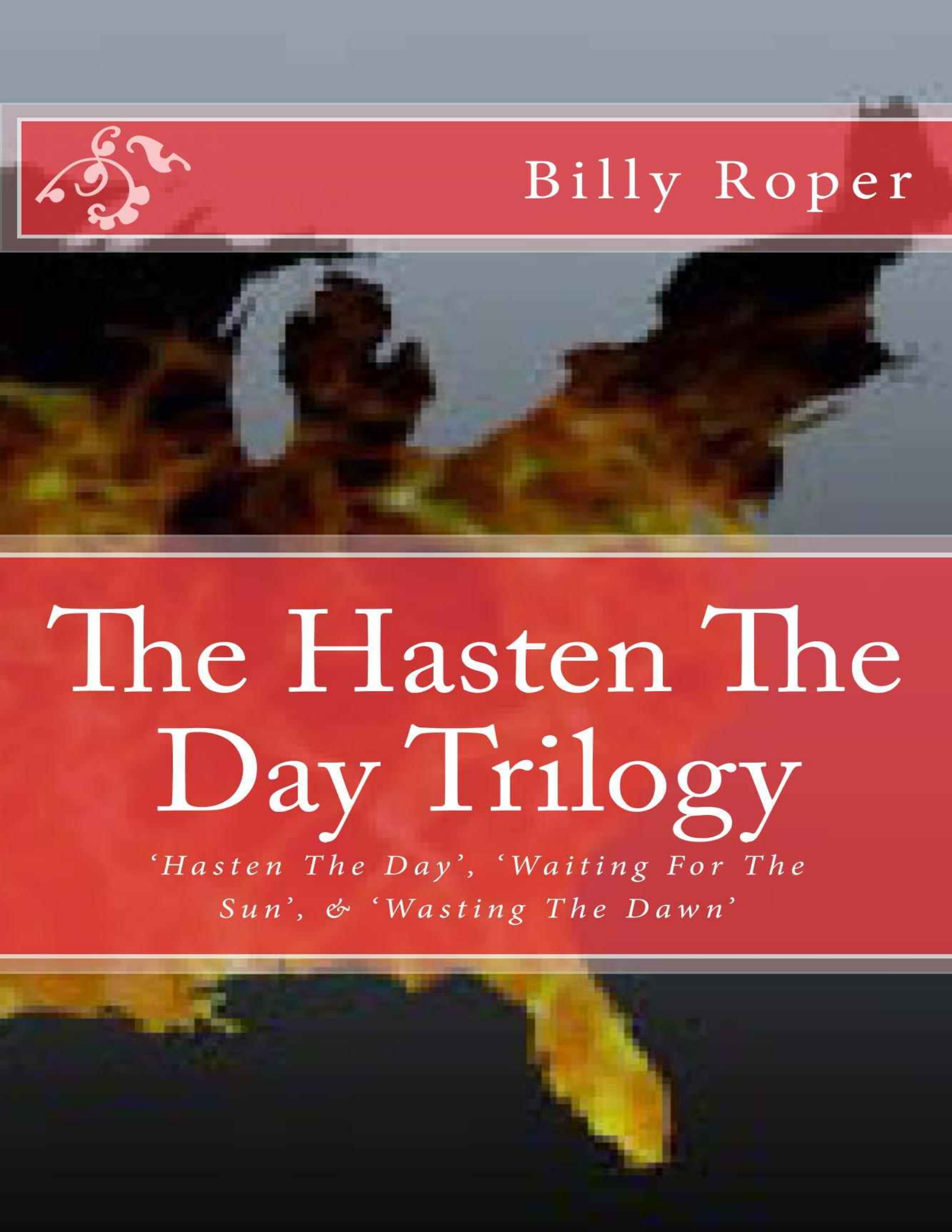

Billy Roper
The Hasten The Day Trilogy
'Hasten The Day', 'Waiting For The Sun', & 'Wasting The Dawn'

The Hasten The Day Trilogy

Dear reader,

The first installment in the 'Hasten the Day' trilogy was published in September of 2014, with the sequel, 'Waiting For The Sun', going quickly into print barely a month later. The third and final installment, except for a chapter-length excerpt from the 'Hasten The Day' universe which was included at the beginning of the otherwise nonfiction 'The Balk', was then published in January of 2015 under the name 'Wasting The Dawn'.

Interest in the characters born in the series grew, as did fascination with the scenario envisioned, to the point that 'Hasten The Day' has remained the best-selling of all of my books, fiction or non-fiction, from its inception to the present.

For the one year anniversary of the first installment 's original publication, after many requests for an anthology, I relented and agreed to reformat the trilogy in a single volume. This, then, is the newly revised, edited, and updated 'The Hasten The Day Trilogy'. I hope that first-time readers will be as moved by the tale told as I was in its telling, and that those who are revisiting the story as old friends will find something in it that they missed the first time; either because it wasn't there at first glance, or they missed it in distractedly wondering how I was going to manage to pull of those myriad characters together into a woven tapestry of intertwined fate, after all. Either way, step forward with me now into a future that may be all too real, all too soon.

-Billy

“Hasten The Day”

The First Year Of The Balkanization of America By: Billy Roper

The following book is a work of fiction. Any resemblance, in whole or in part, to any events or persons, living or dead, is strictly coincidental. Stop reading into things because of your paranoia.

Dedicated to my beautiful wife Tina, who inspired and encouraged me to leave some of myself behind in words. *‘Wyrd bid full araed’*, Baby Doll.

Grateful acknowledgements to Bob, Doug, and all of the other friends and patriots who gave their time and energy to help edit, revise, proofread, and give clarity to my vision.

“Always take care of the most important things first. The little things will take care of themselves.” -last words of Dr. William L. Pierce to the author.

Chapter One

Luke 12:51
King James Bible
“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.”

Eight Miles High And Falling Fast

“Tell the little thug that I’m not Dr. Dolittle.” Captain John W. McNabb stuttered through his chattering teeth. His young corporal Kip’s face tightened, then eased in understanding a moment later.

“Right, you don’t talk to animals, Sir?” his XO asked.
“You got it in one, Kip.” He turned back towards the wood burning stove warming this end of the officer’s tent, wondering how bad off the eleven thousand ‘youths’ nominally led by the Chicago New Black Panther Party must be without heat, power, and much food…not to mention indoor plumbing…now that winter was closing in. Food must be scarcer than hen’s teeth, as his downstate cornbelt momma had always said, for Kwaise Memf-whatshislips the third to send a scared gangbanger across the two mile noman’s land of impromptu funeral pyres and scrap metal piles to the Indiana National Guard picket line. But, what was there left to talk about? McNabb’s Hoosiers (all three hundred and fifty of them), combat hardened in the fires of Peoria, just had to continue to hold Gary and this northeast end of the circle slowly choking down the Windy City until the Colonel said to let up. Nothing but a thing to John. Going on snipe hunts for ‘youths’ was what he did. He was a glorified cop, a peacekeeper, a stabilizer, and a first responder with air support…well, sometimes.
The grimy desk calendar held down flat on the split webbing of a lawn chair by his helmet told him that they had been here for nearly two months. Every time he staggered onto his cot to snatch an hour or two of regulation coma, he saw the pages

staring at him accusingly. October winds blew chill off Lake Michigan, and the first snowfall could come at any time, so the sleeping bag covers were cool and damp beneath him, inviting. John said a quick but sincere prayer over his simple evening meal. He poked at the mystery meat on his tray with a fork and tried to recapture the last five months of downward spiraling chaos since Cinco Day. America had come under attack by minority insurgents. The nonWhite revolutionaries had nearly destroyed his nation. Only men like him, now, stood in their way. He added a prayer, postscript, for America.

Things had already been bad, before last Christmas. The country had been more polarized and divided than since the last civil war. Another round of corporate and big bank defaults, bailouts, failures, and closings. The U.S. budget deficit topping twenty trillion, with no end in sight. Congress refusing to act to limit the growth of government spending. They were afraid of upsetting the entitlement majority in their constituencies before the next election. The President was seen as weak and vacillating abroad, and abrasive at home. She had lost everyone's respect.

Partisan politics had become so divisive that no middle ground was reachable. There was no more moderate middle, no more room for compromise. The Islamic State gained ground in the Middle East, mocking America as being cowardly and impotent. Another round of amnesty for illegal immigrants, under the guise of 'immigration reform', by Executive Order. Red State vs. Blue State. International banks, then foreign monetary exchanges, devalued the dollar three times in less than a month. The Federal Reserve responded by dropping interest rates to zero, but they couldn't pay people to take dollars. The real crippling agent was hyperinflation. John remembered the rising sense of fear as people scrambled to buy anything tangible, physical, of value. In descending order all of the gas, guns, ammo, and grocery store shelves were bought out. Either in a matter of days or hours, there was little left to buy, depending on where you were. Still, inflation soared. Many people took the chance to pay off their mortgages, car loans, and credit cards, but none of that really mattered, any more. The dollar became worthless. By February,

hyperinflation had ended most consumer production and bitten deeply into slumping retail sales. The national unemployment rate reached fifteen percent. The Fed printed paper like it was free. Next, the stock market slipped, caught, and slipped again. Heating oil prices doubled in the northeast. As Spring came, it seemed that there might be some respite. Then, somebody decided to kick us while we were down, McNabb thought bitterly. First Mexicans and other Latinos, and then blacks, attacked the U.S..

It had been a real stab in the back. The next illegal immigration amnesty plan was being opposed so staunchly by most White Americans that the “Secure Our Border” demonstrations made national headlines and led the t.v. news’ top stories throughout the month of April. Clashes with immigrant counter-protestors spread. Much of the opposition to more immigration was due to the nation having the highest rate of unemployment since the Great Depression. Admittedly, some of the resentment was due to racial tension, as well. The Mexican media and government responded by calling the demonstrations racist and antagonistic. They called on Mexicans on both sides of the border to resist, and fight back against ‘Yankee racism’. The rhetoric escalated quickly into violence. A group of elderly Tea Party activists protesting illegal immigration were savagely beaten by a group of Hispanic activists. Emboldened by that success, another group of Hispanics tried the same trick on a different anti-immigration group, but came away bloodied. One of the protesters was a concealed carry permit holder. Eight of the Latino gang members got to stay in America, the hard way. Some law enforcement agencies had abdicated their duties and responsibilities to the people, just as King George had done before 1776, in the Captain’s opinion. The people, then, had to do their jobs, for them.

On May 5th, organized and well-planned chain-fire counter-protests had ripped across the cities, from the southwest to the northeast. Rioting led to looting, and worst of all, to police departments being overwhelmed and in a couple of cases, simply outgunned. In several urban areas in border states, National

Guard units were called up and just as quickly locked down because some units started shooting the protesters…or joining them, then shooting each other. The mass, organized rapes of White women and girls by Hispanic gangs began, as a terror tactic to drive Whites out. The growth of White militias exploded, in response. Unlike the anti-government fantasies of some ironically selflabeled ‘patriot’ groups, the reality of the situation was that most armed Whites became de facto White Nationalists, and most White Nationalists became counter-insurgents, counter-revolutionaries, fighting against the rebels. In most cases they found themselves fighting against those who were intent on destroying America, by fighting to defend whatever vestiges of law and order remained. It was the compassion and love of brave White men and women for their people, that drove them to defend their nation.

Public utilities began to fail, including fire, police, and water and sewer treatment. Power plants failed when employees stopped showing up for work because their pay, if it came at all, was worthless. The coal or fossil fuels used to fire many of them stopped being delivered. Riots, looting, and ethnic violence destroyed power lines, substations, and transformers. Some of it was deliberate sabotage. Electricity went out, and stayed out, in many urban areas, and across most of the nation. That was the end of law and order and civilization, except in isolated pockets where Whites preserved it by strength of arms. How had it happened? How had it all come undone so quickly? It was a blur. That’s why Cinco de Mayo was burned into John’s memory as the day it all went south. Like any divorce, though, the breakup had been anticlimactic in and of itself, and a long time coming.

Only the last three calendar flips since he’d been called up from his daytime gig as a High School principal were clear. Following orders, giving them down the line, and the routine boredom punctuated by moments of high pucker factor created real clarity. How he had gotten there, the secessions and declarations and ethnic cleansings of the heartbreaking summer were a smear on the lens of his glasses, and he refused to wipe it away. He liked things blurry, when it came to memories of what had happened,

what was happening, to his country and his state. Better to keep moving forward. Like a shark. Better not to stop and think. Or sink, and die. Twenty-three million Americans had stopped swimming while he was on his little campout here. And sank.

The Captain hoped that Kip wouldn't literally shoot the messenger this time, but McNabb could hardly blame the kid, if he did. His grandparents had been snowbirds, living just north of Phoenix. They had gotten caught behind enemy lines when Arizona went over to Del Norte. Now they were permanently retired, he guessed. No Anglos had squeezed out of there, except for a few Mormons who'd skedaddled to Utah, since about onethousand six hundred 'displaced persons' were released by La Republica del Norte paperpushers in Tempe as a "goodwill gesture" on the 4th of July. McNabb noted the irony of that. But all that he, and the Corporal, and the rest of their volunteer militia reinforced company of weekend warriors could do about that was here and now. That, and pray for their future. John had never thought of himself as a religious man. He had taken his girls to church, and prayed before meals, of course. Where he came from, that's just what people did. But not seeing his family for so long, and being at risk of dying every day, sure made a believer out of you, he considered. What was that old saying, 'there aren't any atheists in foxholes'? They could pray. They could also snipe at this other enemy, and especially savor the occasional Mexican they found that the blacks hadn't already shot up. Every Mexican was an MS-13 member, and a terrorist. Some of them swore in broken English that they weren't, but everybody knew how Mexicans lied. Most of the time, all they could do to vent their frustrations was send forays across the lines to sweep for White refugees here, and hold the line. Eventually, some bureaucrat in Springfield or Indy or St. Louis might broker a human cargo trade deal between the Chicago pocket and a few thousand White scarecrows holding out on the Gulf Coast, or in Detroit, if any were left there. Little Alamos and Littler Big Horns. Rumor had it that was the kind of thing they were trying to do, on both sides, where they were able to talk without gunplay. That seemed reasonable. People often weren't reasonable, in McNabb's experience. Any way it

went, that kind of decision was above his Captain's paygrade, not that he or any of the rest of them had seen a paycheck since August. Some stuck around because they still got fed and they were safer together than alone. He had a job to do. That helped keep his mind off of his wife Cindy, and their two girls so far away in Ft. Wayne, tonight.

The Best Lack All Conviction

Kelly Johansen was working the second shift again, typing in new recruits for the Latter Day Saints Security Forces. She absent-mindedly hummed an old Metallica riff, then caught herself and glanced around the state police headquarters office to make sure that nobody had heard her. People in Salt Lake had begun to tattle on each other for things like that. Theocracy tends to make people petty, she amused herself by thinking. In between calls to officially annex Mormon communities in bordering states and disdainfully declaring the national government to be in abdication of authority, calls for renewed morality and traditional values were daily heard on state radio broadcasts, the only source of news sanctioned by the Church. 'It's become like Salem around here since the national networks quit broadcasting', Kelly continued in her mental conversation with herself….'and a lot like whatever place Orwell was writing about in England in '1984''. All of the other stations had signed off, one by one, six weeks before. She was glad, in a way, that the internet was either down or jammed by the Church, depending on who you listened to. It kept her from being distracted from her work, and Kelly had another coffee mug high stack of paper enlistment applications to transcribe. Only when she reached the bottom could she take her place in line at the Tabernacle-run cafeteria two blocks down the street, and they closed for the night in three hours, no matter how many hungry and cold folks still stood in line when the bells rang.

Kelly wasn't a long -time member of the Church, but she had joined in late July before applying for this state job, instead of joining the thousand other girls her age who now spent their days

cooking and serving food to the masses for their own meals. Better them than her, she felt, but they kept the hive fed, and the men and boys patrolling down south near the state line appreciated the day old leftovers convoyed out to them as field rations. The canneries were shifting gears already, to accommodate that need. No wonder gas rations had been tightened twice again, she considered seditiously. Scuttlebutt around the office was that the state legislature would vote on secession within a few days, and a bill to change the name from “Utah” back to “Deseret” would probably be formalized by Halloween…a holiday which she was unlikely to ever be able to celebrate again, she realized ruefully. At least, not publicly. She was about as likely to abandon her favorite time of the year in her heart as she was to give up the single life and become some elder’s new sister wife. That wouldn’t happen, even if they did bring back polygamy, as some were saying, and even if they did close the cafeterias and she got really, really hungry again. “Hear her roar!”, she chuckled quietly. Kelly had been celibate, by choice, for a year, not that she didn’t have opportunities. Men were men, in the best or the worst of times, even if she hadn’t been well-developed and cute in an unintentionally gothic sort of way. She just wasn’t interested in that sort of drama in her life. People were too erratic to be erotic. Kelly laughed in her head at her own wit. Oh well, focus, girl, get this paperwork whittled down and get to go home, she resolved.

Passionate Intensity

Thomas “Tommy” Vinson was a Prius driving, aging and balding queer with a feminine pony tail. Just your classic liberal homosexual hippy. His Prius was covered with all kinds of leftist life philosophies which could be summed up on a bumper sticker... ‘equal’, ‘coexist’, ‘erase racism’,’ ban guns’, blah, blah, blah. The biggest sticker, which distracted from all of the rest just because of its size, read “Love Your Neighbor”. It was Tommy’s favorite, and had a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on it. It was one he had gotten from his local Task Force On Ethnic

Relations meeting. Community activism was Tommy's passion, along with well-muscled young men. The younger, the better, as far as Tommy was concerned. That was why he hated watching the news, it was too depressing. Like a lot of Americans, Tommy went through his life more concerned about celebrity gossip and drama and reality t.v. shows than the economy or current events.

He had been hiding out in his mom's basement as the anarchy crept into their home town of Covington, Kentucky. The town was so homophobic, according to Tommy, that it was easier to live with his mom, than trying to rent his own place and facing some Bible-thumping gaybashing landlord. He hadn't heard from his boyfriend, Nate, in over a week, and feared the worst. The wannabe wench was probably cheating on him at the gym, again. Probably with that runt, Chad. Rock climbing, my butt. Or his, Tommy thought in jealous anger.

His mom really got on his nerves once the cable stopped working. She missed her programs. All she wanted to do was talk about how disappointed she was that she wouldn't ever have any grandchildren. All of her friends had grandchildren. Then somebody must have driven into a light pole because the electricity blinked and died. She griped at him to check to see if she had paid the bill. Their heaters went off, and it got cold, fast. He picked up the phone to report the outage, and it was dead. His mom nagged Tommy into going out the next day to get some food that would keep, and some flashlights and batteries. They bundled up and shivered through the night, and the next day Tommy's Prius eased over the Ohio River Bridge.

He was fascinated by the number of fires that seemed to be sending up smoke from all over the city. There was a barricade of traffic cones and two Army Humvees parked at the Ohio side of the bridge, but nobody was there to stop him, so he eased around them and kept going. The lack of other cars on the road was kind of unnerving. It was worse that nobody had plowed the streets in days, from the looks of things. Passing one of his favorite spots,

the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, he began to think about where he could find some good food. Something better than the prepackaged corporate G.M.O. crap they sold in all of the grocery stores in Covington. He refused to shop there. It was worth it to drive a little further, into the city, for healthy produce. Even if he did have to make a few stops to get what he liked.

During an impromptu race riot on the way home from an ill-timed run to the Whole Foods store in south Cincinnati to buy up the last of their fresh kale, Tommy took a wrong turn. First the store wouldn't take his credit card, and now this! When he saw a large group of black men marching in front of him in the street, blocking his way, he was confused. Tommy looked admiringly at the rear ends of some of the younger black men, boys really, closest to the front of his Prius. They couldn't have been more than ten or eleven years old, but they looked so big. Those were just the kind he liked. Tommy momentarily daydreamed about the many summer days he had spent at the park, offering cold soft drinks and bottles of water to boys just like the ones in front of him. A few of them had taken the bait, even…Then he saw that several of them were carrying signs saying "Stop Racism!" and "Kill Whitey!", so Tommy rapidly honked his little Prius car horn behind them, in support.

That got Tommy pulled out of his Prius and given a beatdown thrown his way by several blacks. They surrounded him, leaping in and hitting him, then jumping back, one after another, in a circle. He went down, pleading, and a brick hit him in the face, then another. Tommy collapsed, and was swarmed and curb stomped. The whole time he was curled up into a fetal position, wearing a "Change" t- shirt, and whimpering, trying to explain to his attackers that he'd voted for Obama, twice, and had marched with Jesse Jackson. Tommy then got explained to that he "be de white devil and must now pay", and got his jaw broken, along with some other body parts which he couldn't feel any more, and some he didn't need to use, anyway.

In the distance, he faintly heard gunshots, once or twice. He was fading in and out of awareness. After a few semi-conscious hours, a White Nationalist skinhead crew helping take back their city block by block came across Tommy's broken and sodomized body. At first the Buckeye Wrecking Krew Skins though he was another corpse, but Tommy moved his arm a bit at the sound of the engine coming closer. He half rolled over, still clinging to life next to his looted and burnt car, with the bumper stickers still legible, by some miracle. They pulled their borrowed National Guard truck over beside the wreckage, human and machine, and two of them hopped out, armed to the teeth. Tommy was battered and bruised (still wearing his blood-stained Obama shirt). He blearily saw the White good Samaritans, and called out for water, food, and help. Their bomber jackets and straight-laced Docs meant nothing to him. He then started to explain deliriously through broken teeth who he was and that he could understand the black's anger because of institutional racism. Four centuries of slavery and oppression were to blame. It was the poverty… Tommy asked the leader of the skinhead crew to help him up, so he could go find the black men who had felt intimidated by his White privilege. He wanted to give them hugs and say he was sorry and that he loved them…After hearing this, and seeing the Obama shirt and bumper stickers, one of the skinheads sneered "You're way too far gone. I know only one way to help you". He inserted a .45 caliber Glock into Tommy's mouth and blew red and gray matter all over the bumper stickers. A little gray matter, at least. A little goes a long way. With the right projectile behind it.

The six young White men then left, feeling good about the divine karma of the outcome, and commenting on how pieces of garbage like Tommy had enabled the situation they found themselves in. The Krew, as they called themselves, had been hardworking, hard partying hooligans and streetfighters before the collapse. They had continued to go to work every day for a month, once the bottom had fallen out. After the doors of the factory where they worked was chained and locked, they had begun looting Cincinnati, often in direct competition with black

gangs, to feed themselves and their families. Before long they had taken over the job of guarding their neighborhood, and all of the White families in it. No police had shown themselves for days, and the power and then the water had failed. Things had gotten primitive, but they had made it. Pickings were getting slim for food and water, and they were debating trying to head south into Kentucky, when an Ohio National Guard helicopter appeared overhead, looking for survivors. The next day, they met up with some tired infantry and became local guides for them, as they swept the area. They had found some Whites left alive where they had hidden when the riots swept through their neighborhoods. Many more, they had found dead. Every White female whose body they found, from toddlers to grandmothers, had been brutally raped, before or after. The noise of the last riot on this street had attracted their attention, and they had begun working their way towards it, shooting down a few straggling protesters as they advanced block by block.

The luck of finding Tommy made them all briefly philosophical, in fact, musing on how a lot of the current troubles could have been avoided if "Tommys" all around the country had gotten the help they needed decades ago. They debated whether sticking to euthanasia laws and not allowing the weak to breed would have helped. The discussion continued as they climbed back aboard their truck and eased down the street to continue their search for White survivors and refugees.

A segregated U.S. Army armored column pushing north from Fort Knox smashed the Prius, and what was left of Tommy, into the ditch a week later. There was a lot of road kill laying around, during those days. Turkey vultures and other carrion eaters, of the four and two legged varieties, thrived.

It Landed Foul Upon The Grass

Private Luke Hanna woke to the ring of rounds on metal walls, followed by the crump of a small explosion. Confused shouts and questions from other bunks let him know he was not alone in

wondering what was happening. As his eyes adjusted, he saw that some of the bunks were empty already. Camp LeJeune was under attack! No, wait, it was probably just another stupid drill, like they had been going through every few days since the State of Emergency had been declared. Out in the hall, somebody yelled “Marine! Stand down!” and was interrupted by another flurry of shots. He was the third man through the door to see what was going on. The first two were shot down before they cleared the entranceway. The nineteen year old from Florida tried to slow down and stop himself, but his bare feet slipped in blood on the buffed concrete floor, and he fell painfully onto his back, staring up at the ceiling. Madness raged all around him. Who was attacking? He wished he had his gun, or a pair of pants, he thought in embarrassment, as he lay there in his underwear in the hallway. Rolling sideways against the far wall, Hanna raised his head quickly to have a look around. Aside from the two men next to him, the hallway was now empty. One of them was not moving at all, and the other wouldn’t shut up screaming. Somewhere off ahead, boots pounded, then the base alarms started sounding.

“Oh, just in time, great job”, he sarcastically whispered to himself. Testing his side by moving to see if anything was broken, he found that he seemed to be okay. Hanna gingerly got up and limped back across the space to the open door of the interior barracks. There were nine other dudes huddled against the back wall. They had pulled two racks of bunks across the room as a barricade. Playing defense? That just wouldn’t do. Even though he was just a private like the rest of them, they listened when he started getting dressed, and told them to do the same. Time was on his bad side. The wounded guy in the hallway had gone quiet, except for some soft sobs as two of the privates ventured out from behind their rack to try and render first aid. It didn’t help. No, this was not a drill.

Nobody had liked it much when their squads had been broken up and locked down in barracks. It was crazy not knowing what was going on. Maybe some kind of weird new Marine psychological

test. If this was another team-building exercise, it had failed, badly, if they asked Luke. A few of the jarheads had been saying that it had something to do with the riots. Every man wearing green tried to ignore other colors, but they were there. They always were there. Some of the blacks and Latinos didn't try as hard to pretend that those differences didn't matter as the White Marines did. Had the riots come here? To Lejeune? To Jacksonville?

It was surprising how hard it was to find anything to use as a weapon on an active U.S. Marine base.

"Talk about the second amendment, even soldiers couldn't be trusted with guns, huh?" he asked the lanky man beside him. Gowatney, his name read. While they crept in double ranks down the hall towards the offices where the firing continued, his companion cocked his head in the direction of the gunshots and gave Hanna a look that clearly meant "I guess they were right." Outside, the school bells were ringing and klaxons were howling. As they rounded a corner, the group found the bodies of two uniformed and combat rigged black men, a Lance Corporal and a PFC, surrounded by a scattering of brass empties. It looked like they had been trying to get into the door in front of them, with no luck. Hanna had an idea.

"Hey, Marine, the bad guys outside are down. You're clear!" he shouted. After a moment, the bullet-riddled door of the supply closet opened, and a scared looking White M.P. came out, pistol first. Well, at least he was armed. That was an improvement. The M.P. took one of the dead guys' M-4s, and handed the other one to him. He offered his pistol to Gowatney, who made a prissy face and asked for the M4 instead. "Fine, whatever, let's just go!" the M.P. relented.

Taking point with the dead black Lance Corporal's carbine, Hanna led the small group forward. Now that three of them were armed, they could take names and kick…more firing erupted from just in front of them, suddenly. The other guys crouched down while

Luke, the lanky dude with the other carbine, and the M.P. covered the hall ahead. Voices could be heard, cursing, then more individual shots. Off in the distance, heavy motors started up, and idled higher. The overhead sprinkler systems chose that moment to kick on, as the fire retardant protocol was initialized by automatic sensors. “Great, just what we need”, he groused, wet and cold and frightened. Everybody started griping and complaining. Time to find an exit.

Outside , they headed “downtown” without discussing it, picking up three or four small groups of stragglers along the way. They all told the same tale: black and Latino marines had attacked them, in a surprise move, in the middle of the night. Many of them had been armed. Some had burst in the door and just started shooting. A couple had tossed hand grenades and ran. This must have been planned pretty well, Hanna thought, and for a while. After humping and bumping street by street, they located another group of surviving M.P.s holed up in the Dunkin Donuts next to the Commissary. They were exchanging fire, Call of Duty style, with a group of black enlisted across Birch Street, hunkered down in front of the Wendy’s. Other firefights were going on in every direction. An assault helicopter, probably called in from MCAS New River, hovered over the Field House, pumping heavy machine gun tracer rounds into the Chapel. It sounded like a Cobra/Viper. Smoke began to build. The sky looked like the Naval hospital was on fire, in the distant dark. They would need help there. They found more massacres going on as they went along. It looked like the blacks and the Latinos had turned on each other at some point. By the time they were halfway to the hospital, almost everyone was out of ammunition. Fortunately, the fighting seemed to have moved on when they staggered into the emergency room parking lot, exhausted.

