some truth to it and he hadn't warned the PM it would be curtains for his career.

Bill Smith determined to meet the man who was having an affair with Millie. Sure, things hadn't been right in the bedroom department of late, but that was no reason to give up on twelve years of marriage.

Having gotten into the building through an unlocked side door, Bill checked to see if the coast was clear. He was in a long dark passage. Up ahead he could see the light escaping from under heavy doors. It was enough for Bill to find his way. A couple of times he had to shrink into the background when he heard voices or footsteps. Then he heard something that sent a shiver up his back. Strange chanting, a depressing dirge. Onward he pressed until he came to a slightly ajar door.

Peering closely, Bill got the surprise of his life, as he beheld a circle of people wearing ankle length black cloaks. They stood very still holding their masks. In the centre a blood-red cloaked figure sat upon a throne, flanked by three people in blue robes.

Bill froze back. What the hell was going on he wondered? Fearing he would soon be spotted, the author retreated into the dimness of the hallway and exited the mansion without detection. He hadn't spotted Millie among the members, but she could have been somewhere else in the sprawling mansion.

Bill hoped his wife wasn't there because some weirdness was going on at 'Winterdown'. Whatever his wife was involved in it was more than just some sordid affair.

As he drove home, Bill's mind was under siege from many thoughts. His writer's block melted away like ice as warm, creative juices began to surge. He wasn't sure what he felt, but it certainly wasn't jealousy. Well, it was in a way. He was jealous of the way his wife got invited into that curiously exotic elite. Bill had never been one for secret societies and dangerous rituals, but he wanted to know more about Winterdown and the strange goings-on taking place within. He figured the red-robed person was Professor Francisco Sonata

Bill's nerves were still jittery; he needed a stiffener to take the edge off. He stopped at Nightingales an all-night bar with live music, played by his African American friend Jazzy, who tickled the ivories in the background. During his music break, Jazzy came over to Bill. He sat down with his beer. "Man, you look like shit."

"Thanks, Jazzy, that makes me feel a whole lot better."

Jazzy shrugged, "You know me. I says it as I sees it. But seriously man you look like you seen a fucking ghost or something."

Bill took a deep breath. "I've just been over to Winterdown, that big old house down by the coast."

"Yeah, I know the place you mean. They have me over there to play at parties, from time to time."

Bill stared at Jazzy, wide-eyed. "You've been there?"

Jazzy grinned, "Don't look so surprised. I do get the occasional gig you know. Mind you that's a weird one. I have to play blindfolded."

"You're kidding. What's it like there?"

"Dunno man. As I say, the man covers up old Jazzy's eyes. But I tell you something. They got lots o' pretty girls there. Some of them come and sit on my lap." He winked, "And they ain't wearing much in the way of clothes if you know what I mean."

"Christ man, you must have been tempted to take off the blindfold."

"Those bastards would shoot me as soon as look at me if I did."

Bill said, "I've got to get in there, by the main entrance, as a guest."

"Why do you want to do that, man? That place is seriously twilight zone territory."

"My wife goes there."

"Millie? Shit man!"

"Precisely."

Jazzy, downed his beer. "Gotta get back to the ivories. But I might just be able to help." He grabbed a beer mat and jotted down a number. "Ring me tomorrow but not too early."

<http://gawker.com/mystery-sex-affair-stuns-uk-prime-ministers-office-sp-510949997>

<http://www.newsheridanclub.co.uk/about.htm>

Chapter 28

Dayton Lynsey sat chewing the fat with Maddie Frome, an old love of his life. They shared a morbid interest in the misdoings of the Rottafeller dynasty, but each for their reasons. Maddie, an amateur researcher into Illuminati family bloodlines, still enjoyed Dayton's company, whenever they were able to snatch a little time together.

She had not married and, apart from Mr Paws and Queen Jessica, her two Persian cats, she had no close family. There was her estranged brother, an English politician, but they seldom contacted each other.

Dayton enjoyed his visits to Cromer-on Sea, where Maddie lived. Her little cottage, on Cliff Drive, so different to the cold monolithic atmosphere of the family home, was a breath of fresh air for him. It gave him a chance to get away from the insanity and chaos of the world, if only for a few days. Dayton snatched these little windows of normality, whenever possible, to give him a sense of order, a haven in which the Diabolus could not intrude. For this reason, his visits to north Norfolk were entirely covert, unknown to even the Soter Group.

Weak sunlight sun forced its way through the clouds, its rays managing to reach Maddie's cottage. She and Dayton sat up in bed, drinking tea he had brewed. Maddie was his confidante. Although Dayton trusted his mistress not to breathe a word he was still careful in what he said. He hated the thought of the Diabolus Sect using her to get to him.

During their conversation, Maddie said, "Do you think The Rottafellers run Diabolus?"

Dayton sipped his tea. "I used to wonder that very thing, but now I believe it is the other way round. Diabolus uses families like the Rottafellers because being, corrupt they are more susceptible to be seduced by even greater corruption."

"I hadn't thought of it that way."

"Well, Diabolus is only interested in people who can bring about the most chaos. The more wealthy and powerful the person the more destruction they can cause."

She nodded slowly. "I guess that makes sense. But I sense you came here for something specific."

"Apart from getting some of your sweet love, you mean?"

She laughed, emitting a tinkly sound he found endearing. "Yes, apart from that."

He grinned, "It's a beautiful day out there if we discount the wind. Let's walk on the beach, and I will tell you what's on my mind."

She jumped out of bed.

He laughed "I didn't mean this very second. I still have my tea to finish."

One of Maddie's favourite local views was the Cromer skyline, from an easterly direction. She took Dayton to a good vantage point where swathed in thick sweaters and windcheaters; they looked out at the town and beach.

"I can see why it's appealing to you,"

Maddie smiled, "I'm not the only who finds it appealing, you know. Tolkien was of the same opinion."

"Tolkien of the Hobbit fame?" he said.

"Of course. Cromer has its claim to fame you know."

"I knew that he had once frequented Norwich but, are you telling me the creator of Middle Earth once trod the streets and beaches of Cromer?"

"Yes, it's true. You can check it if you like, on page 49 of Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond's Definitive Chronology of Tolkien's life. She wrote that later in 1914 Tolkien visited Cromer in Norfolk, a seaside resort on the north-east coast of England.

"Hardly the north-east, I would have thought," Dayton said, as they began walking to the beach.

Maddie put her arm through Dayton's, as they trudged along on the damp sand, among the washed up shells now sparsely scattered at the high tide line. The beach was barren compared to when Dayton had visited the Norfolk Coast when he was a lad. Pollution from oil rigs and spilt toxic death had contaminated the North Sea and killed off the marine life.

As they walked, Maddie said, "So what's on your mind?"

"The problem with Diabolus is that it doesn't appear to have any centre."

"No central leadership?"

"Precisely. We cut one head off, and two more appear in other places. No matter how many conquests we markup, we're still left chasing our tails."

"Dayton, I think we're looking at this all wrong."

"What do you mean?"

"You're looking for order where there is none. Diabolus doesn't play by standard rules. In fact, it doesn't seem to play by any rules."

"But they communicate with their minions, so there has to be some element of order in how they do things."

Maddie grinned. "Maybe you should ring David Rottafeller and ask him."

"Very funny." Then he said, "I wish I could, but we're not permitted to approach the Rottafellers directly."

"Who makes those rules?"

Dayton stopped. He'd never mentioned the Soter Group to Maddie. Now he was getting perilously close to doing so. "Let's just say it's a long-standing arrangement that certain people turn a blind eye towards us as long as we turn a blind eye towards certain people."

Maddie looked at Dayton. "You couldn't be more cryptic if you tried."

"Let's just say we can touch those manipulated by the Rottafeller dynasty, but not the family itself. But we need to find out who is pulling their strings. Is it Diabolus, or are there still other layers to be uncovered?"

She frowned, "I have never understood why such evil people are considered sacrosanct by your people."

"A couple of reasons, Maddie. One, they are so powerful and influential in this world that to bring them down, if it were possible, would cause a complete crash in the financial system. And Two, They are a visible presence of Diabolus. It's a case of the better the devil you know, sort of thing."

"I see," she said, "So how can I help?"

"Who can we get to that is very close to the Rottafellers without actually being family?"

"To what end?" she asked, narrowly avoiding wet feet by jumping back from a wave rolling onto the shore.

"To find out who is trying to get them to get the Russians to hold Britain over a barrel."

Maddie stared at him. "Is that what's happening?"

"I believe so, but I can't say any more about it."

"I see. Well, Dayton, if you don't have to rush back to the family seat, we can do some research back at my place."

"Sound's like a plan. And, as far as I'm concerned this is the most important thing I could be doing at this time."

Back at Maddie's place Dayton's research had got the pair up to the horrific 30 Years' War in Germany. Maddie read:

"Although the Roman Church did not come out well, the Jesuits were not about to give up. Their next attack came from within, aimed at political and financial penetration, to destroy the Protestant and freedom-loving nations which had escaped Rome's grasp. The Wrathschild Bank (founded 1742) that worked so closely with the Rottafellers in later years was part of this conspiracy."

"For this exercise, let's stick with the Rottafellers."

"Okay, Dayton. Now here we have:

"John T Rottafeller was 22 when the Civil War began. Already wealthy, ..." she paused, then said, "probably with Diabolus funding ..."

Dayton interjected, "Mayer Wrathschild controlled the National City Bank of Cleveland, which gave him his first loan, I do believe."

"Yes, and he started off in the alcohol industry."

"That's right," The Soter agent added, "Rottafeller had been watching a guy called Flagler, who he shrewdly perceived had married the niece of a man who had made a great fortune. This man, Stephen V. Harkness owned a distillery near Monroeville, Ohio."

Maddie yawned, "So how did Rottafeller get involved?"

"Are you tired, my love?"

"No, let's carry on with this."

"Okay, toward the end of the war, the government was searching for values to tax. Naturally, it targeted whisky. John Sherman, aware that the government was going to tax alcohol heavily, told Harkness, who proceeded to buy every barrel of whisky available. Harkness had a huge supply of untaxed alcohol which he sold at high prices, making him an ample fortune in Cleveland."

"And Rottafeller knew of this adventure."

"Precisely," Dayton agreed. "There's Flagler, Harkness' nephew by marriage, at Rottafeller's door. Here was an entrée to Harkness' treasure chest'."

"Hm, It doesn't get us any further. What about the family's little venture into oil?"

Sipping water, Lord Lynsey said, "As you know the Morgans and Rottafellers formed the first giant trusts or monopolies. The Rottafellers created an oil monopoly completely dominating the industry. The invention of the internal combustion engine gave them a stranglehold in America. The Rottafellers, rather than Instead of conserving oil and finding an alternative to the wasteful gasoline engine, encouraged waste and consumption of a non-renewable resource."

Maddie tucked her legs under her. "Well, waste of a non-renewable resource means two things. One it's going to run out and, two, folks are not going to be able to do without it. All of which leads to chaos and breakdown, two of the Diabolus Sect's favourite things."

Then Dayton rubbed his beard. "So it's highly likely that the Diabolus had their hooks into the Rottafellers by that time."

"Yes, Dayton, I agree with you," Maddie said.

He continued, "As a member of the board of directors of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, William Rottafeller had become friends with James Stickman, the president of the National City Bank. Stickman, inspired by the efficiency of the Star Oil management, and of its hierarchic and centralised government, bought Star Oil stock and became one of the family."

Dayton beamed. "Stop there. We might have something. Make a note to follow the progress of Stickman."

"Good idea," she agreed, setting up a new folder marked Stickman. Then she said, "As we are well aware, the US government does NOT issue the US paper money. The Rottafeller's FRB issues the Federal Reserve Notes

Dayton added, "We know it's a private bank, not part of the US government. We also know it has the power to create money out of nothing and with access to unlimited credit has financed all the wars of the 20th century. And it will fund the coming third world war."

Maddie frowned, "It's the perfect weapon for Diabolus. If they gain control of those who control the money, they control the world."

Which they can then destroy at will!" Dayton added, "The key is to find out who is pulling their strings."

She sighed, "How long have your people tried to do that?"

"A very long time, but nobody has had the gumption to go after the Rottafellers."

"But I thought ..."

"Maddie, this is the end game. Do you think I'm going to let Diabolus have the final victory because of protocol?"

She snuggled up to Dayton. "I'm scared. if you go against the rules, you'll be an unarmed sitting duck targeted by both sides."

He fixed her with his gaze. "It has to be this way, dear Maddie. I cannot sit still and watch Diabolus systematically destroy all humanity has built."

Back at Lynsey Hall Dayton was even more preoccupied than before. He shut himself in his study, with explicit orders not to be disturbed. He set up a large whiteboard, upon which he scribbled his thoughts.

He started with: William Rottafeller's home on Jekyll Island, Georgia where he secured the 3rd Bank's secret charter. He committed the greatest theft of the people's money in all the long history of crime.

Abbott's life became much simpler. He was getting used to the chattering and hollering of monkeys, croaking frogs and the purring sounds of toucans. There were a lot of snakes but, being an Aussie; he was used to them. With the growing calmness, time began to mean something different to him. Time, in the Western mind, was about meeting deadlines. Westerners tried making time fit in with their agendas, instead of them fitting in with time.

Abbott was getting used to the idea of not measuring time according to the devices that tell the time. But rather to let time measure him and for him to expand his consciousness according to his measurement of it.

Filipe came from the basic shower (a plastic bucket with holes in it, attached to a pole) his hair still wet. "What a beautiful day," he said, going into the camp kitchen. "Any of your tortillas left," he asked.

"Sure, I left some for you." Abbott said, "I've been thinking about this transition business and why people aren't registering it."

"Oh," Filipe said, helping himself to breakfast.

"I reckon it probably started back in the 1960s and had been gradually growing in intensity ever since, with a few significant leaps thrown in for good measure."

The Mayan smiled, "Tell me more."

"Well, one of these leaps took place during an unusually powerful alignment of planets in May of 1981,"

Filipe added, "During that period this light energy got turned up several notches. Then it was cranked up several more during the Harmonic Convergence in August of 1987."

Abbott said, "This is to do with the 2012 predictions - right?"

"Many of the 2012 predictions can be traced back to the mysterious end of the ancient Mayan calendar, which measured time in vast cycles, based on Earth's position within our galaxy and our galaxy's movement through the cosmos."

"Do you know the timeline?"

Filipe answered, "No, I don't claim to know what the timeline is. I can only speak of the process I have been experiencing and observing over the past several decades."

"Several decades! You've been onto this for a long time."

Filipe started preparing his second tortilla. "I don't usually tell people this, but I am an Elder and Day Keeper of the Maya."

Abbott grabbed himself a tortilla and filled it with some mince and beans he had warmed up.

Filipe took a bite and turned on the gas to heat some water. "The evolutionary light used to come in occasional waves. Each time one of these waves of light poured into our atmosphere, the planet's vibration was raised to a higher frequency."

"Is that why we feel weird at times, and more frequently these days?"

"When the Earth is elevated energetically, we humans are taken along for the ride. If we don't understand what's happening the changes can disorientate us."

"So we have to acclimatise to this heightened vibration." The initiate said, biting into his breakfast. The mentor said, "Currently, the effects have intensified, and we are getting little respite between waves to catch our breath and adjust. "

"Are we that insensitive that we are not aware of the effect this evolutionary energy is having on us as individuals?"

Filipe poured himself black coffee. "I can only speak for myself as you can only speak for yourself." Filipe indicated around him. "Here only you and I exist. You are not responsible for anyone else."

Changing the subject, Abbott said, "So what are we going to do today?"

Filipe grinned, "You're using measurements again." Then, filling another tortilla, he said, "Miguel and Anita sent a message to say they may be back today."

The Venetians began wearing masks and other disguises during the Carnival season because the anonymity suspended the rigid social order. Under cover of namelessness, Venetians freed up their inhibitions without fear of reprisal. Masqued balls were so popular that the Mascherano (mask makers) became a venerated guild in Venetian society.

As more people flocked to the city, each year Carnivals became increasingly chaotic and debauched as the years progressed until their decline in the 18th Century.

The gatherings at 'Winterdown' adopted such principles so the massively rich and famous could engage in various forms of debauchery with anonymity.

Bill Smith needed to know if one of those behind the mask, was Millie. The ID and instruction provided by Jazzy held up, and Bill entered Winterdown through the guest entrance. The mansion's decor had changed since his covert visit. The garish Christmas lights and tacky decorations, he had seen before, had disappeared. Also, instead of the incessant chatter between the wealthy and famous looking for some fix, the place was still and silent.

The masked revellers of before, moved quietly around, almost in slow motion. It was like a monastic order that had taken a vow of silence. The creepy masks in the half light were disturbing. An odd song played in the background. The sound, a Romanian Orthodox Liturgy was playing backwards.

Bill knew that the reversal or inversion of sacred objects was typical of black magic and satanic rituals. Tentatively he followed the sound and came across a scene of widespread fornication, as naked and partially clothed bodies groaned and screamed in pain and ecstasy.

Then Bill saw Jazzy playing the song Backwards Priest, It made no sense to Bill, but the people engaged in the orgiastic ritual seemed to enjoy the distorted music. Bill saw Jazzy. The pianist was blindfolded because the profane could not witness the occult rituals of the elite. Incense sticks were burning with the intense, pervasive aroma of sandalwood adding to the Kama Sutra atmosphere.

Bill felt distinctly odd, yet sexually stimulated, responding to the lascivious scenes, as he walked around the house, oddly, unchallenged. As Bill passed a partially open door tantric yoga and its Western occultism derivative, sex magick was taking place. Then he followed masked guests gravitating to a big hall. He felt anxious but also strangely exhilarated.

A ritual was underway with the High Priest, dressed in red, performing a ceremonial routine. He was at the centre of a magic circle formed by young women, beta kitten slaves, conditioned by MK Ultra treatment.

One of the beta slaves went surreptitiously up to Bill. She whispered in his ear, "You must leave the house now. They know you are an impostor. Please leave before they catch you."

"Who are you?" he asked breathlessly.

"It doesn't matter. You must go. You don't belong here."

Bill, confused, backed out of the large chamber. However, two of the High Priest's minions prevented his departure.

One of the masked women got between him and the security guards, saying halt with her hand. "He made a mistake. He knows nothing. Let him go."

The guard pushed her aside and restrained Bill. Two other masked men fell in beside him.

Turning to the High Priest, she enjoined, "Great Lord let me redeem you," she said, with great drama.

The Priest replied, "Are you sure you understand what you're taking upon yourself by doing this?"

She knew his words held a threat, implying she would repeatedly be abused and then sacrificed. She didn't know how Bill had found the place, but she couldn't stand by while he was beaten and eaten." I take full responsibility for this blasphemy."

The next day, Bill discovered the real power of Diabolus, the secret society he had infiltrated. All the time Bill was married to Millie, certain aspects of her past remained undisclosed, even to her. From a young age, she had been in the Diabolus Sect's clutches. Subjected to childhood sexual abuse and conditioned to have a slave mentality, Millie had grown up blocking the horror of her childhood from her conscious mind. As an emotionally troubled teenager and she was sent away to undergo 'treatments' (a code word for MK-Ultra Programming).

Later, Millie had 'important' friends in the fashion and entertainment worlds. Before meeting Bill Smith, she had an affair with a renowned fashion designer, who, although gay, was totally wowed by her private, seductive solo performances. This seductiveness was the typical behaviour of a beta

kitten. Now they controlled her again, and her body was being used by the elite in their occult rituals.

As a result of warning her husband, Professor Sonata thought she had gone rogue. There was only one fate for beta slaves who become confused about their submissiveness - extermination. Millie was escorted and supported to her hotel room by two men. She giggled incoherently, drugged and dissociated? Like 'real life' elite sacrifices, taking an overdose was cited as the cause of her death.

Bill read about Millie's death in the paper. He was not sure it was her. Bill informed the police, made a statement and was taken to the morgue to identify her.

"Is that your wife?" the attendant asked.

Despite his eyes clouding over, Bill said, in a steady voice, "Yes."

"My condolences on your loss, Mr Smith. You can spend some time alone with her if you like."

Bill didn't like. It was all too surreal for him. He had to get out of the place before cops came and started questioning him. Right after Bill left the morgue, Sonata called him. Bill said, "Who are you?"

"Professor Sonata. I read about your tragic news."

"Tragic news!"

The death of your wife."

Bill had only just identified her remains so how the hell did he know that? "Oh, yes."

"We were friends, you know, so I recognised her picture." He paused, then he said, "I'd like to invite you to Winterdown."

Bill felt like a feather could have floored him. "Er, yes. When?"

"Today at 2 pm."

After the call, Bill thought back to the woman trying to save his life. His wife had been present at the orgy. He knew the masked woman who came to his aid, was Millie. It had to be! A cold chill shot up his spine. She had paid for her warning with her life. Then it hit him like icy water on his face. The professor knew Millie was dead because he had killed her! Bill determined to find out the truth, once he met with the teacher.

That afternoon Bill met Diablo formally, in the pool room. The bereaved husband felt distinctly uncomfortable in the professor's presence.

Diablo, charming when he wanted to be, said, "There are many ways I can play this. I could ask you why you were intruding last night. I could ask who got you your ID to pass through my security. I could ask you what you made of our ceremony last night. But I'm going to ask you something else, Bill. "Do you want to be initiated into the circle?"

Bill hadn't known what to expect, but the invitation completely took him by surprise. He never asked if his wife got killed as punishment for helping him. The widower didn't even ask any

questions about the initiation. He never even wondered why the Professor's had the gatherings. He only said, "Yes."

There was no mention, by either party, about Millie, despite the subject hovering in the room. Bill Smith had just lost his wife yet, instead of being assailed with a cocktail of conflicting emotions he had calmly agreed to become part of an organisation, that may well have been responsible for his wife's death, without question. It made no sense to him at all. By the same token, It made perfect sense.

Bill Smith was in a daze all afternoon. He had practical things to attend to, funeral arrangements at the top of the list. The only thing that seemed real to him was the initiation. The limousine picked him up at 6 pm to take him to Winterdown.

Upon arrival, a hostess showed Bill to his suite, where two stunningly beautiful beta slaves were ordered to do his every bidding. He couldn't believe it. It was like all his sexual fantasies had manifested in one package. One of them, a young blonde girl called Jasmine, introduced herself, saying "We are here to please you."

Bill kissed them both on the cheek. "You girls are lovely, and you smell delicious."

They giggled, "Thank you, sir."

The effect of their perfume and their hot young bodies was sensational. Bill abandoned any pretence of propriety and kissed them both on the neck while touching them through their clothes. He traced his fingers all over their bodies before he even offered them a drink, from the well-stocked fridge. The girls appeared to enjoy Bill's attentiveness though and didn't mind his exuberant behaviour. Jasmine had a distinctly mischievous look about her. Alia was different; she was naturally relaxed and light-hearted. But together in the privacy of Bill's suite, they were simmering sex bombs, attentive to his needs, like playful kittens.

Alia looked at Bill wantonly, as he gave her a lingering French kiss. He kissed Jasmine equally passionately. Incredibly turned on at the thought of having both the gorgeous babes at once had him delirious with pleasure. Bill undressed the pair of eighteen year olds down to bra and panties, then tugged down his boxers, causing his erect penis to spring to attention.

Both girls thought it hilarious, and Bill laughed along with them. Jasmine's quiet composure turned into squeals and screams of delight. Bill had to slow the pace to prolong their pleasure. Bill thought he had good staying power but the effect of the two of them heightened his libido. Having just experienced the best sex of his life by far, Bill lay down exhausted,

Jasmine then filled the en suite Jacuzzi, and the three of them soaped each other while enjoying the soothing jets of water. The girls got out first. They each kissed Bill then they left.

At 9 pm, two of Diablo's men fetched Bill, blindfolded him and escorted him to the main hall.

There, Cloaked in red, the High Priest sat upon on a throne, featuring a double-headed eagle topped by a crown. Unbeknown to Bill Smith it was a most ancient and prominent symbol of Freemasonry.

Somebody removed his blindfold and pushed him roughly to his knees.

The red-cloaked man said, "You are nothing! But, you can become something. If you show us, you have something to offer that benefits Diabolus, the Prince of Darkness, The destroyer of worlds. Then I can let you become something." Looking down at Bill, he said, "Do you want to be nothing, or something, Mr Smith?"

"I want to be something."

"What do you want to be?"

Bill thought about the question. "I want to be free."

Sonata laughed. "Good answer. But what do you have to offer?"

Hell, this was a secret society. "I offer you my obeisance."

Francisco Sonata was highly amused. Turning to his acolytes, he sneered, "This fool has no idea, yet he makes pronouncements, as though he understands." Staring down at the trembling man kneeling before him, he said, "You are not ready for initiation. First, you will be my servant. You will do whatever I tell you to do when I want you to do it, day or night. Do you agree?"

Bill's wife was dead, and his life was going nowhere. Feeling compelled, he uttered, "Yes, I agree."

So be it, Philux, for that is your new name."

Rome, Rockefeller, the U.S. and Standard Oil. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://reformation.org/rockefeller.pdf>

How The Consciousness Shift May Be Affecting You : In5D ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://in5d.com/how-the-consciousness-shift-may-be-affecting-you/>

Chapter 29

Two tough looking men met Salvatore Lucini at the entrance of the Venetian shop. They frisked him for hidden weapons. Satisfied he was unarmed, they led him inside to meet a man known simply as 'the Merchant'. Lucini, used to dealing with thieves and scoundrels, found the Merchant, a middle-aged man greying at the temples, to be pleasant by comparison. Salvatore said, "Let me see what you have."

The Merchant took the covering cloth off the three items.

The Vatican agent scrutinised the relics using a jewellers loupe. The Mark of Cain artefacts were an extraordinary find, linking the legends of Cain, Solomon, Christ, and Lucifer. He looked up at the seller. "Where did you get these?"

"In Switzerland," was all the seller offered. " Then he said, "My client thought we would give the Vatican first refusal."

"Of course." He looked closely at the two plates and the chalice on offer. "I will need to take them to Rome, to have them scrutinised carefully."

"Certainly. Just leave 10 million euro in surety."

Salvatore looked at him aghast. "That is an awful lot of money."

"They are worth an awful lot of money," shop owner stated.

The friar said, "Of course. It will take a few days to arrange."

"The Merchant said, "You have one week Salvatore before I offer it to the next collector in line."