By dawn, a Staff Sergeant was the highest rank they had found alive. Just one platoon leader. It looked like all of the officers had been targeted for assassination as primary goal one. Some surviving brass might be hiding somewhere, but they couldn’t be

found. “Leading from the rear”, Gowatney said, as they watched helicopters rising and leaving from the west. A mixed throng of military and civilians, in various states and stages of undress, milled in front of the burning hospital trying to figure out how to get out. Women and children cried while they walked in nervous circles, as the men looked on helplessly. Some tried to bluster and take command, but nobody listened. One family said they had tried to get out the main gate, only to find the way blocked by a traffic jam, and black enlisted men calmly walking down the road between the cars, shooting everyone White, one carload at the time. When the shooting began several men tried to rush them and fight back, and the witnesses had used the chance to escape on foot.

“The golf course! They’re evacing us from the golf course!” somebody with a single stripe yelled up ahead. Like a herd of stampeding cattle, they had broken ranks and jogged up Brewster Blvd. to the sound of rotors. Ospreys were coming in like giant dragonflies to light and take in a swarm of dazed and wounded White marines who would rush each aircraft as soon as it touched down. Luke tried to get them to let the women and children on board first, but the herd was spooked. Three, Four, Five loads were picked up. Hanna watched the crowded fairway under the crowded skies as Cobras flanked the incoming V22s. Finally, it was their turn. As they rushed the next in line Osprey’s open doors unashamedly, the pop-pop-pop of small arms fire cracked from the bay of the craft pulling up. People ducked as two of the Ospreys collided in mid-air, one rising and one coming in. Gowatney fell back in front of Luke like something had kicked him in the face. Something big and mean and buzzing, as the rounds came sawing in. Hanna had time to see a big rotor turn sideways and move across his line of vision from left to right before somebody punched him in the gut, taking his legs out from under him. “Fore!” he thought absurdly, and almost giggled. He sat down hard in the sandtrap. Something warm and then cold washed over him like a fever breaking, and then he didn’t feel cold and he didn’t feel tired. He didn’t feel cold and tired at all.

Laura, the heavy girl who had been sitting at the desk next to her, didn't come in for the second day this week. For a diabetic, no longer having insulin must be tough. Most of the insulin was manufactured by huge pharmaceutical companies, a lot of it from pig's pancreases in Germany, so there was very little coming in, and what did trickle through was very expensive. Kelly had known of four other diabetics she could name who had been trying to survive without it. Three of them didn't last two months after the collapse. Heart attacks, strokes, blood poisonings…At least walking a lot more and eating less processed foods might help some of them out a little, she thought sympathetically. Diabetics had a slightly longer life expectancy than those on dialysis or ventilators, when the world stopped turning. Those on blood pressure medications probably weren't far behind. Laura must have been really big before the grocery stores ran out of everything, to still be heavy at all, now. There were very few obese people left, these days.

For all of last year, and years before, Kelly had envied her older sister, Karen. In addition to being skinny, Karen had been the smart one, the popular one, the favorite, and had grabbed a full scholarship to study "Gender Issues" at U.C.L.A.. During her last phone call, she had begged Karen to come home before the interstates were closed, but her sister just laughed Kelly's fears off. She had finals coming up, she would see her during the summer break, and besides, only racists thought that the undocumented workers would bother anybody who supported comprehensive immigration reform. She thought that the latest amnesty offer on the negotiating table would satisfy the protesters. Karen was an active member of the College Democrats and had nothing to worry about, she had said. Besides, she had asked Kelly, "we're all immigrants, aren't we? They're just like us". Three days later there was spotty cell phone service, then none. When Kelly tried to call Karen's dorm room number from a land line, it just rang and rang. Nobody answered

at the other end. Very little was heard out of Los Angeles after the declaration of Reconquista, then, until a Spanish language radio station from Arizona announced the opening of a Chinese embassy in L.A., a month later. She had heard, though, what happened to White women in occupied areas. It had all come apart so fast. Kelly blinked back tears of regret, and typed harder. Her stomach growled, urging her on, page after page, towards her dinner.

The Marching Band Refused To Yield

Hu Shan Lin thought that the embassy opening was a mistake, but he dared not say so openly. As an official government adjunct to the People's Humanitarian Expeditionary Force, his duty was to liaison with the peacekeeping forces currently pacifying the hell out of the sick and starving population of Oakland. He, along with the troops, had been dispatched by the Central Committee of the Party to insure the safety and security of Chinese citizens all along the Pacific coast of the former United States, in general terms. It was their duty, since obviously the United States government could no longer guarantee the safety and security of Chinese citizens in North America.

The entire San Francisco Bay grid of hills and streets was his responsibility, in particular. Granted, he technically could call on the entire hundred thousand troops steadily working their way inland for his mission. However much that would help. But Hu took advantage of the thousands of Chinese-Americans who were opportunistically lined up to profess their patriotism and, oh by the way, report on a round –eyed neighbor for hoarding food or stockpiling guns. Yes, there was a reward involved for information on terrorist activities, of course, thank you very much. No, I do not wish to take your daughter as my concubine. Fine, for the sake of your family honor, very well. Just one. The last thing he needed was to have to select the staff of an ambassadorial office in a newly declared breakaway country which only their government had officially recognized, so far. His real orders were to prepare the Republica Del Norte, and all of Mexico, to become a

dependent consumer market for China. With the collapse of the American stock market and economy, and the failure of the dollar, the Chinese economy didn't go into a depression, it had just ceased to exist, almost as quickly as did the U.S.'s. Only aggressive territorial and resource acquisition had saved them. Still, he knew that his country's manufacturing base was eroding faster than the pounding surf could wash away sand. New markets were needed. His job was to provide them.

Australia and New Zealand were isolated into playing nice, and Russia had been placated into docility on the northern fringe by reassurances from Beijing that they had no designs on their northern hegemony, but were focused eastwards. Over the last few months, Hu had hopped the Pacific, reassuring bureaucrats in Tokyo that the new Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere would not threaten their national sovereignty; wink, wink. Three weeks were spent in Taipei taking the pledges of loyalty from Taiwanese parliamentary members following the brief and relatively bloodless occupation, which had gone surprisingly smoothly. Once the Reunification Charter was ratified, he bounced to Seoul, spending a full month debriefing the interned American sailors and marines, all of them black or brown, he had taken notice of, who had been left behind and unable to withdraw to their last standing bastion in Honolulu, before it also fell in turn.

The Americans left behind because apparently their fragmented command structure and fellow soldiers didn't want them or didn't trust them had been a public relations opportunity. However, the decision had been made by the Central Committee in their infinite wisdom to simply dispose of the detainees, instead of bringing to the attention of the world press the fact that China had so many unwanted prisoners of undeclared war to take care of. Hu thought that had been a mistake, as well, but his place was not to ask questions, only to follow orders. It was too bad that they hadn't spun the story about poor oppressed minorities abandoned in foreign lands by their own government. Things had just developed

too rapidly, and there hadn't been enough time, in the end, to go to the trouble. The fish had to eat, too.

India wanted China's help in reining in Pakistan, badly, sinc e both were nuclear powers and sometimes hostile neighbors with lots of hungry people to burn. Pakistan, a Muslim state, was upset that they were too far from Israel to join in the multi-nation jihad against the embattled Jewish state, and ached to fight somebody. The only thing the Indians wanted more, in fact, was to replace the U.S. in the United Nations Security Council. For those two cherries, they were willing to follow the leader in recognizing the new Hispanic nation officially-even if most global insiders surmised that La Republica Del Norte would be annexed into Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos before too long. The overall geopolitical considerations mattered little to a man such as Hu. Like McNabb, he had a job to do. Consolidate Chinese control, Over the Chinese-Americans. Over the American West Coast. Then over these upstart Mexicans, whatever they called themselves.

With No Time Left To Start Again

Gerta Rausch –Schmidt marveled at how thickly dark the huge block of Central Park was from the air. Even the campfires and burning garbage piles surreally lighting the open major avenues looked bright in comparison to the ethereal ink below her, at the shadowed core of the gathering dusk inside the urban forest. The helicopter swung northwards. The German delegation to the United Nations' second ranking interpreter flinched as the scene below shifted dizzyingly, and quietly cursed. She had never liked heights. Electric power in the five boroughs of New York City was confined to a handful of administrative sectors and government enclaves in Manhattan, and just a few tiny pinpricks of light elsewhere where private or corporate compounds had withstood the sieges of the masses, and held out through the worst of times. Down in those streets, it was worse than medieval, Gerta knew.

Only heavily armed groups dared travel the concrete canyons of Manhattan, especially at night.

The U.N. building and its surrounding block of offices on the East side was maintained as well as ever, at least for now, thanks to their own security augmented by blue-helmeted European Union special forces teams flown in from Brussels during the first days of the collapse. The NYPD had broken ranks during the Labor Day weekend riots, when One Police Plaza had been overrun by starving mobs sweeping through lower Manhattan. Only a few hundred of them remained on the job as unpaid volunteers still patrolling their own neighborhoods in teams and maintaining some neo-feudal level of order in fortified bunkers. Others hired on as mercenaries for the surviving compounds, or melted away into the general population, since anybody wearing a uniform was a target in most of the city. The blue flu had turned fatal. But with several of the European Union's member state's economies in freefall following the loss of their big brother, it had taken the personal appeal of the surviving Vice President of the United States to bring in the blue helmets en masse. That was about all Bellefont had done.

Less than a week after the Senate office buildings and Capitol building were burned by throngs of urban youths from Anacostia, civil order was splintered in the halls of power. Rioters were joined by black Capitol police in fighting a pitched battle against the Uniformed Secret Service to take control over the J. Edgar Hoover building. Gerta's personal feeling was that the biggest loss in the burning of Washington had been the Smithsonian. Her grandfather, a survivor of the Eastern Front, had taken her there when she had been just a little girl, and she remembered the science and technology exhibit halls in bitter grief. From reports filed after the fact, Black Block and 'Anonymous' anarchists upped their game and blew up the Washington Monument and the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, all on the same night. She had seen the video of their blasted ruins, and that saddened her, as well. It reminded her of seeing the red flag rising over the

rubble of Berlin in old newsreels of 1945. Or her first two marriages. It was enough to sicken the heart.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff made a heroic last stand at the Pentagon which would have made Custer himself proud, barricaded in his office with a handful of M.P.s and officers, but the black Army mutineers eventually burned him out, too. The Vice Chairman was aloft in the Looking Glass airborne command post as soon as things headed south, and he hovered overhead. In time, he would take command at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, and of the U.S. Strategic Command.

The President was still watching poll numbers indicating that no sitting Commanderin-Chief who abandoned the Capitol could expect to be re-elected, so she dithered while Langley and the survivors at the Pentagon more prudently began evacuating key personnel to the hinterlands. Their efforts were mooted, however, when a relatively small electro-magnetic pulse producing nuclear blast high over Washington fried virtually every computer chip in the District…including some of the more important ones in Marine One, the President's helicopter, that at the moment happened to be evacuating her from the White House. The residence had been surrounded by frightened, angry, and hungry mobs for days. Her flight crew managed a superb emergency landing at the Georgetown University Hospital helipad.

Gerta had been embedded with the first wave of thirty E.U. special forces troops, from the German KSK Kommandos. Their mission was to evacuate diplomats from the member states' embassies in D.C.. They were flown from Fort Hamilton, virtually a ghost town, into Fort McNair, because it hadn't been breached yet, on three Sikorsky Uh- 60 Black Hawks. Flying in reminded her of the movie about Mogadishu, in more ways than one. At the besieged base, they were greeted by some joker's huge painted sign stating "The End Is Coming Soon…But Not Soon Enough". There, they had been provided four armored M113s, eight Army transport trucks for the stranded embassy staffs, (all retrofitted

post EMP) and a platoon of resentful hold-outs from Company A of the 1st Battalion of the Third U.S. Infantry regiment. After first evacuating the staff from the deceptively calm, shady tree-lined residential avenue of the German embassy on Reservoir Road, they were unprepared for the downtown madness just a couple of streets away. Suddenly it looked like a B-rated Zombie movie through her window. Their armored personnel carriers and trucks had been forced to outrun mobs block by block to Wisconsin Avenue and hightail it back to 29 out. Along the way Gerta had seen the spraypainted graffiti on the side of the looted Presidential helicopter bluntly stating “Kilt the bitch”, with her own eyes. If the video posted on Youtube before it went down was real, she had not died easily. The President’s body was never recovered. They never made it to Embassy Row or Dupont Circle, either. At first she didn’t understand why the U.S. Army escorts were so angry, since she was the one who had failed to save any ambassadors but her own…then one of the Kommandos told her. Their unit had been designated as the Commander-inChief’s Guard. Yeah, that would kind of bite the big one. Having the President raped to death on their watch had to be demoralizing. Wouldn’t look good on the old job reference, either.

Nobody knew who had launched the single-warhead missile that carried the E.M.P. blast. Most suspected the Russians. Some accused the Chinese. A few claimed the Israelis has done it, in frustration at the loss of their bully boy and protector, as hundreds of thousands of American Jews made Aliyah, any way they could. But with the District of Columbia already being overrun by starving mobs, and in ruins, it hardly mattered. It was a small bomb, with limited human casualties directly, and at a high altitude. Just enough to put everything electronic in the District, Maryland, and northern Virginia that wasn’t shielded out of commission. Only stubbornness had forced the late President to involuntarily go down with her ship of state. That just sealed the deal for the national government. The city itself was already lost.

For a small town Bavarian girl like Gerta, sharing quarters with the surviving members of the U.S. Cabinet was daunting. She was more used to cows, and liked them better. The ragged bunch in Turtle Bay were always jockeying for position. They and the former Vice President, who had never been sworn in as Commander in Chief formally, shared U.N. delegate housing. The few dozen Congresscritters and Senators who had made it out of D.C. clustered around the outer edges of the U.N. green zone on the East side along FDR in lesser accommodations. ‘A government in exile in their own country’, Gerta thought. All in all, it made for a crowded, stressful environment, even before they had to make plans for an additional battalion of peacekeeping troops headed their way from the U.K.. ‘That’s what you get for sending out a call for help’, she observed wryly. One thing Gerta couldn’t help but think of as the rotors spun down on their rooftop helipad, though, was that once they paid the Danegeld, how would they get rid of the Danes? This city, this island, this country was largely a lawless and starving jungle. Power abhors a vacuum. Who would fill it? How many more would die beforehand? And after?

Chapter Two

Psalm 109:8
King James Bible
“Let his days be few; and let another take his office.”

The Halftime Air Was Sweet Perfume

Northern Indiana was lake country, so fresh water wasn’t an issue for his troop, as long as they used their sterilization kits. As things fell apart and the center didn’t hold, civilization died fitfully in some areas, and revived in others. Most places with local sources for water and power fared well enough, if they could feed their people. But even in the upper Midwest, folks were going hungry. Captain McNabb had heard from the few prisoners of war they took alive that cannibalism had become the new ‘down-low’ of the eastside inner city. His troops ate, sometimes only due to airdrops from Grissom. He had orders not to share rations, if there were any extra, with civilians. This was a war of attrition. This was a siege. This was genocide. But they couldn’t afford to feed all of Gary. It was embarrassing how quickly people had sunk. Not just the blacks and browns, either. Proud men begged and women who had been wealthy offered themselves for a can of tuna. The hungry zombies loitered in urban ghost towns where tumble-weaves of matted hair extensions rolled down empty streets.

McNabb had initiated the tactic of liberating nonperishable food in empty and abandoned houses from Hammond that the scavengers had missed, and using it to set up aid stations to feed hungry suburbanites coming into the relocation center at Calumet City. It was his own version of Christian charity, wartime style. Other units had long and awkward tails of camp followers trailing in their shadow, as ancient armies had. Everybody just did what they could. What amazed him was that people still shuffled along, shallow and dumb and useless. ‘A mile wide and an inch deep’, his momma always called them. No depth, no passion, no

interests. They didn't believe in anything bigger than themselves, really. To him, there were way too many ugly, lumpy, misshapen pieces of genetic drift floating in the gene pool. They were people, to use the term generously, whom natural selection would have helpfully killed off before they were able to breed and pass on their warped genes, in the past. People who misplaced compassion and sympathy had made citizens and voters and 'equals'. Now they died like flies. To the tired officer, true compassion meant making the people as a whole better, not coddling the worst of them and making the whole weaker. True compassion meant sparing the people as a whole from supporting and being dragged down by genetic drift. His Christian faith required him to seek the true compassion which placed the greater good of God's people as a whole, first. He believed in God, and he believed in signs, and he'd be leaving soon, but while he was there, he meant to make a difference.

Most of the nonWhite citizens along I-90 had high-tailed it inside the loop once the real shooting started and it became clear that anyone 'rioting while black' was going to get a rifle, instead of a news camera, stuck in their face for their trouble. They had been more interested in looting electronic stores and jewelers than food warehouses, until it was too late. The population of Gary was down to twenty percent of its pre-war level. That was great for the Indiana National Guard and their militia auxiliaries. Plenty of empty buildings to post snipers and machine gun teams in. Fewer people to feed and watch over…and watch their backs around.

This crisp autumn morning, McNabb was pretending to clean his glasses and watching out of the corner of his eye while some of his non-commissioned officers trained a group of the civilian militia volunteers in how to arm and deploy anti-personnel mines-but not in that order. Some of the guerrilla leaders of the militias were more post-apocalyptic warlords than tactical geniuses. Most of them had female family members who had been raped or murdered by the black mobs in the first days of the collapse, however. They would not retreat. Their practical ambush line, set

up along Buffington Harbor Road, was a part of the defense in depth of the Gary airport they depended on for the resupply of material too big to airdrop but small enough to come in on the short field. He felt like holding up a sign to them saying “Congratulations on 91 days without a workplace injury!”. Only seventy-odd greasy NG’s, 11-Bravo ground-pounding infantry, were left from his original command of one hundred and thirty Guardsmen and women. The attrition rate had spiked in surges. Ten percent never responded to the call-up because they saw the cities were already coming apart. With the writing on the wall in blood, they had opted to stay home and take care of their families.

Th e Captain couldn’t blame them too much for that, but he really fumed when others began to trickle away, singly and by twos and threes, after the first week. By then things had obviously become racial, and some wanted no part of that. When the Major got fragged in his mobile command center by a black lieutenant, the command became McNabb’s- and he almost had lost it completely, as had happened in so many other units. Like most other Guards, the 38th Infantry “Cyclone Division” had been more diverse than the local population it drew recruits from, due to Department of Defense racial recruiting mandates and quotas. They were all antsy. So, when his direct superior was shot dead in the midst of a growing racial civil war by a black junior officer, McNabb didn’t wait for orders from division headquarters. They were nailed down clearing out domestic terrorists from northwestern Marion County, anyway. Instead, he took a few minutes alone in prayer, asking for guidance, then he held an impromptu and abbreviated court-martial adjudicated by himself, his two remaining lieutenants, and the Unitarian Church Chaplain, a Captain who offered the sole dissenting vote against a summary firing squad.

The execution was carried out over her objection the next day, but before the new commander could decide what to do about the dozen other remaining black and Hispanic soldiers left in the

Company, they disappeared in the night, in two different directions, after stealing four trucks and two Humvees loaded with about half the company's stores of M.R.E.'s and a dozen pallets of ammunition crates. They also left behind four of their former fellow soldiers, guards they had stabbed to death and left to bleed out in the motor pool parking lot. McNabb still blamed his reluctance to lock them up for that loss.

He ran down the tally in his head as the militia's self -appointed squad leaders were instructed in the handling of the kind of improvised explosive devices used by both sides to make interstate and inner-city travel more risky than ever. "Let's see, one hundred and thirty to start out with on the roster, one hundred and fifteen showed up, eleven deserted, one fragged, one executed, thirteen more deserted, four murdered, and fifteen more honest-to-God actual combat casualties since then due to incursions by the enemy. Not counting over fifty civilian militia casualties, since they were always enthusiastic about taking the fight to the enemy and being first to fight." McNabb spat on the cracked street in disgust. Yes, his fellow Americans, his former fellow Americans, were the enemy, now. How strange that he had almost gotten used to that. He shook his head and waved away a gaunt brunette in an expensive but dirty evening gown who stood up straighter and made eye contact hopefully when he walked into sight. Oh, how the mighty had fallen.

Most of the strikes came at night, in typical instinctive guerrilla tradition, as probing attacks or raids for food and ammunition or White women. He had been luckier than a lot of unit commanders he knew of. They had been overrun twice in Joliet, and forced to use airstrikes against mobs doing the zombie shuffle out of Oak Lawn. The sound of artillery leveling the Horseshoe Casino had kept him awake last night. Some of the units that had started out with more diverse racial percentages were shells. Many had been disbanded and their survivors reattached to other units. Some companies were at platoon strength, absent militia reinforcements. A few units had been lost to internal fraggings,

and had defected over to the other side, leaving their White comrades in arms behind as corpses.

He still remembered the last divisional officer's meeting before their mission purpose officially changed from refugee internment and peacekeeping to open combat operations against the definitively black insurgency. The Colonel, whose 31st ID had been reduced by two-thirds, made two shocking announcements to the exclusively White men (and a few women) crowded into the dusty Tinley Park restaurant on the front lines that day. First, they were to begin to peel their functional mobile units off of the line, one at a time in succession, to divert force into the grinding fight to push the Latino citizens of Peoria back into the city. In a shocking lack of appreciation for the blessings of multiculturalism, the black citizens had driven them out, furious after the Revs. Al Dullton and Jesse Johnson had been burned alive at a prayer breakfast attacked by local undocumented youths associated with the MS 13 gang. The Latinos were being driven out right into the White suburbs, and marauding there.

It had reminded McNabb at the time of a history lecture he had given once, before he went into administration, where he discussed how the Hun hordes bearing down on Eastern Europe had displaced the Goths, one tribe had displaced another which sacked Rome, in a domino effect. Over the next two weeks, without showing gaps in their siege line, the I.N.G. was to push the MS-13 brats back into the Crips, block by block, house by house. Urban warfare, in confines too close for much armor or air support. Not that they had much of either. In a remarkable display of interstate cooperation, most of their armor from downstate had joined the campaign to clear East St. Louis and then raze Cairo. In exchange, their Illinois counterparts were doing the bloody groundwork in the shadow of the marble arch, and holding the western flank of the ring around Highland Park. God help them, that was dirty work.

With his second revelation, however, the Colonel had earned the ultimate trust of his subordinates. The United States government, he began, had been paralyzed nationally by a major secession movement of Hispanics in the southwestern border states. Protests, demonstrations, and the seizure of government buildings had begun in Los Angeles on Cinco de Mayo, coordinated with occupations in San Diego, Phoenix, Tucson, Las Vegas, Albuquerque, El Paso, San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, and Corpus Christi, then spread outwards to smaller cities from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. Within a week local authority was relinquished, and clearly a full scale racial revolution for the Reconquista of Aztlan had begun. Or had already happened. The border was flooded with an unstoppably massive human wave of migration north into the free for all southwestern sector. McNabb had known all this, as much as he disliked hearing it rehashed again. After all, most of the people in this room had watched it all unfold on Fox News as the politicians wrung their hands and called for calm and for peaceful negotiations. At that sign of weakness, Hispanics in every major city across the country had joined in the rioting.

The Colonel continued his review of recent events. During week two of La Reconquista, after the Stars and Stripes were lowered and the eagle and snake raised over courthouses across the southwest, the first hesitant convoys of Federal troops were ordered in by a vacillating President panicked that most in-state National Guard units had refused to deploy even when asked. The politicians were too afraid to lose Hispanic votes to act until it became obvious that the Hispanics weren't interested in voting, ever again, at least not as U.S. citizens. At first they were delayed entering the areas in rebellion by the flood of White citizens fleeing north, in all four lanes and up the median. The congestion of the frightened refugees masked the armed Mexican Mafia, Norteno, and cartel forces intermingled with them, but CNN had carried live helicopter feed video coverage of running ambushes of surprised and isolated units as U.S. Marines bled and died on the shoulders of the road. The week spent by civil rights leaders

and government soothsayers trying to placate the protesters had failed. Worse, it had emboldened the rebels into declaring secession in a joint press conference in San Antonio, at the Alamo.

It all came to fruition before anybody realized what was happening. The state legislatures of Arizona and New Mexico met the same day in emergency session. The heavily Hispanic state police, after a brief internal purge and shootout on the capitol steps, locked down Albuquerque. In a shorter standoff in Phoenix, the non-Latino representatives were placed under ‘protective custody’ due to the irate crowds surrounding the House chambers. The Hispanic Governor of New Mexico went on statewide t.v. that evening to praise the return of his state to its ‘rightful owners and historic native people’. The Anglo governor of Arizona tried again to call out the state National Guard, which refused to budge. That began a bloody internal uprising with several White pilots from Luke Air Force base loosing their ordinance on Camp Navajo, which had declared for the insurgents after half the base burned. The 355th Fighter Wing from Davis-Monthan joined in, then had nowhere to come home to when thousands of Latinos stormed the base and began killing the remaining personnel on duty. Those White military units who were able to disengaged and withdrew, or demobilized and joined the evacuation of the Anglo civilian population. On bases like Cannon and Holloman, Air Force units unwound into soldier vs. soldier, crew vs. crew fighting, and both were evacuated, along with Kirtland, from which aircraft strafed the streets of the capitol for 48 hours while the nuclear weapons on and around the base were safely loaded and evacuated to Omaha. At least as far as they knew, the Reconquistadores had not captured any nuclear assets. Yet.

This was all new to McNabb and the other officers present, who had never heard the details of force degradation in the southwest. It was shocking to hear. He looked around and saw that a couple of the female officers were silently crying, and most of the faces

looked stricken and gray. The Colonel digressed into a story about how Camp Pendleton and Miramar had been opened up by Latino servicemen to a horde of Mexican nationals cutting their way through San Diego, then continued. All across the southwest, the weight of numbers told. Military units were locked down on their bases by Presidential decree. The order was widened when shooting began at Ft. Polk, Ft. Sill, Ft. Leonard Wood, and Ft. Bragg. Twenty-Nine Palms fell to the insurgency, compromised from within, after bloody hand to hand combat. On MSNBC, Glenn Speck was assassinated in the middle of an interview when a car bomb interrupted him mid-sentence. Few people even noticed.

After brief resistance in spots, those National Guard and regular U.S. Army or Marine units who were majority White and survived the region-wide purges withdrew north as well to await further orders. Many of them deserted and headed home to escort their families to safety. Others, aided by the private Border Patrol civilian militia volunteers, herded the growing tide of Anglo refugees along in front of them, helping as they could. This action saved countless lives, as it discouraged Latino forces from wiping out several enclaves of Whites attempting to abandon the area. Captain McNabb had since heard many stories of heroism and martyrdom, of latter-day Little Big Horns, from Laredo to Ventura. Who could separate the rumors from the facts, they myths from legends, when the ongoing casualty count estimates were rounded to the nearest ten thousand?

What he remembered most from the daylong briefing was the garish map of the new front lines, curving sinuously from California's Central Valley, across Nevada and Arizona's northern tier, through New Mexico and the Texas Panhandle, to Houston. Regular Mexican Army forces had been invited in by the new state legislatures in the border states, and they hadn't had to be asked twice. They were there, of course, to protect the lives and property of Mexican citizens, they announced. The border had not so much disappeared, as turned from black to gray and moved

north by leaps and bounds, with a wide uncertain area on the north side of the amorphous line.

An urgent session of the U.S. House of Representatives arguing whether to declare war on Mexico, seek a diplomatic solution, or impeach the President for waffling so long, was leaning towards granting amnesty to the insurgents in exchange for oaths of citizenship. They were interrupted when the Congressional Black Caucus joined to sponsor two bills, one for the diplomatic recognition of what the Latino members of Congress were calling “The Republic Of The North”, and a second which sought to rip the country from halves into thirds. Representative Lakeisha Roosevelt, the Democratic Congresswoman from Atlanta, authored a bill stating in part that “Whereas, the African American peoples of the United States have suffered under centuries of systematic oppression and institutionalized racism on this continent, having been enslaved, kidnapped to these shores, raped, murdered, and forced to build civilization thereon…the African American peoples of the United States request recognition of the fact that should the Hispanic and Latino peoples of the formerly United States be deemed deserving of their own nation, then certainly the African American peoples are equally deserving of such…”

Not only was this the first use of the term “formerly United States” by a government representative, it set off riots and protests and demonstrations by blacks in every major urban metropolis nationwide, and especially throughout the southeastern states. The black population of the heart of the old Confederacy had been growing due to larger birth rates and remigration of northern blacks back to the deep south for decades, matched with the outward migration of Whites from those states, due to the rising black percentage. More base lockdowns of racially mixed units, and more fraggings and defections and desertions and mutinies by local, county, and state law enforcement units followed. The President addressed the nation and asked for calm, assuring everyone that the situation was under control and would soon

return to normalcy. Then, the New York stock exchange was closed ‘indefinitely’ after the largest one day loss in trading since 1929. The Chicago Mercantile Exchange closed, the next afternoon, due to ongoing riots. Neither reopened.