"Three days at the most."

"Let me know when you are ready, and I will provide the account details."

Salvatore Lucini felt empowered by the fact that he represented the Vatican, the pinnacle of Roman Catholicism, the richest of the rich, the wealthiest institution on earth. As a friar, he often pondered the paradox of the relationship between Christ and the Church. The Vatican ruling in the name of the itinerant preacher was top heavy with riches, yet Jesus had not even a pillow to rest his head.

The wealth of the Papacy, comprising the combined might of the most redoubtable financial trusts made it the most wealthy global corporation in the world. So ten million euro as a deposit was nothing. But Friar Lucini knew how to play these dealers. He seriously doubted the Merchant of Venice even had a second choice lined up. But he was happy to play along with the dirty little thief, for now anyhow.

The question of Christ's relationship to the Church that prayed and preyed in his name also intrigued Tom Graham. It was a matter that had echoed along the dark corridors of history for almost 2,000 years; a question that had puzzled, bewildered and angered in turn untold multitudes from the first centuries to the present day. This startling contradiction of the vast riches of the Roman Catholic Church with the direct teaching of Christ, concerning their unambiguous rejection, is too glaring to be by-passed, tolerated or ignored by even the most indifferent of believers.

Catholics worldwide accept this hypocrisy; mostly without question. Church dogma had so thoroughly conditioned the flock that the greed and avarice of the Papacy continue unabated and unnoticed. Soon it would add to its trove the 'Cain' relics. The items would pass through many hands, so that by the time the Vatican attained them the Church could, plausibly, say it never knew they were stolen and was unaware that people got murdered in the commission of the crime. Not that Anybody would ever question the Church about such things.

Tom Graham strolled around the crowded exhibition. The Vatican Museum of Contemporary Art was celebrating its first 40 years. But that wasn't the archaeologist's reason for absconding from Geneva, to be there. Tom was there, after information, from Paul Cosimo, the museum director, whom he knew from a previous dig. He pushed his way through the hustle and bustle of visitors, to where the Director stood to talk to members of the media.

Tom heard him say, "On June 23, 1973, the then Pope Paul VI opened the doors of this Museum, which houses works of both Michelangelo and Raphael, to contemporary masters. Here we are inaugurating the new Collection of Modern Religious paintings dedicated to the art of the 1900s, which now consists of over 8,000 works. For this special anniversary, all visitors to the Museums will receive a bilingual brochure by Francesca Boschetti."

As soon as he could, Paul Cosimo got away from the media and greeted Tom. They found a quiet place to talk, in the director's office. "How are you my friend," Paul asked, genuinely concerned.

"It's been tough, what with the asylum and the police. The only thing that has kept me focused is finding out what happened to the artefacts."

"Do you have images of them?"

"We were attacked before I had a chance to record them. I did manage to get a few digital shots, though."

"Let me see them."

Tom handed him the camera, pointing out how to operate it.

Paul looked at the images, then looked up, "Extraordinary. Quite a find."

"Quite a loss, I'm afraid." Tom looked at Paul. "Assuming that the Church would want such items in its collection, who is likely to act as the agent for the Vatican."

Paul looked at him sternly. "The Church does not deal in stolen contraband."

"Of course not, Paul. But what if the Church thought it was a legitimate transaction, who would check out the veracity of the find?"

"My guess would be Friar Salvatore Lucini. He's the Vatican expert in such matters."

"I need to speak with him."

Paul laughed, "I doubt he will even talk to me about it. But I can try."

Dr Lynne Becker waited for the applause to die down. Then she said, "The demands of the machine are insatiable. Once upon a time machines made life easier for us. But we so loved the mechanical monsters that we became their passive slaves. We give up our will, our consciousness, our savvy to the mechanisms we so love to hate. Humans are asleep, subject to the will of Hypnos. However, the risk involved in shaking people out of their comatose state, the result of mechanised knowledge is like waking a sleepwalker as they are about to wander near a cliff. Or to prevent a person from being hit by a car by throwing them to the ground. They will dislike the necessary aggressive measures employed, but they will be alive. We have had university professors threatened with the loss of their positions for less than this."

More applause.

Lynne looked at the members of BBB (Brisbane Business Breakfast) "So if we don't want to be taken over by robots, what are we to do? "

Someone in the audience spoke up. "Take over the robots."

When the sniggering died down, Lynne continued. "That's not as stupid as it sounds. But we take over the robots not by defeating them in some computer game -like scenario. No, we take them over by assimilating with their qualities that enhance us as trans-human beings. We have used the word 'mechanised' as though it is a negative expression.

This word is no longer used to describe the negative results of industrialisation. Instead, we have 'systems'. Systems don't have negative connotations associated with them. They represent something positive - a herald of a new and better world."

"The brave new world," someone said.

"A brave new world is better than a quivering, shaking old world that has no real solutions. The framework of our society has become weak and so is no longer able to support the picture it holds. A picture of health, wealth and stealth. Our world needs reframing. And in this re-framing, we all need systems. And so does the government, to spy and repel threats to its national security. The more systems, the better. Indeed, the thrust of the sciences is: life itself is an interlocked system."

She stopped for a sip of water.

Continuing, she said, "People rise, saying this is a form of indoctrination, and they would be correct. But I ask you this. Would you rather be working on the production line or managing it? Already China is way ahead of Australia. For example, Step into the factory of Chinese SUV and truck maker Great Wall Motors, and it's easy to forget you're in the world's most populous country.

Swiss-made robots pivot and plunge, stamping metal door frames and soldering them to the skeletal vehicle bodies of a mini-SUV called the Haval M4. You'll find that the blue-smocked workers in yellow hard hats are few and far between in Great Wall's largest factory complex. Ladies and gentlemen, the writing, is on the wall and soon it will be written by robots."

There was huge applause as Lynne Becker left the stage.

Ulysses was clapping louder than anybody. He walked amongst the tables until he reached her.

Surprised, she said, "Ulysses, what the heck are you doing here?"

"To hear your talk, like everyone else, I guess. That and invite you to lunch."

She checked her watch. "I have time for a quick coffee. Then it's back to the grindstone launching my new book 'Robert the Robot'."

"Where are you launching it - in kindergarten?"

She playfully punched him in the ribs. "No you bastard."

They went to the Riverside Hotel South Bank, where Lynne was staying. Located within the South Bank cultural precinct: The Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre; Queensland Performing Arts Centre; Museum, Art Galleries; and Lyric Theatre.

The 4-star hotel was just a few minutes walk from where she had delivered her talk that morning. She took Ulysses through to the restaurant, where they helped themselves to coffee.

"I'm surprised you wanted to see me after I delivered that bombshell," Lynne said, buttering some toast.

"At the time, I thought you were just a cold, calculating bitch but it didn't last long."

"Charming! And what do you feel about me now, Dr Covington?"

"I don't know. A hot bitch, maybe."

She felt a slight stir between her legs. "I've got a busy schedule. I don't think I can fit you in" she smiled.

He grinned lasciviously, "Oh, I think I could fit very nicely. Besides, I'm taking you out on the town tonight."

"Aren't you being just a little presumptuous?"

"Absolutely. Besides, you might like to know about my meeting with Barney Cormack."

"What, since DARPA dropped you?"

He grinned, "I can only divulge such things as pillow talk."

They were interrupted by his phone ringing. "Hullo, Ulysses here."

"Hi, Edward Sloan here, I have just received a visit from the police. There was some guy found dead. They somehow linked his death to us."

"To us! What the hell are you talking about?" Ulysses asked, unable to grasp the situation.

"The Guy was one of our test cases. His name was Olivier Leroy. They think he took an overdose. They want to speak to you."

"Christ man, tell them I'll get back to them as soon as possible."

"That's not sufficient, Ulysses. They are coming to see you this afternoon."

"Today! Look, phone them and tell them I am not available until Monday."

"Ulysses, they can make thing very awkward for us. I think it would be best if you got back here ASAP."

He turned to Lynne. "It's the office. I won't be able to do lunch. How about I meet you here, say around 7."

"You can take a chance, but I don't promise anything."

The Vatican Billions - taroscopes.com. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://taroscopes.com/othersites/germanophobia/books/VB.pdf>

The March of Robots Into Chinese Factories - Bloomberg. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-11-29/the-march-of-robots-into-chin>

Chapter 30

The Salama Valley was a sight for sore eyes, aching back, blistered feet and burned skin. But despite his physical discomforts, Abbott was in good spirits. As Abbott and Filipe walked down the muddy track to the town, the journalist was feeling relaxed and more alive than he had felt for a long time. As they reached the department of Baja Verapaz, the town was quiet. The market had closed, and hardly anybody was around.

Abbott had an eerie feeling as though it was some portent concerning the Prof. He was old and sick. Old, sick people died. It was a fact of life. As he walked to Filipe's home, Abbott was silent, but his thoughts were deafening. He steeled himself for the worst.

Maria was there to meet them. The look on her face told Abbott the news was not good. Filipe murmured, "Did he pass peacefully?"

She nodded, "He was dead when I arrived here today. I did not know what to do so I left him in bed."

Filipe put his arm around her shoulders, comforting her. "You did well, thank you, Maria. I will make all the necessary arrangements."

She said, "He was a good man." She wiped a tear from her eyes. "He is with the Lord now, safe and at peace." Then she left. But before she reached the door she turned. Handing a letter to Abbott, she said, "He wrote this to you."

Abbott sat down in Filipe's kitchen and looked at the letter. It read:

'Dear Abbott, When you receive this, I will have left this mortal world. There are things you must do. They may not be easy, and you may not want to do them, but you will find a way - your way. I have enclosed instructions for you to meet with a man to help you locate the key. You must not show or talk about this to anyone else - even Filipe. I entrust you with this sacred quest, not because I want to but because I have to. These instructions will make more sense later. But for now, you will need the key to enter Atlantis. Once there you will be able to help. But beware of The Diabolus Sect. It comes in many and multiple forms to bring about chaos and disaster. It could be anybody so do not let anyone know about your quest, except the guide who will help you. If Diabolus accesses Atlantis, then all is lost. For the next part of your initiation, you have to go to Atienza in Spain, where you will meet Hassan Shamsi, your guide.

May the heavens protect you

Harold A Scholfield (the Prof)'

Abbott just sat there, his hands returning the letter to the envelope, unconsciously.

"What's the matter?" Filipe asked.

"Er, uh, I have to go to Spain," Abbott responded, in a daze.

Whether to gain some inspiration, make some sense of the world or to achieve some connection with the ancient wisdom, Dayton Lynsey would sometimes gaze upon the statues of gods and philosophers dotted around his magnificent gardens. On this particular occasion, he was staring at Plato, his favourite philosopher. The only person to give a detailed description of the Atlantean civilisation, Plato, unknowingly, instilled in our minds, the greatest of mysteries.

In Timaeus, Critias told Plato about Atlantis. Dayton had paraphrased what Plato wrote, on a plaque, near the statue:

Originally the gods shared the world among themselves, with each becoming the distinct deity of their allotment. Each established therein temples to themselves ordained a priesthood and constituted a form of sacrifice. Poseidon received the sea and the island continent of Atlantis. It had a mountain at its centre, the home of three earth-born beings; Evenor; his wife, Leucipe; and their only daughter, Cleito. Following the sudden demise of her parents, Poseidon wooed the beautiful

maiden and begat by her five pairs of male children. Poseidon shared his continent among them. Atlas, the eldest, he made supervisor over the other nine. Poseidon named island Atlantis and the surrounding sea the Atlantic in honour of Atlas.

Before his children were born Poseidon shaped the continent into concentric areas of land and water, perfect in their geometry: Two areas of land and three of water surrounded the central island, which Poseidon irrigated with two springs: one warm, the other cold.

He was interrupted from his reverie by a phone call. "Hello, Dayton Lynsey here."

An elderly voice said, "Joshua Stickman, Lord Lynsey, I am calling you in response to your email message. I don't know how you got my private details. However, I have some sympathies with what you are talking about, and I may be able to help. But you will have to come here, as I don't travel long distances these days."

"Excellent. Let me make a note of your details.

"Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Eugene, Oregon."

"Okay, got that."

"I do not promise you anything, mind."

"I look forward to making your acquaintance, Mr Stickman."

Dayton realised he could be walking into a trap. Diabolus agents were getting closer to him. His meeting with Joshua Stickman could be a gift to them. But if the retired banker was genuine the information could be priceless. With this in mind, he went back to his study, to look at Joshua Stickman's background. Dayton, a stickler for detail, had looked over the Stickman file before.

The man inherited a banking empire from his father; he was a great supporter of the arts. Stickman was a close friend of the Rottafellers, but not since the banker had retired. Something happened between them and for whatever reason he had shunned them for the last few years.

Dayton looked up and said, to his empty study, "I have to do this."

Rodney Maddox did not trust Lord Lynsey, and he did not fancy spying on the Home Secretary. But, no matter how he looked at it, he could not find any reason for Lynsey to mislead him. What could Dayton gain by sending him on a wild and dangerous goose chase? But if he pulled her file she would get to know about it, and he would find himself facing some awkward questions.

He called two of his most trusted and loyal agents into his office. Having gotten over the initial shock about whom they were targeting, one of them was assigned to go through her phone records. The other had the task of fine tooth combing her background. The MI6 agents were sworn not to breathe a word of their covert operation outside Rodney's office. Having delegated these jobs, he was ready to carry out his part of 'operation home-sweet-home' by checking her emails, bank records, purchases, etc.

There were things that Clarice Bourne had managed to keep hidden about her life, before becoming a Member of Parliament. One thing she had deeply buried was her role, as a Labour Party activist, in an elaborate plot to entrap a female MI6 officer working undercover behind the Iron Curtain.

Under the name Cynthia Roberts, codenamed Agent Hammer, she was ordered, by her handlers, to target the woman listed as a diplomat at the British Embassy in Prague. Clarice, owing to her previous undercover work, had a personal interest in the British Court of Appeal that had recently ruled that blanket Criminal Records Checks were 'not compatible' with sections of the Human Rights Act.

In response to this ruling, both Clarice Bourne and the Secretary of State for Justice, Chris Gray, made an application to appeal against the decision. The original draft decision came to light after the case of a 21-year-old man who had failed at a job application due to a criminal records check, which had disclosed convictions for theft from ten years previous, when he was just 11 years old. This intervention by Gray and Bourne had the Supreme Court temporarily suspend the Court of Appeal's Judgement.

The MI6 agent contacted the 'Security Watchdog' to access the 'Standard and Enhanced' DBS disclosures concerning Clark Bourne. These would show all convictions as relevant to the level of the applied for disclosure.

The security officer handling the case felt very uneasy and wanted to check with their superior regarding protocol in such delicate matters. Correctional officers were warned that any disclosure was in contravention of the Official Secrets Act, had to be reported. After getting the nod from the head of the Security Watchdog, the police complied with MI6's directive. The report showed that Clark Bourne, as a Labour Activist had long before becoming an MP, been involved with CND activities. Although this of itself was not a criminal offence, it did show an anti-establishment attitude which could lead to criminal offences.

There was a rather interesting entry in the report citing that Bourne, as a parliamentary candidate, had run an anti-nuclear weapons campaign group, from the House of Commons office of Labour MP William McCann. She had moved to Czechoslovakia where, according to documents held by the Czech security service STB, in 1988, Roberts was sent to meet an MI6 officer at a technology trade fair in the city of Brno, 120 miles from Prague.

The agent asked The Criminality and background Checking expert, "Was this information disclosed before she became Home Secretary?"

The Nervous background expert said, warily, "The Prime Minister can have access to these records at any time."

"Did the Prime Minister exercise that right in this case?"

"I don't have any way of knowing that."

Surprised, the agent asked, "Don't you keep records of people accessing security files?"

"Of course, but they would have been obtained on behalf of the Prime Minister, not by him. And unless we have a date to go by ..."

"So, somebody may well have known this and glossed over it when Clarice Bourne was appointed Home Secretary?"

"Well based on the information provided by criminality disclosures, as with any background check, it is up to the employer to assess the relevance and risk to the organisation and then make a decision accordingly as part of the pre-employment screening process."

"So, who would carry out such a check on behalf of the PM?"

The background expert shrugged, "No idea."

According to the cab driver, Eugene, Oregon was an old drug-infested, hippie town. He called it an amoral, isolated enclave of extreme liberal permissiveness. The city was still solidly entrenched in the 1960's, original home of political correctness, a party school of communism, rebellion and anarchy.

Dayton was just interested in the covered timber bridges from the Civil War days. Those and the magnificent coastline, as they drove along stretches of the cliff top.

At one point in the journey to Martin Luther King Blvd, Dayton did get involved in the driver's biased opinion. He said, "I have heard it stated that Eugene's a city looking for a cause to be angry about, a riot waiting for a spark!"

This comment only added more fire to the driver's fervour. "Is this where you want your children schooled? Few escape the leftist mindset inherent in this city, which, also promoted at the University of Oregon's Pinko Leftist philosophy, is the bedrock this university's foundation is built upon!"

Joshua Stickman lived alone in a sprawling single level house fronted by a huge manicured lawn. Dayton left the cab at the front entrance. A servant showed him through to the extensive decking that afforded a magnificent view of pine-covered mountains. Dayton saw the retired banker reading. Joshua, looked up from his book, gesturing his guest to sit by him and poured himself a coffee. "Excuse me if I don't get up, but my knees don't work so well these days. Hell, nothing much works as well as it used to."

Sitting down, Dayton said, "I was interested in the philanthropic work your father did."

"Well, banking is a community thing, or at least it should be. Banks should take an interest in the community and contribute to its culture. My father was a great believer in that. He built the City Bank on that philosophy. I just carried it on."

"Do the Rottafellers have such a philosophy?" Dayton asked, getting to his reason for being there."

Old Joshua cocked an eye at the Englishman. "My guess is you already know the answer to that. Sure the Rottafellers have their foundations and charity functions etc. And I'm not knocking that, not if they're doing some good. But they are doing an awful lot of bad stuff, in my book."

"Such as?"

"Well David T Rottafeller said, just a few years back, that people were always attacking his family for the inordinate influence they claim he wields over American political and economic institutions. He said that some people even believe we are part of a secret cabal working against the best interests of the United States. David stated that his family was characterised as 'internationalist' and of conspiring with others around the world to build a more integrated global political and economic structure - one world if you will."

"And he denied all this?"

"Hell no! David said if that's the charge, I stand guilty, and I am proud of it."

"Okay, Mr Stickman, despite the Rottafeller's tremendous power and wealth I suspect they are not their masters. I think somebody is pulling their strings?"

The old banker shifted to ease pressure on his back. "Now therein lies the crux of the matter. I suspect you might have an idea on that."

"Generally yes. Specifically no." Looking straight at the elderly banking magnate, Dayton asked, "Have you heard of the Diabolus Sect?"

Joshua looked at his guest, not uttering a word.

"They have one agenda and one agenda only. Namely to destroy and spread chaos. Diabolus uses powerful dynasties, like the Rottafellers to that end."

"Who the hell are they then?" the old man asked.

Dayton shrugged, "They can be anybody and anywhere. They manipulate people in such a way they're not aware of the tug on their strings. I believe the Sect has master manipulators all over the world. Whoever the master is in the American zone is expanding and furthering the destructive effect Rottafeller projects are having on the world. So, Mr Stickman, do you know of any such person or persons acting in an advisory capacity for the Rottafellers?"

Joshua rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "What you say is very disturbing. I didn't think much about it at the time, but there is one person who meets with David from time to time. These meetings are always secret, behind closed doors, at his old family offices in New York."

"Have you ever met this person?"

"David introduced me to him once. I didn't trust the guy. He was creepy. I remember his eyes. Black as coal they were. It was as though he was looking right through you."

"Do you know his name?"

"I know David introduced him as the Professor. Now, what was his name? It sounded Italian and something to do with music." Then he looked skyward, as though the answer was up in the clouds. Yes, I've got it. It was Professor Sonata."

Traitor in a headscarf tried to 'turn' MI6 woman | Daily ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1088558/Traitor-headscarf-tried-turn-MI6>

DBS/CRB News & Updates - Mayflower Disclosure Services ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://dbsdirect.co.uk/crb-news-and-updates.php>

David Rockefeller - Wikiquote. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/David_Rockefeller

Chapter 31

Detective Bryan Snow was already waiting when Ulysses arrived back at Heron Industries. The tall police officer followed the CEO into his office.

Ulysses said, "How can I help you?"

The imposing officer retrieved his notebook. "A Mr Leroy was found in extreme pain by his mother. It appears that he overdosed on the drug Tylenol. An ambulance rushed Mr Leroy to the hospital, but the doctor couldn't save him."

"I see. How tragic. But I don't see what it has to do with me."

"Sir, all suicide cases are sent to the pathologist for the autopsy. The pathologist involved us because he found an implant in the decease's left eye. We traced the said implant back to your company."

Ulysses, having had nothing to do with any bionic eye tests, surprised, responded: "I'll get Dr Contoldo to join us."

"Who's he?"

"He is in charge of testing." He spoke into his intercom "Get me Dr Contoldo, please. Tell him to bring his test case records for a Mr Leroy with him."

The detective said, "This may have nothing to do with the case, but we have to check out everything that may have led to Mr Leroy's death."

Covington smiled weakly. Just having had his contract renewed by DARPA, for this to happen, was not good news.

Dr Contoldo duly arrived.

Ulysses said, "This is Detective Snow. He needs to ask you some questions."

"What about?"

The detective answered, "One of your patients, an Olivier Leroy, was found dead yesterday. The pathologist who examined his body discovered an implant behind his left eye. The implant is one of yours."

Contoldo slightly agitated, responded, "I don't see what this Mr Leroy's death has to do with me."

Detective Snow said, "Do you have Mr Leroy's medical report with you."

Dr Contoldo handed it to Ulysses, then said, "Well, if that's all I have to get back to work."

"How often did you see Mr Leroy after the operation?" Bryan asked.

"He was scheduled to come in for a follow up each week. I had to monitor his progress and deal with any problems he may have had regarding side effects."

"Did he have any side effects?"

"He complained of headaches. This discomfort is not unusual during the settling period. Subsequently, the problems eased."

The detective looked straight at the doctor. "Did you prescribe any medication for these headaches?"

"Yes, I prescribed Tylenol."

Checking his notes, the detective said, "Doctor, Mr Leroy took approximately 20 of the 500 mg acetaminophen capsules. That translates to ingesting 10 grammes of acetaminophen; the maximum recommended dose within 24 hours is, as you would know, four grammes. His mother says he became ill, repeatedly vomiting, The side effects of the overdose caused kidney and liver damage resulting in organ failure, which caused his death."

"I have no control over my test cases, detective," Dr Contoldo huffed. "Now I have to go."

The detective said, "I want all records concerning this 'test case' doctor," speaking the words as though they were something he had picked up on the bottom of his shoe.

Noticing the police officer's disgust, Ulysses said, "this test case research is perfectly legal to practice."

"Yes, I'm sure it is," he said, gathering his things. "I may need to speak with you again Dr Covington."

"Yes, of course. I will make myself available."

Paul Cosimo followed Fr Lucini, the Vatican's antiquity buyer, as he described the various relics in the collection. He pointed out the complete skeletal remains of Saint Demetrius (housed underneath the altar). The Friar pointed out the skulls of Saint Macarius and Saint Stephana, skulls of the martyred companions of Saint Ursula, the head of Saint Theodore, and even the tooth of the chapel's patron, Saint Anthony of Padua.

As a curator and scholar of Church history, Paul felt he was already in heaven. He silently praised Tom Graham for affording him this treat. Paul was surprised to receive the call from Fr Lucini. He was even more surprised to be invited to meet with the Vatican's Director of religious antiquities.

Friar Lucini showed him historical monstrosities, statues, and what are alleged to be a fragment from the Blessed Mother's veil. There were two pieces from the table used for the Last Supper, and 22 pieces of the 'True Cross'.

Lucini asked, "So why are you here, Paul?"

Paul said, "An archaeologist I know, a good friend, got robbed in Geneva."

Salvatore stopped. "I think I read about that. Didn't he kill members of his team and escape with the treasure, whatever that was?"

Paul, restraining his tone, said, "I know Tom Graham very well. We were on a dig together. Besides, he told me black-clad thieves attacked them and slaughtered his team. He only just managed to escape, but he had to leave his discovery behind."

"Did he tell you what this discovery was?"

"He said, they uncovered a Gnostic mosaic underneath an abandoned cathedral. He also said, there were a gold cup and two plates. He came to me to see if I knew anything about them. I couldn't help him, but I wondered if you may have heard something."

Salvatore remained impassive, at least outwardly. "Your friend could have been lying, or confused. He was institutionalised, was he not?"

"Yes, that is true. Tom was traumatised by what happened to his team."

"Greed can do terrible things to a man. The sight of that gold could have ..."

Paul interjected, "No. Not Tom Graham. I know him too well." Then he said, "Here are photos of the artefacts he managed to take, before the attack."

Salvatore scrutinised the images. They were the same ones. "You said he came to see you. Is he still in Rome."

"I have his contact number."

"I want to speak with him. Arrange it for me."

Salvatore Lucini looked at the photos of the artefacts. As the buyer of Church relics, he sometimes had to deal with shady characters. Although he found this to be distinctly unpleasant, it was a necessary evil in the function he carried out. In many cases, he did not want to know anything about how the dealers came to acquire such religious treasures. He knew of the Merchant's reputation. The man was unscrupulous, untrustworthy and not a person with whom to cross swords.

Now that he was aware that what the Merchant offered had been stolen and was the subject of a crime involving multiple murders, he broke into a cold sweat. If the Vatican got tied into the Swiss police investigation as receivers of the stolen artefacts, and the media got hold of the story, the resulting fall-out for his Church would be devastating.

The media was already in a feeding frenzy over the recent Vatican Bank Scandal. Friar Lucini could not believe it. The Institute for Religious Works had allegedly violated Italian law by attempting to transfer funds from one of its accounts in an Italian bank to two other banks, one of them in Germany, without supplying the required information to Italian authorities.

Fr Lucini silently cursed himself for admitting Paul Cosimo into his world. Paul had told him things he would rather not have heard. But the pictures were damning. Without the pictorial evidence, he could easily have convinced himself Paul was talking about different artefacts, but he could not deny that the images were those of the stolen goods.

They were the items shown by the Merchant. The ones for which the Church had paid an advance of 10 million euro. He had tied the Catholic Church into a deal with a dangerous and unsavoury character, who it seemed was probably an accomplice to theft and multiple murder. He had to protect the Church at all costs.

Tom Graham met Paul in the Santa Maria Della Vittoria, a little Baroque church in Rome. The museum director enthused passionately over the sculptural masterpiece 'Ecstasy of St. Teresa' which he considered being Bernini's greatest work. Tom would usually have picked up on its subliminal erotic implications, but his mind was on the subject of their meeting. "So did he admit to having the artefacts?"

"Not in actual words, no. But the fact Fr Lucini wants to see you certainly suggests he either has them or is acquiring them."

"You inferred he would not even give me the time of day. So why am I so important all of a sudden?"

"I think he is concerned about the 'Cain artefacts'. The chances are that somebody has already approached him and the deal may already have been signed and sealed. He does not want the Church to be associated with such evil, as that you described. But he doesn't know whether to believe me or not, so he intends to speak with you directly."

"That's fine, as long as he realises I want those pieces back."

Paul smiled, "Best of luck with that. You can ask him when you see him."

When Abbott returned from Guatemala, Murwillumbah seemed to be on a different planet. There were three messages on his phone. One from Phil about the article he hadn't finished. There was a bit of gloating. There was a message from Helen saying she missed him and hoped they could stay friends. The third one both freaked and intrigued Abbott.

The caller said. "You were warned to drop the Heron story. Now face the consequences." The date of the call was only two days before. Now he had to contact the paper.

Sitting in front of Phil in his office, it all seemed unreal to Abbott since his Guatemalan experience, which he did not divulge. "I'm not interested in taking over the story, but I need to be brought up to date."

"It's not your story now. I'm following it up, and it's bloody dynamite. Heron has been caught out doing stem cell research and ..."

"Phil, I'm only interested in finding out who left a threatening message for me because of the story," Abbott interrupted.

"I don't know anything about that. I may well have pissed off that Dr Covington, pushing him into a corner. But surely he wouldn't be threatening ..."

"But he might be getting that thug Nick to do it for him again. I've a good mind to lay it on the bastard."

Phil grinned, "Leave it with me. I've got the corrupt shit on the ropes. Oh boy, this just gets better."

"I'm glad you're enjoying this, at my expense. Just get it sorted, Phil, I want this thug off my back."

The letter the Prof left Abbott was cryptic in some respects. It was written in English all right, but some of it made no sense at all. The part about getting the 'Key to Atlantis' was somewhat vague and Abbott had never heard of a Spanish town called Atienza. The letter said he was to locate a Hassan Shamsi who the Prof said, knew the whereabouts of the key.

The journalist felt more confused than ever. He needed to confide in someone he could trust with the secret information. So that if he followed the Prof's mad plan at least one person on the planet would know of his whereabouts. Abbott had no family, to speak of, just a brother who hadn't communicated with him in over a decade. In the end, he dialled Helen's number.

The boardwalk up to the headland at Bogangar was an easy walk but not so easy when pushing a wheelchair. Abbott was feeling puffed by the time he and Helen reached the top. A group of people had congregated, looking out to sea. Abbott pushed Helen through the throng and saw what captivated their attention. A pod of dolphins were swimming and leaping, to the great joy of the spectators.

"They are just beautiful creatures. They make my heart sing," Helen said.

Abbott said, "The people of Atlantis recognised dolphins as being the keepers of universal knowledge. Their computer-like brains record the information."

"I didn't know that."

"No. neither did I." That was freaky, he thought.

As the dolphin watchers dissipated, Helen said, "What do you mean?"

He sat on a bench, looking out into the blue ocean. The dolphins had moved on. "It just came to me. I've been thinking a lot about Atlantis lately." Could he tell her he had to leave, to look for some key, in Spain? It was a little too early to divulge that.

She smiled, "Anyhow, I'm pleased you came back. So where did you go?"

There was a little bit of the wind on top of the headland, but the warmth from the sun was enough for him to feel comfortable. He told her about the Prof, the trip to Guatemala, his adventure there, the Prof's Letter and his dilemma."

"Wow!" she said. "I can see why you didn't want to spend time with boring old me."

He didn't take the bait. Abbott hated martyrs with a passion. He didn't feel sorry for Helen, one bit but he still liked her in some ways.

She said, "He came and threatened me."

"Who did?"

"That bastard who turned your place over and had you beaten up."

That episode seemed like a previous lifetime to Abbott. He couldn't afford to be dragged back to into the past, but the thought of that thug threatening a disabled person got his ire up.

"I had to withdraw my statement to the paper. I had to write a letter saying it was all in my imagination." She turned away and cried.

"Don't cry, Helen. We think Dr Covington is behind this. We believe he hired that piece of work to silence us. But it's too late for his deception and lies."

She dried her eyes. "Sorry Abbott, I didn't mean to lay that on you. It's just that ..."

He patted her arm, "Yes, I know. But I have to look to the future. I can't let the past hold me back. I have to go to Spain."

She looked at him. "Why is it when I finally meet a beautiful guy he has to keep disappearing on me?"

"Helen, this is not about you. Hell, it's not even about me. In fact, I have no idea what it is about, but I do know one thing. It's about something critical, something that is far bigger than all of us. And, for whatever reason, if there is one, I have to become entangled in it, for better or for worse."

He impassively watched her sad expression. He felt exhilarated and liberated. He knew what he had to do with a clarity never before experienced by him. Yes, he knew what to do, but he was not aware why he had to do it. The Nike slogan came to mind. Just do it."

Italy Unfreezes \$33 Million In Vatican Funds | The ... (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/01/vatican-bank_n_870039.html

5 Warning signs of a toxic faith - Spirituality - Aleteia ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://aleteia.org/2016/09/06/5-warning-signs-of-a-toxic-faith/>

Chapter 32

Rodney felt he had to spell it out. Turning to the colonel, he explained, "Lynch, when I say the gate is probably entirely secure, I mean there's only a ten to twenty percent possibility that Diabolus have got through and have set up residence on the island. That's at least eighty percent safety!"

Strangely enough, Lieutenant Colonel Rafael Lynch – he hated that name, much preferring Raf – was not consoled by Dr MacKay's words. He moved closer to the scientist to look at the screen, over his shoulder. Raf couldn't make out much of the imagery. There were some images of the land, and he could see the gate, in a small clearing concealed by the thick pine forest. Dr MacKay had been out in the elements taking the pictures. The weather had seemed colder than usual, as the northern hemisphere was in the middle of spring.

The Scot was happy to be back in the warmth of his lab. As the head scientist of 'The Atlantis Expedition', he had monitored the gate for several months, and there had been no sign of the Diabolus Sect. In fact, There had been no sign of anybody passing through the dimensional portal.

Dr Dorian Wells announced her arrival by the light clacking of her four-inch stilettos against the tiled floor of the research facility. Both men looked up as she and two companions entered the lab. She smiled in greeting. Following her lead Tella and Kronyn smiled as well.

"Shall we begin?" Dorian asked as Rafael took a seat beside her. Tella lowered herself gracefully into a chair while Kronyn remained standing, ever her protector, ready to leap to her defence.

"What's the status of the gateway, Rodney?" She turned her attention to Dr MacKay, the Scottish scientist and self-professed genius.

He swelled with smugness, turning his laptop screen to show her the images. "Despite what soldier boy over here thinks," Rodney said indicating the Colonel, "the portal has been Diabolus-free for the five months I have surveyed it. I have gone over the data we received, and the climate on the other side and the atmosphere are better for us than this model of Earth." Rodney grinned, "As chief scientist, I suggest we send a recon team to the other side to check it out for contamination."

Raf ignored the barb, saying, "You just said the gate is secure. Now you think we should go there to see if it's okay. Make up your mind."

"Aye, but there's a wee percentage they could have snuck through."

Dorian had the final say. "I'll pass it up the line and see what they think."

Raf said, "Maybe there's someone there with whom we can trade. With an island like Atlantis, I'm sure they have some great food."

Rodney tutted, "Dorian, some people are here to study and examine these other parallels, "

Tella smiled at Dorian, leaning forward slightly she said, "What is your decision, Dorian?"

"From what Rodney has shown me it seems like a peaceful land that has somehow managed to have passed under the eye of Diabolus. But any expedition through the gate has to be sanctioned from above."

The Colonel grunted and huffed, but said nothing.

Tella looked at Rafael. She asked calmly, "Are you worried about any particular aspect of my island, Colonel?"

Dorian looked at the officer, her brow creased. "Yes, Colonel, you seem reticent about stepping foot through the portal. Why?"

Lynch eyeballed Dorian. "Rodney mentioned that there is a ten to twenty percent chance of Diabolus agents having gotten through the portal. Even if they're not already on the other side once the gate is open, they may be able to sneak through."

MacKay folded his arms defensively over his chest, absolutely put out that not everyone had complete trust in his apparently amazing skills as a scientist. He knew what he was talking about, whereas, in his opinion, Lynch was just an undereducated, trigger-happy soldier boy. "My prowess as a problem-solver threatens you," MacKay responded.

Lynch looked at the old scientist. He's 70 if he's a day, the commander thought. "I know you're the centre of your universe, but this isn't about you, MacKay. It's about having accurate intelligence for the mission."

"Aye, well it's the best you'll get."

Raf had carried out a thorough background check on the scientist and had found no mention of him in academic circles. In fact, little seemed to have been known about him, other than he was uniformly spoken of or referred to as 'the Professor' by people who knew him. MacKay was past

retirement age so why had he been included in the Atlantis Project? Still, the Scot stood erect, was vigorous and hearty and very dignified in his behaviour and manners, until someone irked him. And the Colonel annoyed him more than most.

Rodney put his health and fitness down to a healthy diet: no flesh, fowl or fish. He was well educated, highly cultivated, a mine of extensive as well as varied information. Studious in his spare time at the secret base, Rodney placed an ancient manuscript on his writing table. Beside it, he put another book, opened at a blank page. The scientist, using pen and ink patiently and with great care, copied a new section from the rare old book. Unbeknown to the others, MacKay spent most of his free time doing this. His secret project was always locked in a large, old-fashioned, iron-bound, oaken chest.

When he wasn't working out Stargate mathematics, or researching ancient writings, Rodney took long and frequent walks alone. He would sit on the brow of the adjacent hill, or muse in the midst of the green and flora abundant meadows.

Most of the time personnel on the base saw MacKay as a quiet man, self-assured and even genial at times. MacKay was conversant with just every topic that came up in a discussion. Staff members found his many and varied anecdotes entertaining, except a few military types, like Lynch, who saw the scientist as a boring know all.

What nobody did know about him was that inside he was under enormous pressure, continually questioning himself and his ability in controlling the Stargate. A repeated dream also added to his underlying tenseness. In the dream, he was called Lamos. A noise attracted him and the closer he got to the source the more he instinctively tried to move away. Horrified at the desecration to the shrine to Ma'at, at first he didn't notice the menacing hooded men and women encroaching upon him. The dark cloaked, hooded creatures, which had skulls instead of faces, continually chanted the word 'Diabolus'. He clutched a pendant to his breast, asking Ma'at to protect him. Swinging their razor-sharp scythes, the unholy scourge surrounded him. At the moment of being slashed, Rodney always woke in cold sweat, his heart thumping like a bass drum.

Dayton Lynsey looked at the Wailing Wall while observing Orthodox Jewish men repeatedly bobbing their heads and thrusting their pelvises at the stone structure. Why, he wondered, did the Jews worship a wall - an ancient Roman one at that? Was the old Roman wall built from stones left over from the destruction of the second temple, in 70 AD? Dayton pondered such things while waiting in Jerusalem to meet an Arab historian who claimed the second temple was not the site of the Dome of the Rock.

Al-Buraq looked appealing from both the outside and inside of the establishment. The restaurant, near the Western Wall, was nearly empty. It was the Jewish fast day of Tisha B'Av, and Dayton had chosen the restaurant at that time specifically for that reason. He started with the Al-Buraq salad, a plate with several small salads and falafel, while he waited for Yasir Tiwanah to arrive.

The English lord had the historian's profile on his iPad. Yasir had a chequered past, often skating close to the wrong side of the law, selling stolen, used military equipment and heroin. Dayton wasn't

fazed by this. He was well aware that Soter people played all sorts of roles to cover themselves and blend in with society. He had just finished his starter when an olive-skinned sweaty, overweight Arab came to his table.

The profile photo matched. Dayton said. "Take a seat."

Yasir Tiwanah easily passed for any middle-aged Jew. So to keep up his pretences, he conversed with Dayton while he ate. "This is one of the most confusing Holy holidays of the Jewish calendar."

"Oh! Why is that?"

"It's supposed to commemorate the destruction of the First and Second Temples, but it also memorialises a plethora of other events that the Jews define as disasters."

"Oh! such as," Dayton queried, taking a sip of coffee.

The historian wiped his mouth. "Well, for example, on this day Heinrich Himmler received approval from the Nazi Party for The Final Solution. Also, on this day the Nazis started the mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, Ariel Sharon's Gaza Disengagement Plan and much more."

Dayton's Turkish salad lacked the usually overcooked tomatoes, having the strong taste of tomato paste with added sugar instead. He pushed it aside in disgust. Looking at the Arab, he said, "How are we going with our target?"

"We believe he is in Israel. He arrived on El Al flight 901 at Ben Gurion International Airport, three weeks ago. There is no record of any exit visa for a Francisco Sonata from any airports or sea ports. Unless he crossed a land border, he is, in all probability, somewhere in this country."

"So you don't know where he is?"

"That's right; he seems to have gone to ground. We will be watching out for him when he surfaces."

Dayton eyed the Palestinian. "From what little we have been able to glean, he is not the usual Diabolus Sect master. Sonata doesn't just carry out random assignments; the man organises major projects. We think he is one of the main leaders. The professor is also an Alchemy Adept with links to upper echelon Free Masonry."

Yasir Tiwanah sat up straight. "Do you think he has anything to do with the alleged plot to rebuild the Temple?"

"He doesn't build. He destroys, to create maximum chaos and fear. Destroying the Dome would probably appeal to him, but I suspect he is going for something much more subtle and terrifying. But keep an eye on the Dome, just in case."

Francisco Sonata dressed and acted the part of a Hasidic Jew, David Goldberg. Attired in black hat and suit, he blended in with the crowd as he walked around the Dome. It defied all logic that the 35-acre landmass surrounded by ancient walls represented the end-time dreams and fears of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Francisco felt a thrill course through him as he imagined being the trigger that set the end times in motion.

It only needed a little nudge to upset the delicate balance between veneration of the ancient shrine by Islam and its destruction by Jewish extremists and the Free Masons, whose goal was to rebuild Solomon's Temple on the site. Professor Sonata looked about him for the person he had come to meet.

Rabbi Israel Ben Finstein came from a long line of Hasidic Jews. One of his ancestors worked with the founder of Hasidism, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, a great scholar and mystic, devoted to both the revealed, outer aspect and hidden, inner aspect of Torah. He explained this as they ate in the Bandora Jewish Quarter. The Rabbi chose the restaurant for its shouarma, which, in his opinion, was the best he'd tasted in the old city of Jerusalem.

The Rabbi mentioned, "As one of the Rabbi's closest followers, my ancestor recorded that without veering from a commitment to Torah, they created a way of Jewish life that emphasised the ability of all Jews to grow closer to God via everything they said or thought. Of course, this thinking was in direct contrast to the intellectual style of the mainstream Jewish leaders."

The Diabolus Grand Master, fishing for information about the weaknesses of the Dome of the Rock, asked, "Was Haram's western wall built on the site of the First and Second Jewish temples?"

"There are many reasons for it to be so. The remaining stones left over from the Roman sacking of Jerusalem in AD 70 were used to construct it."

Sonata said, "Tell me about The outcropping under the Dome of the Rock."

"It's the crest of Mount Moriah where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son," Rabbi Finstein said, taking all these things on faith. It was also his confidence in what he was doing that had him meet, who he thought was a fellow Hasidic on that Tisha B'Av day.

"This place is blasphemy in the eyes of the Lord," Rabbi Finstein said.

Goldberg nodded, "I agree, and there is much talk and sharing on the Internet about this. He added, On more than one hundred occasions since 1967, members of the Jewish underground have initiated plots to besiege or destroy the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque, acts that, had they succeeded, would have rendered peace with the Arab world impossible."

Goldberg challenged, "But is it all talk? Is there anybody who has the courage of their convictions?" the Professor asked, fanning the embers.

Rabbi Finstein leant in closer. "I and some other good people are ready to light the fuse, David. But we need financial help and support."

"If you're serious I can arrange what you need." David Goldberg fixed the Rabbi with his hypnotic gaze. "Make sure this job is carried out."

Professor Sonata knew the destruction of the Dome, one of Islam's key sacred places, would be the trigger for World War III. The thought of such chaos gave Diablo such a rush of energy he found it hard to contain himself.

Ben said, excitedly, "You will fund us?"

"Yes, of course, for such a noble cause."

Guadalajara was, Abbott discovered, known as an autonomous region of Spain. Somewhere in the province was a man called Hassan Shamsi, who would be waiting for him. Abbott's immediate destination was Atienza, a medieval looking town that had managed to conserve its urban structure and architectural flavour from the times when it was a strategic frontier site between the Christian and Muslim holdings. As he approached the town, details of its military and border calling became apparent, by the wall surrounding it. Inside, Abbott drove past the remains of Roman temples, many churches, a convent, the Santa Anna Hospital and several 16th Century blazoned mansions.

Abbott Gallagher, exhausted from the flight and the long drive in the hired Seat, from Madrid, flopped down on his bed. His stay at the Hotel Rural Palacio de Atienza was just for a couple of nights, while he sought the whereabouts of Hassan Shamsi "More details would have been good, Prof," he said to his friend's spirit. His mind went back to the funeral, Filipe had organised.

The Prof died as he lived - an enigma to those around him. They had shed tears at his grave and drank to celebrate a life about which little was known. But Abbott knew one thing. He was missing the friendship of the strange man.

As Abbott knew only phrasebook Spanish, his enquiries about Hassan Shamsi either brought blank looks from locals or acknowledgement of his existence but not his whereabouts. A couple of people even crossed themselves at the mention of his name, before hurrying on to wherever they were going. Finding the man was not going to be as easy as he had assumed. He had to rethink his strategy.

Meanwhile, his hunger was getting the best of him. The aroma of freshly baked bread wafted through the air. So tantalising was it he got drawn to its source, a new small bakery. Three customers were waiting, giving Abbott the chance to view the products on sale. While being served, he took out the letter. Getting the baker's attention, he said, "I'm looking for a Senor Hassan Shamsi. Do you know where I can find him?" he asked, accentuating each word to make it easier for the Spaniard to understand.

Geraldo Escobar grinned. "Senor, I know English. The man you seek used to live here, but he moved away."

At last Abbott felt he was getting somewhere. "Do you happen to know where he moved to?"

Geraldo looked at the foreigner. "Before you go looking for him there are things you need to know."

Another customer came in the shop.

"What things?" Abbott asked.

Geraldo, serving his customer, said, "I close at six. You can buy me a drink. Then I will tell you."

Abbott picked up his freshly baked rolls and left. With a few hours to go before he met with Geraldo, he explored the small hilltop village, on the Route of El Cid, the legendary military leader in Medieval Spain.

By the time Abbott returned to Atienza Geraldo Escobar was waiting at El Bar de Los Jubilados. The Baker introduced the Australian to Mahou beer, which Abbott found to be weaker and lacking more in body than beers back home.

Geraldo quaffed his beer quickly and had a second lined up in short order. Looking at Abbott, he said, "My bakery is new. My father's bakery was burned down years ago, by the local blacksmith."

"Why did he do that?"

"There was some crazy feud between their families, going back into history."

"How did it end?"

"Tragically," the Baker said, taking his second beer more slowly. "There was a gunfight. They shot each other." Then he added, "But that isn't the worst of it."

"What do you mean?"

"I was very young when a dark man came to town."

"A dark man! What, black skinned?"

"No, not dark in that way. He was a diablo."

"Doesn't that mean devil?"

"Si. Soon after he came to town things went bad."

"Bad, in what way?"

Geraldo took a swig of beer. "It was like everybody here served him. Poor people gave him food, drink, and other favours. He lived in a castle, and they were poor peasants trying to survive."

Abbott, puzzled, asked, "Why did they let him treat them that way?"

"He had some power over them. We think he had something to do with my father fighting the blacksmith."

"I thought you said it was a family feud."

"Yes, but my father didn't care about that. He and Emile, the blacksmith, had always been good friends until that monster came here."

Abbott finished his beer. Setting down his glass, he said, "You said this dark stranger 'had' power over the townsfolk. That means he is not here. So how did you rid yourselves of him?"

"We didn't have to. The Diablo just packed up and left, with all his cronies."

"Oh, so he wasn't alone." Abbott let the rhetorical question hang in the air. "What happened to the castle?"

Geraldo looked straight at the Australian. The man you seek, Hassan Shamsi, lived there.

"Lived there? Do you know where he went?"

I believe he is living somewhere around Zaragoza. But beware. He is a brujo man."

"Brujo man?"

"Like a sorcerer, magician. Senor Shamsi was feared here, especially after the dark man experience that nearly destroyed us all."

Jewish in U.S.A consider themselves as white? - Stormfront. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t779442/>

Hasidism - Jewish Virtual Library. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/Hasidism.html>

Home - Hasidism - LibGuides at Yale University. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://guides.library.yale.edu/c.php?g=296238>

Tourism in Atienza in Guadalajara, Spain | spain.info in ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.spain.info/en/que-quieres/ciudades-pueblos/otros-destinos/atienza.html>."

Chapter 33

Dr Dorian Gibson was used to Colonel Lynch and Dr MacKay arguing. It had almost become a ritual with the pair, as though they just had to tease each other about their differences of opinion on just about every topic of conversation. Dorian smiled to herself, figuring their baiting was a way of relieving the boredom. But, this one-upmanship was not conducive to their work environment.

Dorian, acting as an adjudicator in some crazy debate, placed herself between the old rutting stags. "If you two are quite finished we need to discuss the next step. Meet me in my office," She said, her eyes flashing from behind pink horn-rimmed glasses. Although introvert by nature she flexed her muscles when necessary.

Working for Uncle Sam had made her more assertive, and although she was usually flexible about company policy, she had no trouble showing her authority when it was required. As the US Government overseer for Portal Protection, known by the team as 'Atlantis Watch', she out-ranked even the Colonel.

Tella, known whimsically as 'the shadow' followed Dorian around much of the time. The young woman's bluish-toned skin glowed with youthful energy, in comparison to Dorian's, which began to show the ravages of middle age.

Dr MacKay gave Dorian a slightly sheepish nod as he entered her domain. He said, "So have our betters come to a decision?"

Including herself in the decision making, she said, "We need to know if anyone or thing got through when the field last weakened."

"Rodney huffed, "I would have known if they had. My data doesn't lie."

Tella, smiling, said, "I see no reason not to check out the island. You will have to take me with you, though."

Rafael, also present, agreed. "If any did get through, the only way we'd find out is by going there."

Dorian concurred, "Colonel Lynch, the Chiefs have cleared you for gate access." She turned to Rodney. "Have you got today's schedule with you?"

He handed her his tablet.

She scrutinised his figures. "Forcefield levels seem okay." Turning to the colonel, she said, "You are free to leave now if your team is ready."

Colonel Lynch sighed and nodded. "Sure. The sooner we check for any contamination, the better."

Tella became still, her eyes flickering as though she were in a trance. She focussed on Kronyn's name. Within a couple of minutes, he arrived.

"You must tell me how you do that," Dorian said.

Tella smiled sweetly, "I just thought him here. It's something we learn as children."

Rafael looked over at his three teammates. "Okay, are we all ready?" Tella and Kronyn nodded, but MacKay responded "Of course I'm not ready! You have no idea what's involved for me. I can't just sprinkle fairy dust and clap my hands, and everything is packed and ready to go."

Lynch sighed heavily. "How long is it going to take?"

"It's not just the general equipment. We have to pack our food supplies. What happens if we get cut off from this side? It's entirely possible considering it hasn't been a smooth ride in the past months. Turning his attention to Dorian, he said, "Are you sure we couldn't wait an hour or two?"

Dorian, irritated, snapped, "Dr MacKay You're always pushing to research the island, and now you have the chance you're holding up the operation. "She tapped her phone. "Zelenka, Well's here. Prepare to organise all that Dr MacKay will need for research on the island. Thank you."She usually referred to Atlantis as the 'island. It seemed more believable to her that way.

Rodney moaned, "Radek will probably mess everything up. If I just leave the lab for two minutes she turns my workspace into a dump," he mumbled to himself as he exited Dorian's office.

Kronyn nodded to his team leader. "I'm ready to go, Lynch." He never referred to Lynch by his rank, which meant nothing to people brought up on the Island.

Raf, giving him a wry smile, said, "I'll see you at the gate, after retrieving my weapons and other things."

Tella stood up. "If I'm needed, I'll be organising food rations."

"Thank you, Tella." Dorian smiled at the beautiful Atlantean woman, whom Dr Gibson considered the smartest one out of the entire team.

Kronyn followed after Tella, leaving Raf and Dorian alone in the conference room.

Being alone with her made the colonel feel tense. Their eyes met momentarily and a long silent moment passed. He detested the fact that although he was in command of the gate, she could order him around. The feelings he had for Dorian were dangerous to both of them, but he refused to acknowledge them and certainly never expressed them out loud.

"It's going to be fine," Dorian quietly assured him.

"Yeah, that's what you always say." He nervously rubbed his chin. "And we end up in the shit."

"We have it more under control now."

He rounded on her. "Tell that to the bereaved families of the six that never got back, Dr Gibson."

"Kronyn is greatly trusted by them. Do as he says, and all will be well."

The Colonel turned to leave.

Dorian cared for him more than she'd admit. "Keep safe Raf," she said to his back.

DISABLED WOMAN THREATENED BY MAN PAID BY ROBOTICS BOSS! The Headline in the Sydney Morning Herald shouted. The story went on to say that Nick Gibbon made threats to wheelchair bound Helen Cleaver, on the Bogangar headland.