By week three, Captain McNabb’s teachers had stopped even bothering to call in sick. White parents pulled their children out of school after a week of racial fights and organized ‘knockout game’ attacks in the hallways and classrooms. The President declared martial law in fortytwo states, due to “organized attacks by White racists”. By the time anybody knew which military units were dependable, the armed forces were decimated. Worse than that. “Decimated” referred to the ancient Roman punishment for disloyal tribes, killing one in ten of their population. Most units were below half strength, even before the lights went out. Rule of law remained solid only in local, isolated pockets, primarily in rural areas. The Midwest, the Heartland, the Red States…they got off lucky. He gave credit for that blessing to the Lord, and to God-fearing White men who kept it so.

McNabb learned as the briefing wrapped up that the United States of America no longer functioned as such. The Colonel used a word unfamiliar to most of the officers present: “Balkanization”. It meant the breakup of a large, multiracial country into smaller, more racially homogeneous states. It meant the dream of equality and multicultural diversity was over. As he sat there, stunned at the flood of information, the Captain couldn’t get the old Don McLean song out of his head…”Bye , bye, Miss American Pie…”.

The next few days and weeks in Peoria broke the thin veneer of civilization for him completely, and for his remaining troops. By the time the fires had died in the Northwoods Mall and the Newman Golf Course had been bulldozed into a mass grave there, they had the stomach for bigger jobs…and several hundred civilian volunteers eager to join the fight as auxiliary militia.

The young Whites, the teens, both boys and girls, were the most eager to fight back. They had finally gotten sick and tired of the years of abuse they had suffered at the hands of blacks in the classrooms and hallways and lunchrooms of public schools. Now, they were being trained in how to use rifles, and getting their confidence and self-respect back. Older community activists had taken the place of their parents as role models. Some of them, mainly the organizers and the leaders, had been racialists before the collapse. A few had been Klansmen, or younger Tea Party activists, or Stormfronters. A handful had been Creators or Odinists or skinheads. But most had simply been mainstream White citizens who had seen too many of their daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers raped by black mobs, to ever forgive and forget. Refugees make the best guerrilla soldiers. With nothing left to lose, they became modern day berserkers. The die was cast. She Just Smiled And Turned Away

Kelly pushed her Thor's hammer further under her conservative blouse as she rose from the pew to join the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in the closing song of the morning service. "I know that my redeemer lives" filled the church and flowed outside across W. North Temple to the Square, where overflow crowds of newly enlisted Deseret Defender militia troops stood in rows, waiting to receive the Spirit. Her boss, a young state police trooper who had lost a leg in an on the duty car accident at the end of a chase and was now a deskbound bureaucrat, used to be a pro-immigration activist, she knew. He had admitted as much to her on a shared lunch break. From several rows back he smiled and silently gave her a thumbs up for putting in a diplomatic appearance. She was learning to play the game as well as any of them. The Utah Air National Guard, newly nationalized as the Deseret Air Force and having taken over Hill Air Force base as well, were performing an impressive aerial display outside, for the encouragement of the new recruits. Patriotism, as defined by the LDS, was the flavor of the day, it seemed. So the Elders decreed. Kelly knew what they had inherited when they took over Hill: the atomic fist of God.

The Mormon shock troops, fueled by religious fervor, had driven the regular Mexican Army detachments back across Lake Powell and nearly into the Grand Canyon. The desert campaign was grueling. Back in September, military service had begun to be called ‘divine service to God’. U.S. government offices were universally closed or simply repurposed. A new nation arose, and shook itself, testing its teeth and claws.

People like Kelly Johansen kept their heads down and blended in. But they watched. They watched as Samoan and Tongan and black and, yes, definitely Mexican citizens and even church members were systematically detained, excommunicated, and deported. B.Y.U. had led the Church to declare that nonWhites did have souls, after all, so that their football games could be televised through the NCAA. Now, with nobody looking, the effects of their South Pacific missionary work back-colonization was reversed. Any who tried to come back across the San Juan River once they were dropped off and pointed south just ended up at the bottom of a uranium mine shaft. There was no point in trucking them out to Monument Valley as they had been forced to do during the summer. Why bother? Kelly snorted to herself in derision at how divine revelation of God’s will had, on angelic wings, brought the call to ethnic cleansing and polygamy, both on the same celestial trip. But she never peeped. Very few did. Some had slipped away on their own. Others had help. She shivered at the thought. All dissent quickly evaporated, and disappeared. It was no way for a religiously based small nuclear power to behave. Just ask Israel.

The next morning, she flagrantly sipped her coffee at her desk, and absentmindedly wondered how long it would be legal to enjoy. It was already strongly frowned upon, and all forms of tobacco were considered contraband. Kelly shrugged, knowing that it would be impossible to find soon, anyhow, outside of the black market. Importing it would be difficult, criminalized or not. She missed her Mountain Dews and Reeses more than live music or youtube. Could such things still be found back East, or up

North? The only thing playing down south was mariachi and narcocorridos. Blinking herself into focus, she set back to work. The newly formed Sea Gull Brigade, named after an 1848 event when seagulls from the Salt Lake had eaten up the crickets that had been eating up the Mormon pioneer's crops, were leaving in two days to link up with the Deseret Defenders and Beehive militia units who would lead them along the Colorado river and deep into Arizona.

Kelly had heard the officers talking after church the day before, and knew that the canneries had finally been retrofitted from bulk size to individual ration sized production. Most people didn't think so, but she was smart enough to know that meant an extended campaign, beyond the normal soup kitchen line of supply. Sergeant Cooper, who was in the office more than necessary and likely thought that Kelly might let him sin just a bit, had confided in her this morning that they were headed that way. He had confirmed her thoughts by openly explaining to her how if he showed initiative with the primary advance seeking to drive the 'invaders' back to Flagstaff, or with the secondary arm of the pincer aimed at capturing the Hoover Dam and the Lake Mead watershed, he could be made. "Imagine me marching at the front of the boys driving the ungodly from Las Vegas, and all the gold and silver in those casino vaults, still…or I could be an officer inside a month, Sister Kelly. An officer's pay can easily support a second wife. It might be time for you to settle down, soon….". How gross. The skinny, short little Sergeant made her sick, the way he strutted around with his Napoleon complex. He made her want to slit her wrists, or better yet, his, but she listened. It made her feel more subversive, somehow, and less of a sellout and coward, less domesticated, if she knew what was going on. As much as anybody did.

On purpose, she lived and ate alone. She preferred books to people-especially outlawed books that most of the people she worked with might start burning, sometime soon. That is, if the Mexican army didn't chew them up and spit them out, first. That

was always another, more cheerful possibility. Still, she only had two days to type in their names and biographical information, if only for their headstones and plaques in the Marty's Field cemetery. If they were martyred for Deseret, they were automatically Sainted, regardless of how they got there. Somebody had to know who they had been.

Maybe it was her self-imposed isolation, or denial, or culture shock at what had happened to the world, but Kelly began to lose time, especially at home where there was nothing to distract her from her thoughts. Her memory failed her on things large and small, more and more, day by day. Her favorite sweater had gone missing, she knew she had put it back in the closet. She didn't remember walking to work, this morning. There were huge blank spots in her past, that she couldn't begin to recall. When her co-workers in the Department of Public Safety one-upped one another with stories of misplaced relatives, they meant that the phone lines, postal service, and direct communications with anyone further away than Ogden or Provo was hit or miss, these days. Kelly felt cheated to not have any family or friends to worry about. She had forgotten Karen.

The height of naughtiness for departmental head Claudia, her boss's boss, was to nudge-nudge, wink-wink pass around week old issues of The Denver Post smuggled in by peddlers. It was strictly unapproved, unedited, and uncensored. Kelly devoured each issue with gusto. From the Post she learned the reason why the sunrises had been redder than usual lately. Putting the pieces together from several articles, it seemed that the North American Air Defense molerats under siege at Cheyenne Mountain's complex in Colorado Springs had claimed to be the legitimate chain of command for the armed forces, with two of the surviving Joint Chiefs of Staff (the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps) holed up there. By the time she read that issue, the Deseret News had reported that the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, barricaded in the U.S Strategic Command headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha with

most of the rest of the surviving Joint Chiefs, had declared the usurpers to be seditious traitors and mutineers, and dropped a strategic bomber load of alpha male onto Colorado Springs, making Cheyenne Mountain into a very hot lake for a very long time. The wind had shifted from the East, and it rained red clay silt in Salt Lake. But at least because of the Post articles, she understood the back story, at least academically. A governmental advisory urged everyone to stay indoors for twenty-four hours, until the fallout plume subsided or moved on. The muddy rain lasted half the day, and stained the streets outside red like blood.

Having the day off unexpectedly gave Kelly an opportunity to think about the other news stories in the Post. She wondered how many of them were true. She took the rumpled and faded newspaper out of her purse and smoothed it out reverently, re-reading each dramatic article, one by one…

“Brazil has announced that they have followed the lead of other Latin American countries in officially recognizing the sovereignty of the Republica del Norte , and will establish official diplomatic relations with the new nation as soon as such action is approved by the Chinese peacekeeping authority responsible for security in the Bay Area of California.”

Okay, pretty straightforward there, and likely enough, but with a weak tone. The Mexicans were placing second fiddle to the Chinese, and so were the Brazilians?
And then…
“In Atlanta, tribal leaders of the New African government participated in a wreath- laying ceremony at a memorial honoring the 30,000 black victims of the racial cleansing in Los Angeles this summer. In a gesture of goodwill between the two nations, over 5,400 more Hispanic survivors of similar operations in the former state of Georgia were released from detainee camps and marched to the Hispanic controlled zone in Florida, to be released there. Presidente Rodriguez of the Republica provisional government welcomed the move during the tense negotiations

between leaders at the ongoing peace conference in Baton Rouge attempting to settle border disputes along the Orlando-Tampa front."
That was just weird. Kelly had no frame of reference to know if it was true or not, but it somehow sounded contrived, as if somebody was trying to play peacemaker, but why she couldn't fathom, from a 'quo vadis' standpoint. Who would benefit?
THIS was interesting, if a bit desperate sounding: "find out how you can help in the resettlement of refugees from ethnically cleansed areas, just by donating your unused living space."
The rest of the world seemed to have gone batsheiss crazy, too: "The Islamic State and the Palestinian Authority reported on Monday that the genocide trials of Mossad agents responsible for the deaths of civilians in formerly Israeli occupied territory will continue this week, despite suicide attacks by holdout I.D.F. units against Palestinian patrols in the less radioactive suburbs of Tel Aviv. Guerrilla resistance by Zionist zealots, using tens of thousands of American Jewish volunteers with little left to lose after their financial and political base has been uprooted, as cannon fodder, is expected to continue until the last of the foreign-born insurgents have made Aliyah. Prime Minister Mohammed Ayiid of the Palestinian Authority bitterly criticized the U.S. government for actively encouraging American Jews to go fight for Israel. Ayiid accused America of "trying to pass their problems onto us to get rid of for them", unquote. In a conciliatory gesture, the European Union ambassador to the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Hans Oberstorn, publicly offered to help negotiate a return of all Muslims in E.U. countries to their native lands of origin in the Middle East in order to help revitalize the newly emerging Islamic State with skilled workers and capital."
Ummm…what American government? There wasn't one, that she could point to. It was quite a stretch to blame the U.S. for anything the Jews and Muslims did to each other, now. That one seemed to have been reprinted from the London Times, so no wonder.
This piece was bylined from the Sidney Morning Herald: "The governments of Australia and the People's Republic of China reached a diplomatic accord last Tuesday, mutually agreeing that

the territorial integrity of Australia would continue to be respected, in exchange for a removal of all trade tariffs between the two nations, and the expulsion of all Japanese nationals from the Northern Territories, where they have been at the forefront of promoting recent antiChinese protests."

And originally from the Global India Newsline: "In southern Africa, the Orange Free State offered to provide food supplies to those starving from famine resulting from the effects of the deindustrialization of the farmlands throughout the rest of Southern Africa, along with free compulsory sterilization of those who accept the food aid. The Boers, representing the only remaining government below the equator on the African continent not under direct Chinese influence, have recently completed discussions with India to establish trade relations and mutual recognition treaties."

Politics did indeed make strange bedfellows, Kelly snickered. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, as somebody brilliant had once said. Well, what she really preferred was nice escapist fiction, but even that seemed more real than what was before her. One thing was for certain, Kelly knew that Denver was about seventy-five miles due north of where the Air Force's continuity of government center had been at Cheyenne Mountain. Depending on which way the winds had been blowing, this might be the last issue of the Denver Post she would ever see. No more Broncos games, either.

Okay, she was a news junkie, always had been. Now her life might depend on it. She didn't need another smuggled newspaper to tell her that her country had just nuked itself, and that brought the cold clammy tightness rising up from her belly that she had been craving. Finally, as slightly radioactive silt and pulverized rock pattered onto her apartment roof, Kelly felt the sense of loss that she had been looking for. Idly, she wondered if the Sea Gull Brigade, with their backs to Lake Powell, had been caught out in the open by the fallout, and how many of them would never come home. You had to live long enough to get cancer, before you knew. As she fell asleep to the sound of the chunky rain, she remembered her sister. Kelly wondered how and why she had

blocked Karen out of her thoughts while everybody at work had been sharing their stories of family missing or lost. Was that a defense mechanism? Did it mean that Karen was dead? Would she ever know? Kelly was scared that she might be having a psychotic break. How do you forget that you have someone who you might not have any more to miss? How do you order a nuclear strike on your own country over a chain of command breakdown? So much had been put away, denied, and forgotten. You couldn't just get it back. No take-backs. No do-overs. No regrets.

Chapter Three

Matthew 15:24
King James Bible
“But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Fire Is The Devil’s Only Friend

The ugly brown river just north of Fresno was as good enough place as any to set up a demilitarized zone, Hu thought to himself as he looked south towards the straggling line of sweat-soaked green uniforms trying their hardest to look like a disciplined military escort. The overweight Mexican diplomat, until recently a professor of Latino Studies at the University of California’s Davis campus, resented the line being this far south. The Chinese diplomatic delegation had graciously offered to extend their humanitarian administrative control to the rest of the Central Valley, and that had settled that. Hu still wondered whether the man took his orders from Mexico City or Los Angeles or San Antonio. If he took ten steps down this concrete embankment, would he be in Mexico, or the U.S., or a new country, entirely? It looked like California, to him. It made his head buzz, and not in a good, opium way, either. Every morning as he sat and drank tea, he read the official news releases from Beijing’s state run information agency. Hu had to shake his head in awe. Report after report slid by, in ten second blocks. Ten thousand dead in race riots between Cubans and blacks in Miami and Dade County. A dozen Midwestern states calling for a new Constitutional Convention. At first, he had smirked to hear of the U.S. government’s decapitation. Washington burned, the President dead, and the rest of the national leadership had fled their own capitol to hide under the skirts of the United Nations in New York. But then came the insane bombing of Colorado Springs, and armored blitzkriegs into East St. Louis and Kansas City. Then the mutiny and coup inside Offutt Air Force Base. He

had no idea who was responsible for the string of coordinated terrorist attacks and sabotage on the port facilities of every major trading hub from Norfolk to New Orleans, but he suspected the Americans themselves. They were crazy. Hu couldn't understand them, but he knew they were weak and unpredictable and undisciplined. Discipline was remembering what it was that you really wanted. Hu really wanted to kill round-eyed fat White demons. Vermont and New Hampshire seemed like the other side of the world, and might as well be, from Hu. He could care less whether they voted to join Canada, or Quebec voted to leave Canada, or not. But, the hair stood up at the back of his neck at the thought of those unaccounted for nuclear bombs.

Ugh, that reminded him of all these White women throwing themselves at his soldiers, and how hairy they were without razors. At first he had begun to fear. Not the women, no, he had razors. Then, he began to dread. It wasn't the E.U. troops pouring into every dock from Boston to Baltimore wearing their silly blue helmets that frightened him. It wasn't even worries closer to home, like the resistance growing in the Williamette Valley up north. The unorganized partisans might slow his humanitarian mission, but only temporarily, no matter what that crazy man on the radio said. What kind of kept Hu up at night, aside from the endless parties, was trying to guess how many nuclear tipped missiles were loose in captured or abandoned silos, bunkers, and hangars within the borders of the formerly United States. And on the submarines still at sea? How many fingers on the triggers? He chewed on a peppermint for his heartburn, and tried to listen patiently to what Juan Aliz de Castrano was saying.

"Like you, I am a biological racist, my friend, es verdad? I care nothing for language or culture or heritage, bah! I would rather the whole human species go extinct except for one Latino boy and one Latina girl raised by wolves, than to see Chicano culture bastardized and adopted by Gringo Taco Bell, or see more of our women marry White boys. So yes, let us carve this up. Let us have peace, without the Gringos…." Hu hid his contempt for the

dirty dog waving his arms in front of him quite well. Yes, he assured him, Hispanics in Northern California would be guaranteed safety, but they would be encouraged to rejoin their people south of the Fresno line before the year ended. Yes, yes, the People's humanitarian mission would continue for at least that long, he emphasized, smiling. Perhaps indefinitely. The quick scowl that gained from under the droopy mustache was priceless. Yes, he had heard of the massacres of Latinos and Asians (was that supposed to trip his anger?) in what had been called Utah by religious extremists. No, he knew of no reason why the People's humanitarian mission would extend over the Sierra Nevadas and across the desert to get involved in that, thank you. Yes, he had heard of the guerrilla attacks of the racist skinhead gangs against Mexican soldiers protecting their citizens in Long Beach, that was deplorable. Rounding up and executing another nursing home full of Tea Party members might put an end to that, he advised.

Another half hour of standing there, sweating and smiling and nodding, and the conference was over, with the understanding that from this line, Mexicans would be shipped south, Chinese shipped north, and no questions asked by either side about what went on beyond their vision, otherwise. Hu wanted a cold shower and massage, and maybe a phone call to his father, in the twenty-two million strong capitol, Beijing.. Well, two out of three weren't bad. He was a long way from home, but closer to peace with every Mexican re-migrated, and every line drawn. Now, what to do with the close to a million Whites who hadn't left town when his landing crafts entered San Francisco Bay? Maybe truck them up, a few hundred at the time, to that big lake on the map, on the border with the state of Nevada. Just in case those lunatic Mormons looked west. A buffer. Hu had been concerned that if they remained in the Bay area, some of them might have formed a fifth column working for the rebels in Oregon who were a notch separating his zones of pacification. Yes, gather them, detain them, bus them to Sacramento, then put them on trains to lake Tahoe. Then, tear up the tracks.

As for the blacks, after three weeks of intensive cleanup efforts in Oakland, that sector had been depopulated. The old Alcatraz prison island and twenty concentric rings of trash barges around it had been piled high with corpses. The Chinese were a civilized people, Hu observed. Only barbarians would use a nuclear weapon when it wasn't necessary. As he began to climb back into the back seat of his commandeered Mercedes staff car for the ride back north, Hu's mind hummed with the numbers and logistics of rounding up 800,000 people with the most efficient use of manpower. It could be advertised as a relocation program to a new food distribution and housing area. In a way, that's exactly what it would be, too. Otherwise, they could be offered the Alcatraz alternative, and would line up to get on the trains, voluntarily. He brightened at the thought. Sometimes it was helpful to have set an example. Even the round-eyed devils could learn.

We Sang Dirges In The Dark

The arrival of more soldiers speaking her native language greatly reassured Gerta, in spite of her chosen profession as a linguist. All German children were taught to loathe and fear any nationalistic feeling within themselves, but she felt like giving the forbidden salute when she saw the Heer rolling up Passyunk Avenue. Probably clever of them to bypass South Philadelphia, for now, she thought approvingly. The whole peninsula was a warzone of feuding gangs who would have reverted back to cannibalism, as similar areas recently had in Bedford, Newark, and Trenton, without the International Red Cross floating relief vessels disgorging bags of rice by the ton and pallets of Ramen from their anchorages at the Navy Yard. They were guarded by about three quarters of the remaining operational U.S. Coast Guard forces on the Atlantic side from the Training Center at Camp May and the Loran Support Unit, as well as the 87th Medical Group from Fort Dix, stationed onboard the USS John F. Kennedy. Gerta's mind skipped back to her study of the Hessian involvement in their Revolutionary War here, when America was

born fighting against Great Britain. Now the British were back in Boston, and boys from Hess, and Frankfurt, and Dusseldorf, were headed straight towards Germantown, once again. Their Leopard 2A6 main battle tanks carried the crisis intervention force left onto Broad Street via Snyder and Jackson, and a group of black youths loitering around the high school grounds had to clear the street for them.

Gerta and her team were positioned on the roof of the Kindred Hospital, the tallest building in the area, which gave her a perfect vantage point to watch the impromptu military parade. Even after so many months, the smell of death lingered here at the jumped up nursing home, where the patients had been left to die in their beds. She must be terribly tired, to have to fight back one of those all too human urges, the momentary impulse to step off the roof. Go ahead. ‘Flowers on the razor wire’, like the old song said. ‘Love is a many splintered thing. Don’t be afraid, now, just walk on in’. Not enough sleep this week, or this month, old girl, she cautioned herself. Sometimes she felt in her heart that it would be a lot better if she could just scream, but there was nowhere left to go to be alone. Sometimes she tried biting into her thin pillow at night to stifle a good cathartic animal screech. That helped her sneak a couple of hours’ grace.

Snipers held their positions on the corners of the roof, keeping an eye out for trouble below, but the locals seemed to be impressed by the armor grumbling in and through their barricades, pushing aside stalled cars and twisted wreckage without slowing. The U.N. contingent was here as overwatch, and to monitor the situation. Their dual mission was augmented by similar positions at the Schuylkill bridge, the 347 overpass, and on up the line north. It was a bitterly cold place to be, with the wind whipping in around her.

The trains were running again from Center City to Pennsauken on the other side of the Delaware, but the main problem here, as all through the forever urban sprawl, was food. Oh, and clean water.

Cholera and dysentery had ravaged Cherry Hill and Camden. People were collecting rainwater on rooftops to drink, or melting snow when the temperature hovered below freezing at night, and because of the uncontrolled fires raging in many places, much of that rainwater and snow carried toxic pollution, too. It still amazed Gerta that most urban dwellers simply sat and starved, or looted their neighborhoods and hid in the ashes.

There were few attempts at mass exodus from the cities, except by the Whites. Some of the earlier birds to fly had found sanctuary in upstate New York or Maine or westwards into Amish country, but those welcoming doors began to swing closed after carload by carload of refugees flooded in. Finally barricades, blocked roads, and County Sheriff's department led posses were necessary to stem the tide. Small communities built walls and posted sentries, and 'trespassers' started being shot on sight. It was like the British longbows raining hell down on the French at Agincourt. That eventually turned the tide of refugees back on itself, and set off ethnic cleansing of skipped over enclaves along a two hundred mile front. It began as fighting over food and water and fuel, then drifted into mass rapes by the blacks and racial genocide in response by the Whites. Gerta had spent her life thinking of the Americans as being too cowardly to ever stand up for themselves, but some of them had, when it mattered most.

So many Americans had guns, that the skinheads and their militia allies were better armed than most armies. Many of them were veterans, too, and trained in small unit combat tactics. They had been brutal and ruthless and efficient. When the fighting petered out, clumps of hardened survivors from all sides held their ground jealously. Those in Scranton and Manchester formed city-states for a while, and fared well enough. The devils stuck in Alexandria and Herndon died like flies, as they were overrun by the masses from Georgetown. So died megalopolis. Gerta had noticed the frenzy quieten as early winter moved in, at least in the area where constant peacekeeping force presence had re-established law

and order and full bellies. Things were relatively copacetic throughout Manhattan. All was cool on Staten Island.

Unfortunately, Russia was feeling her oats, and had declared a thirty percent increase in natural gas prices and for heating oil being pumped into Central and Eastern Europe. The Ultra-Nationalists in charge there were rapidly consolidating their control over the ‘Stans and Ukraine. With Brussels already on the ropes economically since Wall Street had become, well, just another dark street needing armed patrol, now, she wondered how long it would be before enthusiasm for condescendingly helping out their fallen big brother would fade for many Europeans. The Indians and Russians certainly hoped it would happen soon. No matter how many mind-numbing briefings Gerta attended on the Chinese occupation of Vancouver or the forced enslavement of Whites in Charleston, she couldn’t care less about New African requests for diplomatic recognition, or the polar opposite New American tentative dispatches from St. Louis. She had her hands full enough with what was right in front of her, and she didn’t mean the German tanks disappearing northwards in the distance as they packed up to tail the convoy.

Right now, what was in front of her was the somewhat ragged looking former Deputy Mayor of Philadelphia, crestfallen that he hadn’t had a chance to present the Germans with a key to the city. He awkwardly shuffled back and forth from one foot to the other. “Not so good with heights, so?” Gerta asked.
“N-No, not really. So, they aren’t going to stop for a welcome ceremony like we talked about?” he asked for the tenth time.
Gerta sighed. Even when they had nothing left to govern, politicians still politicked. “Sorry, but no, Mr. Mayor, we have to meet them up in Germantown, they have been assigned to secure the Queen Lane Reservoir.”
“Oh, well, okay, let’s go then, I guess,” the downcast former city leader relented. “After you, Mr. Mayor”, Gerta replied, gesturing to the Black Hawk perched like a feeding insect behind her. Her

fingernails dug tiny crescents of blood out of her palms as she smiled diplomatically.

In the reservoir parking lot a tall, blonde German Major, Major Strosser, she had remembered, leapt down the last step from the commander's position in the squat lead tank and smartly stepped up to the group of U.N. ambassadorial bureaucrats and local dignitaries, including three from the Nation Of Islam, and two from the New Black Panther Party, since they were still major players in what was left of Philadelphia. Schmidt looked like an SS Panzer poster boy, the interpreter noted approvingly. Gerta stamped out a warm flutter in her stomach as she made the introductions. The former Deputy Mayor hesitantly stepped forward with his ridiculous huge fake key. Her emotions swinging, the interpreter rubbed her eyes and the bridge of her nose as a stress headache threatened. Well, at least she didn't have to solve the world's problems. All she had to do was translate them.

The next evening, she was back at the U.N. complex off First Avenue amid the squabbling Congressmen and Senators and other useless American politicians. Many of them demanded transportation (and security details, of course) back to their home states to reunite with their families, or their property, or to empire build back at the ranch. Some had families or mistresses and staff with them. They all wanted to go home. "Me first", Gerta said to herself, as she interpreted their requests in a straight-forward manner to the U.N. Expeditionary Force's Chief of Staff's secretary. At least they were giving up on wanting to be any kind of government, and just wanted out. That was a sign of realism, or resignation. There might be lights back on in Times Square, but the last ball had been dropped. Fumble, turnover, first down.

If The Bible Tells You So

Former Governor Ike Huckleberry had no idea how many living rooms in America still had power tonight. For those who did, most didn't have the time to watch television, even if their satellite t.v. provider was still broadcasting. What he did know was that his

engineer told him that they could still broadcast, the satellite could still bounce the signal back to whomever was watching, and his voice and image might be the only thing on the air. He thought it was worth a shot. He was going out live. Things were well in hand now in coastal Texas, from Houston to Port Arthur his followers held the line against La Republica del Norte while playing the "God Loves Everybody" tune, full blast. He was the most powerful religious leader on the continent these days. Like the medieval popes, he intended to transmit that spiritual influence, and translate it into some secular power, starting now.

His cute young makeup girl caked on the base. He pulled the napkin tighter over his chest. At one time he had been very obese, but the Governor had lost a lot of pounds in hopes of turning his new, more t.v. friendly profile into a Presidential bid. Moving to Texas last year and setting up a televangelist church of his own had turned out to be a stroke of pure genius, and perfect timing. Ike was a man of many parts. Former Governor of a small southern state. Pastor. Author. Guitar player. Broadcaster. A man of the people. He was ready to shine, again. This time, for all the marbles. Now he was ready, makeup done, hair perfect, jaw squared. The countdown began…the green light flashed on….LIVE.