Ulysses Covington stared at the article, agog. How the hell had it come to this? Once he'd regained his composure, he'd asked for Philip Law, the firm's lawyer, who was already on his way. Word spread like wildfire around the company. The executives had two things on their mind that day. Could they be implicated and what could be done to mitigate the damage? The whole firm went into damage control. Legally, the attack seemed the best form of defence. Well, that was the advice Philip gave Ulysses. A blanket denial and a threat to sue the Herald for slander. Meanwhile, the directors set up an extraordinary meeting to discuss how to proceed.

There was a consensus that there is no smoke without fire. Despite their CEOs denial about knowing Nick Gibbons, they thought it highly unlikely that the thug would fabricate a statement about a person he had never met.

Ulysses looked at his usually handsome visage in the mirror. All he could see were worry wrinkles and a sallow complexion. The Heron boss tried loyal friends on the board, but none of them was available. He suddenly felt alone. He knew the writing was on the wall. Heron NRG was in the media spotlight for the wrong reasons. They were after blood. His!

On the home front, without the majority of the board's support, his position as CEO of Heron Industries was under threat. His personal lawyer advised him to sit tight, but Ulysses couldn't do that. Suddenly the company he had built from scratch to become an international player, seemed alien to him. Since the Article in the paper and follow up media, two days before, the company had gone into damage control, which meant he would probably get thrown to the wolves.

The news had reached American TV and Colonel Barney Cormack, nearly choked on his breakfast when he heard that Heron Robotics was caught up in another scandal. This time, it involved a man paid by Dr Covington to threaten a paraplegic woman who knew about the illegal stem research carried out by the company. "What the fuck! He exploded, sending a spray of cornflakes over the table cloth and launching into a coughing attack. Grabbing a glass of water, which he quickly downed, He wiped his watering eyes and grabbed his phone. Pressing Lynne Becker's name, he waited for a response. When she came online, he said, "We have a problem Dr Becker, one you need to deal with, quickly."

"What problem?" she asked, pouring a cup of coffee.

"Are you watching the news?"

"No, I'm eating breakfast."

"Well switch it on, because Heron Industries is all over it. And not in a good way."

"Okay Barney, I'll watch it but, whatever is going on in Australia is not my problem."

"Jesus, Dr Becker, we are so close with Atlas that anything that puts a goddam spanner in the works is both our problem. So just deal with it."

Although Lynne Becker worked for the Boston Cybertronics, not DARPA, BC received most of their funding from the US Government. Therefore, although, technically speaking, sorting out the Australian problem was not her responsibility, keeping DARPA happy was a shrewd move on her part.

Two main behaviours told Ulysses the Heron wagons were circling. Impromptu meetings of the board of directors without him being either told or invited and executives treating him like he was some infectious pariah. Dr Covington, feeling uncomfortable in his firm determined to take the bull by the horns. Believing offence to be the best form of defence he called an executive meeting to explain his side of the story. It was to be held on company time, and all members of the staff were expected to attend. The memo went out to all departments, so nobody missed out. Having gotten that organised Ulysses about to settle down to his work, received a phone call from Dr Becker. "Lynne, it's great to hear from you."

"Well, I'm sorry to say I am not so enthusiastic about it."

Deflated, he said, "Oh, why are you calling then?"

"Congratulations Ulysses, you made it on morning TV news all over America."

He slumped back in his chair. "Shit!"

"I couldn't have put it better myself. What the hell is going on over there?"

"I can explain everything. It's all a mistake."

"Nevertheless, mud sticks and we don't want it sticking to us."

"I will soon be addressing my staff and explain this misunderstanding." He sighed, "I need your support right now."

"And how is my being there going to help you?"

"Well nobody believes me here. I'm expecting the directors to draw their knives any minute and I have no one in my corner."

"Ulysses, for the sake of the project you may have to bite the bullet and move aside."

He thumped his fist on the desk. If that's the best advice you have, forget it. I built this company up from nothing, and I will not go down without one hell of a fight." He felt himself sweating as stabbing pains shot through his brain. He needed that happy place. He began humming 'Over the Rainbow'.

Lynne had forgotten his MK Ultra programming. "Dammit Ulysses, this is business, it's not personal. If you cannot see sense, I suppose I'm going to have to come over and sort things out. And you may not be happy with the result."

He wondered what she meant? Ulysses, calming down, said, "It's Okay, Lynne. I'm having a staff meeting tomorrow. Once they get my perspective, everything will be back on track."

"You just don't get it, Ulysses. We like our contractors to live life quietly and keep a low profile. This latest scandal is the last straw, as far as we are concerned. If you want to maintain the contract, you will do as we advise. And our advice is for you to sell your shares and leave the company."

"I can't do that," he said with quiet defiance."

She said, "Cancel that staff meeting. Do not discuss this with anybody. I'm coming over."

In the summer of 2007 in Perm, Russia, a new police officer joined the force. The new cop tipped the scales at 550 pounds and hadn't been eating doughnuts. This cop didn't walk the beat either - it rolled along the street on wheels. R-Bot 001, and it was the squad's first robot police officer. It looked much like a 5 foot 9 bullet and was designed to use its five mounted video cameras to monitor the streets for crime. In times of need, a citizen could press a button to contact the police station, and it even had the ability to deliver simple orders, like telling drunken pedestrians to go home and sober up.

Alas, it didn't prove a great success. Mere hours after it hit the streets, R Bot 001 encountered some stormy weather. Rain got into its circuits shorting out its electrical system. Officers had to retrieve R Bot 001 and take it back for repairs.

Barney mused over the article. In just a few years robotics had come from that to the magnificent specimen called ATLAS, who would soon show just what a Robocop could do. Everything was complete, except the arms. Heron had two weeks in which to deliver, or he would sue them for every cent they had. He didn't know if Dr Becker was tough enough to do the job. He hadn't got time to go to Australia but so much was riding on Heron coming through with the goods, he had no other choice.

How Police Robots Work | HowStuffWorks. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://science.howstuffworks.com/police-robot.htm>

Chapter 34

Yasir Tiwanah caught the bus to Ben Yehuda, where he caught another bus to Ramot, his destination. Before long he was walking the streets of Ramot, one of the ring neighbourhoods attached to West Jerusalem to the north. He passed by the iconic Ramot Polin Apartments, designed as a cheap and modular solution to the then Israeli leadership's desire to create an iconic living space on newly appropriated land in northern Jerusalem. The streets were silent and peaceful, and Yasir kept an eye out for the Englishman. He wasn't expecting Lord Lynsey to be dressed in a rekel (a long coat made of silk) and kippah, covering his shaved head. After trading salaams, Dayton said, "Who's this person you want me to meet?"

Yasir checked to see if anyone could be listening. "He has been tracking our target from Spain. He has quite a story to tell."

"Can he be trusted?"

Yasir laughed. "He asked me the same thing about you."

Dayton weighed his options. Working with only one contact was less risky. Dealings were clearer and less complicated that way. Dayton looked straight at Yasir. "Why can't you deal with him?"

"Because he will only deal with you."

"How does he know me?"

"You will have to ask him that yourself."

The Englishman shook his head. "I don't like it."

They reached the park but didn't use the main entrance. To keep a very low profile, Yasir took Dayton to a place where kids snuck in through a hole in the fence. Once inside they picked up a trail that was sadly lacking in direction markers. Dayton followed Yasir up a rough track. Yasir, unused to physical exercise, was breathing heavily. The pair came to a fork in the path.

Yasir took the left fork, and the Englishman followed. Then Dayton saw a tall man standing alone as though quietly contemplating the Jerusalem forest stretching out below. Yasir and the stranger shalomed after which he introduced Dayton Lynsey to Tom Graham.

"Isn't this just the most peaceful place?" Tom waxed poetically.

"I have never thought of Jerusalem as a peaceful place," Dayton stated. And it certainly won't be if this Professor Sonata has his way."

The stark memory of his friends and colleagues slaughtered in the cathedral basement sent a shiver up Tom's spine. Looking at Dayton, he said, "Believe you me, Mr Lynsey, I know that only too well."

Dayton looked at Tom. He had never met the archaeologist before. Yet it was plain to see that the lanky, rugged looking guy's bright demeanour hid deep grief and pain. "How did you find out about me?"

"That's an interesting part of the story. If you will permit me."

"Certainly. Tell your story."

"I'm an archaeologist and was leading a dig under an abandoned cathedral in Geneva. We'd just discovered something amazing when we were brutally attacked and robbed by this Professor Sonata. I tracked down the stolen artefacts to a buyer for the Vatican. His name is Salvatore Lucini. I believe you know him."

Dayton did, but he thought better of the Friar than to speak about him to a stranger. "Did you threaten or torture him?"

"No! Of course not. I was trying to find out who was selling the stolen items, to get a lead on the murderous thief who had my team slaughtered."

Dayton looked at the archaeologist. "So how did my name come up?"

"Salvadore said you might know the smuggler, a man simply known of as the Merchant."

Dayton certainly did know the man, but he wasn't a Diabolus agent. He was just greedy and somewhat ruthless. But he had been useful from time to time. "What do you expect me to do?"

"Salvatore Lucini suggested you might be able to speak with the man, on my behalf."

Dayton, weighing things in his mind, said, "I know you've got something personal going with this professor. If you want me to help you locate this murderer, you will have to do things my way. That's the only way I operate."

Tom, hell bent on revenge, said, "And what is your way?"

Dayton stepped closer to Tom, searching in his eyes. "Anything you find out about the Professor Sonata you run by me."

"I'm sorry, I can't agree to that. If I see that murderer, I'll deal with him myself."

Dayton got closer to Tom.

The archaeologist didn't even blink.

Dayton said, "I don't like this anymore than you, but your emotions could get in the way. You're a liability that could go off half-cocked, and that affects me deeply."

"In that case, Mr Lynsey, no deal!"

Dayton smiled, "It's not as simple as that Mr Graham. Too much is at stake here. And you wouldn't want me for an enemy. I have a thousand eyes, and if you get anywhere near Professor Sonata, we will have to put you out of the game. Do you understand?"

Tom scowled at the Englishman. "Who the hell are you to issue such threats? "

"Mr Graham, Sonata is merely the tip of a massive iceberg."

"I can't work with you. I will find my way."

Dayton responded, "I can't stop you, but I strongly advise you to do things my way."

Yasir Tiwanah, having remained silent throughout the exchange, waited until Tom had left. He looked at the English lord. "That didn't go well."

"If he becomes a problem have him dealt with."

Rabbi Israel Ben Finstein quietly walked around and observed the most contested real estate on Earth. In an area of only thirty-five acres, the Temple Mount was possibly the most emotively charged property worldwide. Having been subjected to a 'Mexican stand-off' for decades, Israel was getting ready to determine its fate. Even referring to it as the Temple Mount, politicised it. Called al Haram ash Sharif by Muslims, it included the Dome of the Rock and al-Masjid al Aqsa, or 'the furthestmost mosque'.

Rabbi Israel, acting like any tourist, took copious shots with his digital camera. Unlike other visitors to the site, he worked out many calculations on his digital pad about load bearing structures, building weaknesses, explosive locations, etc. He also made a list of requirements: materials, equipment and accomplices.

"It's not a mosque, as such. it's a Muslim shrine," Israel explained to a disinterested Philux, shortly after they met on the Temple grounds.

"Have you worked out what you need?"

The Rabbi gave the professor's man a memory stick. "That's what I've worked out so far." Then he added, "I will need a professional team, not amateurs."

Philux pocketed the memory stick. "We'll get back to you when we are ready."

Israel said, "Do you know about the history of this place?"

Philux shrugged, "It's just another so-called holy place. This planet is cluttered with them."

What a Philistine, Israel thought. Determined to educate the man, at least a little, he explained, "This is the site of the first and second temple in ancient Jewish times. It is also the place that the Prophet Muhammad, according to the Qur'an, was said to have stepped before taking his 'night journey' to heaven, where he met Allah and received the Islamic commandment to pray five times a day."

Philux was intrigued, but not by the rabbi's dissertation. "Why are you, a Jew, interested in Muslim fairy stories?"

"Because it is part of this city's history."

"This town will be history soon." Philux sneered. "Once we have dealt with that grotesque golden dome."

Abbott slept at midnight and woke up at 11 am. In his half-conscious state, he couldn't remember where he was. Abbott's brain eventually managed a few synaptic sparks, and the reporter realised he'd experienced his first night in Zaragoza and he was there to find Hassan Shamsi. He splashed his face with water from a basin provided by Hotel Sauce, his current domicile.

After a delightful three course set meal and a glass of wine for only six euro, Abbott asked the hotel receptionist if she had heard of a Hassan Shamsi. She explained that although Zaragoza was only a small city, it still had a population of over 700,000 and, no she had not heard of the person he was seeking. The Spanish phone book was no help either.

The man with the long white beard had the symbols of the Magi on his person. Hidden inside his djellabah, held tasbih prayer beads and his mus'haf recital book. In this guise, he moved freely around the city without drawing attention to himself. Hassan Shamsi, a long-term member of 'Soter,' had to keep his true identity hidden so he could carry on his work, unhampered. He knew that fearful, superstitious people were the most dangerous once they became a mob.

If the fundamentalists knew what he was really about the superstitious and fearful would do him serious harm. He had only lived in Zaragoza a few weeks, since leaving Atienza. Castillo Atienza had had a brooding darkness about it. Standing on a 200-metre high rock, over a former Arab castle, the Castillo held many clues left by its previous tenant, whom, it appeared, had left in a hurry.

Hassan did not come to take out a three-month lease on the castle by chance. Soter had sent him there to investigate a rumour that a powerful warlock had manipulated and cursed the townsfolk of Atienza.

The news turned out to be correct. Except the man called Francisco Sonata, who referred to himself as Diablo, was much more than a warlock. He was a kingpin in the Diabolus Sect, a random mix of people around the world who, to one degree or another, believed in destruction, not as a means to an end but the end itself.

Although a self-styled high priest of evil, Diablo convinced himself, he was doing the right thing. Which, in a sense, made him – not evil but seriously misguided. He had long studied the vexing concept of good and evil. At a young age, Francisco was confused. If God exists and is all good why did he allow evil to exist? If God made everything, as Francisco learned in Sunday school, then everything must be a god. If evil exists it has to be part of God, which meant that God could not be all good, his logical mind told him.

All Abbott knew about Hassan Shamsi was he had lived in Castillo Atienza, showing he was a man of wealth and he could afford and probably preferred a grand residence. But he knew so little about the man there were no real clues as to his whereabouts. Thinking he might come across clues by asking people around the place, he ventured into the city, which, to his great surprise, was named after Emperor August or Caesar Augustus.

Abbott soon found evidence of this in the architectural remains of the major public buildings. These included Zaragoza's: Forum, Thermal Baths, the River Port and the Great Theatre, all archaeological remains which reflected the splendour of the city as it was during the Roman Empire. So entranced was he in this that he neglected to find out where the mysterious man was staying.

After resuming his search for the mystery man, Abbott walked around Moreria, the Muslim quarter. Morería comprised, as the reporter discovered, a maze of winding streets, blind alleys and passageways that protected the privacy of their inhabitants. This settlement, which lay to the west of the old city, was home to some of finest examples of Mudéjar art. It was here that Abbott struck gold.

Talking to an English speaking gallery owner about how impressed he was by the art, the conversation got around to why Abbott was in Zaragoza. He explained he was looking for a man called Hassan Shamsi. The art dealer was most helpful. Not only had he heard of the man, but he had also delivered two paintings to him and therefore had his client's address. The problem was that he was not willing to give it out.

In the end, Abbott left his details and the Hotel Sauce phone number. Realising that the Muslim wouldn't know him from a bar of soap, he mentioned the name Harold A Scholfield, known of as the Prof.

Dorian Gibson and a group of scientists sworn to secrecy, had set up the base before Lynch and his military team arrived. Among the scientists was Larson Beck, a physician and expert in tropical diseases. Dr Gibson knocked on his door. At his "Come in", she entered. She liked the fact that Larson Beck, meticulously organised, probably more so than any other member of the expedition, remained stoic and professional. He smiled nervously, "So, they've gone again."

"That's what we're here for."

Larson tried putting on a brave front, but everything from his defensive posture to his hand tapping showed apparent nervousness. Larson was willing to do most things for the expedition and particularly for Lynch and his team. But he freaked at the thought of his atoms being torn apart and then shoved back together, as he passed through the gate.

Dorian, who also hated 'gate travel', sympathised with him, but he was the best energy detector on the Atlantis team.

"And you're here to ask me to go with them?"

"We have to know if Diabolus has infiltrated the island's side. If they have slipped through without our knowing, they might be able to affect the land's vibration."

The Swedish doctor knew the official story well. Atlantis was a mysterious island that sank beneath the waves as a result of bad science and technology. Many explorers had hunted for the fabled land, and none had found it. But the enduring mystery lived on in the mind of man. The expedition members knew different, but the world was not ready to embrace the reality. Even many of the personnel at the base found it hard to believe the fabled island actually existed.

Whether they believed it or not, Dr Gibson and her dedicated team were not allowed to breathe a word about their unique mission.

Larson said, "So far there are no signs of Sect infiltration."

"True Doctor Beck but I can't take the chance that the Sect's dark energy could cause irreparable damage to the Islander's psyche."

"I have been considering the same thing, Dr Gibson, but if we discover it to be the case, I don't have enough staff to go over to the other side and contain it."

She sighed, Colonel Lynch's military force had been thoroughly trained and screened before being allowed to work at the base. "Okay, Dr Beck, I'll speak with General Schulz about employing more medics, even the military variety, if necessary. But I want you out in the field. If any member of the recon team is wounded or injured, I need you with them."

Knowing Rafael Lynch's medical history from previous 'jumps', she was not letting the team step through the gate without Larson there to treat them.

"Dr Gibson, are you sure this is entirely necessary?"

Dorian nodded. As she turned to leave his office, she spun around to face him. "I'm afraid so, Larson. They'll be waiting for you at the gate so get a move on." Dorian was well aware that Colonel Lynch had reservations about the recon, which was her main reason for including Larson but also for not telling him.

Having been transported to the secret location, in an ATV (All Terrain Vehicle) The team assembled at the gate. Everyone was present, except Dr MacKay, who was trailing behind. He arrived five minutes later with his ever-present tablet, which seemed to be surgically attached.

Muttering scientific jargon to himself, Larson said, "We'll see you when we get back." He faced Dorian, and they met each other's gaze, as was always the case when she saw them off. Larson crossed himself, making a quiet peace, should he never again see the woman he secretly loved. This romantic fantasy with undeclared feelings was the main reason for his reticence, and the thought that it could be his last moment with her.

"Be careful," she said, smiling at her people.

"Have you known me to be anything less than careful?" Lynch asked, completely serious.

"Yeah right," Kronyn spoke up, a smirk on his lips as the Colonel flashed a dark look in his direction.

Secretly Kronyn was happy to be spending some time back home.

"Thanks," Raf remarked. Then he turned to Dorian. "See you when we get back." With that, the Colonel turned about and marched through the Gate, trying not to think about every one of his molecules being ripped apart, only to be put back together again.

Tella, Kronyn and Rodney followed at Lynch's heels, already assuming their positions in the pecking order. Larson lingered, as he took one last look at the waving Dorian. Although Larson Beck, as an ex-military medical doctor, had to deal with death on a regular basis, he still wasn't used to coming to terms with his mortality. The realisation that 'he' could be dead within the next few hours, was something he did not want to contemplate.

Beck was no coward on the battle front. As a Medivac doctor in Iraq, he often had to evacuate wounded soldiers from combat zones. But when it came to courage Colonel Lynch, Tella and Kronyn had it in spades.

"Goodbye, Larson." Dorian gave him the smallest of smiles.

"Don't say that Dorian," he whispered, with downcast eyes. He adjusted the shoulder strap of his M-90 as he walked through the Gate.

Dorian looked as each member of the team disappeared before her eyes. She had an overriding fear that one day, Colonel Lynch's team wouldn't come back. Dr Gibson couldn't bear to think she would never again feel Tella's warmth and compassion, Kronyn's dedication to duty, Rodney's intellectual one-upmanship and, although she wouldn't admit it to herself, Larson's love for her.

Mentally kicking herself for indulging in such thoughts, she trusted they would all return safe and sound. She convinced herself that Raf knew what he was doing, He was her SIC and their military leader. He was also a strong, handsome guy who put her in mind of James Garner.

She was tempted to act on her feelings, but anything more than a professional relationship and things could get messy. She, as his CO, needed to keep their association on a professional basis. Besides, she hadn't had a successful history with men and, despite her bossiness at times, even with a PhD in business administration, Dorian was still an insecure dissatisfied woman on the inside.

The plans were in place, the supplies delivered, and the team was ready. The professor sat back on his balcony, overlooking the blue Mediterranean, in quiet contemplation. He was a man of power. He had been given that power for a reason, to fulfil the function of the universe. If it were not so how had he come by the means to carry it out? He was Diablo Sonata - the dark one, a title bestowed upon him, he believed, by the great Diabolus. From this authoritative source, he received his teaching.

The universe existed to destroy itself, and he was just giving it a helping hand. Only an extraordinarily illumined being could grasp such a simple yet profound concept. The great scientist Einstein believed entirely in the supreme nature of the heat death law. He had proclaimed the Second Law of Thermodynamics to be the premier ruler of the entire universe. It was very simple. Things go from hot to cold - not the other way around unless we use an external energy source. Like his fire in Atienza square.

People go cold when they die. They don't come to life again, despite what Hollywood would have us believe. And he was a genius. Diablo did not consider himself a disciple or follower of those great scientists, but he did enjoy helping to fulfil their Prophecies. The destruction of the Dome would just help entropy to accelerate a little faster.

<https://www.greenProfet.com/2012/01/israeli-architecture-gone-wrong/>

<http://www.meforum.org/10/the-struggle-for-the-temple-mount>

Chapter 35

Hassan pulled over to the hard shoulder to take the call. The message puzzled him, and he sat in the driver's seat wondering about it afterwards. Why would a man, who Hassan had only met a couple of times, and who had just sold him a pair of pieces of Mudéjar art, contact him, merely to say someone was looking for him? In his position, he had to be wary of any oddity. His life could depend upon it. He reread the information. Who was Abbott Gallagher and what did he have to do with Harry Scholfield, a person he hadn't heard from in over a decade? He wondered what Harry wanted? Hassan took out his phone and rang the number the art dealer had given him. Upon hearing a man's voice, he said, "An art dealer gave me your details and told me you were looking for me."

"Are you Hassan Shamsi?"

"Who wants to know?"

"My name is Abbott Gallagher. I am, I was a friend of the Prof. Well that's what we called him."

"I am aware of that."

"So, am I speaking with Hassan Shamsi?"

Hassan, uneasy about giving personal details over the phone, said, "Why do you want to see me?"

"The Prof, Harold Scholfield, told me to contact you."

"About what?"

Abbott, not sure what to say, decided to risk it. "Atlantis."

Having heard enough, Hassan said, "Where are you?"

"Hotel Sauce, Zaragoza."

"I will see you there at 1 pm."

With the meeting arranged and his plans changed, Hassan manoeuvred his Avida Winnebago back into the traffic and carrying out a U-turn headed back to Zaragoza.

Abbott looked at his watch. It was 1.10 pm and no sign of Hassan. He went back to his fried calamari and portobello mushroom, covered with crab meat. Then he saw the man enter. He was tall and sported an Asama type beard. Abbott put him in his fifties. He was wearing casual clothes. Abbott rose from his seat. "Are you Hassan Shamsi?"

Hassan nodded and took a seat. "Show me the letter."

Abbott passed it over.

Hassan put on his reading glasses and read:

My dear Abbott

I will have died before you read this. I had hoped to show you the wonders of higher dimensional realities but, alas, there was not time. To further your enlightenment in these matters you need to find a wise colleague and trusted friend, Hassan Shamsi. He will know what to do. I am not sure where he is, except it is somewhere in Spain. I know this is not much to go on. Farewell, my friend.

The Prof

(Harold A Scholfield)

Hassan looked at the Australian. "How did you two meet?"

"In a cafe, playing chess."

"He always did love his chess." He eyed Abbott. "So what am I supposed to do with you?"

"You could tell me what this is all about."

"Where to start. That's the problem." Then Hassan got up. "Come and walk with me."

As they walked in a nearby park, The Arab said, "Look around you, Abbott. Zaragoza still possesses a multitude of indicators that tell us something of the grandeur of the city."

"It is beautiful, but I don't know what I am doing here."

"Mr Gallagher, the world today lacks tolerance and fear and prejudice is rife. Thanks to the Mudéjar, and their show of tolerance, different cultures were able to live side by side, with Christians, Jews and Moslems in a united community. Because of them, we can still enjoy beautiful enclaves such as the San Salvador Cathedral (the Seo) or the San Pablo church."

"As impressive as your information is, I don't see how it helps me understand why I am here."

"Did Harold ever say anything about the 'Soter Group'?"

"I believe he may have mentioned it a couple of times in passing. What is it?"

"Saviours."

"Is it religious."

Hassan smiled through his beard. "It's ancient Greek for Saviour. Let's just say Soter is a group of people dedicated to truth and justice."

"That's very noble. But does Soter have any real influence?"

"Mr Gallagher, Do you know what is meant by truth and justice?"

"Sure, it's about being treated fairly."

"It is much more than that. The Khemmetians had a god called Atum, whom the Greeks called Atom. Aten had sex with the void and seeded the universe."

"A poetic description for jerking off."

Hassan frowned. "If you are not going to take this seriously ..."

"Sorry. I won't interrupt again."

"Very well. Now, this seeding was random and chaotic and would have destroyed itself if it were not for Maat, the Khemmetian Goddess of justice. She was symbolised by an ostrich feather or had one in her hair. She was the daughter of the sun god Ra. To the old Khemmetians - later to be called Egyptians - Ma'at, everlasting and powerful, bound everything together in order. She represented truth, right, justice, world order, stability, and continuity."

"We could do with her influence now."

Hassan's piercing dark eyes bored into Abbott. "There are physical forces in this world who's one and only aim is to bring about destruction and chaos. They call themselves Diabolus, The Prince of Darkness, the destroyer of worlds. Diabolus is the ancient Greek word for 'devil', which is where the western Church got the idea."

"I seem to recall the Prof mentioning them. Hassan, what's their motivation for being destructive - money, power, control?"

"If only it were that simple. Diabolus agents believe all life in the universe will eventually die. Therefore they see no purpose in prolonging the pain and suffering. They think their actions are purging and pure."