"Brothers and Sisters, I come to you tonight in supplication. As you all know, when I was Governor I sponsored legislation to give in-state tuition rates at state universities to illegal immigrants, and I'm proud of that. I opposed racists and haters and denied having any memory of any association with them, once I found out who they were. I embraced all of God's creatures, great and small. Many times, while I was President of the state Southern Baptist Convention, I asked all of the White people in my audience and congregation to be especially friendly, generous, and welcoming to the Hispanic peoples coming to this land, to make up for the collective sin of slavery which we committed against blacks in this country for so long. I told you that we needed to welcome them into our homes, into our churches, and into our nation. I begged

you to open your heart to God's innocent children from abroad. Well, too many didn't listen, and the mortal sin of racism and hatred has now torn this once great nation apart. In order to get back to God, we need to pray for redemption, we need to ask for forgiveness from those we have wronged, and we need, most of all, to fulfill our Biblical duty to support Israel, God's Chosen People. As many of you may have heard, the Battle of Armageddon has been fought in the Holy Land. God's people have been attacked from all sides, and injured, grievously so. Much of their territory has been overrun by Godless Muslims, and occupied. Their capitol was been bombed, and much of their land has been made radioactive. They need our help now, more than ever. Remember that the scripture says of Israel, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee." The Lord knows in his wisdom just how much we need a blessing on our land, right now. Thank you, Jesus. We have received your correction, Lord, and kneel before you in repentance of our sins, Hallelujah. But we know, Father, that we have to prove ourselves worthy to be called your disciples, Amen. We have to stand up for your people, for Israel, in their time of need, Praise God. We know that you want every God-fearing listener within the sound of my voice to seek out diligently for a remnant of your Chosen People in their communities, Lord. They need to look hard for any Jewish people left, anywhere, and find them, Holy Father. These, your holy and Chosen People, need to be saved from this new Holocaust, this new Tribulation which is upon us. Don't let them be lost, we beseech you, Jehovah. Help us, Jesus, to find the Jews among us, wherever they may be, and bring them forth, Almighty God. Dear Lord, we know your will is that we help them make their Holy migration to your Holy Land and your Holy City Jerusalem. Amen. And so I ask each and every one of you to save the Jewish people! Find them, anoint them, and bring them unto me, brothers and sisters. Bring God's own Chosen People unto me, and we will take them home, to the promised land, home to the Holy Land, home to Israel, Amen! Bring the lost sheep of the House of Israel to Beaumont, Texas! I know it's a long way for many of you. I know it will require hardship and sacrifice. But the

Lord himself is calling for a pilgrimage to escort his Chosen home. Here in Beaumont, we have the port, we have the shipping, and we have the U.S. Army's 842nd Transportation Battalion keeping the port running and secure. The Commander is a God-fearing Christian man who supports our holy mission, our crusade to help the Chosen People home. Israel is fighting for its LIFE over there, and desperately needs all Jews to come home and help them win the victory for the Lord. We will be sending food, we will be sending ammunition, we will be sending weapons, but most of all, with your help, brothers and sisters, we will be sending God's Chosen People themselves! Help find them, help round them up, help bring them here to Beaumont where they can go home to the Holy Land. Tune in this time next week for another broadcast, and may the Lord God Almighty in his infinite mercy cast His blessings upon you, your families, your communities, and our nation during this time of Tribulation. We humbly ask all this in sweet Jesus, our savior's precious and blessed name, Amen!"

His engineer had been right. With no competition on the airwaves, tens of thousands of Americans had left their tv sets turned on to scan for a broadcasting channel. They had seen his sweaty, frothing broadcast. Many times more than that heard about it, and tuned in the next week, if they were able. Even based on rumor and word of mouth alone, fundamentalist Christians began doing Ike's bidding. They were looking for a way to fight back against the more militant, anti-minority Christian Identity churches that were gaining members all around them. It took a while, but in two months over 102,540 Jews had been railroaded, driven, or force-marched into Beaumont for involuntary Aliyah. Most of them were none too pleased about the blessing. Many had died while resisting detainment, or along the way, despite the best intentions of their benefactors. Thanks to the former Governor, the Theocracy under his command in Beaumont, and the defunct Norwegian, Royal Caribbean, and Carnival Cruise lines, almost 100,000 of those Jews were shipped off to Israel. There, they faced the fury of the Islamic State. None of them ever came back to complain, though. Never again.

Turning And Turning In The Widening Gyre

The kind of fury building up in Captain John McNabb brought to mind the old poem about when the Saxon came to hate. Kipling, wasn't it? Most people he had known were a mile wide and an inch deep, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing. All show and no go. He had never liked drama. Others could hate you one second and love you the next, but McNabb didn't get his temper triggered quick, and didn't get over it quickly, either. People had been known to say that he could hold a grudge, and that once he turned cold to you, it was relentless and forever. That may be, but people knew where they stood with him. He knew that it was unChristian to let anger take control, but his Jesus was a god of war. The moneychangers in the temple had learned that, the hard way. Letting it get personal, and allowing his emotions to overpower him, was dangerous for any combat commander, though. With his command, now numbering about three-hundred and fifty combat hardened soldiers after the swearing in of the militia volunteers and a week of crawling advances westwards across the state line separating Indiana from Illinois, word had come down that he was receiving a battlefield promotion to Major, in a week or two. He could really care less.

His wife and kids were stuck in South Bend, so far as he knew, after moving there to be closer to him. He missed them. Not just in an, 'oh well', casual, 'hope to see you soon', way. They were on his mind every hour of every day, no matter how busy or exhausted he was. Their names were on his lips in prayer, every night. The idea had been that he could visit them there, and he had been able to exactly twice before being ordered to clear out all "criminal resistance" between Gary and the Illinois waterway which had connected Lake Michigan to the Illinois River, and from there to the Mississippi. Folks down in St. Louis seemed to have decided that if the red states or flyover America or the Heartland or whatever they were calling it today was going to be a going concern, it didn't need to be a landlocked one. John could see the sense in that. Heck, he could even understand why a Great Lakes

route to the Atlantic was the best option, for now. Especially once Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Cleveland, and the other big cities around the lakes were cleared out. Like everybody else, he had heard the horror stories about how fast the lower Mississippi Valley was descending into voodoo ritual killings and human sacrifices. Everything below the mouth of the Arkansas River, really below Memphis, was a no-go for anybody as pale as him, these days.

People had moaned and cried and bought up bottled water and ammunition whenever blacks rioted from time to time here and there over cop shootings or basketball games won or lost. They hadn't known how to deal when it had happened all over, all at once. Fair enough. But what he could not understand, or accept, why his line of advance had to be away from the people he had gotten into this mess to protect. That made him angry. Sometimes when he ordered his men to answer "hands up –don't shoot" with "up against the wall" and a single volley, his mind drifted sideways into half memory. He was driving, holding Cindy's hand as she sat in the passenger seat, looking out the window at cows in the field going by. The girls were in the back seat being endearing in their spoiled, 'let's see who can be more annoying on a long car ride', fashion. Suddenly a split second blur of oncoming metal and another car smashes into them on the passenger side and everything blurs out. But, that had never happened. His mind was playing tricks on him again, or he was fooling it.

Looking at her picture from his wallet while he printed, McNabb wrote another love letter to his wife, venting, then sealed and addressed it and gave it to a long-haired conscript driver carrying another truckload of sick and wounded soldiers back east. Only four, today, two caught by a sniper on a water tower who was eventually flushed out and ventilated, one who had broken an ankle climbing through a burned out convenience store checking for scavenge, and one who had come down with the flu. It was a bad strain that had cost him a dozen casualties this winter. This was the second case this week, and seemed to be abating, but

they had lost twice that many last week because of it. No field hospitals or field clinics here, just pick your rifle up and move forward, son, or get out of the way. We have blocks and blocks of Glocks and docks, McNabb thought tiredly. And miles to go before we weep.

Two weeks later he was sure that he would be eating Thanksgiving dinner alone. At least, not with his family, but instead with the three hundred and fifty dirty young men he thought of as his kids, now. It seemed like a lifetime ago that he had thought of his students as his kids. He wondered how many of them had survived since the collapse. When the Colonel pinned the Major's gold oak leaves on, he'd handed his two bars off to a lieutenant who looked young enough to have been in his 9th grade Civics class. Attrition, right. Most informal promotion ceremony ever, he bet.

Every time McNabb ordered a lieutenant to order a sergeant to order a platoon into a building held by hostiles, it felt like how signing an order of expulsion for a kid who didn't deserve it used to feel. These guys, who a few months ago had been maintenance men and factory line workers and firemen and cops and retail workers never hesitated, and always made him proud. Yesterday, a former McDonald's cashier had shot a teenaged black girl just before she threw a Molotov cocktail that would have killed him and his buddies, or burned them badly, right in front of the Major. High fives all around as she fell back and dropped the lit bottle, which burst and whoofed into a spreading fireball that swallowed her up while she screeched and thrashed out her life on the pavement. No rounds were wasted to end that early.

That night they took Lockport. There was a holdout group of insurgents in a small church. The first bullets slammed into the ground right in front of their point man, who hit the dirt an instant before the rest of the group followed his example. John tasted gravel and dirt. Signaling for two men to stay prone and deliver covering fire to keep the hidden snipers pinned down, he

motioned for three others to go with him. Sporadic firing continued as they crawled into and along a ditch half filled with trash and the bloated body of a large dog of undetermined breed. As quietly as they could, they elbowed it towards the rear of the building. The confrontation from the street intensified briefly, then suddenly cut off. McNabb rose from the ditch to cover the back door of the church just as a group of black youth ran out, straight at him. He knew without looking that the three men behind him were up and running, too. As he raised his M4 to fire, a huge black buck plowed into him, carrying them both back down and into the ditch while muzzle blasts ripped the air near his head. All of the breath went out of him through his Kevlar in a whoosh, and he struggled to stay on top. The momentum and weight drove him back and down into the mud. When he had released his grip on his rifle, it had simply swung down on the single point sling to his side, leaving his hands free. The beast on top of him was easily 6'4" and 290. It smelled like swisher sweet cigars, marijuana, and body odor. Taking a huge lungful of the stink, John wrapped his left forearm around the fat neck of the monster and began jabbing punches into its' face with his gloved right fist, over and over, as hard as he could. The head under his arm tried to pull free. John felt meaty fists striking his ribs and sides ineffectually, and got his feet under him just in time to bring his left knee up quickly into the nose of his attacker. Again, as hard as he could. In one movement McNabb leapfrogged onto the black man's back, by swinging to the right and stepping onto him with his right foot. The Major pushed the huge head away, and shoved its body forward, face first. Swinging around, he took a step back, drew his sidearm, and put three rounds into the back of the head and neck. The massive body thrashed around in the ditch like a dying alligator on that old tv show. He re-holstered his sidearm, then checked his carbine. John locked his hands behind his head to catch his breath. When he looked around, he saw all three of his men standing, one with a slight cut on his face, and five black 'youths' down and out. Say Amen.

On the ride down to rear end duty rotation guarding the former grounds of the Army Ammunition Plant in Joliet for a week off the front line, McNabb wondered if finally a letter from his wife might have made it through the lines. He wondered if his children were warm in the bitter days of November, and like always, if they had enough to eat. More than the box of 'liberated' canned food he sent home to them every week as a privilege of command. He said a silent prayer for them in the darkness. The snow fell soundlessly outside his truck window, and he caught a nap as the roar of the engine created a white noise blur. The slumber was snapped off short when his body felt the truck slow and pull a tight turn into a sandbagged exit ramp off of I-55 guarded by two jackknifed flatbed trailers and a squad originally from the Illinois National Guard Band. They stopped for a minute, talking through the half rolled down window with the former musicians about how quiet it had been around here since the city was pacified, and how cold, and to gripe about the locals coming around begging. They laughed at the irony that even though no ammunition had been produced in the arsenal for years, a Wally world and rail hub made it about as important as Rock Island, which still hummed along as best it could making things that went bang.

From I-55 they cut east to the industrial park and the Wal-Mart distribution center that the mobs had missed because it was away from any residential areas. It had only experienced minor looting by the employees themselves before they evacuated the city. The rows and rows of canned food alone made it worth defending. They would eat good tonight. Resupply was still sporadic, and would be so long as O'Hare was still in unsecured territory. That scarcity worked both ways, though. With every passing day the insurgency grew weaker. McNabb guessed that a combination of lack of food, lack of ammo, and lack of unified leadership was taking its toll. McNabb had seen to it that Meigs Field on the east side was cleared, though too short for C-130s, but nobody needed tanks dropped on this front, not anymore. He sure could have used them a month ago, though.

As he grabbed his gear out of the back, the Major was met by his aide, and the young corporal grabbed the pack for him and handed him a clipboard without bothering to salute. The militia influence has really taken the starch out of us, McNabb thought to himself, but he let it pass. He read the front page of the report, then whistled tonelessly. “When did this come through, Kip?” he asked. “About an hour ago Cap..uh, Major,” he grinned, then frowned again. “We have him under quarantine”.

Just before they had trucked out north on deployment, John had snuck a peak at his personnel file, out of curiosity. Who wouldn’t have, if they had the chance? It had been another late July staff meeting in the un-air conditioned Quonset hut. He had seen his name on a bulging folder sticking out of a stack, and thought, ‘why not?’. During a latrine break, he hung back to take a look. He almost regretted it. Apparently, he was “smart, gregarious, and hardworking”, but “appeared to find it difficult to relate to others whom he saw as unmotivated” and, as a leader, needed to “dumb down” his approach to fit the Guard’s rank and file. That, and his high ideals and perfectionism, kept McNabb from being a more effective leader. “God grant us the gift to see ourselves as others see us, right”?, he’d fumed. He’d almost walked out of the meeting, but decided to stay, in case anyone needed a multi-syllabic word explained for them. What he knew about himself, that he did know how to do, what he had done many times over the fall and winter, was interrogation. He was ruthless when he had to be and fake as Charlie Brown’s smile when that served its purpose, too. The carrot and the stick. Rub, slap, rub.

The prisoner looked as bizarre as his story sounded. Squatting on the concrete, he gasped and wheezed, his stick-thin ribs working like bellows. Sweat drenched his coal black skin despite the thirty degree weather outside. Probably feverish, John thought to himself. He wore a pair of old Nike running shoes, cut off business slacks, a Bulls basketball jersey, and a rumpled tie. His guards had given him a bottle of water, then another, then another, shortly after he had shuffled up to the fence and

mumbled the standard “Hands Up-Don’t Shoot!” greeting. Since then, all he had said, over and over, was “I surrender”.

McNabb questioned the skinny ragdoll while it greedily slurped down a can of peaches. If he was telling the truth, the surviving blacks in Chicago had killed off all of the Hispanics, slaughtered every man, woman, and child in Chinatown, and then broken up into at least three or four mutually hostile groups. The only commonality they recognized anymore was that they had had enough. Within minutes, the Major had division HQ on the horn. Within hours, the Indiana and Illinois and Wisconsin National Guard forces, along with their auxiliaries, militia, volunteers, and camp followers, were advancing along the entire oval front on Chicago. Not a shot was fired against them as they drove through the trash and snow filled avenues, and they began the roundup.

It took four days to reach and relieve the Naval Station Great Lakes in North Chicago, where nearly five thousand recruits and personnel had held out as their own small city through the worst of the mob attacks. Those people would be the backbone of recolonizing the city and getting O’Hare and the rail links going again, as well as the port, John knew.

Surviving blacks lined up to surrender, once word got out that they were being fed for laying down their weapons. By the time he had been able to get some sleep and write up the after-action, McNabb was able to formally report that major hostile insurgency in the city of Chicago was at an end. It was now a recovery mission. His role in securing Gary, then leading the triumphant entry into Chicago, was used by the Indiana National Guard’s press corps to boost morale and give the troops a badly needed hero. He would gladly have traded the fame for a ticket home to his family.

A detention facility was established in Wrigley Field. There were 4,493 total hostile civilians housed there, almost all of the remaining black population of Chicago. The order in reply to his after-action report took six days to come back down from on high.

Feed them, water them, and for God's sake hose them off, then frog march them to Rockford, it said. They would be put on boxcars and shipped south by rail to Mississippi, where the New African regime was sending up (or so they claimed) an equal number of White survivors from the collapsed Biloxi Bubble. Either way, he would be rid of them. He shrugged his sore shoulders in the cold November rain, and smoked his menthol under the cover of a poncho.

John did indeed spend Thanksgiving with his soldiers, instead of with his family. He was more than a little disappointed that he hadn't received any mail from them in almost a month. All of his troops were a long way from their homes and families, too, though. The best they could do was empty out cans of spam, mash it into the rough shapes of turkeys, and bake it brown together. There were plenty of Americans all across the fruited plain who had a lot less than that to eat, this Thanksgiving, and a lot less to be thankful for, than he did. As usual, he led the company in a prayer of gratitude and hope, before they dug in together in an empty elementary school cafeteria. The decorations the kids had taped up on the painted cinderblock walls last spring made it a bittersweet dinner. Nobody felt like talking much about home. He and Kip sat together, and ate in silence.

McNabb had thought that his war was over. It took two weeks to prepare the refugee prisoners and get them on their train. They finally got them loaded. A week's leave was granted, at the end of which the Major and one of his companies were to rendezvous at Decatur, then board a train of their own, for St. Louis. Soft capitol-building duty, it looked to be. His other company was reassigned to collect and escort White refugees back into Chicago, then aid in the cleanup and reinstitution of city utilities. The city, its location, its name, were all too important to just abandon to its ghosts.

One week seemed like too short a time to spend back with his family. At least, it felt that way until the third day of his leave, when the South Bend City Counsel Treasurer found them for him. They hadn't had any more money among their personal effects to pay for the private plots, so the City Council had paid for them, since they were the wife and daughters of a war hero, after all. That's why there was any record of them, to find. The Treasurer sure was sorry, he kept saying. That super flu had just torn through the town like a wildfire. So many people, crowded into so little space, doubling up for heat. It was awful how fast it had taken so many. Hundred ended up just in mass graves at the edge of town, once the panic set in. Nobody knew where the flu had come from, or how it started. He had been down with it himself for a while. Did the Major want the personal effects of the deceased?

Slipping his wife's wedding ring onto his left little finger, so it could be next to his own, Major John W. McNabb started to shake. If he had told them to stay in Fort Wayne, Cindy would be wearing it. In his mind he could smell her hair, and feel the touch of her skin. His trembling kept rolling. He tried hard not to think about the girls who looked in their own way just like their mom in miniature. His teeth began to chatter as he pulled a small, dirty doll out of the brown paper bag. The bag crinkled loudly, way too loudly, grating on his nerves, like thunder. This bag was neatly rolled on top and labeled and stacked with so many others, it had taken several minutes of digging around in nearfrantic obsession to find it. Barbie looked up at him accusingly, with eyes the same color blue as his youngest daughters'. Just as lifeless now, too, he thought. Cindy and Kylie and MacKenna Rose, he rolled the names around in his head in a circle of pain. He took out the purse. The Harry Potter book. The dead Nintendo DS. Something in his face made the embarrassed bureaucrat take a step back. "I am so, so sorry, Major". "If you'd like I can have somebody show you their final resting places", he said nervously. "Nothing is final, and I'll find them myself, thanks", John whispered, as he walked away

clutching the sack to his chest like a drowning man might hold onto a life preserver.

The next three days he spent mainly just sitting in front of three narrow and short mounds of dirt, in a field of such mounds, marked with wooden planks. On each wooden plank was a typed biographical information sheet, stapled to the wood. The words and dates were already fading, and would soon be gone, their staples rusting through. He cried. He prayed. He swore at God, and begged Him to bring his girls back. He offered up his own life in exchange, a thousand times over. He sobbed and lay down in the dirt. The living envied the dead, just as everyone had always predicted. McNabb got up and stumbled off to find a bathroom but found an open bar, instead, at one point, and then he made his way back to his family. He carried a bottle for each of them. Well, the girls were too young to be drinking, of course, so he would, daddy would do that for them. One for Kylie and one for MacKenna and one for Cindy, too. He sat and thought about each of his girls for a while, and about each of the young soldiers he had loaded onto trucks with the flu and sent back here, back to safety. He looked at the rows of mounds and rows of planks and finally, at the larger mass graves beyond. He wondered how much blood was on his hands. He wondered how much he would have to learn to hate, in order to not hate himself. He thought it was too late. On the fourth day, he rose from the graves.

Feeling guilty for laying around drunk in the mud, John brushed himself off as best he could. He knew that he never would have acted that way in front of his daughters, so he shouldn't act that way, now. McNabb said a guilty prayer of apology for his rage at God. He asked for the wisdom to understand why he had lost his girls, or the strength to bear it. Inside him, a cold resolve grew. It didn't feel better. It just felt…less.

The next morning, his men exchanged knowing looks as he stood before them, chain smoking, his uniform perfect except for the Barbie peeking out of his holster at them. He wore three more,

and those weren’t playing. Major John W. McNabb had a score to settle with somebody. He just wasn’t sure who, yet.

Chapter Four

Romans 1:26-27 King James Bible
26 “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.”

For Spacious Skies

A Federal prison was no place to sit out the end of the world. Especially when the doors were locked shut and the guards had stopped coming to work. Jeff Price knew that it took about three weeks for a person to die of starvation. Thirst, however, was the quicker messer-upper. It had been four days since he had seen a guard. That last C.O., Bilansky, had been scared, and wouldn’t stop to answer his questions about what was going on outside. The overhead lights and air conditioning had gone out the day before. Only the faint emergency lights powered by the automatic battery reserve power system that had kicked in kept it from being pitch black. Bilansky used to be a stand-up guy, a C.O. who would talk to you, and turn a blind eye to a kite dropped to another tier, or even pretend not to see a baggie of smoke when they tossed your cell, instead of sending you to Ad-Seg or giving you a write-up that would cost time points. Not the last time. He had just shook his head and kept walking forward, the small circle of light cast by his Maglite in front of him dragging him away.

Jeff had listened hard, since then. Beyond the diminishing hoots and calls and screams of the locked up cons, he had heard nothing from or about the guards in four days. No commissary or mess in a week. The remaining chips and candy bars in his cell

he'd eaten yesterday, chewing the last pack of Ramen dry the day before. No cells had opened or closed at all in that time, either. From what he could tell, nobody in adjoining cells knew any more about what was going on than he did. He figured the world was going to pieces outside. You didn't have to be a rocket scientist to see how ugly stuff was getting, the last few weeks.

'Mistakes had been made' in his life, as the saying we nt. He had ended up in the Federal Correctional Institute in Manchester, Kentucky after a parole violation for a single shot .22 bolt action rifle he had given to his twelve year old son for Christmas. The black officer had stabbed him in the stomach during the arrest. In between his state arrest and federal trial he had been released back into his small, majority black South Carolina hometown. The local media had painted him as a racist. Then, he was attacked three different times by blacks who wanted to test him. That led to him being arrested again on assault and battery charges. When it was all over, they gave him fifteen years, like they were giving away candy.

The water left in the squatter was down to the bottom. He had tried to make it last, taking just a sip at the time. At least he was lucky that his cellie had been in the infirmary when they'd went on lockdown. Well, okay, maybe it wasn't entirely luck. Jeff had put him there, after all. It had been a prison politics thing. His cellie had raped another inmate in the showers. Toning him up was necessary. It was the righteous thing to do. He had stayed in G.P. because his cellie had told the C.O. that he'd fallen in the shower. For that, his cellie had rights to run-backs, if he wanted it. He sat and wondered about his mom and his sons, hoping they were okay. From what had been on t.v. before the C.O.s had shut them off as being 'a threat to the order and security of the facility', most of the riots seemed to be in the cities, but they might have spread. He had no way of knowing. The last mail he had received from groups and people in the White Nationalist movement on the outside hinted that they weren't taking a revolutionary position, but quite the opposite: they seemed to anticipate the illegal

immigrants kicking off ‘the day of the rope’, instead of the other way around.

Jeff’s eyes fluttered open at a subtle shift in the background noise. His watch told him it was seven, in the p.m., he guessed, going by his internal clock. He had no way of verifying that with any certainty. Suddenly, he could no longer see the face of his watch, as the gradually diminishing humming quietened to silence, and the emergency backup lights faded to complete darkness. At the moment the pod was immersed in night, faint clicks popped from the gates and cell doors throughout the block. He knew immediately what had happened. When the emergency battery power had died, and nobody had been around to start the backup generators, the electronic locks had fail-safed open. He held his breath. As one of the thirteen percent of White inmates in the institution, he was a constant target. Being a stand-up Wood, and more, a broken down old White boy friendly with the clover leafs, Jeff had a number of Christian Identity and other brothers to back him up in the yard, so he’d never had to dive into the SHU. But here, in the dark, it was every man for himself. He decided to hunker down and wait out the drama.

The narrow space under his bunk was the only place to squeeze into. After a few minutes he heard cell doors being experimentally pushed back. At first there were a few quiet footpads out of cells, up and down the tier. None of them approached his cell. More and more doors were dragged open. Whispers rose to talking, then shouting. Hooting and hollering sprang forth where just hours ago had been whimpers and crying and prayers and cursing in despair. In the chaos, some of the voices were jubilant, but a few were angry. Rival gangs and cliques were calling out to each other and meeting in the open, without C.O. supervision. The sounds of struggle, grunts and yells and thuds, came from both ends of the row. Jeff pulled himself into a tighter ball in the darkness.

He had no idea how much time passed. After the last footsteps faded into the distance as the walking felt their way to the exit, the moans and sobs of the wounded continued. He slept for a bit, and woke again, to silence. Moving slowly and quietly, Jeff crawled to his cell door before standing up. Keeping one hand on the bars, he slid his back against the wall and began walking towards where he knew the gate to the yard to be. Twice he stepped in wet patches of stickiness, and once he kicked into a body that he had to step over. A grasping hand tried to grab his ankle from the open door of a cell he passed, but he skipped over it easily enough. Eventually, he reached the commons gate, which was open, and then he could see the faint light ahead.

After finding his way to the yard, where a few groups of inmates sat sullenly in clumps eyeing one another, Jeff thought things through. The guard towers sat empty. No C.O.s walked the yard or the perimeter. They were on their own. As he looked around, a lone Hispanic inmate was being kicked to death by a ring of blacks in one corner. Nobody intervened. They all just looked away. Only two members of his C.I. congregation set had made it out, and the three of them agreed that they had no interest in going back to the blocks to find any of the other brothers. They did agree to stick together and go back in to turn the other way, towards the visitation and admission wing. Several unaffiliated Woods followed them back in, since they were outnumbered by the black cons in the yard. Manchester was a medium security facility, but there weren't many innocent angels residing there.

It took Jeff's group half a day of feeling their way in the dark, interrupted by a blind fight with another group they met along the way that left a couple down and dead. At the end they pried out some plexiglass from reinforced frames and squeezed through into the processing section. There they found soft drink and snack machines they chinged open. There were seven of them left, all together.

Once they got into Manchester, the group split up. Three of the cons wanted to start living it up and taking advantage of their newfound freedom. To them, that meant looting. One of them talked about finding girls, and what he would do, when he did. Jeff's C.I. congregation members and one of the others just wanted to keep moving and try to get back to their homes. Only looting for the food and water they needed to survive, they traveled quickly. They saw people from time to time, always armed, and usually looting, themselves. Often they heard gunfire in the distance. Always, they avoided speaking to anyone, or coming close to other people. Even with the world in obvious anarchy, and even with new clothes, a part of them still felt like prison escapees. Like cons. Getting caught and sent back, strangely, felt like a real fear, for a long time. They stayed together until they reached the Tennessee state line, which was patrolled by state police on horseback, of all things. The oldest of their group decided not to risk it. He'd turn back and take his chances. There, they had to split up to slip across at night.

One of the three cons must have been caught trying to cross the state line, because only Jeff and his buddy Kenny Wayne met back up across the line on the other side of Bristol. The yellowing newspapers in their stands told them enough of what had happened after their news had been cut off for them to know why it was only White people they saw first in Kentucky, and then in Tennessee. The only nonWhites they had seen, once they had cleared the prison wire, had been corpses. Many had apparently been lined up alongside the road and shot. Most looked to have been made to kneel first, and some of those had their hands Tyveked, handcuffed, or just tied behind their backs. That explained a lot. More than they needed to know, really.
Oh, Mama I'm Coming Home

Four days later, Jeff and Kenny Wayne hitched a ride with a Tennessee National Guard platoon on one of their three trucks, moving south from Johnson City to Asheville. Most of the refugees were headed north, away from the fighting around

Charlotte, but their cover story of looking for their families who they had gotten separated from seemed plausible enough to the Staff Sergeant in charge of the platoon. From Asheville, they were on foot again. Jeff's plan was to work his way back home to his mother and his sons in South Carolina. The only drawback to this plan was that there was a broad and ambiguous front line and no man's land area between Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina. When they entered the zone, it stretched from Shelby to Greenville. Kenny Wayne's home was in Dahlonega, Georgia, which was still under White control at the moment, although fighting between the local militia and Mexican insurgents there was the problem, not the blacks who had declared their independence. The situation varied widely all over. It was really confusing to both of them. Jeff knew that he would be headed alone into black controlled territory. When Kenny Wayne decided to turn West in the outskirts of Spartanburg, they shook hands and wished each other luck, In Yahweh's grace. That was the best they could do. Travelling alone was much harder, and riskier, for Jeff. He only moved at night, laying up in empty buildings or homes during the daytime. As he moved further south, he heard the sounds of heavy weapons: machine guns, and even artillery, around Moore. That convinced him to swing East, and cut through the Sumter National Forest. Following Hwy 121 East about fifty yards parallel to the road, he was able to observe patrols of armed black men, for the first time, moving in convoys of several civilian vehicles. He became even more careful, then. Travelling at night, Jeff was able to jog along the road, and see oncoming vehicles by their headlights for far enough ahead of time to be able to hide in the treeline along the shoulder. A few times he had to dive in the ditch and lie still as unseen vehicles passed, sometimes several in a group. He could even see the lights coming from behind him, if he stayed alert. Considering the alternative of becoming one of those bodies along the side of the road, he did. Two days later, Jeff was home. Both of his sons and his mother had survived the collapse, so far, but were glad to have him back. Food was short, as was their bottled water. His mom was out of her fluid pills. Local authority had collapsed, and

the black and White citizens were avoiding confrontation, or any other interaction. When they saw each other in groups, it was like two dogs sniffing and circling. You could feel the growls building in their throats, and their hackles rising on the nape of their necks. Charlotte and Columbia had both fallen to the black insurgents, though, and the future of the White minority in Chester seemed to be in question. Word of atrocities against Whites in both cities had already filtered in from the north and the south. Jeff thought the best bet was to get his family out, before the winners had time to take the spoils of war from the losers. He worried whether his mother could make the trip, but he knew that if they didn't try, she wouldn't last long under the New African regime. None of them would. Any of the folks around those parts who were whistling 'Dixie' had better make it the short version.

Birds Flew Off With The Fallout Shelter

Something was wrong. Okay, take that back. A LOT was wrong, but something was really wrong right here, right now. Trouble, with a capital 'T' and that rhymed with 'P' and that stood for 'police state'. From a block away, Kelly could see three patrol cars perched menacingly in front of her apartment building. They looked like they were just waiting to pounce when she came home from the cafeteria. Dinner had been a hunk of bread, canned spinach, and fried potatoes trucked in from Pocatello. It would have been disappointing faire, but it had been food and her stomach wasn't as picky as her eyes. The servers kept promising that they would be getting hamburger any day now, but maybe Wyoming and Montana were less eager to do business with a bunch of Mormon wingnuts frothing about hidden gold tablets and angels than Idaho was, Kelly surmised. She'd kept that guess to herself as she showed her government identification and found an empty chair in the crowded, noisy auditorium, and dug in. Ten minutes later, staring down the street at Salt Lake City's finest, she considered going back for seconds. But, you can't postpone the inevitable forever, she thought. Besides, it was closing in on dark, soon, and cold.

She had her door key out and ready and a look of bewilderment pasted on her face as she deliberately jaywalked across the street towards her front door. Guilty people follow all the rules, she knew. As if she had nothing to hide, Kelly smiled uncertainly at the young cop blocking her from going in. “What’s happening, Brother?” she asked, pushing her brown hair back and giving him the submissive little girl look that had always served her pretty well with men for a quarter century. “Is something wrong?”

In a blinding instant her overactive imagination pictured stormtroopers clumping down the stairs bearing armloads of books on paganism, mythology, fantasy, and herbalism, accusing her of witchcraft and dragging her off for an Old-Salem style interrogation. The witch trial from ‘Monty Python’s Holy Grail’ ridiculously popped into her mind, flashing in. She shook it free, and it flew away. Breathe. Focus. Instead of asking for her name, Officer Newton, as his nametag proclaimed, blushed and smiled. “Well, ma’am, err, Sister, we are currently apprehending a dangerous fugitive at this time here, but the situation is under control. You are perfectly safe, I promise, Sister.”

“Oh, Thank you, Brother,” Kelly gushed, as if he were knights in blue polyester. “I was scared there for a minute. Is it a terrorist?” Officer Newton beamed and leaned in towards her.

“Kind of. A real subversive type, using suspicious means to broadcast treasonous and seduct…uh…seditious lies about Deseret.” The boy in man-pants blushed at his own near Freudian slip. Kelly pretended not to notice, and upped the ante by placing her gloved hand on his arm.
“Oh, wow. What did he say about us? To Who?”…Newton was about to speak when he straightened up at the sound of boots on wooden stairs, behind them. An older, angrier cop came out, followed by two more, dragging her downstairs neighbor Jimmy, his hands zip-tied behind him.

Jimmy was a thirty-two year old gamer and website designer who had asked her out, painfully awkwardly, soon after she had

moved into the building. She had considered telling him that she was a lesbian, or that she was surprised because she had thought that he was gay, just to shut him down and be left alone. In the end, though, she was curious enough about his passive aggressive skulking and stalking of her in the laundry room to agree to go with him to get a pizza around the corner. He had been too scared to pursue things any further, and Kelly had been relieved. Now she couldn't help but feel sorry for the pathetic, lazy loser, both his eyes swelling shut as they sought hers. One of them was bloodshot solid red. Oh boy. Awkward. He looked like his face had been used to polish their boots, and was dripping snot and blood onto the sidewalk. Something about his expression looked resigned, though, even brave. That shocked her. An internal strength might be there, buried deep. "Kelly, please feed my cat, okay?" Don't let 'Mr. Freebird' go hungry, okay? Please!" THAT got her the older cop's attention, fast.

"Do you know this man?"

"Yes, sir, he's my downstairs neighbor." What was it that people were expected to say in a situation like this…oh yeah. "He seemed like the real quiet type. I don't get it!"
"Well, not quiet enough, apparently" the veteran cop said. The other two chuckled as they half dragged Jimmy away, his eyes still locked onto hers, imploringly, as if trying to send her telepathic waves or something. "So, you've lived here for how long? And can I see some I.D., please, Miss?"
Her government employee card relaxed him somewhat. DPS, like him. Status. She tried not to watch as they shoved Jimmy into the back of the nearest squad car, or think about where he might be taken. Probably to a shallow grave in the desert. I thought you were supposed to be trying not to think about that, she chided herself, her nerves jangling. She felt dizzy. The older cop was asking her if she had ever seen any suspicious activity going on. Had she ever seen any strangers coming or going from the building? No, not before today. Had she ever heard any unusual late night conversations, maybe one sided? She answered 'no' to

everything, then, feeling unsteady, she asked Sgt. Kelly, the veteran, whether Jimmy was in bad trouble. “Yes, ma’am, pretty bad. I’d say that he’s going away for a long time.” Taking a gamble that old didn’t mean dead, Kelly gave Sgt. Kelly ‘the look’ and said “Wow, your last name is the same as my first name!”
“Yeah, well it sure is”, he smiled more easily, looking down and leaning back. “What do you think about that?”
“I think it’s pretty neat”, she exhaled. “That means that if you married me, my name would be “Kelly Kelly”, she giggled, tracing his badge with one fingertip. The Sergeant blushed.
“Well, my wife wouldn’t like that though, I bet, and I’m kind of an old fashioned guy, one is plenty for me, Miss.” They shared a laugh. Officer Newton wrote down his personal phone number for her, “just in case you think of anything you might have forgotten that was suspicious about the suspect, or get scared”, and they slapped each other on the back, then left. Kelly didn’t dare look at Jimmy as they drove away.
The first thing to remember when entering a crime scene was to observe everything. Sweep the room with your eyes. The second was to not disturb evidence, Kelly thought distractedly as she climbed the flight of stairs from the landing. The door to Jimmy’s apartment was closed, but the doorknob was broken off and crime scene tape crisscrossed the doorway. She absurdly raised her hand as if to knock, then, pushed the door open with her toe, gingerly. Kelly ducked under and stepped over and was in, pushing the door closed behind her. Her pulse raced. She knew that the other tenants in the building would stay locked in all night, after the raid, fearing they might be next. Everybody has something to hide. Paranoid herself, Kelly looked around the thoroughly trashed room single room studio. Broken dishes, papers, porn dvds (which by themselves could have gotten Jimmy detained), and smashed computer monitors and towers lay scattered, covered, and smashed. She was surprised that they hadn’t taken anything in evidence that she could see, but apparently evidence wasn’t necessary when there were no plans for a trial. Two smashed shortwave transceivers in a corner seemed to have earned special treatment. Kelly guessed they

were the weapons Jimmy had used in his heinous crimes.
Of course she was going to raid his cabinets and refrigerator for any food he had stashed, and of course she had instinctively determined to loot the apartment for anything that she could sell. Hey, times were tough. But Kelly's curiosity had been enflamed by Jimmy's plea for her to fed his damn cat. Especially since the stupid thing had gone missing over two weeks ago, and never come back. That's what you get living the next block over to a Chinese restaurant. Then she remembered the cat's name. "Splinter". Not "Mr. Freebird". She turned to the pile of DVD jewel cases on the stained carpet. Here we go. Lynard Skynard. Uh-huh. Popping the case open, she raised an eyebrow at the CDROM labeled 'HAM'.
Turning a duffel bag full of dirty magazines upside down and empting it, Kelly dropped the CD and tipped the personal jewelry contents from a bedside table tray in, then began selective looting. It took her a few minutes to find the cat's litter box in the gross little bathroom. Under the fresh litter, a third shortwave transceiver was wrapped in plastic and sealed with enough tape to strangle a cat. Now, she understood his weirdo request. She wished that she would at least have given the poor guy a kiss of something. Almost. How sweet. A present for her, as his dying act. Awwww.
Jimmy had told Kelly that he was a HAM radio operator, but she had just dismissed the hobby as another quirk of his nerdiness and social phobia. Kind of like she had dismissed his risky jokes about Prophet Rammell and the Coucil. Now, as she bundled the radio together with all of the food she could scrounge and a few other saleable trinkets, she thanked him for his generosity. Like a post-apocalyptic Santa Claus, she tied the corners of a bulging quilt into a bag and threw it over her shoulder, then, with the loaded duffel, mushed upstairs to her own little cubby hole to count her blessings and war trophies. Okay, dude, your cat has been fed.
Finally, an hour later, Kelly found the BBC broadcast to North America. She was amazed to hear them playing Euro-pop top twenty songs. The normality of it seemed alien and offensive. For

a quarter it was like the world didn't know or care that its' biggest superpower had imploded. Just when she had begun to think that she was in an episode of 'The Twilight Zone', the top of the hour news chimed in. Russia blamed China for sabotage of some Siberian oil facilities and attacks on workers there. Vladivostok had been overwhelmed by thousands of illegal Chinese immigrants, as well. Kelly held her breath, wondering if that meant that the Russians might stand up to Beijing. Not yet, it seemed.

Brazil had joined other Latin American countries in officially extending diplomatic recognition to La Republica del Norte, and warned Argentina not to continue with plans to ship beef to famine struck areas of the Carolinas. California had been divided into 'zones of occupation' along the San Joaquin river. Between who, they didn't say. Kelly assumed the Mexicans and the Chinese. Things were so surreal. There wasn't much other news about the situation inside the U.S.. Just a few snippets.

The Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force in Offutt had conspired to place the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under arrest. A summary trial was held for crimes against humanity. After the public firing squad finished their work, they probably hoped to be absolved of the incineration of Colorado Springs and the death of Denver. It might have worked, too, if they hadn't made a power grab for the chain of command so ruthlessly, themselves.

Alaskan oil was for sale to the highest European bidder. Representatives from France, Italy, and Hungary had arrived in Anchorage, where the capitol had been moved to from Juneau, to place bids for crude from Prudhoe Bay. Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan promised wheat and beef next year in exchange for help refining their petroleum into heating oil this winter. A reporter from Calgary stated that Canadian army units under 'independent command' were coordinating resistance against Chinese aggression in British Columbia. Other units from Regina and Winnipeg had linked up in Minot to help put down a violent uprising by the First People's Army, which had been conducting raids across the border…well, the former border. The Sioux were on the warpath.

It looked like the central part of the continent was pulling together, while the coasts and the southern corners were breaking away. In Atlanta, they talked to a tribal leader of the New African government at a wreath-laying ceremony honoring the 30,000 black victims of racial violence in Los Angeles this past summer. In a gesture of goodwill between their two new nations, 2,400 Mexican citizens who had been detained in Georgia would be released, as soon as someone could come get them. That probably meant never, Kelly thought.

All through the night she listened. In addition to the BBC, there were English language shortwave broadcasts from Calgary, Edmonton, New Brunswick, and St. Louis, she was surprised to hear. Just before dawn she logged a broadcast in English from Beijing, as well, on a frequency listed in a data file on the unencrypted CD-ROM. She probably could find more, she figured, even without having to decipher the Spanish language broadcasts that were plentiful all over the dial.

Kelly made some weak coffee with the same old grounds she had been re-brewing, then showered, dressed, and walked downstairs, careful to avoid looking at the yellow crime scene tape where it had fallen by Jimmy's door during the night. She heard someone inside his apartment looting, but kept walking. First come, first served. There were no police cars outside that she could see on the gray morning. The cold outside shocked her lungs at the first deep breath. Acting casual, she stuck to her routine. The icy November wind kept her sharp, and she doubted she would be drowsy at work today, even on zero sleep. Her head was full of what she had learned about how the world had changed outside of Utah, err, Deseret. In all likelihood, she could continue to listen and learn, with some discretion, forever, so long as she didn't actually broadcast and risk giving away her location, as Jimmy had done. No problem there, she had nobody she wanted to talk to, anyway. Even if it was nearly Christmas, as the official government signs everywhere declared. Her head down in the cold, Kelly made it into work before the twelve block hike could numb her toes very much.

Moss Grows Fat On A Rollin' Stone

From the Bay bridge landing in the Presidio, to the Oakland bridge heading out into burned wasteland being cleared by a thousand uniformed laborers from San Quentin prison, Hu felt like the lord of a medieval realm. During peaceful nights when the gunfire was far away, he imagined that his kingdom, from the Columbia Plateau to Fresno, was truly his own. The peasants with shovels notwithstanding. How could he humanize his tyranny for those who were not Han? Already his troops were stretched thin. If the Russians moved to stop the People's hegemony over Vladivostok, chances were the Central Committee wouldn't be sending any more reinforcements to bridge the gap between Seattle and Sacramento. Well, he would just have to make do. Things were tough all over. He kicked the blonde girl in the leg to wake her. "You! Clean up this mess and leave. Take the other with you. You go now."

He had seen the carnage left behind when the Mexican soldiers had turned on the Anglos down in Twenty-Nine Palms. Not to mention what he had ordered done across the ugly bay, himself. In places along the edges of the streets and sidewalks, gray stains remained from the acid rain runoff. For weeks an intermittent acid wash had pattered ash from the Los Angeles basin fire. Up the coast it had poisoned trees, bushes, and every blade of grass before finally blowing out to see. The weird temperature inversion effect that the locals blamed for "Valley Fever" had trapped a plume of smog over the Central Valley that still hung low in front of the hills. It was not natural to be away from family and friends and society. His sense of alienation, of being disconnected, and lost from the hive, grew like the brown and lifeless vegetation never could. It might be that the landscape stretching as far as his eyes could see, caused by a lack of water pressure or organized firefighting efforts, made his mood worse. It was a small world, after all, and getting smaller by the minute, shrinking in on him then throwing his mind outwards into agoraphobia. Hu's experiences with Taiwan, Japan, Hawaii, and

the Philippines had not prepared him for this. For how…messy San Francisco was to govern. So disorganized. So dirty. Messy with sixteen different nationalities. Unkempt with a dozen languages or more. Chaotic with diversity. A proud Han, he could only feel disdain for these soft and squeamish Americans who had let their land be taken from the. It was ironic, he thought, here he was in America, with an army, but not even fighting Americans, well, not here, anyway. They were all just jackals fighting over the carcass of a dead lion. A dead cat. A kitten, mewling and dying pitifully.

Hu had other worries, besides pollution. Closest to home, how to sort out the Koreans and Japanese and Indians and Pakistanis and other non-Americans. What to do with them? Maybe march them south into what was now really a part of Mexico? Ooops, sorry, they looked brown to me! Or west, into the sea. The gulls were getting raucous and shrill with hunger.

At times like these, he envied his counterparts further behind the front lines. Yes, they had more oversight, people standing right there over their shoulder, judging them, every moment. But at least they weren't out here so far all alone, as he was. Their biggest problems were trying to hide from foreign media what had happened after the U.S. bases in South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and at Pearl Harbor had surrendered. It had been inevitable due to lack of resupply, once their paler brothers in arms disarmed and left them there, marooned. Once all the personnel who could fly or ship out had escaped, headed east with the Chinese fleet in hot pursuit. Wary of U.S. submarine escorts, the pursuit hadn't been too hot, granted, once a couple of overzealous cruisers were torpedoed and a flight of Shenyang J15s hadn't come back to their nest. But in the end, the whole American Pacific fleet, what was left of it, ended up fleeing 2,500 miles north from their defeat at Pearl, to form a defensive arc from the Aleutians to the Queen Charlotte Islands.

He wished now that they could have pursued them and finished the job. Hu didn't know how this all would end. He didn't know who was going to win this sorry piece of real estate. He did know that what he had to do was to keep fighting, and fighting, and fighting, and then fight some more. The appointed governor knew that it wouldn't be over until no Chinese grandmother had to go to sleep at night wondering if she was going to get bombed by an American plane. It wouldn't be finished until not a single little Chinese child had to worry about being incinerated by a crazy American's missiles. The fight wouldn't be done until no sacred porcelain Chinese lady had to worry about a dirty round eye staring at her and wanting to make her his submissive China doll. Some day, that would be the case, because all of these round eyes would be closed, they would be forever DEAD. In the overall picture, in the big scheme of things, that is how it had to be, Hu felt sure. He wasn't a national separatist. Hu was a non-Chinese extinctionist. He didn't really like the Mexicans, of course. He did not like them living in Chinese nations, just as they did not want him living in theirs. He wouldn't want them marrying his daughters, just as they would not want him marrying theirs. But, anybody willing to carry out human wave attacks to kill Whites, was alright by him.

The naval warfare for control of the Pacific had stalemated once it became clear that the humanitarian efforts of the peaceloving People's Republic would extend to California, despite its' losses along the way. Like two wounded animals, the American and Chinese fleets kept their distance, and eyed each other vengefully. And so his thoughts grew morbid with dread. His malaise, these days, bordered on depression. There was no way that he could sacrifice the manpower to put out the fires of resistance smoldering in the mountains and forests of the wet north. There was no way he could continue to feed his millions of hungry, greedy, whiny peasants. Every day the strain hurt his head more.

The homosexual freaks wanted to hold a parade, of all things, to celebrate ‘global unity’, and had sent a ridiculously flamboyant spokes-thing to plead for permission to do that monstrosity. It even had offered a most unusual bribe, even for Hu, a veteran of the graftfueled spoils system of Party politics. He’d had it killed, cleanly.

Admiral Liu, chief of the People’s Humanit arian Foreign Aid Task Force fleet, technically had the unenviable duty of delegating responsibility for organizing the impossible logistics. They could ship in enough food and water to keep the rations flowing, but Hu was under pressure to persuade these Americans of the Party’s benevolent intent. Thus, he was to stop, for example, minor crimes such as the painting of racist slogans over Chinese-American friendship posters from escalating into sabotaging of the struggling water treatment facilities. That was harder to do when people were hungry.

As Hu walked slowly downstairs to dinner, he felt the weight of the world, or a good chunk of it, on his carefully tailored, but slept in, suit’s shoulders. He wasn’t hungry, unlike most people in California tonight, but dinner was a state function, a ritual. Rituals must be observed.

The Darkness Drops Again

Alexander City got its drinking water from Lake Martin, so the town wasn’t thirsty, yet. There were no lights, though, and hadn’t been since September. Generators powered the water plant, and a few battery recharging sites, along with the police station and clinic. The police chief had closed all of the service stations in town and confiscated the fuel before the tanks were emptied, so they still had gas. Joe Don was glad the power was out as he and the boys drove south on Highway 9 for a long-delayed trip to Montgomery. He kept his headlights off and drove by the light of the round moon, keeping it under thirty just in case there might be something in the road. There was no other traffic, like usual.

Almost nobody had gas, except the rich and the stingy, and even they only had it for emergencies.

When the bluegum porch-monkeys had taken over the state legislature and declared martial law, most of the Klansmen like Joe Don in the area had gone to ground. Some had grabbed their bug-out bags and split, but many of them who jumped too quick got caught up in the massive traffic jam of Whites trying to get out of Birmingham as it went up behind them. Being stuck between two big black urban areas was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, they couldn't really go anywhere. Only a few people with private planes had made it out once the zoo gates broke open. On the other hand, the zombie hordes hadn't come out this far looking for brains. They mostly stayed put and tormented the poor White idiots stuck in there with them. Folks took care of their own, and had potlucks when they could. Some families doubled up, abandoning the harder to maintain homes. They bartered and donated when they needed to, and generally had gotten by, except for the very old or sickly. A couple of the local churches had suddenly gone back to their roots and started teaching against interracial marriage and homosexuality, after one of the bigger congregations in town that had welcomed mixed race couples had suffered a late night fire, perhaps linked to a cross lighting. Those churches began to help the local community with free stores, food baskets, and collections for the needy.

The real change came when groups of activists from the Southern Impoverished Legal Committee, the S.I.L.C., began visiting schools throughout the state. Acting on 'anonymous tips' about child 'psychological abuse' or neglect, they would show up at the classroom door with a black police officer, or a 'deputized' group of black youths. Typically, they had a list of the children of people in the community who held 'politically incorrect' views. Many of those lists came from the rosters of the local Republican Party, or Tea Party group, or known NRA supporters. The S.I.L.C. representative would demand that the teacher release a specific child to them for 'counseling'. The child would be taken to a

private room, where behind locked doors they would be asked whether their parents ever used racial slurs at home, or owned guns, or prayed. Most school administration and teachers were intimidated into going along with the interrogations.

If the children gave in to the browbeating and the directed, leading questioning about whether their parents liked the President or people of different races, the next step was taken. Their parents received letters of summons from Child Protective Services, followed by an unannounced visitation. Their homes were inspected to make sure that the children's safe environment didn't include any firearms or right wing extremist literature the children might have access to. The new black government rubber-stamped all of the S.I.L.C. actions, since they were no longer under the old U.S. Constitution with its protective Bill of Rights. Alabama, after all, wasn't a part of the United States, any more.

When Joe Don's third grade daughter got off the school bus crying one day, he found out about what the S.I.L.C. was doing. Alone in her bedroom, his wife was able to get out of the little girl that the big black counselor man and the black policeman had asked her all about if her family was in the Klan, did her daddy ever tell her not to have black friends, and had she ever heard anything racist being said at home. They also had asked her how often his friends came over, and what they talked about.

His wife's ashen facial color and trembling shoulders told him that there was much more to it than that, though. As he sat impatiently wanting her to tell him everything that their daughter had been asked, and everything that had happened, she finally started crying. "One of them asked our baby if we would like it if she liked girls instead of boys, and when she said 'no'…" she broke down sobbing in anger and shock.

"What!?! What did they say?" Joe Don asked with a rising sense of urgency. "Oh, it's not just what they said, they told her that was good, because her mommy and daddy would like her to like boys,

like them, and since they were boys, they could show her what boys liked.."
"They did what? They said that? If they touched her I'll find them both and I swear to God I'll…" Joe Don felt strangled, like the room was collapsing in on him. "She's EIGHT!" he screamed.
"Well, she said the school shop teacher and the football coach kicked the door in and made them stop talking to her then, and she says there was a fight and the black councilor man and the black policeman left. But they said they were coming back, Joe Don. Even if we pull her out of school, they know where we live. What are we gonna do? How are we going to protect my baby girl?" she sobbed in despair.
Joe Don hugged her tight. "That's my job, you don't worry about nothin'.". He then went and gave his daughter a big hug and told her that she hadn't done anything wrong, that everything was going to be okay, and nobody was going to hurt her. Once she had fallen asleep, he picked up the truck keys and told his wife he was going to make a few house calls.
His Knighthawk Roy shifted next to him, and, pointing his shotgun up towards the roof of the cab, pulled a can of skoal out of his shirt pocket. One of his last log. It was a special occasion. They were going hunting. Joe Don grinned. The only radio stations still playing he could pick up were blaring hip hop and rap, so he let an old Johnny Rebel CD slide into the stereo and keep him awake as they sliced through the night.
Normally on a hunting trip like this, the rest of his boys would ride in the back of his pickup and scream their rebel yells into the wind, but it was a bit nippley for all that tonight. The new Mayor of Montgomery was planning on giving a speech tomorrow morning announcing the citywide Kwanzaa celebration schedule for next month. Joe Don and his redneck revolutionaries intended to put a damper on the plans.
The only kind of jobs still available for Whites in Alabama, New Africa, were in menial positions no black man wanted, such as waiters and janitors. That explained the strange mixture of greasy coveralls and bow ties that crowded the other two pickups. This was a bonafide mission, not a cross lighting where robes and

hoods would suit. The back of the trucks were each filled with six barrels of diesel fuel, and ten fifty pound bags of ammonium nitrate fertilizer. Some assorted electronic devices rounded off the list of goodies covered with tarps, on their way for delivery. Mohammed Jarvis might be planning a Kwanzaa, but they were bringing him a Christmas. Joe Don was even wearing a red Santa Claus hat, just for the occasion. Behind the three pickup trucks painted to advertise a local catering service, two stolen school buses filled with their closest kin followed at a distance.

They had C.B.'s, but only for life and death situations would they use them and risk being caught. So, communication was confined to within the trucks, for the trip.

"Wasn't there a book about something like this here, back in the day, Roy?" Joe Don asked over the music, to break the boredom more than anything. His Knighthawk laughed like that was the funniest thing in the world. Everybody knew that Oklahoma City had gone back to the Injuns, from what folks said, the whole state had, pretty much.

"Yeah, sure was", Roy answered. "Just don't go writing in your DIARY about it!" Joe Don guffawed.

"I won't, so long as you promise to not take the dang old license plate off." The Imperial Wizard of the West-Central Alabama Klavern joked.

Horace Slees had seen his eighty-second birthday come and go in style. The night before, he had hit the pipe and chased a teenage girl around his dining room table with a buzzing thingy, then later on he had kissed a young interning lawyer right where it mattered most. The young man had been very grateful. Well, that's as it should be. After all, he knew who Horace was. The man. The myth. The legend. In this new world, a god. It was a heck of a lot better than selling birthday cakes in the mail, that's for sure. Some of the staffers worried too much about being able to control the darkies now that they were really in power, but Horace knew he could keep them under his thumb. He always had. You didn't get to be a multi-millionaire by being stupid. Just ask Richard. From the sixth floor polarized window he looked down at the memorial between his two buildings just southwest of

the capitol, and saw Mayor Jarvis's entourage and security marching around the corner. The anti-Semitic bastard was early, probably just to upstage him with the media and whip them into a frenzy, as he liked to do. If he made any more "Hymie's Next" chants today, it would cost Horace a whole case of candy bars to keep Heidi from quitting. Those were getting harder and harder to come by these days, too. Candy bars, that is.

A few times, black mobs had come close to storming the doors of the Southern Impoverished Legal Committee headquarters, in the earliest days of the transition to black rule. Having the best ex-mercenary security that money could buy had really paid off during those hectic weeks. He had spent the first month directing things from his fortified estate, but eventually the situation had calmed down, when there was nothing left to loot and few Whites left to rob or rape or murder. Now he was living at the office, full time. All you had to do was ride these storms out, and you would end up on top, like he always did, Horace thought smugly.

The caterers had arrived just after dawn, dressed like Christmas elves, of all the ridiculous things, and began quickly setting up the breakfast buffet (no pork, he had specifically ordered them) around the fountain. Steamtrays were piled high with fried chicken and waffles, a nice touch, he thought with approval. He pushed a buzzer and almost instantly two armed guards appeared.

"It's time to go pretend to care what this monkey has to say", Horace told them. "Let's go on down and get Pohtick. He shouldn't miss this."

Joe Don sang a song under his breath as he looked up at the high walls that hung over him to his right. "Inside of a room, in a square the color of blood…". Snipers as usual, on the roof, scanning the crowd for any signs of weapons or hostile intent. Cameras freaking EVERYWHERE, not that they mattered. If this worked, nobody would be around to watch any tapes or freeze frame any faces. If it didn't, he wouldn't be leaving the scene, regardless. He and Roy each took an end of the last barrel, and waddled it off the truck, down the ramp, and into position under the buffet table, labeled as carbon dioxide. Right beside the other four, for the soda jets ready to launch grape crush soft drink

through the memorial fountain, as the contract specified. The zebra-striped banquet-sized table cloths, also custom ordered for the party, neatly covered the apparatus from end to end, on three sides of the pool. Sometimes it was good to have a member in the catering business. Who'da thunk it?