Abbott scratched his chin. "Can we fault their logic?"

"I know what you mean. Under the present scientific restraints, which are financial constraints, the answer is no. But there is also no justice in that. I mean are we put here on this planet to think, feel, build and grow, for no reason? It doesn't make sense. And I don't count extinction as a reason."

"I still don't get it, Hassan. What's this mythical Atlantis got to do with it?"

"They have the answer. The Atlanteans have the technology to restore the order. We just have to bring it into this world."

Abbott grinned cheekily, "You make it sound simple."

"It's anything but, and we haven't found a way yet. But There is someone who can help."

"Who's that?"

"First I have to show you what we mean."

For Rabbi Finstein the tribulation period would begin when his fellow Jews offered sacrifices, confirming their seven-year covenant. This ritual could only take place once they could offer sacrifices where Solomon built the original temple. This reasoning was the cleric's motivation for destroying The Dome of the Rock, the Islamic sacred shrine that had been standing there for over 1,300 years. In the Book, 'The Revelation Unlocked', the author gives Biblical details pointing out that during an invasion of Israel, Muslims will destroy their own Dome of the Rock on God's Holy mountain in Israel. The destruction of the Dome will give Jews access to their temple location for the first time since its destruction in 70 AD.

He shone a torch on the blueprint of the mount, then up at his men. "You each know what to do. There will be no communication until everything is in place. May God be with you, my brothers, as we carry out his Holy work." The six men left the black transit van and walked to a flat section of the four walls surrounding the Temple Mount. There hadn't been any attempts to damage the temple of late, so Jewish security was down to a minimum.

The black-clad figures breached the trapezoid shaped wall and let themselves into the temple grounds. Like shadows in the starless night, they moved surreptitiously towards their allocated targets. Shem, the team leader, walked quietly past the location where Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice, the known location of the two Jewish Temples. So far he hadn't encountered any security guards. Shem checked the blueprint.

Ahead he could just make out the shape of the courtyard surrounding the elevated platform and the decorated arch structures around the Dome. Security services operating at the 'Dome' had blocked most of the gateways, leaving them inaccessible. Shem knew the hard bit was to come, once he was through one of the unblocked gateways set in the wall. He headed for one of the newer ones, from the Arab conquest. Shem's sharp eyes picked up a faint glow fifty or so metres away. The soldier froze. There was somebody there.

Shem, using his military training, edged forward to get a better look. It was a guard smoking a cigarette. He appeared to be talking to someone else, Shem could not see. The ex-Jewish soldier, one of Israel's best army snipers, got himself into a better position where he could see both guards and lined up his targets.

The sniper unslung his silenced rifle, loaded with nickel-tipped bullets. He calmly centred on his targets. He loved the genius of the CIA armourers. There was no giveaway muzzle flash and no recoil. With the killing accuracy of a mile, the fifty metres was child's play.

With the guards dispatched, Shem entered the sanctified area with its great works of art. The exquisite craftsmanship, prayer spots, arches, minarets, fountains and arched porticos meant little to Shem, except reminders of the sacrilegious destruction of Solomon's Temple.

He checked his watch. The others should be in place. He unpacked his backpack, carefully removing the explosive devices. Then he lifted his eyes to the heavens and gave thanks for the coming Tribulation.

Rabbi Finstein sat quietly in the parked van, observing events on his touchpad. He had fitted each of his men with a tiny video camera so he could see what was going on. He could easily see the progress of each saboteur. Having dealt with the guards, the saboteurs had the mount to themselves. Soon the monstrosity would be irreparably damaged, and there would be nothing to stop the building of the Third Temple.

In an interview room at Broadbeach Police Station Detective, Sergeant Jones asked, "Dr Covington, what was your relationship with Nicholas Griffin?"

Plausible denial was no longer an option. Philip Law, who was present with Ulysses, offered, "Dr Covington employed Mr Griffin as an odd-job man, from time to time."

Jones suspended his disbelief. He had an intense dislike for these pricks in their plush offices looking down their nose at the law. "I see, and you will be able to provide proof of these arrangements?"

"They were casual transactions, Sergeant. Mr Griffin did not ask for receipts, or received any."

Jones turned to Ulysses, "I'm talking to you, not your lawyer."

Philip intervened, "Mr Covington has asked me to field your questions, Sergeant. Unless you are here to charge him, of course."

Jones coughed. He hated smart-arsed lawyers. "Do you have records of these jobs and their dates, Mr Covington."

"My client may have some records somewhere, but he will have to look for them."

Jones flipped over a page in his notebook. "Do you know Helen Cleaver?"

"No, Dr Covington does not know her."

"That's funny because she knows him. She used to work for Heron."

"Yes, Sergeant, we already know that. But Mr Covington does not know all of his employees."

Expecting this answer, he countered, "Granted. But Ms Cleaver's name came up in the exposure of your stem cell experiments, Dr Covington if you recall."

Law felt uncomfortable. This stem cell stuff was dangerous territory. "My client only knows of her from her ridiculous accusations, but that is different from knowing her."

Jones grinned slightly. "Did your client discuss Helen Cleaver with Mr Griffin?"

"Of course not!" Law spluttered, feigning outrage.

"That's not what Mr Griffin says. He states that not only did your client discuss Helen Cleaver with him; he asked Mr Griffin to scare her off."

"That is an outrageous lie, Sergeant. Surely the police don't believe a thug like Griffin, over Dr Covington."

Detective Sergeant Jones loved it when he had the suspect on the ropes. "Right now his story seems the most plausible." He rose to leave. "Oh, and do look for those notes, Mr Covington. You can drop them in at the Broadbeach Police Station."

Lynne Becker looked at the Sydney Herald front page. DISABLED WOMAN THREATENED BY MAN PAID BY ROBOTICS BOSS! The story went on to say that Nick Gibbon made threats to wheelchair bound Helen Cleaver, on the Bogangar headland, at the behest of Heron Industries boss, Dr Ulysses Covington. It was plain and straightforward and could not be misconstrued. Her course of action was decided. She looked at the article again, just as her cab swung into the entrance leading to Heron Industries.

Striding confidently to the reception desk, she said, "Dr Becker to see Dr Covington."

"Do you have an appointment?" the receptionist asked, scanning her computer monitor.

"No, but he is expecting me. So just let him know I am here."

The girl looked at the attractive, supremely confident blond woman, wishing she had the same self-assurance. Then being assertive, she said, "Dr Covington said he was not to be disturbed."

Lynne, getting annoyed but trying to hide it, said, "Do you like your job, young lady?"

The girl stared, open-mouthed. "Er, yes. Why?"

"Because I am more important to Dr Covington than you. Get him for me now."

"It's great to see you again, Lynne," Ulysses said, as Dr Becker entered his office.

"I wish I could say the same, Ulysses but there are no good tidings of great joy, I'm afraid."

He wanted to hug her but restrained himself. He needed a hug. It would not fix his crapped on life, but it could help. Instead, he gushed, "It's been awful here. They're treating me like someone with the fucking plague."

She looked at the dishevelled, usually sharp looking man's sallow complexion and bags under his eyes. "You look terrible."

"Thanks," he grinned wanly.

"It's time for you to move aside."

He stared at her. "I thought you at least believed me."

"Jesus Ulysses, this disaster has gone way beyond what you did or didn't do. You're under police investigation; the science ethics people are after you, and your board of directors are plotting against you. For God sake wake up and move over!"

He could feel tears beginning to well and blew his nose. "This is my fucking company. I built it up from nothing. They can't just ditch me."

"They can and they will. At least this way you can resign for the good of the project and walk away with some dignity intact."

"And then what am I supposed to do?"

"Concentrate on fighting the police rap," Seeing his deep sadness, she softened and gave him a hug. Close to his ear, she said, "Ulysses, get your act together. You are a brilliant scientist and innovator. Once you're clear, there's a job for a man with your talents at Boston Cybernetics. Leave this backwater and be part of the action, where it counts."

He had never considered another alternative to Heron. It had been his life for so long. "You could be right. I may well have outlived my usefulness here. I will give it some thought."

She backed away. "Ulysses, don't weaken. Put in your resignation while I am here. I have to know you haven't backed down."

You expect me to roll over just like that?" Ulysses said, seething inside.

"Ulysses, don't you get it. I'm not asking you to do this. It is a directive from DARPA. What you are caught up in is far worse than our Japanese friends making sonar equipment to track minke whales. They are so close to pulling the plug on you. You have no choice in this. You will resign, and you will write your letter now."

She handed him an envelope with the DARPA logo on it. There was a covering note from Colonel Barney Cormack and a letter of resignation citing all the reasons for his decision. All he had to do was sign it.

Ulysses stared at the damning document, a nauseous sensation welling up in his stomach. He looked at Lynne accusingly, then turned back to the letter. Reaching with a trembling hand for his Parker pen, he scrawled his name at the bottom of the document.

Dome of the Rock - The Revelation Unlocked. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://therevelationunlocked.com/domeoftherock.html>

Chapter 36

The Explosions went off simultaneously as fifty kilos of Semtex detonated sending shockwaves through the Dome as flames that engulfed the area sucked all the oxygen out of the air. Load-bearing columns took the brunt of the explosions, as they weakened and collapsed, bringing the golden dome crashing down upon them.

People nearby looked out at the impromptu pyrotechnics, with dread in their hearts. Instinctively they knew what had happened. Many froze like statues, in disbelief, while others were bursting with anger, vented their spleen at the starless night. They didn't exactly know what the repercussions would be, but they knew they would be bad for everybody.

Dayton Lynsey looked out of his hotel window at the fireball atop the Temple Mount. In his mind's eye, he could already see the missiles of Islamic nations swing in Jerusalem's direction, like a north

homing compass. Israel would already be going into offensive mode and arm its American nuclear weapons.

All hell was about to break loose. Dayton knew this was the work of Professor Sonata, but he could not prove it. He wouldn't have done it himself, of course. Sonata would have incited and possibly funded an extreme Jewish group to carry out the mission. He quickly made a call to Yasir Tiwanah, who lived on the outskirts of Jerusalem. "This is Dayton; I know it's late. But The Dome on the Mount has just gone up in a fireball."

Yasir, just awoken from deep sleep, shocked into wakefulness, exclaimed. "My God!"

"Precisely! All hell is about to break loose in the city. I need to leave right now and get to Ben Gurion Airport.

"Okay, I will try to make arrangements. But at this late hour and with such little notice ..."

"Get me a car and charter a plane. Let me know as soon as you have it done."

Dayton feverishly stuffed his belongings into a couple of cases. Already the cacophony of screams and yells rang out from the streets below. Five minutes later Dayton's phone rang. It was Yasir. "I have made your arrangements."

A car was waiting at the main entrance of the Inbal Hotel, where Dayton was staying. The code name 'Zion fire' was to be given. Dayton knew that every minute counted. Very soon it was going to turn ugly in the old city. He grabbed his luggage, took the elevator to the foyer, where he hastily paid his bill. Already a queue was beginning to form behind him. Grabbing his bags he made his way to the black Mercedes. He tapped on the driver's window, mouthing, 'Zion fire'. The driver released the boot, got out and hastily stored the Englishman's luggage.

"Laufer Aviation, Ben Gurion Airport," Dayton barked, settling in the leather passenger seat.

As they drove from the hotel, sirens rent the air, as fire trucks from ten of the twenty-four metro regions raced towards the Temple Mount. Dayton's driver knew Jerusalem like the back of his hand. He was aware that the journey to Tel Aviv was not going to be easy. Getting out of Jerusalem would be a nightmare.

The first delay took place near Mugrabi where hastily erected police roadblocks slowed traffic. Only fire trucks and other emergency vehicles had access to the Temple Mount disaster area. The driver explained that the only access to the Jewish side was the wooden Mugrabi bridge, which was not robust enough to support emergency vehicles - only their crews.

Dayton heard the unmistakable thrumming noise of helicopters overhead. The deafening rotor noise came from half a dozen firefighting choppers, their powerful, dazzling searchlights illuminating their target, as they released water from the baskets they carried, onto the burning wreck below.

Dayton told the driver to switch on the news. An announcer spoke in Hebrew. The driver translated that Police at the scene came across 12 dead security guards. They had died from bullet wounds, not the explosions. A police spokesperson said it was evident that the disaster was no accident.

Dayton could have told him that.

As word of the Dome destruction spread like wildfire throughout the city, Arab mobs took to the streets seeking revenge. "This could get a little rough," the Soter driver said as they drove through an area usually populated by moderate Muslims and Jews.

This night was different as Arab mobs, fired up by the event, gave vent to a lifetime of passive aggression, rampaged, smashing windshields of cars as frantic Jews tried to make their getaway in slow moving traffic. Just ahead, the frenzied Arab mob targeted cars driven by Jews as they passed near Jerusalem's Damascus (Shechem) Gate.

Caught up in the queue, as riot police tried quelling the crowds, and police traffic control brought the lines of cars to a virtual standstill, The drivers, sitting ducks to the unfolding violence, wound up their windows, tensing themselves for the assault to come.

Dayton's driver said, "Hang onto your hat. We have to get out of here, now." Spotting a narrow side street, he quickly reversed colliding with the car close behind. Giving himself just enough room, he gunned the Merc and slewed into a narrow side street, blasting his horn and flashing his high-beam, scattering any pedestrians in his way.

The alleyway, barely wide enough for the big Merc, was filled with the roar of the eight cylinder engine. The German car then skidded in a sharp left turn, narrowly missing oncoming traffic. The driver virtually stood on his brakes, just avoiding a rear-end collision.

Dayton, tense and alert, had never driven in such a nightmare situation. His driver was fantastic. Through the window of the speeding, Merc Dayton saw fires, Jews fighting Arabs, Riot police with tear gas and pepper sprays. Some were using their batons and shields against bricks stones and Molotov cocktails. Once again, finding their path hampered by roads blocks with burning overturned cars, the driver had to find another route out of the war zoned city.

Dayton watched as hundreds of Jews got beaten and injured in a pitched battle with the police in the centre of Jerusalem. Arab activists had also taken to the streets carrying worded placards displaying messages blaming the Israeli Government for not protecting the Golden Dome.

Their car was approaching Zion Square, where a feeding frenzy of Arabs and Jews were smashing shop windows and grabbing what they could, while police were engaged in quietening the ensuing riots. To Dayton, the converted smart shopping and amusement centre had become a no-man's-land between police and the Arab crowds. The Arabs were retreating without dispersing, in the face of police baton charges. They continued stoning the police, who were rapidly erecting barbed-wire barricades in the square. Some of the mob turned their attention on the German luxury limousine, which had gotten caught up in yet another traffic jam.

The driver said, "Sit tight, we have bullet proof glass and a reinforced steel body," just as stone missiles and other projectiles found their target. Dayton didn't know it at the time, but severe disorder followed the stoning of the Government District Office on Jaffa Road by a crowd of at least 10,000 Jews.

The mob smashed the entrance to the building, damaged and occupied the ground floor of a department store and also took possession of a German-Christian restaurant adjoining police headquarters and public telephone kiosks. Jerusalem was coming apart at the scenes. Israeli troops were called in to boost the numbers of the inadequate riot police.

Dayton was amazed how his driver kept finding ways through the maze of rioters and burning obstacles in the road. Somehow they made it onto Ze'ev Jabotinsky without any major incident. They turned left onto Hanas, then right onto Highway 1 which would take them to Tel Aviv. Now that they were past most of the intense clashes the going was smoother until they reached LA Mayer Institute for Islamic Art.

All of a sudden an out-of-control Jewish mob confronted them. The Merc was heading straight for a hastily erected barricade across the road. The barrier comprising objects de art, display cases museum furniture and fittings The driver weighed things up very quickly. He could floor the accelerator and smash through the barricade, and the car could probably cope. But there was a lot of broken glass, and if he got a flat, they would have no chance of escaping the wrath of these people. He braked hard bringing the great machine to an almost instant standstill. He hit reverse. The wheels spun burning rubber. The wheels gripped, and the big Merc shot backwards.

Just in time, the driver braked again, as a tanker truck blocked the road from behind. "Fuck!" he said, crashing the stick into low gear. "Hold on to your hat again," he said to Dayton, as he floored the accelerator, making the car screech as it surged at full pelt towards the barrier.

A man wearing the room steward's uniform of the Inbal Hotel Went to room 512, where Lord Lynsey was staying. Using his pass key, the porter let himself into Dayton's suite. Retrieving a handgun from inside his jacket, he quickly and quietly screwed on the silencer. He then opened the bedroom door and blasted away at the body shaped mound in the bed.

With hardly a sound a close-knit pattern of holes appeared in the bed clothes - but no blood! The man stood still for a moment, the smoking gun still in his hand. The hit man took out his mobile, pressed a contact, waited for the voice, then he said, "The bird has flown. I repeat the bird has flown."

"What do you know of Alexander the Great?" Hassan asked as he and Abbott sat in his Winnebago drinking mint tea.

The journalist shrugged, "I don't know. As I recall, Alexander was the King of Macedonia. He was a young king who conquered a lot of the world and had a lot of places named after him."

The Muslim stretched out his long legs. "While on his Indian campaign it is written that he came to a most pleasant mountain, on the side of which hung chains or ropes of gold. Near the top, after climbing two thousand and fifty steps all of purest sapphire, Alexander struck camp. Atop the mountain he found there a Palace called the Palace of the Sun, in which he found a man lying on a golden bedstead; he was very stately and beautiful in appearance, and his head and beard were white as snow.

Alexander and his princes bent the knee to the Sage who said Alexander would see what no natural man had seen or heard before. He told the conqueror to put aside his rings and ornaments; to walk barefoot and follow him. Following the sage, Alexander came to the Trees of the Sun and Moon. The Tree of the Sun had leaves of red gold, the Tree of the Moon had leaves of silver.

The Sage questioned the Trees, asking if Alexander would return in triumph to Macedon? The answer was, No, but he would live another eighteen months after which he would die by a poisoned cup. He was not told who would poison him."

"A fascinating story but what has it got to do with anything?"

"As you did not pick up on the symbolism, probably nothing."

"What symbolism?"

Hassan studied the younger man with his dark piercing eyes. "The symbolism of ancient Alchemy. For a start, the so-called talking trees were merely strips of wood with tables of letters upon them, using which oracles were evoked. Following the sage barefoot speaks of giving up the past to experience the present."

Abbott, becoming more interested, asked, "Where did alchemy come from originally?"

"We alchemists have great difficulty in deciding the origin of alchemy owing to our ignorance concerning the so-called lost continent of Atlantis."

Ah, at last, we are back on track, Abbott thought. "Because it is not lost but in a different reality to this one."

"Excellent. I see Harry taught you well." He paused then, picked up a set of cards and handed them to the Australian. "The Great Arcanum was the most prized of the secrets of the Atlantean priest craft. When the physical land of Atlas sank, hierophants of the Fire Mystery brought the formula to Khemmet - which the Greeks later called Aegyptus, from which we get Egypt - where it remained for centuries in the possession of the sages and philosophers. It gradually got taken into Europe, where Soter still preserves its secrets."

"Are you a member of that group?"

Hassan smiled, wistfully and offered Abbott some sweet mint tea.

As they sipped their tea, the alchemist said, "Regardless of its origins, it was left to the Khemmetian priests to preserve alchemy for the modern world. Khem, because of the colour of its earth, was called 'the black empire' and is referred to in the Old Testament as "the land of darkness." Because of its possible origin there, alchemy has long been 'the black art,' not in any sense of evil but the meaning of darkness is that which has always enshrouded its secret processes."

"Is it through alchemy that we can find the lost key to Atlantis?"

Hassan smiled widely. Harry's protege was tuned in. It would save a lot of time and energy. "Are you ready to walk barefoot with me?" he asked.

The first thing Lynch always noticed about the island was how fresh aromas hung in the air, almost like mild incense. Filling his lungs with the sweet air had the Colonel feeling light-headed and relaxed. As pleasant as the feeling was Lynch had to stay alerted and ready to respond to any challenges.

The majestic trees reached up gracefully towards the bright blue sky. The sun cast its warming rays upon the five-person team, making the trip seem more like a vacation. "Are you getting anything, Rodney?" Raf asked over his shoulder, his eyes trained on the forest in front of them as they made their way into the underbrush.

"No, nothing at all. Which is rather weird, unless Diabolus have somehow managed to remain undetected." The measuring device was able to pick up ULF (ultra-low-frequency waves) a signature vibration of Sect's agents.

"Or unless they are not here," Kronyn suggested.

"Let's hope not," Tella said, "We only have three people here who can fight."

"Then we got you and Beck," Raf said to Rodney.

MacKay responded, "On Atlantis, a knowledge of science is more important than alpha male antics. Anyone can learn to fight, but I have unique skills crucial for this job."

Raf quoted Dr Gibson. "Just because you doctors have unique skills doesn't mean they are useful, let alone critical."

"Well, excuse me, just because I don't run around, waving a gun everywhere doesn't mean I can't fight." Larson huffed. "MacKay's the one that can't fight," he muttered petulantly.

The Colonel relaxed his grip on his XM-25 CATS, a computer-aided targeting system, allowing him to quickly aim at a target, adjust the range of the air-bursting round, while still ready to fire at a second's notice. Something about the island both relaxed him and kept him on edge. He didn't detect anything sinister, but there had been reports by Tella that an element of Atlanteans did not like interference from the other side of the portal.

The team continued walking through the exotic undergrowth for twenty minutes when Rodney, holding his XM-25 tightly, complained loudly. "My forearm feels like it's going numb. Could it be a muscle spasm?"

Beck took a look and said, "It's not a muscle spasm, Rodney, I'm sure of that."

"I'm pretty sure it is." The scientist twitched as he looked around. "I'm also pretty sure some crazy natives are going to jump out at any moment."

"MacKay, I'm leaving you here if you don't quieten down," Lynch stated seriously.

"You cannae do that." Rodney snapped smugly. "You guys need me to find the Sect agents and get us what we need here."

"Then stop complaining like a petulant child," Raf said.

MacKay was about to reply when his vibrato-detector started registering a strong field. He looked at the reading. "Huh, that's odd."

"What is it?" Rafael asked, falling back into his role as leader, as he looked over the scientist's shoulder.

Beck had also picked up the vibrations. He interrupted, "There's a rather large cluster of negative life signs ahead. It seems that there is a Diabolus presence in a small village about two clicks from here."

"There's no reason why they couldn't have infiltrated the entire population, especially if they just blend in," MacKay stated a little too casually.

"Could it just be some of the people who hate American invaders?" Tella suggested.

"Either way it's not good news," Raf said, gripping his rifle.

The team trudged through the jungle three hundred more metres until they came to a small rock formation. Colonel Lynch leant against it. It felt smooth and only rose some six feet at a steep angle from the ground.

Kronyn adjusted the stunner he held. "I don't like this place."

"Why not?" Raf asked mockingly. "It's a great vacation spot. If only there were a surf beach, some beer and a surfboard it would be perfect."

"It's just too quiet. Something's going to happen." Kronyn answered.

Tella broke in, gently smiling, "We're all just used to danger and things going wrong. A routine mission is not a terrible thing." She reminded them.

"Tella's right," Larson agreed. "No one but us has passed through the Gate in the entire time we have watched it."

"Except the time our monitoring equipment was down that hour." Rodney grouched as he stood up.

"Diabolus would have to be on constant standby to take advantage of that small window," Raf said.

"Not if they engineered the breakdown," Larson commented.

"That would mean they have someone on the inside. And we don't want to go there," the Colonel stated.

"Yes, well maybe they did, and maybe some did slip through when we were blindsided," Beck persisted.

"So why are we only now picking up their wee signal?" Rodney asked.

"They must have developed a shield to hide their vibration from us," Tella said.

"Have you considered the possibility that your equipment is at fault?" Raf said, leaning casually against a rock. But his shoulder never touched it. It went right through, and he landed hard, groaning, "What the fuck!"

"Colonel?" He could hear Tella's voice, but he couldn't see her. It was dark and disorienting. Gathering his wits, Rafael said, "I think the rock's just a shield, guys." Getting to his feet, he then spotted a small device not very far away from him in the dark cave he had fallen into; it was similar to something Raf had seen in Rodney's lab. He reached over and felt for a switch but instead found a dial and twisted it. The immaterial solid rock face melted, revealing his team. "Hey, guys. Happy to see you." He greeted. Then he said, "Where did my flashlight go?"

The Colonel, Tella and Larson all activated the lights on their XM-25s. Rodney found his smaller version of a flashlight. With illumination to guide them, the team walked down the tunnel. Which, apart from being dark, damp and freezing, suggested nothing suspicious.

Then, without any warning, they were under attack by unseen forces. Bullets ricocheted off rocks with one finding its mark, nicking Raf's shoulder. "Fuck!" he exploded, returning fire, along with all the armed members of the team.

With initial adrenaline expended, the pain assaulted Rafael, making him feel faint. There was no time for Beck to deal with his wound. He had to stay on top of things. Tella, always very smart and alert, took refuge in a small dip in the cave wall, while Kronyn crouched down, making himself a smaller target. Rodney ducked behind a small boulder, protecting himself from any stray bullets. Lynch pressed himself hard against the wall, trying to find an indentation to give him some protection. Larson, positioned behind him, was careful to shoot around Raf, his eyes on the blood dripping from his friend's bent elbow.

A strange voice cried out from the other side of the battle, and the enemy stopped firing. Raf switched on his Atlantean to English translator, as he tentatively motioned for his team to lower their firearms. They glanced at him questioningly but ceased firing.

A light was turned on, and they could see the faces of their enemies. Surprised, Raf noted they were all youngsters most of whom were in their late teens. They had ducked behind boulders and other large objects, as well as standing behind the bend in the tunnel that veered sharply to the left. Slowly they retreated, ordered to do so by a young woman and an immature man.

The girl's bluish skin glow made her out to be an Atlantean. She took tentative steps towards Rafael's team, her weapon lowered. Others followed her example, but two of them stayed behind, tending to a young man lying bleeding on the ground.

Larson stepped around Kronyn to stand next to the slightly wounded Lynch. "I'm an experienced doctor. Let me examine your man," he said. Then pulling the strap of his XM-25 over his head, Dr Beck handed his weapon to Tella to show he meant no harm. "He smiled, "I won't hurt him."