Horace Slees and Mike Pohtick, a bobble-headed Jew-froed weasel, exited the S.I.L.C. building and entered the crowd of black dignitaries with fake grins and a flourish just a couple of minutes after the caterers had finished their setup, climbed back into their trucks, and discretely left the celebration area to their betters. Pohtick hated being up this early. He needed another cup of coffee. Where was that former skinhead serving boy? Oh, God! "Hey, T.J., where are the waiters at? I saw them a minute ago. I want a java and a bagel, you stupid goy, and I want them now!" Horace growled at him to shut up, then plastered on a smirk as the Mayor stepped up to shake his hand. That's right, you better pay homage, you dirty gorilla, Horace thought.

As soon as Joe Don made the left turn, Roy said a quiet prayer and pressed a button. They winced as the westside windows of the first Confederate Capitol cracked behind them. They made a right, going the wrong way up the empty King Street, before Roy said another prayer and pushed a second button. Two white buildings, with black men inside, began to give off gray smoke on both sides of Union Street. That should keep them busy.

Very little structural damage was done to either of the three buildings targeted by what local media called an obvious act of racist terrorism. However, the concave design of the first structure channeled the force of the blast, and its' shrapnel, into a shaped charge. The explosion instantly killed Mayor Jarvis and five members of his entourage, as well as Horace Slees, Mike Pohtick, and eleven other members of the S.I.L.C. staff, including Heidi Biterich. She had come downstairs for the free buffet. Two dozen other attendees were injured, to greater or lesser degrees. In the state capitol building, the governor's office was destroyed, as was his blackness and three "secretaries" who had been in consultation with the former pimp at the time of the blast. Across the street, the Speaker of the House and fourteen

Representatives assumed room temperature, and the Speaker Pro Tempore and several others were wounded.

Two hours later, in the confused aftermath of the attack, three C-130s piloted and flown by White crewmen lifted off from Maxwell Air Base in northern Montgomery. They turned their radios off after the tower first asked them what they were doing, then ordered them back. The big planes angled northwest towards the aptly named Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, 500 miles away. The defectors, who had pretended to be subservient to their black officers after the takeover of the base, were jubilant. Inside the huge cabins of the C-130s were the West-Central Alabama Klavern of the Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, and their families. Joe Don's daughter sat on her mom's lap, holding her daddy's hand. The kids sang "Jingle Bells" during the takeoff, as loud as they could, to overcome their fear. Also along were thirty-two of the remaining White Maxwell base personnel, including two of Joe Don's cousins who had joined up for the free college. The cousins had arranged the ride. They would be out of reach of any reprisals. The same could not be said for the nearly four hundred Whites drug out of basements and attics and slaughtered in Montgomery's suburbs over the next two weeks of frenzied rioting.

Chapter Five

Luke 22:36
King James Bible
“Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.”

Shadows Of The Indignant Desert Birds

Standing beside their chairs awaiting his arrival were Captain Ming, Admiral Liu’s Chief of Staff, who served as the naval liaison to the civil authority, and two other men. Harry Lee was a second generation Chinese-American businessman whose parents had fled the enlightened rule of Beijing after Tiananmen Square. They had become wealthy fulfilling the restaurateur stereotype throughout the Pacific coast region. Their oldest son Harry, the most ambitious of his six siblings, had risen to a seat on the San Francisco City Council, thanks to an aggressive tiger mom upbringing. His next younger brother had taken over the family business, and another brother had went to law school after Berkeley and opened a private practice serving the Chinese expatriate community from San Jose to Sacramento. In Hu’s eyes, Lee and his whole family were traitors to the Party, and his nation. He was, however, a pragmatist, and understood that Lee was necessary to insure the cooperation and grudging support of the population group which still served as the international justification for their presence there.

The third man, like Hu and Ming an only son, stared at the governor’s disheveled appearance and mussed hair with barely concealed disgust. General Jiang was the actual military commander of all of the People’s forces engaged in their humanitarian efforts throughout the United States and Canada. In actuality, that meant Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, and the Bay area, with their cordoned off environs. He lay claim to the

pacification of the entire coastline and two hundred miles inland in his reports back to the Central Committee, but that was wishful thinking, to be generous. Hu also knew that Jiang had a harem of blonde American girls, all under the age of consent, at three different bases around the occupied areas. Either of those two nuggets would have led to his recall and retirement to a rice field, or worse, it they were known back home. That was why Jiang continued to defer to him, despite the fact that Hu was officially just a bureaucrat, just the Administrator of State Resources and the Acting Governor for the People's Humanitarian Foreign Aid Task Force, and its liberated areas.

It was their custom to debrief over boiled dog, which led this night to a casual remark by Harry Lee that a few dozen ragged animal rights activists had begun protesting the menu changes at his family's dining establishments. Captain Ming shook his head and sneered, with a mouthful of meat, then shared that he could never understand the barbaric American's dainty appetites. Especially now that they were near starvation. Jiang settled the issue by telling Lee that he would have the protesters arrested and executed for creating a public disturbance if they repeated their performance the next day. Before Lee could pull back from his complaint and demur that such action was unnecessary, the fates of the P.E.T.A. and Animal Liberation Front vegans was sealed.

Hu changed the subject by asking Jiang for a casualty report from the last week. The official report sent back to Beijing listed three deaths and five injuries in a helicopter crash. Everyone at the table knew that casualties were cremated in a funeral home in Sacramento, instead of being shipped back home for burial. So, the General began ticking off skirmishes and ambushes. A group of White separatists operating out of Olympic National Park had hit a convoy just outside of Olympia: forty-eight dead, twice that many wounded, and several truckloads of food "lost". A patrol in Salem had withdrawn under fire from suspected elements of the Oregon National Guard, working with a "patriot" militia group, leaving behind five dead or captured. A Chinese-American

friendship office in Eugene had been blown up, and three secretaries and a guard killed, and another injured. In a dozen incidents, People's army losses in the Bay area alone approached twenty casualties. The stupid Americans should be calming down and getting ready to celebrate their meaningless "Christmas", not stirring up trouble for him and Jiang. Captain Ming wondered about reports he had heard of White Californians being resettled in Reno now rebelling. Jiang hesitated, then confirmed that yes, the rail line between Lake Tahoe and Carson City was 'no longer viable'. That meant it was no longer under his force's control. Lee and Hu exchanged glances, both wondering how bad that situation really was. Hu prodded Jiang gently for details on the obviously sensitive issue. The last relocation train, which had carried six hundred and eighty detainees and thirty guards, had rolled back into Sacramento two days earlier, empty. That was depressing, not only because of the depletion of irreplaceable troop strength, but because they only had been able to relocate around 110,000 Whites from their sphere of influence to the Nevada border. Now that operation seemed to be at an end.

Harry Lee inquired of General Jiang what he would do with the remaining hundreds of detainees they had already rounded up for deportation. Jiang just smiled. Hu and Ming did, too. Lee was so Americanized. Jiang responded that he was going to draft a few thousand conscripts from Chinatown to guard them. They all laughed except for Lee. Later, Hu thought back on it, and considered that it might not have been such a bad idea, after all.

It was quiet on the southern side of their shared demilitarized zone with the Republic del Norte. Fresno and the San Joaquin border were quiet. One Chinese soldier, less alert than he should have been, had been disarmed and killed by a large group of MexicanAmerican women and children his squad was escorting south. The reprisals had been swift and bloody enough to deter any repeat performances, since. The Republica side hadn't dared make a peep about it. Captain Ming reported that the new Mexico

territory had agreed to relocate the few naval assets they had bobbing around the Channel Islands further south to San Diego. They ought to, since it the naval base there had been evacuated by the U.S. Navy as they retreated up the coast, awaiting orders which had never come through. Ming's primary concern was protecting their resupply convoys all the way across the Pacific from rogue U.S. sub attacks. A dozen troop carriers and two destroyers guarding them had been lost during the last week to them.

Their soup went cold as Lee complained about the acid rain pollution, the air quality, and his people's dead gardens. Hu told him that he could thank the Mexicans for that, burning half of Los Angeles. They joked about Hollywood not making any more movies for a long time. The evacuation of the new People's embassy had been impossible to hide from the Central Committee, and that hadn't been funny, though. Admiral Liu had sent a flotilla both to pick them up, and intimidate the Mexicans. The mission was a success, on both counts.

Over dessert, which Hu barely picked at, their conversation turned to broader-ranging issues. Rumors that the Mormons in Deseret had control over nuclear arsenals left at Hill Air Force Base. Another shipment of fruit and rice from Manila being overdue. Reports of cannibalism on Oahu. And the biggest mystery: what was the U.S. Pacific fleet, still at around seventy percent strength, doing up in Alaska? How long before that particular problem came down on their heads?

Nobody worried about the block by block fighting in Vladivostok, or talked much about their families back home. Being only sons and raised by the state helped fend off that kind of nostalgia, at least in public. Inflation, unemployment, those problems seemed a universe away. But three of the men saw the same haunted looks in the eyes of their peers as they faced in the mirror each morning.

Did You Write The Book Of Love?

Oil still flowed to Valdez. Massive tanker ships still lined up to fill and creep away again. These days, they didn't arrive empty, though. Ships ran the Chinese naval gauntlet from Australia and New Zealand, and from France and Spain and Italy, too. Pallets of canned foods and containers of fruits and vegetables arrived lashed onto decks as barter for the cheapest oil left on the planet. Especially now that the Islamic State had declared a fatwa of death on any Muslim nation which sold petroleum to the infidels. Once they reached the Gulf of Alaska and the protective ring of U.S. Naval forces there, they could offload their barter goods- which sometimes consisted of American citizens who had been left stranded in their countries when things fell apart and all flights to the U.S. had been cancelled. The population of Anchorage had doubled to nearly 597,000, now 98% White. That included fourteen thousand naval personnel and dependents now based on shore from the Pacific fleet. They had come, sometimes in two or three trips, from places like El Centro and Coronado, Kunia and Chinhae, and were adapting to the Alaskan winter as best they could. In addition to the naval personnel, four thousand Marines and their families, and fifteen hundred belonging to the Air Force, now lived in and around Elmendorf-Richardson. Spreading some of the more intact and independent units to Juneau, Homer, Wasilla, and even over the Alaska Range to Fairbanks had only helped so much. All throughout the late summer, chainsaws and sawmills had hummed, and all throughout the fall new barracks had been thrown up, as the entire Pacific theatre shrunk in on them.

Everybody was sick of fish, but nobody was starving. What they were, was bristling for a fight. Nothing could get at them, so solid was their naval line from the Aleutians. But all eyes turned south, towards home, and towards the enemy. Their radar was turned south, too, trying to get a good a read on the rapidly changing situation there. The U.S Strategic Command center at Offutt Air Force base in Omaha had tried unsuccessfully to bully the COMPAC officers in charge to knuckle under to SAC authority. Offutt might have enough nuclear weapons and strategic

bombers under their command to give the Chinese or anybody else pause. The Pacific fleet, though, not only still had the fast attack Ohio class subs and their SSBNs, they had the sympathies of the U.S. Atlantic and Mediterranean fleets, too. Since both of those wings had temporarily signed over ‘joint command’ with the U.N. peacekeeping forces trying to keep a lid on the East coast, that gave them some cred with the blue beanies. What Vice Admiral Woods of combined Seventh and Third fleet command lacked was an intact chain of command, especially from a civilian authority, in the lower forty-eight. Because of that, and the Atlantic fleet sign on with the E.U. led faction of the U.N., U.S. Pacific Command Anchorage opened channels of discussion with the U.N. North American peacekeeping forces.

Specialist Tommy Bullens sat hunched at his radio station, huddling deeper into his bright orange parka every time some idiot opened the door on their wood-frame comm shack. Neither the coat nor the building were exactly standard military issue, but they kept out some of the cold. Who would have thought he would end up in Alaska for Christmas? He had signed on for beaches and bikinis. At the moment he was talking with another Specialist a world away in Guantanamo Bay, where the U.S. Naval station had clung on despite repeated mass human wave attacks. After the locals given up trying to eat them, they had emerged as the most successful and resourceful pirate base in the Caribbean. That was unofficial. What was official was their access to data that the Pacific fleet lacked. Data such as the readings on the radiation count in the plume from Pueblo to Denver where Cheyenne Mountain used to be, or in Browns Ferry, Alabama, and Hartsville, South Carolina, where nuclear reactors had melted down when their autoshutdown systems had failed. Tommy looked up in irritation as the door banged open again, then smiled to see his buddy Rick. Both had served on the USS Abraham Lincoln together before being ordered ashore, first for construction duty, and now for data analysis.

Although the Third fleet claimed the Alaskan waters as home station, Vice Admiral Robert Woods of the Seventh fleet had sagely begun onloading U.S. personnel from bases in South Korea and Japan as soon as it became obvious that the southwestern states were gone. In fact, his actions countermanded the last standing orders from the Joint Chiefs on May 24th that he lock down all bases and sort out his base personnel by race, then await further orders. He did the first part, all right. But when the USS Carl Vinson and one of its' cruisers were lost through mutiny by black and Hispanic crew members working together, then fighting each other, the game changed. Similar rebellions were barely suppressed in carrier strike force Nine targeting the Ronald Reagan. Fraggings and confused firefights effected every base across the Pacific.

There had been a surprising number of under-the radar White Nationalists in the Seventh, and especially in the Marine units. They seemed to actually relish the sorting out process, more than others. The Seventh fleet had to abandon the Marianas and the Carl Vinson, but their withdrawal from the Japanese home islands was more orderly. In the end, the nonWhite military personnel who survived the staggered mutinies, who simply could not be trusted, were detained and marooned. The mutineers took over in Sasebo, Iwakuni, and Yokota, but were defeated in Yokosuka and Atsugi. There they were left behind to be turned over to the oncoming Chinese for internment, or worse.

The knowledge that their country back home was breaking up, and that many of their shipmates had turned on them, helped soothe the qualms felt by most of the White sailors and marines at leaving them behind. More than one ship was lost or abandoned due to desertions, but the massacre at Camp Humphreys by units from both sides of the DMZ was good motivation to get their families loaded if they had them, and try to get moving towards them, if they didn't. The Chinese moved before the Woods could reconsolidate and reassign personnel to cover their losses, launching a missile attack on Taiwan to cover

an amphibious assault with overwhelming air cover. With Seventh fleet out of action, elements of the Fifth fleet steamed south from the Indian Ocean, while trying to maintain unit cohesion between the diverse components of their crews. They were ordered by the Joint Chiefs to position between Malaysia and Australia to defend our ally there, and a few weeks later, had negotiated a joint command agreement with the Australian admiralty.

The Seventh fleet anchored in Subic Bay to lick its wounds while the Chinese Navy gobbled up the western Pacific. The world watched Chinese marines take revenge for the rape of Nanking on the streets of Osaka and Tokyo. It took a Herculean effort, and a week of constant crew transfers and reassignments, but by the first of August Vice Admiral Woods determined that they could fully man four of their five remaining carrier groups. The U.S.S. Kitty Hawk, Constellation, Nimitz, and Independence and their groups and air wings would continue their eastward withdrawal. The damaged Reagan was scuttled after the ships stores and ordinance were offloaded and redistributed between her four remaining sisters. As had happened in South Korea and then Japan, all American citizens- the White ones who were deemed low security risks- were fast-boated from shore to ship for relocation. None of them knew to where, exactly. China couldn't really blame the U.S. on the world stage for racism against its own citizens in abandoning them, in the end, since once they moved in, none of them were ever heard from, again. So eastward they ran, towards Pearl.

By the time the Seventh fleet reached Pearl Harbor-Hickam, the Hawaiian Islands were under martial law with a militarily imposed dusk to dawn curfew and strict rationing. Cut off from the mainland, with no flights in or out for six weeks by then, they were in a world of hurt. Civilian authority from the mainland was impotent and unresponsive. As the Philippines dominoed down behind them, Honolulu felt that they were next.

In consultation with the Third fleet on station north of them, Woods considered making a stand at Pearl. None of the commanders wanted to be the one whom history would remember as abandoning a U.S. state to an enemy force. Technically, they had already left behind a U.S. Territory, Guam, and that was bad enough, it seemed. However, they all knew that the Hawaiian Islands were indefensible without resupply from the mainland. Vice Admiral Woods made the command decision to request the Third fleet negotiate with the Alaskan civilian government and the ElmendorfRichardson joint base near Anchorage to begin planning for and preparing housing accommodations for the Seventh fleet, should they need to withdraw there. The Chinese passed and occupied Midway before the Naval and Air Force personnel at Pearl-Hickam could be prepared for evacuation, anyway. The 15th air wing from Hickham and Nimitz's carrier wing were ordered, along with the Pacific submarine fleet, to meet the vanguard of the Chinese fleet just north of the Johnston Atoll. While the other surface ships continued the evacuation, the Nimitz and her three destroyers and two guided missile cruisers were chosen to make the stand because all of the dependents and civilians had been offloaded from them onto the other three carrier groups' vessels.

On August 29th, the first wave of the Chinese navy's full -on charge across the Pacific was blunted by the loss of both of their aircraft carriers, and their escorts, to coordinated U.S. submarine attacks and barrages from the big guns of the Nimitz's group. In a running battle, the Shi-Ling and her sister ship each took several torpedo and missile hits before going down. Both ships were hit by multiple sorties of F/A-18s from the Nimitz, as well. There were no survivors. The loss was mooted, though, because the skies had been swept clean of Chinese J15 aircraft the day before by the 15th air wing's F-22s. This meant that the People's Army troops who landed in Hawaii, and for the initial phase, in California, for that matter, would be very short on air cover or resupply. The three U.S. submarines of the Pacific fleet which survived the day continued to shadow Chinese convoys, sinking

troop transports until their munitions stores were depleted, then heading south to rearm with the Fifth fleet in Australia. Their mission continued.

The victory came at a high cost. One of the Nimitz's destroyers and two cruisers, along with the U.S.S. Kentucky Ohio class nuclear submarine, joined the total of eleven Chinese ships at the bottom of the Pacific. The Nimitz herself was badly stricken, and limped back into Pearl, there to be abandoned. Most of her air assets which survived the battle had enough fuel left to catch the U.S.S. Constellation as it swung north to join the Third fleet. Nimitz's crew were evacuated by her two remaining destroyers, which followed the Constellation. Hawaii's fall was postponed for three weeks by the rear guard action of the Nimitz, but in the end the islands' fate was sealed. The Pacific fleet could not feed them, could not evacuate them, and over the long view, could not defend them. The Jester Sang For The King And Queen

After drinks, Hu's dining companions drifted away one by one, leaving him alone to wrestle with resource allocation algorithms in his head. He had forgotten to broach the subject of enlisting Chinese-Americans as armed auxiliaries for real to General Jiang after dinner, to fill the eroding holes widening in the peacekeeping force's ranks. Harry Lee and Jiang would both have to support the idea, but even a few thousand would help. It was either that, or withdraw their areas of control back into the major port cities, and Beijing would not ignore that.

His head pounded. Hu had begun to unravel mentally, and play with so many problems balled up tightly in his mind that he had isolated himself. Over time he had become, by Asian standards, reclusive. It helped him to think, to solve problems. Problems too big for one man, for one brain. That was his problem. Well, not just his, and that was problematic. Probably the problems were his own problem. Hu felt like he was having a panic attack. There was a small chest filled with powdered problem solver packets upstairs for that. What had Harry Lee told him, the joke? About

the new girl who had served them tonight? Ah, yes. “Hu knows”. He thought about that a while as it rained again outside the glass walls of his prison.

Later, as the world slowed and dimmed, he let the syringe drop from his arm and made another fist. Now that was hitting below the belt, Hu thought. Americanisms were so amusing. That Harry Lee, he was a funny guy, for a traitor from a family of traitors. Was he his friend? Did he have any friends? Where were they? Who were they? Hu could not think of any friends. He did not trust anyone, he couldn’t. He didn’t really try to. He didn’t really lie to. He didn’t really like anyone. Outside of the hive, a worker bee lost and alone, flying and spinning off into space, Hu closed his eyes and lay back to enjoy his headache fading.

They Caught The Last Train For The Coast Brenda set the broom, dustpan, and bucket down beside the door and knocked again, less hesitantly than before. This time, the door silently eased back open an inch. She had not seen the Administrator all morning, but that wasn’t unusual, lately. He rarely ate breakfast any more, or left his suite, before mid-afternoon. But now it was almost two in the afternoon, and even though she knew that her boss’s secretaries and guards had been ordered not to disturb him except in case of an emergency, she had to finish her cleaning rounds. There was still half the building to finish, and get home to her three kids the soup and roast leftovers from the fancy dinner the chinks had eaten last night. What she had done for that smelly, pimply busboy in the kitchen for those scraps was something she had already chosen to forget. Her kids hadn’t eaten in two days, and that counted as an emergency in Brenda’s world. She had no idea what they were getting from Santa Claus this year. It depended on what she could loot or barter for.

She pushed the door open instead of calling out, so she could back out unnoticed if he was still asleep. Sure enough, there he was, sprawled in bed. Brenda stopped short at something on the floor. A spilled baggie. In an instant, she took in the needle, the

belt, the spoon and melted candle. She moved inside the bedroom for a better look, like a shark smelling blood. Hu's face was more relaxed than she had ever seen it, even with the vomit on his chin. When her husband and brother had both disappeared within a few hours of each other three weeks ago, Brenda had ended up coming to this evil place for any kind of job she could find, against her will. The supposedly anonymous cans of food left on her doorstep by those skinheads from uptown had helped, but only so much. She thought of what would happen to her kids if she disappeared, too. She knew that a purge would follow this, that everyone on staff here was as good as dead. The Chinese would have to cover this up. It would be an embarrassment, a dishonor.

Her decision was as quick as instinct. Moving around the body, ignoring the smells of puke and voided bowels, she went from the chest to the nightstand to Hu's closet. It helped that she knew where everything was, already. In less than eight minutes, the door to the Acting Governor's suite shut and locked behind her. Brenda calmly passed the security detail down the hall chattering away in Mandarin about their previous night's adventures, based on what she could tell from their animated hand motions. Neither of them bothered to look up at her as she leaned to the left to counterbalance the weight of the bucket in her right hand. She followed routine, dropping off her broom and dustpan in the downstairs closet. The packets of heroin, the ten one hundred gram silver bars, and the pistol and ammunition would pay a coyote to take her and her kids east, maybe all the way to Reno. She hoped they would be safe there, that it was far enough away. It was the nearest White held zone she knew of.

Brenda waddled awkwardly down the sidewalk towards her kids, forgetting the food, focused on the bullet in her back or the barked order to stop which never came. That night they ate very well, anyway. A week and a half later Brenda found her husband and her brother working to repair water distribution pipes from Lake Tahoe into the city. She never told them her full story, but their

struggles were unspoken between them. Everyone had their demons, these days. Few of them were lucky enough to have the exorcism of a happy ending to go with them. Her family was safe.

To Light The Sacrificial Rite

As their reassignment briefing had told them, what the Navy needed now more than ever, more than anything, was to know what was going on. That was his job. Rick loved to play wingman to Tommy when they hit the bars, because the local girls might be scarce, but they loved to hear any news from the lower forty-eight. With almost all internet servers from the U.S. down for the count, not to mention satellite t.v. stations, most people in Alaska turned to the B.B.C. for English language news. Especially since all of the even part Indian or Eskimo or whatever girls had been relocated to enclosure communities outside of Anchorage as security risks, females were few and far between. But a guy like Tommy, who knew more about what was happening down below than the B.B.C., could always score. Sometimes that made him equally popular with the enlisted personnel from the fleet, over 25,000 sad sacks who were hungry for any news from or about home.

Rick held the door open and bowed grandly as Tommy stood up and buttoned his coat. “Your chariot awaits, Sir”, he announced, gesturing towards the Honda 4X4 with snow chains whose engine heat was melting a patch of slush outside. “Come on, Season’s Greetings and Yuletide Cheer and all that, my boy!” Tommy grinned and moved for the door. He could use some time off the clock. The world would continue to go to hell just as well without him listening. Let Admiral Woods’s ears ring for a few hours, instead of his.

Tommy and Rick drove through the icy, muddy snow over the newly laid gravel road. Between row after row, block after block of unpainted raw buildings, each puffing out blue wood smoke into the twilight, they crunched. Two more blocks and a left would have them back into the old town, where civilian bars hummed

and strummed to their own eclectic tunes. Enlisted access to the motor pool had been severely restricted a couple of weeks ago after the fourth or fifth small group of fed up jarheads had commandeered a Humvee and deserted. Rick said that it was stupid to try to drive down the Alaska highway in winter. The road hadn't been maintained all season. Tommy guessed that he had a point, but nobody knew exactly how many fixed wing and rotor aircrews had decided amongst themselves to pack it in and head for as close to home as their fuel payloads would get them. No more paychecks and no more country to fight for, plus being thousands of miles from home, left them feeling like a defeated, guilty army of broken men and women. Dealing with the series of retreats and abandonments and mutinies and infighting had demoralized them, especially the enlisted men who didn't have their families along.

Alaska was a bleak place at best, in the wintertime. Plenty of wood to burn, plenty of space, plenty of oil, okay refining facilities, but not much for agriculture. Or nightlife. Tommy and Rick shouldered their way good-naturedly through a mixed bag of civilian and military folks to the bar. A drunk sailor murdered " Blue Christmas" on the karaoke machine, on the tiny stage. Here, the clientele was all working class, there was no middle class left. Basic red and green construction paper cutouts and a forlorn Charlie Brown tree in the corner did their best to add some cheer to the joint. The drink choices were simple: home brewed beer, or locally distilled moonshine, cut with water to various potencies. One thing about Alaska, the beer was always cold. He bet that in Kansas they were drinking wheat beer, or soon would be. Iowa would have corn liquor. Idaho, potato vodka. Tommy joked that he wasn't much for vegetables on his plate, he preferred them in liquid form.

The snubnosed redhead's name was Becky. She was an actual Alaskan native, meaning born here, not Eskimo, she made clear. Her friend, sitting across from Rick, was prettier, but she also knew it too well. Poor Rick looked miserable as she yammered on

about how her daddy said that the Navy and Marines should pull it together and go down there and knock those Chinese bastards out of California right now, before they dug in like a tick. "'Get back in the ring', he says!" More Americans were dying every day, and here the military was just sitting around, hiding out…

She got so loud with it that Tommy thought they were going to have to fight some Marines giving them the stink-eye just for sitting with her. When Becky took her friend to the lady's room to calm her down, she apologized ruefully to Tommy…a good sign, he thought. So, instead of cutting their losses, he and Rick played the winners a game of eight ball at the pool table until the girls reappeared in time to watch him scratch on the eight, trying to show off. Nobody cared. The blonde, a Cathy or Callie or something, had calmed down, and retreated from discussing politics and military defeat to going on about her daddy's ideas to build massive greenhouses to grow crops, with artificial lighting for the winter months. Rick wilted again, visibly. Tommy asked for the check, and calculated the bill. Based on mutual consent more than anything else, greenbacks were still accepted currency in most places. Their material scarcity onboard ship and in Alaska counterbalanced inflation. Many people preferred silver, or for large purchases, gold, but few people had enough of either to use as legal tender. Up here, barter was just as welcome as cash. In the end, ten rounds of 9mm paid for their drinks and the tip. Nothing was easy, these days.

The pickup cab was a bit cozy with all four of them jammed in it, but the girls didn't seem to mind. Becky's warmth pressed against him made him glad that the girls had ditched their ride at the bar. He drove to the waterfront park down the hill and parked a few minutes, watching the lights of ships in the distance. Many were U.S. Naval vessels, of course, at anchor or on patrol to keep loose. Others were foreign container ships and tankers, always coming and going throughout the day and night. The problem for Tommy was, there was no place to go. No quiet unfrozen places outside, no motel rooms empty anywhere in the city, nothing.

Even the barracks abandoned by deserters had quickly been claimed by officers with families and the right paperwork. There was nothing for it. Tommy drove slowly to a not so crowded restaurant, where at least a booth would give them more room face to face than the truck.

Of course it was fish. There were plenty of fish in the sea, and Alaska's fishing industry still kept people fed. So long as you liked fish. Rick once again held the door open, saying "I've always wanted to try this place, just for the Halibut." Both girls, and Tommy, groaned in appreciation.

Tommy and Becky grabbed one booth, and he waved the other de facto couple to the next. Now, this was more like it. As they ordered their fish, fried and fried, with canned sides, Tommy took some time to really look at his date. She was cute, maybe unremarkably so, but pleasant enough to look at. Maybe he would get to know her better. Becky, for her part, carefully avoided asking Tommy about where he was from, or his family back home. Unlike most of the local girls he'd met, she didn't badger him for news from the lower forty-eight. In fact, he was put a bit off his game tonight because, being born and raised here, she was unimpressed by the fact that his job gave him access to real news. So, she led the conversation, which was kind of a refreshing and welcome relief for Tommy. Becky talked about herself, her family, her dog, and her plans to go back to college "when things straighten out". She had been a first year marine biology student, she confided with self-aware irony while digging into her slab of Nemo with appetite. Tommy also found that he had a renewed hunger. It was almost like he hadn't had any fish in a long, long time, and had really been craving it. He sat and listened and nodded and chewed.