The dark-haired young woman's eyes met his evenly. The Atlantean girl nodded. "Very well, stranger." Then, looking at the young man standing beside her, she ordered, "Takran, watch him."

Beck followed Takran, to where the wounded boy lay. An XM-25 slug had hit his upper arm. Larson immediately got to work. He opened his medical pack and withdrew antiseptic and a bandage. The shot was clean, and the bullet had gone straight through. Checking that no remnants remained in the wound, the Swedish doctor looked at his patient. "You'll be alright, lad. "I'll just stitch you up and give you a light painkiller." He then cleaned the wound, sutured it and put the boy's arm in a sling. Larson turned to Raf. Seeing the bloody patch on the colonel's fatigues, he said, "I'll take a look at your shoulder shortly, Colonel,"

"Don't bother about it Beck. It's just a nick." Raf had his mind on other things. He turned his attention back to the woman leader, making sure she wasn't going to attack the doctor once he had treated the boy. He still slightly resented the Swede for not attending to him first. However, the doctor's swift action showed goodwill. Addressing the Atlantean beauty, he said, "I'm Lieutenant

Colonel Rafael Lynch of the American Marines. We came through the gate out of concern, and we need to speak with your leader about this."

The young woman nodded. "We know who you are and what you are doing. You are not wanted here."

Raf grinned, rubbing his shoulder. "I got that in the firefight. But we have a job to do and to carry it out we had to come here. I assure you we wish you no harm."

MacKay spoke up. "We are here to learn about your technology to help humanity survive."

Raf added, "I'm sorry that my people fired on yours. But we were defending ourselves against an unknown enemy."

The woman said, "We did not expect anyone to find our entrance, much less that you would offer to help us." She explained. "My name is Tamis. If you follow me, we can give you some semblance of hospitality."

Lynch looked over his shoulder at his team. Although they seemed wary, like him, their instincts didn't start ringing alarm bells. They followed Tamis, and her soldiers along the passage, leaving Takran with Larson to help the injured boy walk behind them. Lynch had Kronyn stay with them until they caught up.

"If you don't mind me asking," Lynch began. "Why are you all living in a cave when it seems perfectly fine outside?"

Tamis looked over her shoulder and slowed her pace so she and Rafael would be side by side. She explained, "Recently, there was a power takeover. We, the young ones, decided to form a resistance group underground. My father's last order was that we, the younger generation were the hope of the future for Atlantis and that we should protect ourselves by moving to the caves with all of our supplies. My father could not agree with the new regime, and they took him away. I have not seen him since."

"Who is this new Regime?" Lynch asked.

"They are called Singularians. I have led this band of resistance ever since." Her voice was low and even, but the pain and conflict in her dark brown eyes hid intense grief. After a while, she announced, "here we are."

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/eso/sta/sta37.htm>

Over 100 Jews Wounded in Jerusalem Riot; Police Battle ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.jta.org/1939/05/19/archive/over-100-jews-wounded-in-jerusalem-riot-po>

Secret Teachings of All Ages: The Theory and Practice of ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/eso/sta/sta37.htm>

Chapter 37

Dayton's heart leapt into his mouth as the car barrelled straight for the barrier blocking their way to freedom. Screaming Jews jumped for safety as the black limo impacted with the wall of furniture, fittings, paintings, etc., its acceleration carrying it onward as bullets bounced off its body and

windows. Timbers cracked, glass shattered and canvas ripped as the Merc continued on its path of destruction. Dayton ducked, as he rolled onto the floor between the seats. Then there was an awful crunch, and the car seemed to slew sideways and come to a standstill. He heard the driver yell, "ARE YOU ARMED?"

"YES."

"RIGHT, FOLLOW ME, NOW!."

Dayton wasn't about to argue. Rocks and Molotov cocktails fell on and near the wrecked car. It was pitch black and extremely hostile outside. Dayton pushed open his door, just as it took a couple of hits. He ducked and crawled out of the car, his Beretta at the ready. It was a close action weapon but having it afforded him some sense of power.

The driver, having gotten safely out of the car, urged Dayton behind a concrete barrier, as the mob raced towards them. The driver only had a split second to put his hastily contrived plan into action. Luckily he had topped up with petrol, and the tanks were nearly full. The chauffeur, cursing the car for being bullet-proof, had to fire straight into the petrol tank. He yelled at Dayton, "MOVE! GET AWAY NOW!"

Seeing what the reckless driver was about to do, he froze. He had to seize the moment. The armed hoard was already scrambling over the barrier. Dayton took to his heels, climbing over the remaining debris that hampered his progress. The deafening explosion and ensuing fireball gave him a few minutes grace, in which to escape. Gasping for breath, Dayton reached the junction of highway Hap Almach and Highway One. But he needed alternative transportation desperately.

It was too late to call for assistance as the rioters, their anger fuelled by the explosion, came yelling and running in his direction. He got off the main road and ducked down a side alley, praying it was not a dead end. Everybody not involved in the madness on the streets had barricaded themselves indoors, waiting for the horror to pass. So there was no chance of getting any help from that quarter. Panting heavily, Dayton ran to the end of the alley and found himself in a T section; the only way out was where he came in. "Shit!" he cursed.

He was trapped. Running onward in the dark, aiming vaguely for the end of the cul-de-sac and looking for any possible escape route, he managed to stay about fifty metres ahead of the mob.

Then he saw something - a small gap. The Soter agent, plunging into the narrow dark space, silently prayed it would lead to freedom. It turned out to be a narrow path between two houses. Using a final burst of energy, he ploughed along the lane and came onto some open wasteland under construction.

He had about 30 seconds to disappear but not in the way it happened. Feeling himself pitching forward he landed heavily in a ditch of some sort. The soft earth dulled the noise of his fall, as well as only leaving bruises instead of broken bones. Ahead he saw a section of wide concrete pipe. He scrambled into it, praying the mob would not look there. Then he heard Jewish voices approaching the ditch. He had seven shots in the Beretta. There were perhaps a hundred of them.

Diablo Francisco Sonata laughed loudly, exhilarated by the mayhem going on outside. The Holy City was in chaos with the ensuing riots and destruction beyond his wildest dream. And the best was yet to come, once the world had gotten over the shock. Then the missiles would fly, and World War Three would begin. The final act of Pike's plan would play itself out, and the world would end in ruins.

The Professor poured himself some wine; then he turned his attention to the two prostitutes tied up on his bed. They wore ball gags, slutty latex outfits and leather masks. He grinned lasciviously thinking about what he would do as he reached for a huge dildo.

Tom Graham treated surveillance as he did Archaeology. They both required many of the same attributes. They both needed rigorous research, interminable patience and meticulous attention to detail. The main difference was that searching for inanimate objects proved somewhat easier the seeking out live suspects.

It had been a long, painful road back from the breakdown he had suffered. The horror of his experience beneath the cathedral haunted him every night. Only Tom's determination to clear himself, see justice done and retrieve his prize kept him going. Salvatore Lucini was his only main lead so far, and he had been less than helpful. So Tom was very surprised to receive an Email from the Catholic Church's artefacts buyer telling him he had the Cain objects and wanted to show them to him to authenticate them. Tom couldn't believe his luck. So enraptured was he at the prospect of laying eyes on those magnificent priceless relics he threw caution to the wind. Had Tom been more alert the archaeologist may well have questioned why Salvatore Lucini wanted his advice when Tom had only had them for a few minutes before they were stolen from him. He may also have wondered why the Church's Holy relics dealer had not kept the find secret from him. However, the golden cup that dangled before Tom was just too irresistible.

Tom Graham, in the dirty clothes he had worn since absconding from Geneva, looked a bit out of place among the well-dressed visitors, as he walked through The Sistine Chapel. Passing beneath the great ceiling decorated by Michelangelo, he made his way to the museum founded by Pope Julius II, in the early 16th Century, where Friar Lucini had his office.

Seeing the tall unkempt man in baggy casual clothes the Friar beckoned him in.

Once inside the office, Tom realised the Friar, and he was not alone. A conservatively dressed woman in a dark twin set was also present.

Ignoring her, Tom said, "So where are my artefacts?"

"Your artefacts, Mr Graham?" He smiled, The Church just paid a huge sum for them."

"I want to see them," Tom stated, wondering what was going on.

Salvatore indicated the woman. "Let me introduce you to Lieutenant Jean Leclune of the Swiss Fedpol. She is your escort back to Switzerland."

Tom sat stunned, unable to take in the friar's duplicity. Then he exploded, "You lying bastard, Lucini. You've got me here under false pretences."

The Friar returned, "And you never told me you were on the run for multiple murder."

Tom jumped up. "That's a lie! It's the creep you have been dealing with who is the murderer. And I now know his name."

A Sig automatic had leapt into Jean's hand, pointing in his direction. "Hold it right there, Monsieur Graham. We don't want any unnecessary heroics, do we?"

Then the truth hit Tom. Glowering at the Friar, he accused, "You did this to get me out the way. You have knowingly received stolen goods, and I will make sure the media knows about it."

"I hardly think you'll have access to the media where you're going, Signor Graham," Salvatore smirked.

Abbott was so wrong about Hassan Shamsi. He was not a castle man at all. In fact, he liked living life simply and carefree. The journalist pondered this, having spent his first night in the Winnebago. He opened his eyes and saw Hassan, in a flowing djellabah, standing over him.

Hassan offered him sweet mint tea and sat down on the bunk beside him, saying, "The roots of alchemy are buried in legend and mystery; allegedly the earliest books on alchemy appeared all at once as if they had been locked away for safekeeping and were suddenly released."

"Why is that?" Abbott asked, the hot sweet tea helping him to wake up.

"Because, at the beginning of the first millennium, all around the world, alchemical principles exploded into human consciousness, and these same ideas continue to inspire us to this day."

Abbott took a sip of the over-sweetened tea. "Maybe not so much sugar next time."

Hassan grinned. "Too sweet, huh!" He said, "Alchemists point to the heavens – not books – for the origin of their craft, and ancient Khemmetian writings tend to back them up. Three-thousand-year-old scrolls described 'visitors from the firmament' who came to Khemmet and shared their knowledge of the universe, including the art of alchemy."

"Little green men, right." Abbott half-joked.

"Green maybe. Little no. Some could be considered giants."

"Giant Aliens! That would be scary."

Hassan sighed, "Try to keep up, Abbott. This information is no joke." Satisfied that his initiate was listening, he continued, "One document contains a succinct summary of ancient wisdom engraved on a green crystalline tablets that became known as the Emerald Tablets."

"I have heard of that, but I don't know much about it."

Hassan sipped his tea, then added, "The first known alchemy works appeared almost simultaneously in Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China over 2,000 years ago. Most modern historians date the birth of alchemy to that time. During this period in history, the great library at Alexandria thrived as ships visiting the busy Egyptian port carried alchemical manuscripts from around the world."

That would have been a good time to be around," Abbott stated.

"Yes, but those early writings quote even more ancient texts and refer to a lost tradition that goes back to the dawn of civilisation."

"Was that when alchemy began?"

"All we can say with certainty is that by 300 BCE, philosophers, priests and artisans in civilised nations around the globe widely accepted the principles of alchemy. Hundreds of parchment scrolls, clay tablets and papyri existed that dealt with alchemical rules and processes. To this day, the real source of that knowledge remains unknown."

Abbott said, "How does this help us find the Atlantis key?"

"By discovering the source of alchemy. Something before even the Emerald tablet."

"How are we to do that?"

First, we must go to the land of Khem, more commonly known as Egypt."

Dayton hunkered down, holding his breath. The nervous tension made his throat dry, but he could not clear it. He had to use all the willpower he had to remain silent. His rapidly beating heart sounded like a drum to him. He silently moved further back into the pipe. A flashlight penetrated the darkness but did not pick him out. After what seemed an eternity the lights and noises went away. Dayton, exhausted, collapsed into sleep.

Four hours later, at first light, he crawled, tentatively, towards the entrance of the pipe. Thankfully nobody was about. Stiff and cramped he stood up facing the dawn sun. Now he had to get to Tel Aviv. He took out his phone, but the battery was flat. There would be a public phone at the looted Islamic museum, but it would be far too risky to return there. He trudged along the cul-de-sac, to Ha-Palmach where he hoped to catch a bus. Once he reached the main road, he looked back towards the wreck of the burned -out Mercedes, with his luggage in the boot. The driver had served Soter well. Now he, Dayton, had to make sure the courageous man had not given his life in vain. The Englishman walked over the road to where a few people stood at a bus stop. All conversation was about the night's terrible events Dayton kept out of it. His mission had been to find the Professor, and he had not only failed. He had allowed Francisco Sonata to bring the hatred, anxiety and frustration of millions, to a head.

A bus eventually came, and Dayton was able to get to Ben Gurion Airport. It was a nightmare. The car parks were jammed full with private and diplomatic vehicles. A mad rush had begun in earnest as foreigners fled Israel before the extreme sectarian violence became even worse. Thousands upon thousands of passengers were jostling for tickets on around 300 flights.

Dayton pushed his way through thousands of desperate passengers queuing for their boarding passes. Thankful he did not have to deal with that nightmare, the Soter agent pushed his way through the milling crowds, and, stopping a passing cleaner, he got directions to Lufta Aviation. The premier charter company was separate from the other airlines. Dayton Lynsey, tired, aching and dishevelled, presented himself at the desk, "Dayton Lynsey. I have a charter booked for me."

A honey-haired young beauty with a ponytail smiled sweetly. "We do have a booking, but that was for last night at 11.30 pm."

"Yes, I had a little trouble getting out of Jerusalem."

"Sir, we never heard from you, so we cancelled your flight."

Dayton's mind flashed back to the horrors of the previous night. There was no way this sweet girl could understand. "Okay, re-book me, please."

"Sir, we have full bookings at present. The best I can do ..."

Exasperated, worn-out, and angry, Dayton exploded, "For God's sake get on the phone and get me your boss!"

The girl jumped like a nervous rabbit. "I don't think there is anything Mr Gerran can do to help."

"Don't think - just get him on the phone, now!"

She picked up her phone, saying, Get me Mr Gerran. Hearing her boss's voice, she handed the irate Englishman the phone.

"Dayton Lynsey here. There seems to be a bit of a misunderstanding regarding my charter."

"Yes, most unfortunate. Our policy states that to make changes to your booking, you must notify our company ..."

"I understand all that. These are extreme circumstances. I was trying to leave a city under siege. Have you any idea? ..."

"It must have been terrifying but ..."

"You will be receiving a phone call very soon. You will follow this person's instructions. Is that clear, Mr Gerran?"

David Gerran paused. What the hell did this client mean? "Sir, we can only do what we can do. if no planes are available, there's ..."

"Mr Gerran, it's imperative that I get back to England ASAP."

Dayton replaced the receiver and flashed a knowing smile at the booking clerk. Then he took a seat and thumbed through a magazine. Although Soter was unofficial, many people in influential positions were involved. One such person was a top executive in Lufta Aviation, which is why Soter used that particular company to carry out their emergency travel arrangements.

Within ten minutes the booking assistant received a call. The young lady made some adjustments to her reservations, printed out some documents and handed them to Dayton. "Enjoy your flight with Lufta, Mr Lynsey."

The Emerald Tablet and Atlantean Alchemy. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.kamakotimandali.com/blog/index.php?p=551&more=1&tb=1>

Chapter 38

Rafael, ducking his head underneath a slight lip, entered a large cavern. It was quite a labyrinth, with tunnels branching off in all directions. It was dark; the only illumination came from a camp fire and a few flaming torches attached to the wall of the cave. Colonel Lynch and his team

followed Tamis to a common meeting place where young Atlanteans sat on thick blankets spread around the fire. A large cauldron hung from a tripod over the flames.

Tamis smiled at them. "Sit and rest."

Once they were settled, she asked, "Are you hungry?"

Dr MacKay famished, said, "Aye lass,"

Raf knew she was just polite. They had hardly enough food to sustain themselves. "Thank you for your generosity but no. We have our rations with us."

Rodney flashed him a hard look.

Beck said, "I'll take a look at your wound, Colonel."

"It's nothing,"

"Colonel, let me do my job."

As Tella took out some gauze for Raf's wound, which Larson insisted on checking, Tamis said, "If you will excuse me, I must take Yeldon to rest." turning to Takran, she said, "Make our guests comfortable."

Takran nodded to Tamis and then turned to the Colonel and the others. "We would be honoured if you would join us for our humble meal."

Rodney tried again, "Aye, thank you."

Raf scowled at the scientist. Then he winced as Larson poked around the wound with his tweezers.

"Bloody hell, there's a fragment," Beck muttered, his Swedish accent thickening in his frustration. Lynch was not as lucky as Yeldon. "Hold still, Lynch, while I numb the area."

"Like I have a choice," Raf muttered to alleviate his anxiety. Bullet fragments were nasty things, but he trusted Larson to do all he could without access to an infirmary.

"Tella, hand me the syringe." He said, calmly. He filled it with local anaesthetic and injected it directly into the Colonel's shoulder. Tella gave him some rubbing alcohol, which he used to clean the tweezers. After testing the area for pain sensation, Larson carefully removed the bullet fragment, sutured and bandaged the wound. Then, by the time he had administered a painkiller to Raf, Tamis returned.

"Is he well?" She asked concern showing on her face.

Larson grinned, "He'll survive. I've patched him up for worse things than this."

Raf, felt a chill, despite being close to the fire. He slipped on his camouflaged jacket, leaving it draped over his wounded shoulder.

The Atlantean team's attention was diverted from the Colonel's wound, As more young Islanders joined them for dinner; they tentatively sat down near the outsiders. They were all very young and afraid of the strangers.

Tamis, delegating the feeding of their guests to a few of her subordinates, made sure they each had a bowl of delicious smelling, steaming stew."

Tella asked Tamis, "What happened here?"

She didn't mind sharing food but not political information. She answered, "Since the early days Science and the Poseidon Religion have existed alongside each other. They reached a balance that worked for both for millennia. They managed to find an equilibrium that suited both. Then a new religion arose, slowly at first. It seemed harmless enough, like a new trend. It had a modern approach that appealed to young people We encouraged the elders to leave their old religion."

This change in belief sounded ominous. Tella pressed, "How does this new religion differ from the Poseidon faith?"

Tamis said, "The new religion, called the 'Singularism' preaches Atom worship, instead of ocean worship. But that is not the problem." Tamis hesitated, unsure of how much to divulge.

Tella smiled, "What is the problem, Tamis?"

The Atlantean group leader sighed, "Our traditional scientists have harnessed water power for thousands of years. Now, many of the Singularist scientists want us to develop Atom based technologies?"

The Colonel asked, "How long has this new religion been on the Island?"

Tamis turned to Takran. "Would you say about 20 moons."

Rodney did a quick calculation on his touchpad. "That would be about the time we had a power outage at the gatehouse."

"Right, we need a pow wow team," Raf said.

Tamis frowned, sensing something was wrong. Perhaps she had said too much. Why were the strangers affected in this way? "Is there a problem?" she asked.

"No problem," the Colonel smiled. We just need to work out what to do; that's all." At least it was the truth, he thought.

"Would you tell us more about how you came to be in this cave?" Tella asked.

Tamis nodded. "Very well," she said, pushing her stew aside. "At first, we young Atlanteans were influenced by the preachers of the new religion, but our parents stood against it. As Singularism became more powerful and influential on the island, the new religious leaders changed our government and removed those who opposed them."

What do you mean removed?"

"Those who opposed Singularism were taken away for 're-education'."

"Taken away where?" the Colonel asked.

"We don't know, but we foolishly believed it was for their good. Then Singularist military instructors began training us like soldiers. We hadn't had an army for thousands of years, and some of us became suspicious."

Why did they want an army?"

"So we could defend ourselves against you."

"From us! We are no threat to you."

"They said you would invade us and take over the island."

Tella smiled, "We are here to help, not harm you."

Raf asked, "Then what happened?"

"Some of us realised we'd been tricked and escaped to these caves." She added, "If they knew we were here, they would destroy us. That's why we reacted as we did when you penetrated our hologate."

"Do you guys ever go outside?" Larson asked.

"We try to spend three hours around sunrise to bathe in the nearby river and forage for food, but our supplies are running low."

"So, how long can you survive here?" Beck asked.

"We estimate that our supplies may last another six to seven moons if we are frugal." Sadness showed in her young features.

The Colonel said, "We can bring you supplies, but we need a strategy to help you take back the island."

Rodney looked at him, askance, but kept silent.

Tamis frowned, "My people cannot live like this indefinitely. The conditions are terrible, but we cannot live outside in the forest because the Singularians would find us. Those of us old enough to work have little knowledge of farming or any other such skill." She looked the Colonel straight in the eye. "I am asking for your help to move my people to your world."

Lynch looked at her. She couldn't have been more than eighteen. Although surviving in the caves had quickly matured her, the weight upon her young shoulders was enormous. He said, "I'll see what I can do." He turned to Tella. "Take her back to the Gate and talk to Dorian."

Rodney said, "She hasn't been trained to go through the gate."

Tella said, "The first time I went through I was much younger than Tamis. She may suffer some mild side effects, but she'll be okay."

Tamis nodded, smiling brightly. Turning to Takran, her second-in-command, she said, "Look after this lot. This journey is something I have to take."

Rabbi Israel Ben Finstein was quietly jubilant about a job well done. As he approached the bench, in Sacher Park, opposite the Knesset. He fingered the small key in his pocket. He knew the package had only just been left there because it was dry. Everything else, including the benches, had been caught in a downpour half an hour ago.

Making sure, to the best of his ability, that nobody was spying on him, he sat on the bench and, using the small key, undid the lock that had chained the metal box to the seat. The contents of the

box, five million shekels, was to his satisfaction. He rose to his feet and walked into a wooded area, known as the Valley of the Cross; unaware somebody was following him.

As Israel exited the Valley of the Cross, a black Mercedes van pulled up in front of him. He felt something hard pressing into his back; then he heard a voice. "Make a sudden move, and you're dead." Somebody dragged a hood over his head and roughly bundled him in the side door of the van. The man with the gun climbed in, and the van roared away.

Israel, sweating under the hood, said "Who are you? What do you want?"

Yasir Tiwanah yanked the hood off the Rabbi's head. "There must be millions here. What did you do to earn all this, Israel Ben Finstein?"

"Are you from Mossad?"

"No, but by the time we have finished with you, you will wish we had been?"

"Who are you people," he asked, becoming anxious.

"The city is like a war zone. Jews are parading in their thousands, chanting Biblical oaths; The blue-white Zionist emblem is everywhere; Israeli troops are strategically placed on rooftops, while American forces are acting as back-up for exhausted undermanned riot police. You have stirred up something, Israel Ben Finstein. You must be very proud of yourself."

"I don't know what you mean," the Rabbi lied, fidgeting.

"Oh, I think you do. And I want to know who else was involved in the sabotage."

"Sabotage! I don't know anything about that."

Yasir smiled, "I am pleased you deny blowing up the Dome, Rabbi because we have many exciting ways of getting you to admit your crime. You will tell me who was behind the destruction of the Dome, but not too quickly, I hope."

Israel hunched up in the rocking van. With gritted teeth, he determined he would never give up his accomplices. He silently prayed to God for strength in the ordeal to come.

Outside, the terror was still mounting. Jewish residents around the city, woke up to find the tires of their cars slashed and windows smashed in an apparent attack by Arab extremists. Some parts of Jerusalem had become virtually no-go areas for Jewish residents. The Mount of Olives, the site of an ancient Jewish cemetery, became one such danger zone, with Jews afraid to approach their ancestors' graves. Yasir wondered, will my beloved city recover from this?

Grenville met Matthew Snelling at the front door and showed him through to Dayton's study. "Mr Snelling to see you, sir," Grenville said, backing out of the room.

"My Lord what has befallen you." the minister said, his eyes falling upon Dayton's sallow complexion and lined features.

Ignoring the remark, Lord Lynsey got up and went to his feature window that afforded him an expansive view of his well-manicured lawns. "Fuzebaddhi is girding his forces to attack Israel. He has openly vowed to avenge the destruction of the Dome."

"Yes, a terrible business. So why have you asked me here?"

Dayton turned to face the Minister "The Iranians have convinced themselves that the 'Jerusalem for Zion' faction was responsible."

"Do we know who was behind it?"

"We have one of the key players under our control. The culprit will confirm what we already suspect."

"That Diabolus is behind it?"

"A high-ranking agent."

"You know who it is?"

Dayton said, "I have asked you here to get me a hearing with Hayden."

Matthew feared something like this. "I don't think that's possible right now. He is leaving for talks with Metayahu later today."

"Then I have to speak with him first. Make a call now."

Matthew grabbed his phone and keyed in a unique number. He waited, then got a response. "This is Minister Snelling. Get me the Foreign Minister, please." He listened for a moment, then turned to Dayton, frowning. "He is being briefed and cannot be disturbed."

"Give me the phone," Dayton demanded, taking it off Matthew. "Now look here, this is Lord Lynsey speaking, and I have crucial information for Hayden before he leaves for Israel."

"I'm sorry your Lordship but ..."

"But nothing lady. If you haven't the authority to do this, then find me someone who does."

"Sir, I do not appreciate your tone."

"For God's sake woman, this is an international emergency. Get me the Minister now, or face the consequences."

Matthew looked on amazed and amused.

Dayton waited, then heard a cultured male voice. "Hayden Holmes here. What is this about?"

"I have to see you urgently before you go to Israel. I have first-hand knowledge of who was behind the sabotage."

"Who the hell are you?"

He handed the phone to Matthew. "Tell him who I am?"

"Hayden, it's Matthew Snelling here. I can vouch for Lord Lynsey. He was in Jerusalem when all hell broke loose."

"Where are you?"

"At Lynsey Hall, Godmanchester."

He listened, then turned to Dayton. "They'll be a chopper here within the hour."

Hassan was very close-mouthed about Soter, and it annoyed Abbott intensely. His questions about it elicited responses like, "You are not ready," or, "It is not for the uninitiated." So, the journalist tried a different tack. "I never have liked the idea of secret societies."

Hassan smiled wistfully. "Soter is not a secret society. It is a society with secrets. There is a difference."

"What difference?" Abbott asked as they drove to Gibraltar, to board the FRS ferry to Tangiers.

"You would be better off learning about alchemy. We will need it to find the 'Key'."

Realising he could not trick the Alchemist into divulging any more information about the 'group with secrets', he acquiesced, "Okay, tell me about the key."

"Abbott, there are two sciences - good and bad. Real science is about evolution and growth. Bad science is about death and decay. In fact, bad science is about atomic decay. Alchemy is the sound science. Today it is referred to by other names, such as quantum biology.

"Why is alchemy the real science?"

"Because alchemy is an ancient spiritual science, one of three disciplines that comprise the Hermetic tradition. Called the 'royal art', it is about transmuting the 'gross' into its fullest perfect state."

"How will it help us find the key?"

Transmutation takes place through a series of processes, collectively referred to as the 'Magnum Opus' or 'Great Work'. Completion of the Great Work yields the 'philosopher's stone' or the 'elixir'."

"What is this elixir?"

Hassan slowed his vehicle, as they came to the outskirts of Gibraltar. "It is a legendary substance some claim will transmute base metals into gold, rejuvenate the body and confer immortality."

"Yeah, right."

"Don't knock it, Abbott. You do not know enough to make any judgement."

"Surely you don't believe in this immortal nonsense!"

"Not about the gold. That is to mislead us. But what the metal of the sun can become, now that is something else."

"What do you mean?"

"Later I will tell you more. Right now I have to concentrate on where we are going."

Abbott couldn't believe it. They had to cross the airport runway, to enter 'the tiny country'. Luckily it was not a busy airport. Then he got his first view of the iconic rock, as seen from the runway. Its sheer eastern face stood out sharply against the clear blue sky. They didn't have to board the car ferry immediately, and so they had time for some sightseeing. The pair had to walk back across the single runway to get to the town. Most tourists, of whom the majority tended to be English, went

there to stock up on tax-free alcohol and smokes. Hassan and Abbott ate in a cafe, in one of the many side streets. The fare was only memorable for how much it cost after the cheap food in Spain. After Hassan had shopped for necessities, it was time to drive the Winnebago onto the ferry. Abbott was a little disappointed, not seeing the apes but once he was on the ferry, he focused on the prospect of extraordinary adventures and experiences ahead.

The short voyage took just over two hours. The boat was so crowded with eager tourists that Hassan found it difficult to find a spot where he and Abbott could talk privately. In the end, they went away from the main deck to a small alcove. Under steps leading down to the cargo floor. Hassan said, "You were asking about the gold."

Abbott, snapping back to their previous conversation, said, "Yes, you said it turned into something else."

"Although there are such references to alchemical principles, found in Egyptian scrolls dating back to 1500 BCE, they are not the originals."

"Really! Then what were the original ones and where did they come from?"

"Sadly for us alchemists, the original canon of texts from which those principles were derived, has vanished."

"How do you know they existed?"

"Because the early alchemy manuscripts that have survived, from all over the world, are remarkably similar in style and therefore originated from a common source."

"What style?"

"They're all written in an odd style that makes unclear references to pre-existing concepts. They gave no explanation about their secret cyphers and mysterious symbols."

Abbott, sceptical, said, "This stuff all seems very general. So, assuming there is more to this than what you are telling me, I guess you, or your mysterious Soter group, have an original text."

Hassan smiled. "That's why we're going to Egypt."

"Egypt?"

"That's where we search for the manuscript."

"And, seeing as we're taking your mobile home, we're doing it the hard way." he added, "And this original whatever will lead us to the key?"

Hassan answered, "It is the key."

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/170007>

Chapter 39

The PR circus was in full swing as DARPA prepared the Cyberman 'Robocop' for the grand unveiling. The media was in a frenzy, with each publication and TV network pushing to get the first movie or picture of the super robot. A television interviewer quizzed General Logan Schulz about

'Atlas' on yet another chat show. The interviewer said, half joking, "A lot of folks out there are a little worried about armed robocops giving out speeding tickets."

Logan, trying not to sound scripted, answered, "This is a misconception. The Police Robots do much more than giving out speeding tickets. Atlas is trained to help out in rescue situations. It is designed to work with rescue aid workers and human response teams, in disaster scenarios."

"When are we going to given a demonstration?"

DARPA had contracted Boston Cybertronics to the tune of \$10.9 million to manufacture humanoid robots that were bi-pedal, built like humans and had a sensor head with on-board computing capabilities. The general said, "You will be able to see for yourself in just a few days at the big unveiling."

"Do you think this will be the way of policing in the future?"

"I couldn't speculate on that. It's one step at a time."

Barney had to admit the General handled himself very well. Give the media a taste but not too much. Keep them dangling on the hook. By the unveiling ceremony of ATLAS the (Activated Tactical Law Automotive System) the whole of the media would be salivating. Barney phoned Dr Becker. "Hey Lynne, did you see Logan strut his stuff?"

"Yes, he's hitting some left-fielders well. By the unveiling, we should have any bugs dealt with."

"While we're talking how is Covington fitting in?"

"I didn't want to bring him into the loop just yet. But needs must and all that."

"You haven't answered my question. Has Ulysses he got his legal shit sorted?"

"That's not our problem. Heron isn't the front line. Just relax Barney. Everything is going like clockwork."

"Yeah, well I hope you're right. I think you're taking a big chance with him."

Lynne was busy going through her in-tray when Ulysses knocked and entered her office. "Dr Becker, can I have a word?"

"Sure. What's on your mind?" Dr Becker said, removing her glasses.

"It seems that the biggest obstacle we face right now is biological to a technological interface. We have to get the public to accept Robocop as a necessary part of law enforcement."

Indicating the list she had on her computer, she said, "These are the public feedback responses from the latest survey. Here are a few random examples."

- 1) I bet a soldier that never questions very evil orders is worth ten times more to them.
- 2) It's as simple as this. We replace current police officers with robot police personnel shortly. No harm comes to anyone except the bad guys, especially if those bad-guys are revolutionaries against an evil government.

- 3) A Robby Robocop on every street corner sounds good to me. Start their mass-production now.
- 4) Scary, just imagine being pulled over and questioned by a robot cop.
- 5) How many murderers will get away with their crimes?
- 6) It depends on what they programme it with to define 'bad guy'. We all know the broadness of the meaning of terrorist.
- 7) Yea and there will be no chance of leniency. In the old days, the cop might consider a minor crime not to be worth the paperwork, and give the offender a cuff around the ear. Robocop won't have a discerning judgement in such matters.
- 8) The problem as I see it is that these robocops as any other device connected to a network would be susceptible to being hacked and that could be a problem."

"What do you glean from that, Ulysses?" Lynne asked, watching his response.

"The good folks out there don't believe a word of Logan's lies about Atlas being used only for rescue duties, and there's a lot of uneasiness masked as cynicism."

"And we go ahead anyhow because we are leading the way and they are all following."

"Of course. We can't stop progress."

Her voice softened. "That reminds me, is your situation improving?"

"Everything is fine except when Nick Griffin gives evidence in court."

"When will that be?"

"Three weeks from now. I have to be back in Australia then."

"Yes, I see what you mean. Can that thug's silence be bought?"

"I would think so. But how can we make an offer?"

Looking directly at Dr Covington, she said, "You just concentrate on ATLAS's debut."

The RAF Puma HC1 landed at Northolt, dispatching Dayton and Matthew Snelling. A staff car was waiting to take the men to the briefing room, where the Foreign Minister was being brought up to date on the latest developments in Israel. Dayton just took it in his stride, but Matthew was totally in awe of all that was happening. They were dropped off outside the entrance to a long one story building with the signage 600 Squadron on the door. An NCO escorted the pair to where the Foreign Secretary waited. Hayden took Matthew aside. "What's this all about?" he asked, glancing at Lord Lynsey.

"He hasn't told me. He wants to speak to you alone," the Minister replied.

"Well, that's not going to happen. Beckoning to Dayton, he said, "Lord Lynsey, I am rather pressed for time, so tell me what you know."

"What I have to divulge is for your ears only, Minister."

"Dammit man, I don't have time for cloak and dagger nonsense. Tell me now."

Dayton didn't like having an audience. You never knew who was listening. But he had no choice. "The Hit on the Dome was not the work of a Jewish extremist group. We have a Hasidic Rabbi incarcerated for this heinous crime. We know he was working for another man, believed to be a Professor Francisco Sonata."

Hayden, a barrel-chested man, pulled Dayton aside. "Who the hell are you and how do you know these things?"

"I am Lord Dayton Lynsey, and I know these things because it is my business to do so."

The Foreign Minister stared at the smaller man. "I can have you arrested and questioned under the Terrorist Act just with a snap of my fingers. So I want some answers now. Who is the Hasidic Rabbi and where is he being held?"

"It's not a good idea to threaten me. I can give you valuable information that will help negotiations in Israel."

"What do you mean?"

"If you listen to what I have to say, you can expose this Rabbi and have him handed over to the Israeli justice system. I'm sure you can see how beneficial it will be for the talks."

Hayden frowned deeply. It did not follow protocol. The man could be lying, but for what purpose? A Minister of the Crown vouched for him, but that didn't prove anything. "Right, you're coming with us. You will be questioned further on the plane."

Dayton, completely blind-sided, said, "That's not part of the deal. I can't just ..."

Hayden snapped his fingers. Two men in dark suits came up to him. "Take Lord Lynsey on the plane. Stay with him at all times."

"I vehemently protest!" Dayton expounded, as the spooks marched him away.

Matthew stood nonplussed.

Holmes said, "Tell his family he is helping the British Government."

Snelling thought, I sincerely hope that's true.

The drive to Fez proved to be white-knuckled for Abbott, who seemed to have a death grip on his seat. The sides of the narrow stony track that passed for a road in the Rif Mountains squeezed even closer together as Hassan negotiated twists and turns around sharp 'S' bends. With heart in mouth, Abbott avoided looking at the crumbling edge as the Winnebago climbed through the fabulous heart of the Rif Mountain Range. With snow caps in sight,

Thankfully the road widened, and Abbott plucked up the courage to glimpse out of the window at the Grand Canyon-like vastness of the valley, while Hassan focused on the path ahead. Hassan had an uncanny driving instinct, narrowly avoiding donkeys, sheep, goats and people popping up from out of nowhere.

Then, all-of-a-sudden a car was tailgating them, the driver honking and flashing his lights. In his rear-view mirror, Hassan saw the driver wildly gesticulate for him to pull over.

Hassan didn't think he was driving too slowly, but he pulled over to let the motorist pass.

Abbott, concerned, said, "What's happening?"

The car behind, an old Ford Escort, squeezed past the camper and pulled over in front.

The Winnebago screeched to a halt narrowly missing the rear of the Ford. Hassan turned to Abbott. "Don't say or do anything. No sudden moves. Leave it to me," the Arab said, showing more confidence than he felt.

Two young men dressed in Levis and tee shirts sporting rock bands stepped out from the old Toyota Crown and walked casually up to Hassan's window.

"Can I help you?" Hassan said, shaking the Black Sabbath fan's hand.

The other man, a Rolling Stone fan, wearing a tee shirt displaying the Jagger mouth with the tongue hanging out went around to Abbott's side and tapped on the window glass. Abbott, heeding his mentor's warning, just sat and stared at the man, as he resisted winding down the window. The other guy shook Hassan's hand again, saying, "Hello! Welcome! I am Abed. Come to my house. My wife will feed you, and we can smoke hashish."

Warily, the Alchemist said, "Thanks, but we have to get to Fez before dark."

The Moroccan remained persistent. In broken English, he said, "No, I will show you my family and how we live, come."

Hassan knew if he accepted the invitation he would end up without his car or he would be forced to buy drugs. He laughed, "Thank you but no thanks." He started the engine and backed up to give himself clearance.

Black Sabbath banged on the driver's door. "It is an insult to my wife to refuse an invitation."

Hassan responded in Arabic, and the man backed off. Then he manoeuvred his vehicle past the Escort.

Abbott, breathing a huge sigh of relief, said, "That could have been very nasty."

"Yes, if you had been here by yourself you would now be wandering around these mountains naked and without money or a vehicle."

"Why's that?"

"Because you're an Infidel, which makes you fair game."

Abbott mumbled something Hassan didn't hear. He was busy eyeing his wing mirror. The Escort was following again but made no attempt to overtake. Shortly after, the Escort sped up and passed the camper van. But this time the car kept going. Black Sabbath had another agenda.

Hassan, relieved, said, "They must also be heading for Fez."

Black Sabbath parked the Ford Escort outside the hotel. The distinctive Winnebago was in the parking lot. The driver got out and took photos of the camper van, on his phone. Then he pressed a contact and reported, "They have arrived in Fez. The targets are staying at the Riad Anata." He listened to instructions, then responded, "It will be done."

There had been sexual tension between Lynne and Ulysses all day. They both determined to keep their relationship on a professional basis, but the chemistry between them had other ideas. It started off innocently enough in a Boston bar after work. But the signals became more overt over an intimate seafood meal at the Island Creek Oyster Bar. By the time they got back to her apartment, Ulysses had made quick work of getting her undressed. Lying on the bed, naked, Lynne looked at Ulysses, wanting the sometimes gawky Aussie, and his mixture of boyish and bossy appeal.

He wanted her badly as his eyes sated themselves on her imperfect but erotic form. Soft electric sparks of lust between their skin and fingertips heightened their physical and emotional need for each other.

Ulysses laid down on the bed facing her, resisting the urge to get primal and fuck straight away. That had happened back in Australia, but now it had to be different. It was not just lust, as before. Now there were emotional feelings involved. Being a confirmed bachelor, his feelings towards Lynne scared the hell out of him. He wanted to pleasure her as never before. They moved together, cuddling and caressing for a long time.

"Lynne, I've missed this," he crooned, leaning his head forward until their lips met. I'm ready for you."

"Yes you are," she smiled wickedly, cupping his engorged penis.

"I want you on all fours.

She obliged without complaint.

From behind, he kissed her neck, then slid his mouth, kissing down her back a centimetre at a time with each touch of his lips showing personal appreciation and deep affection. As his hands gently stroked her hips, Lynne felt waves of pleasure rocketing through her. At each touch of his lips or fingers, her ecstasy grew. He positioned himself and pushed into her, immediately feeling enveloped by her soft wet, feminine warmth. As their rhythm and friction intensified, she raced towards a great orgasm, dissolving all the tensions of the day. Her climax hit hard, sending seismic tremors through her body, from her core to her fingertips.

"Oh God! Ulysses," she cried out, surrendering completely to the supremely enjoyable release, before collapsing on her stomach in ecstatic exhaustion.

Afterwards, as they lay in each other's arms, She said, "You're a good-looking, crazy man, Ulysses, but this has to be a one-off."

He propped himself up, looking at her. "Why? We're single, consenting adults."

"Where do you see this going then?" she asked

"I don't know. But I find you a very sexy, intelligent and exciting woman. I don't want this to end."

"But I'm your boss, and these things never work out."

He leant forward and kissed her on her forehead. "Maybe you're right, and maybe you're not. But it'll be fun finding out."

"You're one of us, aren't you?" Tamis asked as the procession came to the cave portal.

Tella answered, "Yes, I'm Atlantean by birth, but I have lived the other side of the gate for twenty-four moons."

"How did that happen?"

Tella smiled, "It's a long story."

Just then, Raf decided, "Kronyn and I will scout outside to see if the way is clear. The rest of you stay put."

Tamis said, "Colonel, take Takran with you. He knows what signs to look for."

Raf nodded, and the Atlantean youth joined them. The portal wall looked solid and, although they knew they were looking at a holographic image, both Rafael and Kronyn hesitated. Takran grinned and walked straight through.

Once all three were on the other side, Takran climbed onto the rocks and scanned the area, for as far as he could see. "There is no sign of Singularians," he said, jumping down the cliff, landing cat-like on his feet.

"Can they hear us through the portal?" Raf asked.

"I don't know," Takran said, stepping back into the caves.

"Is it safe?" Tamis asked.

"It is clear, but we must move quickly and quietly."

As they walked, Tamis kept close to Tella. She said, "I do not know how to help my people. Most of them are children who are very dependent on us older ones. As we have only just met, I am taking a risk to trust you. But I see no other way."

"We are not your enemy."

Tella, I want to believe you, but that's what the Singularians taught us."

Tella placed a reassuring hand on the girl's shoulder. "Colonel Lynch is a good example of the people on earth. They are robust and resourceful. They are also very kind, and there is no doubt in my mind that Dr Gibson will assist you."

"Dr Gibson?" Tamis inquired.

"She is the leader of the Atlantis expedition," Tella replied.

Tamis nodded. "Thank you, Tella. Your reassurances do calm me."

The two young women, lapsing into silence, walked for an hour, which brought them to the Gate. After that Tella sat-phoned the gatehouse.

"Tella, is there a situation?" Dorian Gibson asked, noting the expedition had been cut short.

"No, Dr Gibson, do not worry. Instead, I need your approval to bring a visitor. Her name is Tamis, and she is the leader of a group of young Atlanteans. I also have Takran, another Atlantean resistance fighter with me."

"You know our policy, Tella."

"Yes Dr Gibson, but in the case of an emergency ..."

"What emergency, Tella?"

"There is a takeover on the island. Tamis and Takran were hiding in a cave with a bunch of young Atlanteans."

Dorian, weighing up the unusual situation, said, "We need to question Tamis and Takran to find out what's going on."

"Then we can come through?"

"Just hold the line for a minute." Turning to a subordinate, Dr Gibson said: "Tell Major Lorne to take a few Marines down to the Gate." Then, back to Tella, she said, "You have approval. The shield is down. Gibson out."

"Come." Tella led Takran and Tamis to the Gate, and the trio stepped through.

Tamis carefully put on a neutral face, as she had, been taught, though the strangeness of this new land awed her. Filled with questions about the design of the buildings and the activities of the technicians, Tamis remained silent. Six Marines had their automatic rifles trained on her and Takran, yet she did not feel threatened. Looking up, Tamis faced the brunette woman who was descending some stairs.

"Welcome to Earth, Tamis." The woman greeted her. "I am Dorian Gibson, leader of this expedition. Come with me to my office; we can speak in private there."

Major Lorne, concerned about security on the base, countered, "I need to be present at the briefing."

"This is a chat, and I want it to be private," Dr Gibson persisted.

The Major didn't like breaking military protocol in such an instance, but he ceded to the Doctor's wishes.

In Dr Gibson's office, Tamis seated herself, then glanced around the room. "Dr Gibson, your post is very strange. I have not seen anything like it."

"I expect this is all strange to you, Tamis," Dorian said as she took her seat on the other side of the desk. Tella took the chair beside Tamis, while Takran stood by as protector.

The camp commander said, "So, what is it that you need from us?" She asked kindly, leaning forward and getting straight down to business.

Tamis, straightening up in her seat, folded her hands in her lap. Dropping her gaze from Dorian, momentarily, she tried summoning up some courage. "Dr Gibson, my people have been dominated by the Singularians. They came to us with a new religion. Those who wouldn't convert got sent to a re-education camp. After months of hiding in caves, there are only about thirty of us young resistance fighters left. There was no time for the elders of our culture to teach us how to use the Ancestral Ring, or Gate, as you call it, so we have been stranded there."

Dorian listened quietly, and when Tamis had finished speaking, she was silent. Looking over the Atlantis Mission inventory that morning, She noted that Government cutbacks had left them hurting. With the tightly stretched budget, there was not much Dorian could offer.

At last, she said, "I can only provide temporary sanctuary for you and your people. Otherwise, the request has to go through normal channels. In return, I want to know everything about the situation on Atlantis."

"Thank you, Dr Gibson. We are all very grateful."

"Can you contact your people from here?"

Tamis shook her head. "Only from the other side of the gate."

Dorian spoke into an intercom. "Major Lorne, come in please."

"Yes, Dr Gibson."

The Major entered Dorian's domain. "How can I help you?"

"Take you Marine detail and go through the gate to bring in the refugees." She turned to Tamis, "You'll have to go with them."

<http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread873913/pg1>

Chapter 40

On board the 32 squadron BAe 146, Dayton was interrogated by two MI6 operatives. He played along with them as long as their questions didn't jeopardise his Soter work. Agent Stevens looked like he hadn't smiled in years. And the shorter one fiddled with his hands a lot. Both men, no longer field agents, were middle-aged and worked their remaining years in the service from behind desks.

"What is the name of this Rabbi?" the taller spook asked, for the umpteenth time.

Dayton smiled, as he always did in such circumstances, "For security purposes, I cannot answer that question, yet."

"Who do you work for?" the shorter one demanded.

"I own a 100-acre property. People work for me. I don't work for anyone."

That got up Stevens' nose. "How did you get to meet this Rabbi?"

"I have never met him."

"Who is holding him at present?" the short one asked.

"I cannot answer that because kidnapping is a crime."

Agent Oliver, exasperated, said, "Why should we believe you when you refuse to back it up."

"Indeed. But if you don't believe me, why all these questions?"

Hayden Holmes turned up. Dayton thought he looked very calm and collected. The Foreign Secretary smiled, "How are we doing back here?"

Dayton answered. "Top notch Minister. Your people have been keeping me entertained. They ask me questions, and I don't answer them."

The agents scowled. The Foreign Secretary dismissed them.

As they left, Dayton said, "Do give Rodney My best."

Hayden sat down beside the English nobleman. "You like winding people up, don't you?"

"It's not personal Minister. I am pissed off, and they were the nearest targets. Now you are."

"Are you with Soter?"

The question nearly floored Dayton. Was the FS also a member? "What's this Soter?"

Hayden leant close to Lord Lynsey. "Did you think that HMG didn't know about Soter and the covert work it does?"

Dayton stayed silent.

"If you admit it I will accept that we are on the same team and listen to your advice."

"And if I don't."

"Oh, I'm sure there is a whole swag of national security offences we can charge you with."

Dayton had never divulged his Soter role. "How do I know you can be trusted?"

"Lord Lynsey, I know how things work in the real world. You've been very busy, and we have turned a blind eye."

Dayton decided to put the FS to the test. "Very well, what do you know about the Senior British politician responsible for leaking the sex scandal to the papers."

Hayden smiled, "There will be a change of Home Secretary soon. Clarice Bourne will announce that she is retiring from public service, for personal reasons. Now, have I passed the test?"

Dayton didn't even know that intelligence. Impressed, he said, "Yes, I am with Soter."

"There, it wasn't that difficult," Hayden smiled. Now it's your turn to tell me what you know about this Rabbi."

"A Hasidic fundamentalist called Israel Ben Finstein has terrorist affiliations of which we are aware. He hires saboteurs as he (Diabolus) needs them to carry out their destructive projects."

"Where is he being held?"

Dayton turned to Hayden. "I haven't a clue, old boy. I have a contact number I will ring at 7 pm tonight. Then we will find out."

"We want him. No one else. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Minister."

Diablo asked, "Is it organised?" as he and Philux ate in the Caravanseraï.

"Yes, of course. The talks should be under way now. There is one unexpected thing, though. Lord Lynsey is there with the British Foreign Secretary."

Sonata grinned, "Two birds with one stone."

Philux frowned, "We haven't arranged that."

"Then organise it. We cannot miss such an opportunity."

"Of course," he agreed, taking out his phone.

Diablo Sonata had developed an ability to feel at home, anywhere quickly. Well, anywhere of his choosing. At that time his place of abode was 500 miles south of Algiers in Ghardaia (The city of ghosts). During the flight to Ghardaia, Professor Sonata sat next to a friend of the French Ambassador to Algeria and his security guard. Sonata used this opportunity to glean local information about the city of ghosts. He learned that Ghardaia, in the M'zab Valley, was a settlement made of up five ancient towns, all built upon the huge boulder hills and surrounded by luscious green palmeries. He further found out that It was jam packed with culture and religion, due to the Mozabite Berber tribes that live there. He mentally stored this knowledge. It would come in useful for what he had in mind.

"He wanted another million shekels," Philux said, resuming his meal.

"Oh well, He won't get a chance to spend it," Diablo said."

They both laughed at this, and raised their wine glasses, "To chaos."

Chattering dignitaries filled the colonnaded interior of the massive rectangular building. Knesset security guards, punctuating the perimeter at regular intervals, checked everybody as they entered. Even Politicians and dignitaries, from many different nations, were scanned before being allowed to join with others in the Plenary Hall. All belongings went through X-ray. It was one of the rare occasions that Dayton did not have his Beretta with him, and he felt vulnerable without it. It was also the first time he had been in the Knesset, the Israeli legislature.

"I don't know why I am here, Minister," Dayton said, as they entered the hall set up for the emergency summit.

Hayden said, "Do you realise what is at stake here?"

"I have a pretty good idea - yes."

"You were here when it happened. That could be very useful."

"It would be more valuable for me to check the security."

"You saw the efficiency of the Knesset guards. Nobody could sneak by them."

"I know that, but I just want to be sure."

Hayden stopped and turned to the English Lord. "Are you expecting trouble?"

"I always expect trouble."

The British Foreign Minister took his seat, which was next to Aasif Babar, from Egypt on one side and Basher Damurah from Lebanon, on the other. He got Dayton to crouch down near him. "The head of security is a General Dagan Efraim. He won't like you interfering." Then he added, "I want an MI6 operative with you at all times." He beckoned Colin Frayles to him. "Stay with Lord Lynley and don't leave his side."

General Efraim, a fat man of medium height, barked orders, as members of Knesset Security rushed around, checking the building for vulnerabilities. He turned, hearing his name called. Seeing the two men approach, he said, "What do you want?"

Frayles flashed his ID "He wants to know what we want."

"Tell him we think there is an alien in the building, possibly a hired killer. We want to check him out."

The General laughed at this. "This place is sewn up tight. Nobody can get in or out without my people knowing. You have nothing to worry about."

I'm sure you are correct General, but my Minister wants us to run a check. It's probably a waste of time, but we have to do it."

The emergency summit, which had been put together in just a few hours, was a desperate attempt by Israel to avoid retaliation from Muslim nations for the destruction of the Golden Dome. Dayton knew that at such short notice, no matter how good the security forces were, shortcuts could be exploited by unscrupulous people.

The General snapped his fingers. Two, close-by men, wearing blue berets and carrying Uzi's, approached. He fired orders at them. Frayles translated, "These two are to stick to us like glue."

"Fine. We're all on the same side here."

"So where do we start?" The MI6 man asked.

Dayton stopped, alert. The meeting had started. Metayahu was making his opening remarks. "We'll start at the top and work our way down." he turned to the armed guards, "How do we get above the ceiling?" Dayton knew the Knesset had a hanging ceiling, made up of twelve wooden planks, each weighing 200 kilogrammes. He asked, "Is it possible for a marksman to get on the roof and shoot down into the chamber?"