After dinner, which cost him another fifteen rounds of 9 mm for the four of them, the young Specialists dropped the girls back at their car behind the bar. While they waited to make sure that it would start in the cold, Tommy was rewarded by a quick kiss from

Becky, and a promise to meet him there again next Friday after her job at the fish cannery ended its' shift. He was smiling most of the way home, until he noticed how quiet Rick was. Normally, he would have been talking nonstop about any new girl, and all of her charms, and how much in love he was all over again. As they pulled up to their barracks, Tommy let go of his reverie over Becky, and asked his friend "What's wrong?"

It all came out in an angry, hurt rush. Apparently during dinner, Cathy had begun to interrogate Rick over the mutinies and maroonings. As he defended their collective actions, even going so far as describing how bad he had felt when he saw the face of a nice black dude, Terrell, as they zip-tied him and whisked him away. Terrell had been his bunk-mate for three months. It had depressed Rick to talk about it. Cathy had made it worse by asking, pointedly, if he knew what had happened to his "friend". Then she had asked Rick if he was a racist. "No", he had told her, coldly. "I'm just a survivor."

Chapter Six

"I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race." –Abraham Lincoln

The Courtroom Was Adjourned

Gerta had been interpreting for the Marine Colonel who had just arrived from Ramstein in Germany with the 'redeployed' remainder of the U.S. forces stationed in central Europe. Such a casual way of thinking about the new isolationism of an imploding empire, as she had expressed to him in a bolder moment of the frank discussions of the situation. Evacuation was a better term, and more accurate. When most of the General Staff had 'evacuated' back stateside, he had helped coordinate the withdrawal of theater forces from their bases throughout Europe. It had been a close thing, but they had been pulled out and 'redeployed' to Germany before the Islamic State coordinated the attack on Israel. Having a German Chief of Staff for the multinational U.S. European Command had made that possible, in her patriotic opinion. In fact, Gerta thought that their withdrawal probably had emboldened the I.S. to green light the swarm on Tel Aviv, but with things falling apart at home, she didn't blame them for packing up.

With a few dozen Marines left as guards at each of the core embassies which had remained open in European capitals, sixty thousand U.S personnel were counted in Europe. U.S. command and control at the administration levels were still intact in Germany. The first couple of waves of redeployments of U.S forces to the northeast went smoothly enough, from a logistical standpoint. Air Force assets were re-stationed at Hanscom and Westover in Massachusetts, while Marine and Army units were initially regarrisoned at Fort Devens, to slowly begin taking over peacekeeping duties in Boston from the British. Because the U.S. European forces had not been segregated, they were still mixed race and fractious. Mutinies and fraggings had been relatively minor on the continent, compared to what had happened in the Pacific. When they got back stateside, however, desertions became rampant. Subsequent redeployments to Fort Drum and Fort Hamilton, on opposite ends of New York, were designated for minority and White Marines and Grunts, respectively. This resulted almost immediately in the loss of Fort Drum. After its' takeover by the mutineers, the facility had to neutralized by air assets from Hanscom.

This slowed the follow-up flights considerably as the racial segregations then happened at Panzer Kaserne for the Marines and at Hohenfels and Schweinfurt and Ansbach for the Army. In some instances the segregation of individual units by race was met with resistance. German forces had to assist when armed mutinies began at Patrick Henry Village, and air strikes from Aviano Air Base in Italy quietened a temporarily successful takeover of Camp Bondsteel, in Kosovo, by black and Latino insurgents. NonWhite U.S. military personnel were left locked in base stockades, isolated in barracks, or simply released into the local population, depending on the personal command decisions of base commanders sorting out their problems locally. The latter solution made many Europeans hostile to the U.S. in general and the U.S. military in particular. Hundreds of former U.S. servicemen were hunted down and summarily executed by local

citizens in Germany, Italy, and Yugoslavia. But whatever the price, there would be no more cases like Fort Drum.

In the end, U.S. Forces from Europe who made it back stateside numbered around 47,280. After the mass desertions, executions, court martials, and ‘releases’ of September and October, approximately 32,500 remained, top heavy with Air Force units. Throughout November and December reassignments and unit restructuring recreated some cohesiveness of command. Local patrols gave them something useful and patriotic to do, except for when it required shooting civilians. That occurred all too often, during that hungry winter. Every incident was mediated and adjudicated by the U.N. umbrella command, of course. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

Part of Gerta’s overview of the status of U.S. forces in Europe included the debacle in Turkey. When the redeployment of overseas U.S. forces began, the Islamic State struck, and struck hard. They had already coiled to strike in righteous zealotry, when the U.S. collapsed and began to break up. The loss of D.C. and the death of the President had made them tingle with anticipation. When the first U.S. flights out of Germany began, Incirlik Air Base in Turkey was hit by a weeklong hellstorm of I.S. rocket attacks from the outskirts of Adana, which grounded all flights. F-16s from Izmir pounded the rocket positions day and night in retaliation, with limited effectiveness. Crowds of angry Muslim Turks besieged the gates of both bases. Islamic State ground units then crossed the border and converged on Incirlik from the south and east, as Turkish Air Force units turned on the U.S. forces at Izmir, attacking them from the nearby Cigli air base. This took Izmir out of the fight. The primitive but effective rocket salvos were followed by successive human wave attacks over the wire, which overwhelmed base security. In the fall of Incirlik 1,500 military personnel, over 1,000 dependents, and nearly 2,000 civilian contractors were massacred. The government of Turkey formally requested that the U.S. Air Force Base at Izmir be evacuated, in order to bring an end to hostilities in Turkish territory. They began

transferring personnel to Aviano. The Islamic State had won, all the way to the Black Sea.

I Saw Satan Laughing With Delight

What the loss of Turkey meant for U.S. forces in the Middle East was that the door to Europe, and evacuation from that route, was closed to them, effectively. The Fourth fleet from Mayport was busier than a one legged man in a butt-kicking contest helping with the redeployment of continental Europe based U.S. personnel from their disembarkation point in Kiel, Germany. There just weren't enough planes to move that many men fast enough, so many would have to go by ship, the long way. It would be a cramped and melancholy ride home.

The Fifth fleet was already on their way to Australia after trying unsuccessfully to guard the flank of the retreating Seventh in the south Pacific. This left the Sixth. So, the U.S. Sixth fleet, headquartered in Naples, bluffed their way through the Suez canal to help evacuate U.S. forces from the Middle East. However, the victory of the martyrs for Islam in Turkey had inspired jihad envy all throughout the Muslim world. With few exceptions, U.S. bases were all locked down and bracing for attack. They didn't have to wait long.

The King of Saudi Arabia publicly requested that all U.S. military aircraft at King Abdul Aziz air base remain on the ground due to growing local animosity towards the American presence there. The local base commander, knowing what had happened at Izmir, saw the writing on the wall. Things were also tense at Eskan Village, near Riyadh. A flurry of communication between the USAF joint command in Saudi Arabia and the southwardchugging Sixth fleet's command ship USS Mount Whitney commenced. Both bases evacuated under pressure, and their fighter wings headed west and south. The Saudi Air Force engaged them from Riyadh, with both forces losing several craft before pursuit broke off.

A dozen surviving U.S. fighters continued to the inactive King Fahd air base, where they forced the airport administration to refuel their flights. The Saudi Air Force hung back, warily, unsure of how to respond or what the next action by the diminished U.S. forces might be. After the overnight refueling stops, protected by sentry overwatch assignment flights, most of their craft which were able to continued west to the Red Sea. One was abandoned due to a refueling issue at Faud, and another, acting as a suicide decoy chosen by lot, took off headed back east twenty minutes before the remaining ten.

They dropped all of their remaining ordinance on Mecca in frustration, along the way. Five U.S. F-16s and two F-15s successfully landed aboard the USS Gerald R. Ford, the supercarrier at the core of Sixth fleet. Three more craft were forced to ditch, and all but one of the pilots were recovered by the fleet. After a brief but fierce resistance, U.S. forces at Eskin Village were annihilated by Saudi commando assaults, and the American personnel remaining at Aziz and elsewhere throughout Saudi Arabia were forced to capitulate. A week later, declaring his Kingdom free of the infidel, King Saud held public executions of nearly fifty surviving American servicemen, and advertised the fact that all of the surviving American females, (the wives and daughters of military personnel, as well as some civilian contractors and some female personnel) under the age of thirty would be made available for purchase. His nation's economy had long been dependent on selling oil to the Americans and Europeans. Now, I.S. was the only game in town in the Middle East. If he wanted to keep his throne, and his head, he had to play ball.

The U.S. Air Force, along with help from the Australians and British, were able to hold Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar despite local riots and daily protests outside the perimeter. The Victory Base Complex and COP Shocker were the only two remaining U.S. installations in the former Iraq. Taji, Sykes, Grizzly, and Balad bases had been closed following I.S. annexations of territory to

within fifty miles of Baghdad, the year before. Victory Base fought a Quixotic rear guard action against the I.S. assault that signaled their final grab for Baghhad while King Saud was cutting off heads. This gave time for flights from Camps Wolf, Patriot, and New York in Kuwait to carry out roundthe clock evacuations to Al Udeid.

By the time the Sixth Fleet motored into the Persian Gulf, they were able to pick up over 5,000 U.S. military personnel from NSA Bahrain and Al Udeid, combined. These had already gone through the service-wide segregation process which had cost so much blood elsewhere, and the heavily White majority U.S. Air Force contingent had been able to sort itself out first, then dictate that only segregated units would get a ride out. That greatly reduced the drama. Only limited mutinies and rebellions occurred in the most diverse infantry units within the redeployment staging areas outside Kuwait City. These were quickly put down by pre-segregated units. Approximately 1,300 servicemen of minority status were locked down and left behind during the evacuation of the Middle Eastern Theater, and another eight hundred died due to injuries sustained during combat, either from I.S. or from “friendly” fire. White military losses numbered around six hundred, overall.

The Sixth fleet was over capacity already after evacuating their base at Milan, so the navy took the simple measure of commandeering the oceangoing cruise ships MS Europa 2, Artania, Amadea, Azamara Journey, and MS Deutschland from Doha. A week after arrival, they were ready to leave, expecting to have to fight their way through the Straits of Hormuz, but Tehran was quick to contact them, saying bluntly that the Islamic State was a greater threat to Iran than the United States was or would likely be again, so they would not impede their withdrawal.

From the Arabian Sea, into the Indian Ocean the huge armada steamed. They had not heard from any confirmed naval authority above the rank of their own rear admiral in two weeks, despite

continued efforts on their part to make contact up the chain of command. Civilian authority in the states also seemed to have fragmented. With no secure bases remaining open on the U.S. Coast on the Pacific side, they continued on to Garden Island, the Australian Naval center and submarine base near Perth, in Western Australia. Because they swung wide of India to avoid a showdown with that new superpower, the trip was almost 6,000 miles. It took them eleven days, since they could not leave behind the slower Cruise ship. There, they rendezvoused with the Fifth fleet, and entered a joint command agreement with the Australian Secretary of the Navy. Australia had just become the third largest naval power in the world. For the tens of thousands of American men and women in the Fifth and Sixth fleets, however, home was still a climactic clash with the Chinese away.

Helter Skelter, In The Summer Swelter

The situation in Afghanistan was even worse, for U.S. forces there. Like the five or six million other Americans caught travelling or overseas at the time of the collapse, the twenty-eight thousand men and women of the U.S. Air Force, Marines, and Army in the northern sandbox were stuck. Logistically, they lacked the fuel, food, or ammunition to sustain campaign in-country for more than thirty to sixty days. Even ratcheting back on offensive moves and conserving nonessential fuel consuming operations, they were looking at ninety days, max, from the date of the last major resupply at the end of May. There was nothing else in the pipeline headed their way from stateside, no way to withdraw, and friendly faces were few and far between. Everybody wanted to kick us, now that we are down, though Major General Gerald “Ferocious” Ferguson. His nickname had started out as a goodnatured ironic joke, given Ferguson’s placid demeanor and appearance. It had stuck, though, because of his relentless, unflagging work ethic and dedication to detail in every plan of every action. That attention to specifics would be crucial now, when every gallon of fuel and every MRE and round of 5.56 counted. U.S. forces on

the ground could force their way through in any direction. His only problem was, just where did they want a door?

Ferguson had read his military history. He knew that Alexander the Great, and the British, and the Russians had all broken their backs on these mountains. That gave him an idea. They needed to link up with the nearest non-Muslim military force, in order to survive. Otherwise, the escalating attacks on U.S. officers and patrols by supposedly friendly Afghan Army troops would flame into a shooting war they couldn't win. Or walk away from, even if they won. So be it.

"Sir, you want me to get in contact with WHO?"……"Yes, Sir"….. "Yes, Sir."… I understand, Sir."….the second lieutenant stared at his telephone is disbelief. One minute he had been trying to figure out where to house the mixed race soldiers who didn't want to be housed with either the White or the black or the Latino or the Asian soldiers, and then trying to segregate the most racially diverse army in the world seemed like a vacation from what he had just been asked to do. But, he Captain had been passed it by his Major who had been passed it by his Colonel who had been passed it by General Ferocious, himself, so Jake Lastern wasn't about to question it. Ours is not to reason why, ours is but to do and…hey, hadn't that been written about the Russians, too? He wondered.

The U.K. and Denmark were too busy at home putting down rioting Muslims in the streets of Copenhagen and London to be able to help with any evacuation of their own soldiers, much less anybody else's, he knew that. So would the Germans, French, Italians, and Bulgarians, be, for the same reason. Lastern knew those boys would be on board with the plan. So would the Canadians, with their country breaking up a half step behind the U.S., and the other coalition forces would follow the U.S.'s lead. They knew they would either hang together, or hang separately. Even the French had quickly shut up about the ordered segregation of U.S. units, after the eleventh or twelfth black

groundpounder Bergdhaled over to the Taliban. There had been two suicide bomb attacks and seven fraggings of coalition personnel by Afghan soldiers or policemen in the last week. The Afghan President had apologized, but added that he was powerless to oppose the will of the people, in these uncertain times. That meant to Jake that they had been on a good run, but the jig was up. So, in between sorting out one unit racially and ordering it to detain the minority members of another unit, then reassigning those two units to do the same to two more units in a cascading campaign, he had another fish to fry. A big one.

Richie Edgars, a State Department undersecretary in Kabul, was contemplating trying to use his diplomatic credentials to get a flight to Athens, and from there frog hop it to the U.S. forces evacuating from Europe, when he got the weirdest call. At first he thought that it might be some weird Machiavellian joke. A test of his loyalty. People must be cracking up and seeing spies everywhere. Some Second Lieutenant was going outside the normal chain of command, if such still existed, but he claimed that he was speaking on behalf of “Ferocious Ferguson”. The General wanted Richie to go visit the Russian Federation embassy. Today. Okay, why not? It was an interesting enough curiosity to delay his packing. He wouldn’t make it home for Christmas with the folks, this year. Oh well, Athens could wait, they still had flights every other day.

Gregor Petrovich Surov had not been named Ambassador to the dirty little cat’s litter box of Afghanistan as a favor. He had been sent here as a punishment for questioning President Putin’s delay in sending in adequate forces to help the pro-Russian rebels in the Ukraine. He had also been chosen for this station because he was a mean, ugly man with a broad Slavic face and beady brown eyes. He was from peasant stock, and not ashamed of it. Of course no one could grow anything here, except for more filthy brown beggars and terrorists. He was of the generation which had been embarrassed by defeat here, and so mixed with his contempt for the Americans was a tinge of sympathy for their

plight. Their mission had been impossible before. If Russia had been unable to squash these camel-loving fleabag Mohamed worshipers, right next door, how could the soft and compassionate U.S., from the other side of the world? Well, maybe the Americans were getting tougher. His intelligence agents reported that they had begun removing blacks and browns and yellows from their command and control structure, quietly, and were planning on segregating their forces. The Americans now had no way of getting home, and not much of one to go back to, from what he could tell from Moscow. Some oldschool cold war hardliners celebrated and laughed and back-slapped as Uncle Sam fell. Others wondered what would fill his emptied shoes. Surov, for one, wanted revenge. He always had gotten even for every personal slight, every insult, real or imagined, and on everyone who had ever gotten in his way. He had seen the Americans begin to fall. Da, that was good. Now he wanted to see these Afghan sub-humans suffer.

He would listen to what the American General, who did not seem so “Ferocious” in person after their first meeting, had to say when they met again tomorrow. The embassy staff were planning their Christmas party all around him, making it hard to think through his vodka headache. We would see. There was an old Arab saying that a falling horse attracted many knives. His were sharpened, just in case.

Edgars met with Ambassador Surov and General Ferguson three times over a six day period. At the end of that week, a tacit agreement was reached. As the Gerald R. Ford fired up both of its’ reactors and pulled away from Naples, U. S. and coalition units began withdrawing on all fronts in Afghanistan. The movements began so quietly and so suddenly that the Taliban had little time to react to the realignment of forces. Kandahar Province, the disputed area in the south of the country, was the first to be emptied. When Taliban forces and foreign-born jihadists cautiously opened the first of the hangar doors at the abandoned Kandahar Airfield, they were astonished to find the bodies of forty

black American servicemen who had been left ziptied on the floor, and succumbed to the heat. Each of the other hangars held an equally grim prize for the victors.

And The Camel You Rode In On

Fahran had watched truck after truck and helicopter after helicopter leave Camp Leatherneck in the Helmand Province, and heading northeast. For three days it had buzzed with activity, and now it was silent. He had sat on his heels with the men from his village, and pretended to be bored, instead of excited. He was nearly seventeen, he was ready to kill his first infidel. Every time the unclean pigs had given him a candy bar half melted in its wrapper or a lukewarm can of soda from their forbidden left hands while their right hands held a gun trained on him, he had learned to hate them more. They thought that kicking a soccer ball at him had made him forget they had invaded his homeland. He wanted to make his father and his uncles proud. He wanted to make the girls of his tribe bat their eye lashes at him and smile. He was now a proud fedayeen for the Prophet. He wanted to be a mujahideen.

The first intrepid Afghani ‘freedom fighters’ to enter the ghost town of the base thought that it was completely empty. Fahran was not among them, but the base was so big that he was able to walk as fast as he could without running, and get there soon after. Building after building was empty, with just a few odd bits and pieces of material and equipment that the other boys his age began to argue and fight over. Fahran knew that there were plenty of war trophies to go around, and would be more, before the fighting was through. He wanted to kill. He wanted to be a man, Praise Allah.

The secret he most hated was that he had enjoyed the American run school they had made the children in his village go to. The Prophet understood why, and forgave him. It had saved him from working in the goat herd, and given him his first taste of air conditioning, the one good thing that the Americans had. Fahran

had wanted to get to know his enemy, so he could hurt them. That was what his father had told him to keep in his mind when they sent him to the American-run school. Know your enemy. And so, he had learned to read and write some of their broken up English script, enough to get by. That is how he knew that the sign he was standing in front of said “Regional Command Southwest Memorial Chapel”. It was a church. A church where they worshipped the prophet Jesus as if he was Allah. What better place to find infidels to kill! But the door was solidly blocked by steel beams that had been piled in front of the entrance, and was locked with a chain, underneath. He shot at the door in anger, then jumped back in surprise when many voices all shouted back at him from the other side.

“Hey, Let us out, dawg, don’t shoot!” “ Who are you?” “We’re marines, just like you! Come on man, let us out!” “ Muhfuhs be trippin’. We ain’t doin’ no lootin’, we’s all green up in heah”. “Come on, dawg, you know how it is…” “Hey, you ain’t RACISS, is you? What’s the mattah, don’t you like black people?” “it be Kwanzaa! Let us out foah Kwanzaa! It’s our RIGHT to celebrate our religion, muhfuhs!” “We be cool, dawg…Come on, it be hottah than muhfuh up in dis shees…” ”Gone leave us to DIE up in heah? I know you didn’t. I know you didn’t.” “Come on, you feel me, dawg?...” “Shut up, fools, I’se tryin’ to hear them sose I can talk to these muhfuh..” “Who you callin a fool, fool?” “Niggah I’ll bust a cap in yo ass!” “Shee, you ain’t got no gat, no moah than the res’ of us do.”

On and on they went, most of their words and phrases Fahran could not understand. They spoke differently than the White soldiers who had always been giving out candy and medicine. The tribesmen had learned that the black soldiers didn’t give out anything but beatings for the men and rapes for the women. They were the worst of the infidels. It didn’t take Fahran long to find a full tank of diesel fuel, and buckets to fill, and strong young arms to help him douse the building and set it on fire, while the screams of those trapped inside were offered up to Allah as a

sweet sacrifice. That is the story of how a young Taliban wannabe named Fahran became the hero of his village, a servant of the true faith, and a future leader of his tribe.

The British operated Camp Bastion nearby had also been left, with the gates standing open and all of the lights on. Loud Rock and Roll music played on the base speaker system. The Beatles sang on, over and over on autorepeat, about getting to the bottom and going back to the top of the slide, then stopping, and turning, and going for a ride, then getting to the bottom and seeing you again. Yeah, Yeah.

From Herat to Jalalabad, the coalition lines constricted, covering each other's flanks from the air and the ground, as unit by unit converged on Kabul, and Bagram Airfield. After a lengthy conference between the allied commanders under Ferguson, convoy after convoy formed up. They were shadowed by streaming flights of helicopters overhead, while jets circled slowly to forestall any sneak attack on the historically massive column. Twenty-two thousand American servicemen and women had made the cut, and like the British, Dutch, Danish, Polish, Bulgarian, and other European contingents following them out, they were now 99% White.

Kyrgyzstan was a nation caught between two stones, and one was yielding to sand. The former US air base at Bishkek airport, since then a civilian airport, now hosted several gleaming Russian Federation fighter jets on the tarmac. It was only twenty miles from the official Russian air base in Kant. When Colonel Yuri Fyordev received orders direct from Moscow to help provide air cover to an AMERICAN column travelling up through Uzbekistan, which was uncertain territory these days, more than ever, he was speechless. That was quite an accomplishment, considering his personality. His briefing had convinced him that Putin had finally lost it. Either that, or the master manipulator has entered into a diabolical scheme with the Yankee imperialists.Why was he allowing the trapped Americans to evacuate Afghanistan north,

towards Russia herself? And why would the crazy Americans try that route, in the winter? With nearly It made him think of Hitler's attempt to fight on his Eastern Front in the same weather conditions, and the same time of year. Fyordev gave the orders anyway. His planes would fly a westward pattern, refueling as needed, while the coalition convoys under their own air cover, as much as they were able to refuel them and keep them in the air, leapfrogged north. Ultimately, in a few days, they could come under the air cover of Dnepr. Those who made the trip.

Chapter Seven

Revelation 3:9

King James Bible
“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.”

Jack Be Nimble, Jack Be Quick…

The U.N. Christmas Party was a bust. Gerta and U.S. Marine Col. Mark Smith, even together, couldn’t get the Chinese ambassador to the United Nations to calm down long enough to understand that yes, U.S. forces were operating under the auspices of the U.N., and no, the American regime (‘what regime?’, she thought) was not trying to reassert its’ imperialist power (even though this WAS their own soil). She sighed, wishing that was the case. The elected Vice President, Perry Bellefont, was a native Texan, and he had flown home three weeks ago to declare himself the President of the Republic of Texas. A month of bombings and air strikes from the sorted out Dyess and Goodfellow air force bases had stopped the advance of the Mexican army along I-10 in the western side of the state, but Houston had been declared an open “sanctuary city” in the east, as had San Antonio. Some kind of whack-job evangelical theocracy was solidifying along the coast north of Houston, but Bellefont was ignoring them while he used the armor and troops who had won control of Ft. Hood to try and push the Reconquistadores out of Austin. Unless or until he retook the former state capitol, he was stuck headquartered on the base. He had ordered flights from Sheppard to bomb the hell out of Dallas, which had declared itself a free city, and opened up the Red River Depot to the Second Battalion, Alpha Company of the Texas State Militia, who were now augmented with eighteen newly refurbished Bradley Fighting Vehicles, along with more than

enough retired former armor jockeys from the depot who had volunteered to man the tanks alongside them. The armored militia was even now rolling west towards Dallas, picking up other militia units and volunteers along the way.

Gerta had seen the reports on some of these militia groups. Many of them, like the Southeast Michigan militia, had stepped in to fill the vacuum when local and state law enforcement collapsed. Now, with nobody to protect White citizens, they busied themselves carrying out dirty-handed ethnic cleansing operations in their area of operations, such as in the refugee flood plain south of Detroit. Others were little more than looters or warlords, while some were legally deputized posses taking orders from County Sheriffs or local Mayors who were holding things down in their own necks of the woods. Was that ‘neck of the wood’, or ‘necks of the wood’? English, even for her, had its challenges, at times.

Her meandering line of thought was broken by Col. Smith banging his fist on the table and demanding for the thousandth time, it seemed like, that he and his men be allowed to secure their nation’s capitol, such of it as remained. Having him around was certainly different from the herds of displaced politicians. The V.P. had taken half his staff and many of the surviving Secret Service with him. Gerta had been grateful for the relative peace and quiet for all of the four days which had passed before the quite reasonable Speaker Of The House slipped his security detail and walked uptown, alone, to a visit a specialty prostitute who ended up stabbing him to death and robbing his corpse when he dozed off. The foreign press corps, especially the British tabloids, had a field day with that story. It was still front page news in London.

The Colonel was red in the face now, and shaking, by the time she got the two men separated. She took the Marine officer to the side. “Colonel, the German delegation appreciates the sensitive nature of your position, and the U.N. welcomes your cooperation in our joint mission”.

“Cut the crap, lady, that slant eyed gook just wants to make sure I’m not headed out west to knock their yellow butts back into the ocean and hold them under with my boot until they stop bubbling. My parents were in San Mateo. WERE. Well, I’m not able to do that, not yet, so I’m going to secure my nation’s capital, first.”

Gerta blanched. She was never good with those who had suffered personal loss, and that was so many, these days. “Colonel, surely you know that the French Expeditionary Forces have been assigned the responsibility for security in the District of Columbia?”, she said, pointedly ignoring his insinuated threat directed towards the Chinese.

“Those frogs can jump back in the pond and take that big bad idea out there w ith them”, Smith snarled, pointing vaguely to the south. It took the interpreter a few seconds to realize that he meant the Statue of Liberty. She was glad that the French ambassador was drinking himself into a stupor across the room, trying to chat up a waitress. “We have enough of our own tired, our own poor, our own huddled masses. We always did. That open door is what got us into this mess, ma’am, and I’ll tell you another thing”, he steamrolled on, “from what I saw when we were leaving, the French better get back quick if they don’t want to be praying five times a day. They need to go put their own house in order, and most rickeytick.”

“I understand how you must feel, Colonel,” Gerta began…
”No ma’am, with all due respect, I don’t think you do. When you get rotated back home and see what your own country is turning into, with the Deutsch bank system collapsing under the weight of the E.U. beggar nations and the stock market closed and thousands of Muslims protesting until curfew, then maybe you will begin to, just a bit. But now in the here and now, no, ma’am, you don’t.”
Gerta could only think of one way to calm the Colonel down. She might be pushing forty, but she always tried to look her best. She put on her most winning smile. “Okay, fair enough. Maybe I have

been isolated here. Things have been moving so fast. Let's go back to my office, and you can tell me what's really going on, and what you and your men plan to do about it. Then, before he could object or beg off, the German translator took Smith by the elbow of his uniform jacket and turned him about face, then steered him down the hall by putting her arm in his. Behind them, the Chinese ambassador continued to whine and mutter like a cat whose tail had just got stuck under a rocking chair.

Two hours was an eternity these days, the way her schedule ran. When what turned into a working dinner had ended, however, she had to admit that she was disappointed to see Col. Smith go. His bold plan, lacking an intact chain of command, was to lead his six re-formed companies of U.S. Marines in pacifying the capitol and the buildings of the Federal government, as a symbolic gesture to the Air Force that holding Omaha didn't mean holding every card in the deck. It also would help deny them legitimate executive authority. Technically, that still rested with the rogue Vice President, who had not resigned his office before declaring himself the President of a just-made up Republic. That was why so many soldiers and Federal law enforcement had gone with him, despite the confusion over Texas's stated nationhood. Gerta had found herself agreeing to help him supply and transport his jarheads and coordinate as a liaison with the German Expeditionary Force. She would put Col. Smith in touch with Major Strosser in Philadelphia. He planned that private citizen militias in Northern Virginia, who had created a White enclave there with the help of a few dozen local skinheads, could protect his southern flank. So now, the racists were the good guys. White hats, instead of White hoods. What had she gotten herself into?