Frayles translated.

The Security guards shrugged. "Only maintenance people would know that," one said

"But nobody can get in here with a gun," the other guard said, cradling his Uzi. Realising the contradiction, he countered, "Except us who are authorised to carry them."

Frayles said, "Have your people swept for explosive devices."

A guard responded, "Of course. Do you think we are stupid?"

Dayton cut in, "We must check any locations that would give a sniper a clear view of those dignitaries attending the summit."

"We have already done that - more than once, a guard protested."

"Yes, I'm sure you have, but we cannot be too careful." Then he added, "We can check for likely places to hide bombs, but I don't think it's necessary. Explosive devices usually require more than a few hours to organise and install. Snipers, however, can prepare very quickly. So we need to check all high vantage points and efficient escape routes."

"Unless it's a suicide bomber," Frayles suggested.

Annabel Haifa sat with all other stenographers and translators behind the government representatives. She was working on her laptop, like all the support staff. However, with Annabel something was different.

The security guards in the Plenum Hall did not see or at least did not take any notice of the anomaly - a USB computer cable trailing down to a black bag by her side.

Fahd Agrijeeta, the Saudi Foreign Minister, was on his feet. "This sinful act of destruction is an affront against Allah. It will not just go away. We want to know what compensation your Government is going to offer to pay for this outrage."

Other Muslim politicians stirred by the Saudi's remarks shouted. "Israel must pay."

Prime Minister Metayahu, feeling very hot under the collar, said, "This government did not sanction the destruction of the Dome. We are as outraged as anybody, and we have already suffered hundreds of deaths as a result of this tragedy. Of course, we are willing to work out some compensation. Our government has already put forward a motion to rebuild the Dome."

Basher Damurah raised his hand, "A modern building cannot be compensation for the desecration and destruction of a sacred site, where Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. The site must be left vacant. Nobody must build upon it. Any construction on the hill will be an act of war."

The Knesset went silent at this remark. Metayahu knew full well that both the Freemasons and extreme Zionist factions were itching to build the third temple on the site and they had the power and resources to do so.

Hayden Holmes spoke up. "It is in everybody's best interest, I believe, for us all to keep cool heads. The person responsible for this outrageous act has been caught and will be handed over to Mossad for questioning. We know he had accomplices and we are aware he was working for someone else. At this stage, we don't know who. Let us focus on those who carried out this heinous crime, and not our religious differences."

There was stunned silence for a moment. Then Fahd Agrijeeta said, "It is our sacred shrine that got destroyed. The perpetrators should be handed over to an Islamic court, not Mossad."

Many Muslims raised their fists in accord with this.

Frayles knew Lord Lynsey was making preparations to hand over the saboteur, but he wasn't letting on. He was wondering just how difficult it would be to assassinate a prime minister within the highly-secured Knesset compound? He had no answer.

Annabel Haifa had the answer. Not too difficult at all with the innocuous mini printer in her black bag. Using the latest technology, it could print out a fully functioning 3D-printed hand-gun. It would have been simpler to have walked into the Knesset carrying the plastic pistol, but with the stringent X-ray screening and body scans, it could have been picked up. She quickly checked the blueprint on her screen. There was another twenty minutes to go before it would be ready.

Dayton caught up with Frayles and Knesset security outside the main doors of the chamber.

"Where have you been?" A guard asked.

"I got lost on the way back from the toilet," Dayton grinned. Then he said, "Do you have records of the X-rays you took of attendees belongings?"

"Yes, everything is recorded on a computer. Why?"

"Where are they?"

"In the screen room."

"Take me there - now."

Annabel checked how the print was progressing. Most of the parts were ready for assembly. Her best practice time was 40 seconds. She had already tested one of the guns at a professional shooting range and successfully fired a live bullet at a cardboard target. She took out her fake lipstick, unscrewed the barrel and palmed a single shot. She would only need one at that range.

"What are we looking for?" Frayles asked as the computer operator whisked through thousands of images.

"Something different from the others. Most people carry similar things, cameras, laptops, mobile phones, etc. Look for something unusual."

The guards looked on, bored.

Frayles made an effort to follow Dayton's line of reasoning. "Are we looking for some weapon?"

"I don't think so. It would have been picked up. No, it's something else, but I can't put my finger on it."

"Maybe because it doesn't exist," a Knesset guard suggested.

"We can only hope so," Dayton countered. But I think we are missing something."

The computer operator said, "I might have something here. It doesn't look like a laptop."

They peered over his shoulder. It was nearly cube-shaped, with something inside.

Dayton asked, "Can you zoom in to see what it is?"

The operator was already onto it. As the X-rayed shape became larger, the computer technician exclaimed "I know what it is. It's a printer! I haven't seen one like it before."

"I have,' Frayles said. "It's one of those new 3D printers."

Dayton had heard about them. They could be programmed to make functioning three-dimensional objects, such as a GUN! "Who owns that?"He asked.

The operator shrugged, "We don't keep those records."

"Damn!" Lord Lynsey cursed, "Whoever owns that printer could be making a working gun as we stand here."

"I will contact security central," a guard stated, approaching General Efraim with the alert.

Annabel quickly assembled the plastic parts, on her lap, while looking at the data on her screen. She had been practising blindfolded, so she knew what to do.

Dayton and Frayles were inside the chamber, trying to be as discreet as possible. Dayton's hawk eyes scanned the row of translators and stenographers until they became fixed on the printer. He casually walked behind the row of language translators until he reached the square case near the clerk's feet. She was doing something on her lap.

The bullet was in the single chamber. The assassin was ready. Annabel quickly swung the gun up and aimed at Metayahu.

Dayton came swiftly from behind, inserted a syringe into her neck, while pressing a nerve point on her wrist, causing her to drop the gun. Frayles pocketed the weapon, while Dayton helped the drowsy woman away. The summit continued undisturbed.

Away from the chamber, Dayton turned to Frayles, "Well done old man." Then, looking at the slumped assassin, he said, "Secure her. I will be back soon."

"Where are you going?"

"The lavatory old boy. Surely you're not going to follow me there."

Having taken a cab to the address Yasir had provided, Dayton looked at the beaten man collapsed in the chair, only held erect by the hand and arm restraints. His face was a bloody mess. Half his teeth and a couple of fingernails were missing. Not one to curse, Dayton exploded. "What the fuck have you done to him?"

Yasir Tiwanah stepped back. He wiped his sweating forehead with a handkerchief. "We had to find out who his accomplices are."

"And did you?"

The overweight Arab was feeling a bit dizzy.

"How the hell am I supposed to hand him over now?"

Yasir shrugged. "We did what we thought was right."

"Clean him up and tend to his wounds. I want him in some reasonable shape when I return."

"Where has he gone?" an Israeli guard asked.

"To relieve himself."

"That was over thirty minutes ago. You should have stayed with your countryman."

"I wasn't going to follow him in the toilet," Frayles argued, wondering to where the English Lord had disappeared.

"This is a complete waste of time," one of the Knesset security men stated. Only Frayles knew that Lord Lynsey had dealt with a threat that was anything but a waste of time.

Hayden Holmes received the call. "Lord Lynsey, where the hell are you?"

"Had to go for a change of plan, Hayden."

"What the hell are game are you playing? I announced that we would hand over the Rabbi ..."

"The package will arrive at the Knesset in ten minutes."

"Where are you?"

"Foreign Secretary, I have played my role, so you no longer need me. Incidentally, Frayles has another package for you."

"What do you mean?"

"He'll explain. Now I have a plane to catch."

As Dayton relaxed in the cab taking him to his charter flight at Ben Gurion Airport, he mused, "Well we got that pussy back into the bag. Another round to the good guys Francisco Sonata.

https://www.wildfrontierstravel.com/en_GB/community/blog/post/algeria-first-impressions

The end of book one

Other books by Chris Deggs

Amenti – a quantum tarot journey

Anunnaki – the greatest story never told – book 1 -gods, gold and genes

Anunnaki – the greatest story never told – book 2 - challenge, change and conquest

Anunnaki – the greatest story never told – book 3 – Profesy, power and politics

Black Pope – secrets of the vatican

Democracy on Trial – the verdict

Hack – world bank in crisis

Investigation – the nunnery murders

London Lies - The Terror Agenda

Marlowe – A Quantime experience 2

Millennium – countdown to chaos

Nanofuture – the small things in life

Plane Truth – What happened on 9/11

Termination – the eugenics agenda

Vincent – a quantime experience 1

Ziggurat – the real agenda in Iraq

About Chris Deggs

Chris Deggs was born in 1948 in Bury St. Edmunds, England. For many years he has lived in Australia. He is now happily retired and lives in the Tweed Valley in Northern New South Wales, Australia. He is a colleague of the Science-Art Cancer Research Institute of Australia where he is actively involved as a visual artist and author. He writes contemporary works of fiction: mysteries, adventure, crime, ethics, conspiracy, global domination etc., as well as reference books for the betterment of the human condition. He has published a number of articles on the Academia Website reflecting ethics and Human Survival. Chris has written 16 books to date. Writing and painting are Chris' two main passions in life in which he is always looking for new ways to express himself.

Connect With Chris Deggs

Internet

www.coloursandwords.com

chrisdeggs63@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/artystyck>

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/search?query=chris+deggs>

<https://www.feedaread.com/search/books.aspx?keywords=chris%20deggs>

Outernet

If you are in the area you can catch up with Chris and say G'day at local art and craft markets in Tweed Shire, New south Wales, Australia.

First Sunday of month Tweed Heads Men's Shed Markets

Second Sunday Chillingham Markets

Third Sunday Uki Buttery Markets

Fourth Sunday Murwillumbah Showground Markets

I hope you are enjoying my story.

Here is a sample from book 2

When Abbott Gallagher thought of pirates, a vision came to mind of swashbucklers sailing the Mediterranean, searching for treasure and living the adventurous life upon the high seas. However, the history of the Barbary Coast showed him a time and place that dated back hundreds of years and had nothing to do with the adventurous romanticism that Hollywood created of the pirate lore. In reality, stretching across northern Africa, the Barbary Coast was a hotbed of pirate activity. The treasure sought most often was not gold and coin, but rather slaves stolen from European Christians and sold in the marketplace of Algeria and Morocco. Barbarossa (Red Beard), the most famous pirate who operated in the area, was hired to defend Algiers from the Spaniards. After successfully doing so he killed the Algerian ruler and opened up the country as a home to many of the pirate ships that operated in the area. Despite Hollywood's and literature's idolisation. Pirating marauders were brutal, violent and greedy. Although Abbott felt entranced by the natural beauty of the coastline, he was not enamoured by Algeria's barbarous history. He pondered this as Hassan drove into busy, bustling, scorching and very noisy Algiers.

Having found a car park, Hassan said, "Amuse yourself while I attend to something."

"Attend to what?" Abbott said, fed up with his guide's secrecy.

Hassan just smiled, "Soter business."

"So what am I to do while you go about your secretive stuff?"

"He handed the Australian a crudely drawn map. Pointing at a red spot on the diagram, Hassan said, 'We're staying there tonight. It's only a couple of blocks away. Go and have a rest.'"

Out of the air-conditioned vehicle, the heat hit hard. Even the two block walk to the single room in a Pension was taxing in the late afternoon sun. Abbott discovered their compact unit fronted a narrow alley in the Casbah. An ageing ceiling fan made a pathetic attempt at keeping the room cool. There was a shower of sorts, but both taps coughed out hot water. Abbott, thoroughly annoyed, dragged a mattress onto the floor in the coolest part of the room and tried to sleep.

Once the Alchemist had returned, Abbott asked, "Why are we staying here? There's probably more room in the Winnebago."

"Because we have been invited to stay here by a colleague. it would be an insult to turn my friend down."

Abbott shrugged. He figured Hassan knew what he was doing. "Is this the person you came to see?"

"Yes." Then he grinned. "Don't worry Abbott; we are only staying overnight. He added, "Let's go."

"Go where?"

"You are about to have your first Casbah experience."

Although Abbott had visited other marketplaces in Morocco and Algeria, he had never been in a Casbah as claustrophobic as that of Algiers. Most Medinas and Casbahs were built like fortresses and were busy day and night. The Algiers Casbah was no different in that respect. A densely packed citadel on a steep hill, where twisting alleys, really staircases, were flanked by haphazardly built

houses, one on top of another, forming a seemingly impossible maze. Abbott turned to his mentor, "Hassan how on earth do you know your way around this maze?"

The Muslim answered, "I have been here many times before. At night it is even worse. Because, since the curfew, there is no lamplight, because citizens are supposed to be indoors."

"Yet the Casbah stays open."

Hassan shrugged, then he pointed out, "Remember this landmark," he said, indicating a blue tile-inlaid section across a building, "I will see you shortly."

"Where are you going?"

"Business," was all he said. Then, as an afterthought, "Don't talk to any strangers and don't answer any questions."

Jesus, I'm not a little kid, Abbott thought. He couldn't protest further as the tall bearded man had disappeared into the throng.

It was the day Americans had been waiting for, especially Boston Cybertronics and DARPA. Atlas, dubbed 'Robocop' had its grand debut. The event was fully booked; crowds eagerly awaiting the day's events packed the Speedway. Ulysses Covington and Lynne Becker were among the elite in the VIP box, that afforded them the best view. Outside the gates, protesters, with banners against transhumanism, gathered in large numbers. They were booed and spat at by members of the public, many of whom sported 'Robocop' t-shirts. It looked as though the Miami police had their work cut out for them that day.

General Logan Schulz puffed on a big cigar as he marched to the microphone. He began, "Ladies and Gentlemen and the media this is a very special day for all of us. Our national security is vulnerable to natural, and human-made disasters and there are often limitations to what humans can accomplish to help remedy these situations or mitigate further damage. Until now robotics have not been robust enough to function in all environments and perform the basic tasks needed to alleviate a crisis. The ATLAS class robot, we are unveiling today, is changing all that."

He waited for the huge applause to die down. "The goal of the DARPA Robotics Challenge, here today, is to generate groundbreaking research and development so that future robotics can perform the most hazardous activities in future disaster response operations, in tandem with their human counterparts, to reduce casualties, avoid further destruction, and save lives."

More applause. Cheers and whistles from the audience.

"So, without further ado, I give you ATLAS."

A truck drove up to the platform. An enormous wooden crate was unloaded and placed centre stage. At first, nothing happened. Then there was a drum roll, and the container exploded into fragments as a six foot two, three hundred, and thirty-pound robot burst out, onto the stage. The audience, awestruck by the dynamic spectacle, sat wide-eyed, as the robot proceeded to clean up the mess from the shattered crate.

ATLAS' Onboard real-time control computer, sent instructions to its hydraulic pump and thermal management system, which activated its two arms and legs to pick up the pieces and put them in the bin provided. Flashes from thousands of cameras, video cameras and media cameras that recorded the extraordinary event, flooded the arena.

Colonel Cormack grinned hugely. "What a great success."

Lynne Becker said, "I'm glad we went with the Carnegie Robotics sensor head."

"And Akawi Technics for the arms," Barney stated.

Ulysses couldn't believe what he was hearing. "Barney, did I just hear you correctly?"

Barney, not liking or trusting the Australian robotics man, said, "Yes, we used Akawi for the arms. Your piss ant company was just there for back-up."

"But what about the scandal with the whaling sonars?" Ulysses protested.

Barney pointed to the jubilant crowd outside, "Listen to them, Dr Covington. Do you think they give a fuck about your smear campaign?"

"So where does that leave Heron Robotics?"

"Why do you care, Ulysses," Lynne asked, "They ditched you. You owe them nothing."

Ulysses knew these guys were ruthless, but this was beyond the pale. "So, even after we got our contract reinstated with DARPA, you had no intention of using us?"

"Of course not. Did you think your pathetic little stunt was going to pay off?"

"Heron will be finished."

"Yeah, well there's a lesson there. Don't fuck with the big guys."

The magical art of alchemy, to create objects out of raw matter or turn one object into another, was widely believed to be capable of anything, by those who do not understand it. The idea that alchemy was magical or miraculous, by those unfamiliar with the craft, had served it well. Hassan knew it was a science and, as such, was subject to certain natural laws and limitations. The alchemical process meant 'Equivalent Exchange' (to obtain or create something, something of equal value must be lost or destroyed). However, with nanoscience, this was not the case. Nano-scientists (modern day alchemists) could make something from virtually nothing, so nothing needs to be destroyed in manufacture at a molecular level. Soter was well aware of this, and their secret scientists practised an alchemy not limited by old thinking.

This reasoning was why Hassan Shamsi needed to see a colleague who lived near the Casbah.

Karim Ibn Al Hamsa lived in a small dark apartment at the top of the narrow staircase. Hassan squeezed against the wall to let two women pass him on their way down. He knocked at the door. It was opened by a white-bearded, florid looking man. His face split into a grin when he saw who it was. "Hassan, it is wonderful to see you. Come in. I will get us some tea."

Hassan sat cross-legged on a large cushion. Karim offered him a hookah, which Hassan accepted and sucked in the bubbling aromatic mixture, filling his lungs. He exhaled, coughed, and said, "I suspect Diabolus knows I am here and probably know what I seek."

"Then you have found an apprentice."

"Yes. Harry Scholfield was training him, but he has passed into spirit."

"May he find peace with Allah the Compassionate."

"Indeed."

Karim passed his friend a small cup of sweet mint tea. "Where is your trainee, in the steps?"

Hassan knew his friend meant the Seven Alchemical Steps. "Calcination."

Karim stared at him. "But that is only the first step!"

"How is he going to reach the seventh before you find the key?"

Hassan stroked his long beard. "The long road trip across the desert will help. But I need to know if the way is safe for him."

"Are you ready for the Ast initiation?"

"Yes."

"Very well, be at the temple tonight."

Dayton sat facing Annabel Haifa. She looked to be in her mid-twenties, harmless and demure. But she had tried to assassinate the Israeli Prime Minister, and trigger World War III. "You are very lucky, you know," Lord Lynsey said.

She remained silent.

"If it weren't for our intervention you would now be facing execution. Do you understand that."

Her blank expression gave nothing away.

"Ingenious device," he smiled, "but it still showed up on the X-ray." Dayton leant back casually, his hands clasped behind his neck. "So, the question is, what do we do with you now. Let's see. We can lock you away and lose the key. Nobody knew what you intended to do, so you are not news."

That didn't matter to her; she remained silent.

Dayton turned to Yasir, his back-up. "Whoever she is working for is not going to be happy with her failure. Perhaps we should inform the Professor where she can be picked up."

She didn't like the sound of that. And they called him the professor. How much did they know?"

"We can also turn you over to Mossad; they will interrogate you in ways, not at all pleasant.

Still no sound from her.

Yasir said, "Perhaps we should give her a taste of what to expect."

After seeing the state of the Rabbi Finstein, Dayton didn't know if Yasir was play-acting or not. Dayton concurred, "If it's the only way to get her to cooperate, you'd better get the tools."

Tools! Her skin went cold and clammy.

Yasir unrolled a piece of suede containing an array of sharp tools, pliers, blades and pincers, all fitting neatly in their loops. He removed some very sharp secateurs. "Hold her little finger out," he said, matter-of-factly.

Dayton separated her small finger of her left hand.

No! Surely they wouldn't, her mind screamed. She couldn't pull her hand away. Sweating profusely, she cried, Nooo!"

Dayton had broken her silence. Now came the crucial part. The Soter agent, relieved, said, "Now let's start again, shall we?"

She took a deep breath.

"Who are you working for?"

"I only know of him as the Professor."

"Have you met with him?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In his hotel room."

"Did you have sex with him?"

Annabel flushed, saying, "If you would call it sex. He whipped us while reciting some poem, or story, or something."

So she was a prostitute. "So how did you graduate from S and M to attempted assassination?"

"You must understand, he is a very powerful man."

"In what way?"

"He is scary. He does something with his eyes. It's difficult to explain."

Dayton looked at Yasir. "Next she'll be telling us she was hypnotised."

"No. Not hypnotised - but controlled in some way."

"This is rubbish," Yasir said. "I think I will get out my tools."

Dayton stilled him with his hand. "Are you saying he used mind control on you?"

She nodded frantically. "Yes, yes. That's what the Professor did."

"When did he do this?"

"After our whipping."

"Our! So there were other prostitutes involved."

"One more. A woman called Miriam."

"Do you know where I can contact her?"

"No."

"What does this Professor look like?"

"He had a dark pointy beard. He was not so tall but broad in the shoulder. A bit like a gnome or goblin."

At last Dayton had a physical description of the man.

She added, "There was one odd thing. When the Professor watched us having sex, he played with himself, but he never let himself go all the way. It was as though he was torturing himself, as well."

"The Atlantean resistance leaders understood the necessary protocols and seemed eager to submit to our demands," Colonel Lynch said, as he and Dr Gibson entered his quarters.

"Tamis looks like a bright, courageous girl. She expressed that her reasons for staying are intellectual, and the scientists will have no qualms with having someone like that around."

"Intellectual, huh! I've seen her fight and lead. She's a warrior."

Dorian laughed lightly. "I see you have felt the effects of their fighting," She said, touching his injured shoulder.

"Beck told you about that, huh?" Rafael gingerly reached up to touch his injured arm. Larson had thoroughly washed and re-banded it. He had said there seemed to be no sign of infection, and it would only hurt bad for a while."

"That's good news, but you should have let me know about it as soon as you got back here. It's important for me to know if my military commander got shot in the shoulder?" Dorian teased him gently. "Are you okay?"

Raf nodded, putting his hands on either side of Dorian's face. He leant towards her parting lips and kissed her slowly. "Fuck the stupid wound, this is what I want," the colonel mumbled, gently, running his tongue over hers. He nibbled her bottom lip, and the tips of their tongues danced like old lovers. It was only their third session together, twice after he got back from Atlantis missions. He guided her into his bedroom. She moaned as he pulled her into him, while they kissed deeply. She felt him getting hard and wanted him too. He reached for the zipper of her dress. Her heart began to race as the garment fell to the floor. Raf pushed her back on his bed and caressed her breasts.

"My God, I've wanted this," he said, running his hands down her body, lightly touching every curve.

She responded, "Raffie, I want you now," while grinding against him.

He pulled her up close, kissing her deeply while pushing her panties aside. "I have got to have you now," he groaned.

"Yes, fuck me," she moaned, as he thrust into her feminine warmth.

As they lie in post-coital bliss, she said, "Raf, we have to stop doing this."

He leant up on one elbow and stroked her coppery, slightly greying hair. "Why give up this pleasure that we enjoy so much?"

She looked at him. He reminded her of James Garner, in his 'Maverick' role from her childhood days. "Because we are commanders of this mission, Raf. If anyone finds out ..."

"And why's that going to happen. Christ, this is just one of the few pleasures to be found on this God-forsaken base," Lynch said, stroking Dorian's hair. "We just have to be careful; that's all." He grinned, "Now, how about a drink?"

She sat drinking coffee, naked but for the army issue blanket wrapped around her. "What are we going to do about Tamis and those kids?" she asked.

"More to the point, how are we going to weasel out our mole."

Dorian sniggered, "I know it's serious, but you seem to be getting your mammals confused."

Tella knocked at the door and responded to Tamis' "Come in." Everything seemed in order, so she turned and smiled at Tamis. "Are you settling in comfortably?"

The Atlantean smiled, "Thank you -yes. You have all been very kind."

Tella thought back to when she was made welcome. "Takran is just down the hallway. If you need anything, just ask."

The room felt alien and strange, vastly different to her chamber in her father's house. She sighed, putting on a brave face. "Thank you, Tella. I'm sure everything will be just fine. It will be wonderful to be able to bathe properly, in warm water, and not in a cold river."

"I will leave you to it, then." Tella smiled once more and then left.

Tamis stood still, at a loss for what to do. A hot, steamy bath had been on her mind, but she couldn't motivate herself to run it. Despite all the kindness showered upon her she was far away from home and had never felt more alone. It seemed that the entire weight of her world rested upon her frail shoulders. She thought she was prepared to lead her people, but that was when her father's robust and loving power had protected her. Despite their differences in religious beliefs, she had never doubted his love for her. Now she realised he had been right, but that had only got him locked up or killed. She shuddered at the thought and yearned for her father's experience and wisdom. But he had disappeared in the Singularian attack on the Capitol. Tears clouded her eyes. He had instructed her to remember all of her lessons and to lean heavily on Takran, for she would need a strong companion and a good friend.

There were three hundred and fifty staff members on the Atlantis mission base, and one of them was the mole. But which one, the Colonel wondered? How could he find out? Dorian had gone back to her quarters, and he lay alone in the dark, trying to figure out a strategy. It had to be somebody with the knowledge to cause a power surge to short out the shield. The shield, a device generating an

energy barrier, was designed to block matter or energy directed at it to stop unauthorised personnel from passing through. Somebody had overridden it. The Ancients Atlanteans had placed a shield on the Stargate which had been in place and effective, for thousands of years. Raf wondered how his people discovered the Gate and how somebody had deactivated the shield?

His shoulder was giving him trouble, and he couldn't sleep. So he got up, made coffee, and pored over the reports he had requested. When the shield deactivation took place, the computers recorded everything that happened, power wise, as they went into battery mode. Schematics on the Gate came up on his monitor. Scrolling through the technical data, Raf came to an original report stating the shield on the Atlantis Stargate was translucent. This anomaly meant the suppressed unstable vortex and the impact of objects were prevented from re-materialising. The scientific consensus at the time was that it was unable to be breached. The reason given was that it could not be breached by anything because it was placed so close to the event horizon that it blocked even subatomic particles, not just objects larger than an atom. However, since advances in Star-Gate technology had taken place, a 'back-door' was previously coded into the shield's control system by, Dr Rodney MacKay. This extra port allowed the scientist to remotely deactivate and activate Atlantis' Gate shield, preventing anyone else (including anyone using the shield's control panel in Atlantis itself) from deactivating it.

Could MacKay be a spy for Diabolus? No, it didn't make sense. But he did have more control over the Stargate than he realised. Raf would have to check into it the next day. Now he had to get some sleep.

<http://www.federaljack.com/terminator-robots-a-reality/>

http://stargate.wikia.com/wiki/Stargate_shield

<https://www.fanfiction.net/s/10062512/2/Alchemical-Nin%C5%8D>