A Gaze Blank And Pitiless As The Sun

Major John W. McNabb, the latest media darling in a world where media and celebrity had both been truncated, fidgeted in his seat. Delegates from Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, and both Dakotas debated joining the coalition of Midwestern states now coalescing into a military and economic Confederation. His goal was to turn

the mutual defense pact into something more, something tighter. In the four weeks since he had been in St. Louis and reassigned as the conference's delegate from Indiana, he had questioned that order, more than once. It was a little late to call it a reConstitutional Convention halfway through it, but more than one of the other representatives were using those terms. Of course, the former high school history teacher knew that the first Constitutional Convention hadn't been intended as such, either… at least not by most of the attendees. Since being pulled off of counter-insurgent operations in St. Louis and declared a politico, he had gotten halfway used to sleeping indoors regularly again. And running water. And electricity. Hot meals. All of it. But he couldn't help but feel a little guilty that his sister and brother and their kids, as well as his mom, didn't have it nearly so easy, back in Warsaw. He also felt bad that he hadn't been able to celebrate Christmas with them. It was the first time he had missed the family event since…well, ever. Not that he had been the life of the party, when his team had dragged him out to eat on the 25th. So much guilt. He even felt guilty that they had all pitched in to give him a matching set of Colt Combat Commander .45s with pearl handles, like Patton. He hadn't given them anything but a hard time. Compared to the other gnawing guilt that he choked down every moment of every day, though, that one was minor.

He had learned to sit and listen, until the blowhards ran out of steam, then deliver a punchline. The media in the galleries loved that, for the succinct one-liners it gave them as copy. True to form, the delegate from Nebraska was reluctant to commit herself, rearing reprisals from the S.A.C. forces holding her state's capital. John would gladly go back to a field command, if they would let him, but he had begun to feel that what he was supposed to be doing here was important, more important than any single counterinsurgency campaign or siege. At any rate, the Governor of the Hoosier state had handpicked him, the Colonel had said, due to statewide media's hero worship of McNabb after the battles of Gary and Chicago. He was stuck being a delegate

‘under the arch’, as his fellow conventioneers had taken to calling it.

McNabb quietly rose and visited the restroom (inside!), then eased out past the Missouri State Police guards for a smoke. They recognized him, as most people did these days, and his uniform, waving him through without missing a beat. A dingy blanket of snow hid the wreckage of East St. Louis across the river, and except for the lack of much civilian traffic, things looked normal. He took a hard, long drag on the menthol, hotboxing it. Well, there was a heavy military presence on the street, and more bicycles and horses than anything else except for army trucks and Humvees. Okay, almost normal. The garbage was being picked up around the city, the entire county had been cleared, and people were moving in instead of moving out, for a change. That was progress.

It was cold out side, and in him, too. The Major didn’t need the Barbie inside his left uniform jacket pocket to remind him of the gnawing hole behind it. He lived with it, every moment. Every blink he was haunted by the faces of his girls. He closed his eyes for a lingering blink in a momentary prayer. He feared forgetting what their voices sounded like, more than anything else. Leaning back against the chilly granite wall of the Old Courthouse, he inhaled hard on the menthol again, then flicked it away with a practiced flair.

Like most urban areas, there had been hard fighting, here. Fire smudges, smoke stains, and boarded up windows still showed the scars of the battles waged by White Nationalists from a dozen different organizations who had taken back the downtown. St. Louis was now 98% White, and most of the other two percent were foreign media types and diplomats from other nations, looking to get in on the ground floor of this new enterprise they smelled cooking up. The city was back up to about 40% of its pre-collapse population, around 150,000, and growing every day as merchants, traders, and whole families seeking stability and

security moved in to fill the vacant homes, apartments, and stores through City government permitted squatter's rights. The Major, as a state delegate, had been assigned a free room at the Hyatt Regency, along with adjoining rooms on each side for his security retinue. Other state representatives occupied rooms there, as well as at the Drury Plaza. It was a short walk from his room to the Old Courthouse where he spent fifteen hours every day, and not much further to the open rummage sale and farmer's market going on day and night at Busch Stadium, which served as the post-apocalyptic Wal-Mart.

As he reluctantly went back in, McNabb was hit by a wall of welcoming heated air. A moment later, the buzz of animated conversation met him. He thought, optimistically, that the petty conniptions going on inside represented the birthing pangs of a new nation. He didn't really care if he ended up being stuck here for the rest of the winter, but he did idly wonder how his men were doing, back home. Had they cleared out and cleaned up, Chicago, yet? The temporary markers on his family's graves obsessed him, they had to be replaced with something more permanent. Oh, well, back to work.

Western Pennsylvania, outside of the U.N. area of control, was represented, and stood with the delegate from Ohio, and McNabb, and Illinois as a solid block in the convention. Iowa, Missouri, and Michigan usually agreed with them, as well. But other states that weren't divided, such as Kansas and Wisconsin, opposed allowing divided states like Pennsylvania, Arkansas, and Tennessee to have equal representation. Same as it ever was. The Major thought that cordoned off hellhole around Milwaukee took as big a chink out of Wisconsin, and Topeka and Kansas City out of Kansas, as Memphis's mass grave took out of Tennessee. It was all silly. It was all necessary. It occupied his mind.

Some of the most bitter debates mattered the least. How should they reword the second amendment to make it clearer to future generations of wimps that it was an unlimited individual right

under discussion? What amendments after the first ten should be kept, and which, like the fourteenth, should be scrapped? They were really getting ahead of themselves, John knew.

In a few more days, McNabb had developed a plan to keep himself distracted from his loss. He would ignore his guilt by staying busy pushing for a consolidation of military commands of all the represented states and territories. Tirelessly, he began to lobby for a ‘unified command’. They could wait until later to settle the question of whether legitimate armed forces authority lay with Omaha, or Texas, or Anchorage, or with the U.S. forces co-opted by the U.N. With the strongest remaining authority in each state being the National Guards and Expanded private militias and in some cases County Sheriff departments, it was a hard sell. But there was little civilian authority left to oppose the centralization of power, and no representatives from Alaska, Texas, S.A.C., or the U.N. to lobby against the idea. Before a national civil government was re-established, before economic trade pacts were codified, it made sense to provide for the common defense.

One of the aspects of the Major’s plan which helped it sell itself to the convention was the opportunity for local and state authority to integrate the many private militias into their chains of command. Most of these paramilitary groups had been around before the collapse, led by preppers and gun enthusiasts and military veterans. Some of them had been survivalists, or sovereign citizen advocates, while others were strict Constitutionalists. Some were libertarians, or White Nationalists, and others were patriot groups similar to the older Tea Party organizations. Many had an apocalyptic worldview, and had been flooded with an exponential growth of new recruits as the collapse became apparent. Once it had happened, they had been forced to turn people away, or be selective. Many of them were well armed, combat experienced, and swollen to company strength or greater.

McNabb played an ace when he paraded in some of the better groomed commanding officers from the Missouri Militia 3rd

Battalion 2nd Brigade, the Yorkville, Illinois militia, the Lenawee Militia from Michigan, the Illinois Sons of Liberty 1st Battalion Alpha Company, the Michigan Militia Corps Wolverines, and the Southeast Michigan Volunteer Militia one day; and the Missouri Militia 1st Battalion 3rd Brigade, the Ohio Defense Force Home Guard 3rd and 1st Battalions, and even the Idaho Lightfoot Militia, from the area north of Mormon control. Over the two days of testimony, they each took an oath to defend and obey the civilian authority of the convention, and to submit themselves to an integrated unified command structure. That dampened most of the fears that some held about the militias, especially once it became clear that those militia groups who didn't play ball could be corralled by those who would.

In many areas of the U.S., a power vacuum had occurred shortly after the collapse. Some places held on longer than others, some still held on to law and order, and others panicked and fell headlong into anarchy. In many regions, that power vacuum had been filled by bad guys, by demagogues and warlords and power hungry outlaws, either in uniform, or in business suits. Some of those areas had been regained by the militias and racialist groups who had re-established civilian authority. A couple of them had been better prepared to fill that vacuum, than others. A five County area along the Arkansas/Missouri border had become the undisputed territory of The Knights Committee, for example. Another Klan group had filled the power vacuum in Columbia, and were doing okay.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch had become the largest still functioning newspaper in the Heartland, maybe in all of the formerly United States. With the liberal media truncated, there was a vacuum to fill. Most of the media networks had expired with their offices and equipment, and studios and resources lost, and in many cases their leading personnel making Aliyah to Israel or in hiding, if they had not fallen victim to the rioting and ethnic cleansing in the cities. Most of the media bosses were dead, or out of the country on permanent vacation. Some had watched the

mobs crawl over the walls of their gated communities and swarm over their manicured lawns. Many of them, like Eisner and Bronfman and Siegel and Levin, eventually disappeared in the overlapping mushroom clouds engulfing Tel Aviv. The correspondents and reporters left unemployed cast about for a medium to write or broadcast for during the breakup summer. As word spread of the consolidation of power at the convention in St. Louis, the Post Dispatch staff became the elite of the national media, and developed a sideline local television station. It provided local news and city government programs, as well as entertainment, in between weather reports and rebroadcasts of BBC international news, in a fifty mile radius to everyone with power, a t.v. set, and a digital antenna. It also simulcast on a 100,000 watt AM radio station which covered most of the Midwest.

The military, especially the National Guard, was already popular in St. Louis. Most towns and cities still safe for Whites were kept calm by patrols of armed citizen militias, expanded police and Sheriff's departments, or by White skinheads, Klansmen, or other longtime racial activists. The prominent presence of official National Guardsmen was welcome. On the Post-Dispatch radio and t.v. programs, and through the print pages of the paper, McNabb's celebrity grew. Reporters breathlessly covering every jot of the convention seized upon the fame of the "Guardsman of Gary". They blew up his celebrity as he rose to prominence through his advocacy of a unified command.

At a New Year's Eve dinner party, the highest ranking U.S. Air Force officer in the Midwest made a surprise announcement. As a major blow to Omaha's claim to authority, Lt. General Nathaniel Harrison, in charge at Wright-Patterson in Ohio, declared that he was transferring an entire U.S. Air Force wing under his independent authority to Lambert Field in St. Louis. The combined force, gathered from the remnants and survivors of various air bases around the nation which had been evacuated or mutinied, was significant. Two thousand military personnel,

including a fighter squadron of twentyone F-16s, twelve C-130s, seven C-5 Galaxies, three KC-135 refueling craft, and a squadron of thirteen F-15 Strike Eagles were putting some meat on the theoretical bones of the unified command. McNabb got the call the next day, and smiled for the first time in a very long time. What a way to start the new year off right!

One of the huge worries on John's mind had been the U.S.'s vast nuclear assets. What if those were lost, or turned once again on their own people? Warren Air Force Base outside Cheyenne and Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana had both refused to get involved in the chain of command fight between Omaha and Colorado Springs. When Omaha used the nuclear option against its adversary, though, both base commanders had resigned their commissions in protest. They apparently had been in back and forth discussions of the situation, and reached a mutual agreement to take that step, simultaneously. One had even dramatically committed suicide over it, the poor old soldier. General Harrison communicated his intent to join the Unified Command to the Colonel and Major, respectively, who had assumed commands of the two crucial strategic missile bases at Warren and Malmstrom. They both willingly subsumed their commands to Harrison. That secured the three-hundred and twenty LGM-30 Minutemen, and their five hundred nuclear warheads. The hundreds of silos scattered across Northern Colorado, Southeast Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and central Montana were securely under the control of forces loyal to New America.

The B-52H StratoFortress bombers at Barksdale Air Base near Shreveport had been able to evacuate, taking with them all of the on-base AGM-129 ACM cruise missiles, each loaded with a W80-1 variable yield nuclear warhead, to Minot Air Force Base in loyal North Dakota. Minot's base commander subsumed those assets to Gen. Harrison's overview, as well. The Barksdale Base crews hadn't had much choice, once Louisiana's state legislature had joined Mississippi's in voting to secede from the United States

and joined in the formation of ‘New Africa’. Most of the White base personnel got out alive and headed north.

The Major General in command of the Indiana National Guard, a major fan of John’s, responded, along with the commanders of the Guard in Illinois and Ohio, by nationalizing his command (with the Governor’s reluctant approval) under the auspices of the U.S. Army. Technically, this rendered Lt. General Harrison the highest ranking U.S. military officer recognized by the convention, which may have been just what he had calculated. Harrison was unanimously declared the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, absent any civilian executive. One of his first acts was to give an immediate promotion to Lt. Col. to John W. McNabb. This came as a direct result of his status as a hero and celebrity. He only cared because that strengthened his position as a lobbyist for finalizing the Unified Command.

Vexed To Nightmare By A Rocking Cradle

“He is the most dashing and eligible widower in the city”, the Post -Dispatch assignment editor had told Caroline McKenzie, the young city beat reporter. “After all, with your t.v. exposure down to co-anchoring a half hour news program on the EBS broadcasts locally, you need all of the exposure you can get.” Carolyn rolled her eyes dramatically.

“Hey, don’t forget getting to pick the lottery winners every week”, she joked. “is this a puff piece, or a real interview that you want?”
“You can be hardball if you want”, the tired editor sighed, rubbing his temples, “but remember that the freedom of the press is a fragile thing here and now, so don’t push it. Also, keep in mind that this guy may be the closest thing to a genuine war hero, celebrity, and future founding father all rolled up into one, tigress!” Caroline purred, then growled, making a catlike swiping motion with her red polished nails. They both chuckled tiredly. She would get the interview. There was no doubt about it.
She had never been so scared as when the mixed group of ‘Bloods’ gang members and uniformed black city police officers

had stormed into the CNN studios. They had been ordered, at gunpoint, to not broadcast any news story which hadn't been pre-approved by the Mayor's office. Two days later, Atlanta had been locked down by the black Chief of Police, and a curfew declared for all White citizens. As in other areas of the country, the brutally effective terror method of raping White women became the standard operating procedures of the new regime. Carolyn and four other CNN bureau reporters bribed one of the station's helicopter pilots to fly them out of the city. All of the White staff wanted to leave, but some of them couldn't be trusted because they had been too chummy with the minority staff employees and anchors, and others had their families there, and wouldn't leave town without being able to take them, too. So, only the handful who gathered on the CNN headquarters roof at the edge of the helipad had been told exactly when and how they planned to make their escape. Fortunately, the big Bell 407 could hold them all, along with their luggage, and had a range of almost 300 miles, fully loaded. They all wanted to go north, across the state line, and out of the black controlled areas. Unlike so many of the other staff, Carolyn was from Chattanooga, where her family still lived. She would be the first one dropped off.

Two months later, the Chattanooga Times newspaper she had been writing for since returning home gave her the present of putting her in touch with the Post-Dispatch editorial staff. Although they hated to see her go, they were proud to have her accepted as a city reporter in St. Louis. Once again Carolyn gave her dad a hug and kissed her mom goodbye, then climbed aboard the big truck headed to Arnold Air Force base, where she would catch a ride to Whiteman, and then a ride from there in another military convoy to St. Louis, all based on being an "embedded CNN war correspondent" using her old credentials. The ruse worked, and got her there, and she did write up the stories of her trip for the PostDispatch, but she hoped the guys she had lied to along the way didn't mind, too much.

Chapter Eight

"Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people [blacks] are to be free. Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. Nature, habit, opinion has drawn indelible lines of distinction between them." --Thomas Jefferson

A Shape With Lion Body And The Head Of A Man

The new Lt. Col, adjusted his shiny new silver leaves that had replaced the gold ones. He was amused at how fast he'd been promoted, twice in a row. After they had cleaned out two more riotous neighborhoods around the new capital, as everybody already thought of St. Louis, most of his old company had been sent back to continue rounding up "suspected terrorists" in Indiana. The rough crew was now under the command of the new Captain who had been given his old bars, the poor kid. He hadn't really understood at first why Kip, now a Corporal, and a squad of five of his men had been ordered to stick beside him in St. Louis. He didn't feel like his new assignment as an appointed delegate needed a staff, or a bodyguard unit. But after they settled into their three rooms, he didn't having them around. The city could be lonely. They had known him when he was just a school principal, so they helped keep him humble. Now, he had an entourage, he considered with good humor. That was especially true on days like today, when reporters kept sending messengers requesting an interview. Even though he kept sending back the same negative response by return courier, it cost him a .22 long rifle round for every message. By the time Kip had turned red in the face from the constant knocks on the door by messengers, he had stopped responding. Take a hint. Take a nap. Take a valium. Jeesh. Give it a rest.

McNabb felt bad for his aide. "Kip, remind me this afternoon to send through a promotion request to Harrison for you, and we'll

make you a Sergeant. The way they hand out promotions around here, you can be an officer by next week", he said self-deprecatingly.
"No thanks, Kip replied, only slightly mollified. I'd rather work for a living." They both shared a grin, and relaxed. Kip kicked aside some Busch beer cans, the expected debris of bachelor quarters, especially since the brewery had resumed local production. He shared an adjoining room with one private, while the other three had to bunk two doors down. Most of the time, of course, all the shared room doors were just left open. That made it seem less claustrophobic, and helped the security team 'guard their delicate flower of a Lt. Col.', as they described their mission, jokingly.

Except for when he had taken to sneaking out alone for some privacy, John usually left three men behind to guard their rooms: one out front, one on the roof above their top floor accommodations, and one inside. Kip and one other guard, on a rotating schedule, were his only full time shadows, and when he needed a driver, one of them served. Kip and John stepped outside into the cold morning rain while Glenn, today's driver, brought the car around. They were quickly waylaid by a short, pixie-like platinum blonde he recognized from network news from before. Her almost white curls clung to her shoulders damply where they strayed from underneath the hood of her raincoat. Makeup ran down her face, leaving black trails from the corners of her eyes. That did nothing to detract from the look of determination she bore. When their eyes met, she transformed into a smiling, eager professional.

"Good morning, Colonel! Happy New Year!"
"That was last week, and it's just Lt. Col., ma'am, but close enough. Thank you.", he responded, attempting to sidestep her on the sidewalk as Glenn idled in the middle of the street. This was obviously the reporter who couldn't take 'no' for an answer. Lately she had been doing the evening news on the PostDispatch's t.v. channel, in between Emergency Broadcast System announcements. She was a feisty little thing, for sure.

Kind of like a young Meg Ryan, McNabb thought.
Carolyn stopped them and planted her petite form in between them and the Mercedes. “Col. McNabb, can I buy you breakfast and talk about your armed forces integration theory vote tomorrow?” she asked.
“The ‘Unified Command’ is now policy, not theory, ma’am, unless you’ve missed hearing the jets coming in over the last two days? But I’m late to give a speech before the convention delegates, if you don’t mind a brisk walk in the cold rain, you’re welcome to step on over and listen.”
‘Nailed it!’ Carolyn thought, but then she pushed it further, looking forlornly up into the drizzling rain and shivering visibly. “Well…I’ve already been out in this for a long time, waiting for you, I’d probably get somewhere warm and dry….”
Glenn was getting anxious at the wheel. Kip was standing there in the rain, holding open the door. He saw the look in John’s eyes, and knew what he was going to do, but before he could say anything, the Lt. Col. had already said it: “Okay, get on in, you can ride with us.” Carolyn beamed and hopped into the back seat before Kip could open the door up front for her. It was a short ride, but getting out in front of the other media clustered at the Old Courthouse was going to be awkward. It would like McNabb was playing favorites, or worse.
On the way over, she smiled and straightened her hair and wiped off her ruined makeup with the clean handkerchief her prey gentlemanly offered. While in the traffic holding pattern she peppered him with questions about what he hoped to achieve through a unified command, and the roles he foresaw for different elements of the military within it. She knew those weren’t the kind of questions she was expected by her editor to ask as a city reporter, but she didn’t want to write for the city page, anyway. They were the questions people wanted to know, and McNabb answered her, line for line, as she held a small microcassette recorder between them. As they slid into a parking space, a throng of cameramen and other reporters hustled over, trying not to slip in the freezing rain and slush puddles. Rapidfire questions about today’s speech and the upcoming vote came at him

breathlessly from the mob. Flashes caught Lt. Col. John W. McNabb, convention delegate from Indiana and war hero, helping a young blonde out of the back of his black sedan. Moments later, as she ‘slipped’ on the ice, cameras caught her held tightly in his arms. The British tabloids had a new front page picture. When her editor saw the photograph, she had her post as national affairs correspondent.

McNabb stood at the podium in front of the seal of the state of Missouri and addressed the delegates. After a low murmur of dying conversation, he had their full attention. He also had the attention of the media crowded along both sides and in the center of the aisle, snapping and recording every word.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, when I look at the faces in this room, I see the same faces as the people who crossed an ocean to bring civilization to this continent, and then, as the Arch down the street symbolizes, crossed the prairie to reach the very end of this continent, ‘from sea to shining sea’. I see the people who came together at the first Continental Congress, when our nation was young, and who together Declared their Independence, then again met and, through delegates and conventioneers not unlike ourselves in language and heritage and ancestry, drafted a Constitution to form a government. In 1790, in the Naturalization Act, they defined who could be a citizen of their new nation, but over time those values and ideals of our Founders were eroded, and subverted, by the enemies of our nation, and of its’ founding people. Now, that erosion of values, that corruption of principles, has cheapened the meaning of citizenship to the point where it is meaningless, and our one nation, indivisible, has been divided. For the last few months, we have fought to save a terminal patient. That struggle, sadly, has been lost. It should not come as a surprise to any of you to hear me say that the United States of America no longer exists. It is dead.”

Some groans and grumbles erupted from the delegates, but McNabb continued. “Yes, friends, it is dead, and none of us can revive it, even if we wanted to. But even if we could, why should we, with the cancerous seeds of its’ destruction still not fully removed? I submit to you that multiracial democracy, as our

country had become, cannot fly. What cannot fly, should fall. And what is falling, we should still push, and say, fall faster!”

Many of the conventioneers were looking down at their feet. This was a hard thing to hear, and a harder truth to swallow. “All of us have lost loved ones over the last year, because of the folly of multiracialism. Now, the formerly United States of America have Balkanized, and like the old song says, ‘breaking up is hard to do’. But it is done. We have been humbled. Our country has been torn apart, but our country is not our nation. Our people is our nation. The people who founded the United States before they lost control of it, are still here, throughout the land, and in this room. They still have hope, they still have a future, and they still need our leadership. Whatever our challenges or our triumphs in the future, they will come as a new nation, a new nation returned to the original ideals and principles of our Founding Fathers. Here, right here, now, right now, we are building a new nation, a new future, a new America!”

Every head in the room raised up, to meet his eyes. Kip stood, on impulse, and began to applaud. Singly at first, then in clumps, the delegates rose, and began to clap. It was slow at first, but built to a crescendo, then cheers and shouts rang out, for the first time in the convention. It took five minutes for them to quieten down enough for McNabb to wrap things up, anticlimactically, by asking them to vote in favor of the unified command resolution the next day. They remained on their feet for that, then gave him another ovation. The measure passed without dissent.

General Fred Grace, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and the only surviving member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff not involved in the Offutt cabal, sent a personal letter of commendation to the Lt. Col., from Camp Grayling in Northern Michigan, and pledged his support to the cause. That got the headline banner, right over the competing story about the 2nd Winnipeg Infantry defeating the First People’s Liberation Movement guerrillas at the Battle of New Town, in North Dakota, despite the high number of Sioux casualties.

Carolyn felt like she might swoon. Not only had she been named the National Affairs Correspondent for St. Louis Post Dispatch,

EBS TV, and EBS Radio St. Louis, she had a new office, a doubled salary, and her own secretary. Not that she spent much time in her office. She was really intrigued by the dynamic, charismatic Lt. Col. who had given her career such a boost. He was good looking, in a scholarly way, and definitely a man on his way up in the world. Especially after that speech was put on a rebroadcast loop for two days on the radio and t.v., and reprinted verbatim on the front page. They even played the whole thing on the BBC North America broadcast, and newspapers reprinted it in London, Glasgow, Belfast, Calgary, Edmonton, Anchorage, Sidney, Auckland, Melbourne, and Perth, as well as most of the still functioning newspapers in North America. The whole world also thought that she and McNabb were an item.
What puzzled Carolyn was that, even though his security guys and aide made it obvious that they thought so, too, the Lt. Col. had never made a move, not even when they were alone. He had certainly had ample opportunities over the last week and a half. She had interviewed him three times, over dinner and even in his room.What was wrong? Nothing was more attractive, and intriguing, than a man who didn't take the bait. She knew he wasn't gay. Or dead. It must be her. What did it take to get some attention?

What Rough Beast?

Kelly finished typing in the classified casualty reports from the first assault on Hoover Dam. Losses had been light, thanks to their air support from Hill. It had been freed up now that the new Deseret Air Force had cleared Arizona all the way to Flagstaff. She switched off her desk lamp, burning her fingers on the hot, overworked light. Putting on her heavy jacket, she bundled up further with a took and scarf, before heading home. The DPS data entry clerk preferred to work late, after the rest of the office had left, and it got her noticed. That was why she had received clearance to handle the more interesting classified reports.

In order to make it to her building by curfew, she'd have to wolf down dinner, tonight. The streets were filled with young men from the Mormon reaches of south-central Idaho 'brothering' and 'sistering' everyone to death in their enthusiasm to be in the center of everything LDS. They could be spotted as a swirling eddy of white shirts and black ties. Kelly wondered how many of them were in town to sign up as Gulls, and how many would never make it home. She, or another of the clerks, would type their names into the system one day. In a week they would be finished with their very basic training, and a week after that, they would be looking around at the desert sand while they marched towards Sainthood.

Her primary social interaction recently had been Kelly's one way voyeurism of the shortwave world. Last night she had listened to Stephen, a gas company employee near Mobile, as he described his frustrations that he was the only White worker left at the utility. The city council offered him bribes and rewards to stay, since even down south they needed natural gas this winter, but their affirmative action hirings and running off all of the other White employees had gotten bad. Most of the Whites who could, had outmigrated in the first couple of months after the state legislature declared secession from the 'institutionally racist' U.S., and the seizure of all formerly White owned commercial property as 'reparations' for slavery.

White owned private property, including residences, was next on the legislature's agenda. Stephen's wife, who was diabetic, could no longer get more insulin, anywhere in the city, and was growing sicker each day. She was almost out, even though she had reduced her dosage to ration it. Despite his status as one of the handful of remaining White men who kept things running, he was fed up. Stephen had always been an antiracist, and believed in the best in people. Even after the secession, he had held out hope that a peaceful balance could be achieved. One morning, he noticed that all of the other Whiteowned houses on his street stood empty, their owners gone. He didn't remember seeing any

moving vans in the area, or hearing any of them talk about leaving. Not that he had talked to his neighbors, really. In a few days, the first black families began moving into them.

Stephen and his wife tried to be friendly to the new neighbors, who were openly curious about how Stephen had kept his house. Their curiosity was turning to resentment at the exception to the law he represented. His wife was frightened, which didn't help her blood sugar, either. They weren't racists, many of their friends were black, but none of them came around, any more. That was heartbreaking.

Not wanting to be confrontational, Stephen had a plan. He was going to take one fo the cabin cruisers still moored in a cove off the bay, and he and his wife and their little dog were going to chug over to the Florida panhandle, where a large White enclave of several adjoining counties still held tough. The only way that he could cover his tracks was by staging a house fire and playing dead. Kelly tried in vain to find any subsequent broadcasts on the normal frequency from Stephen. Late into the night she listened, but he never came on. She went to sleep dreaming of he and his wife and their little dog, sailing away towards the sunrise. A week later she heard a brief BBC North America report that hundreds had lost their lives, and thousands more were left homeless, when a raging firestorm had torn through a gulf coastal city in the southern U.S., which local authorities had been unable to bring under control. Kelly remembered Stephen, and mentally sent him a high five.

The next morning after Stephen's last broadcast, Kelly awoke to the sound of a hacking cough from across the hall. She felt guilty that she had not stuck her head in to check on Mrs. Murphy last night. She had been too tired and it was too late when she had gotten home. A hard life and harder losses had taken their toll on her neighbor. Kelly knew she should go over and say 'hi'. The ongoing trials and appeals processes of those facing deportation for having adopted nonWhite children would have traffic backed

up for blocks around downtown, even up on the sidewalks. That would make her late getting in to work, too, if she didn't got ahead and start her day with a bang…or a whimper.

Mrs. Murphy missed her daytime soap operas more than anything else from before. The only officially sanctioned radio station in Salt Lake City filled some of that void by live broadcasting the trial testimony, day after day. Last week, she had kept the volume up to 'eleven' while Kelly made her dinner and sat with her, which kind of defeated the whole purpose of stopping in to talk with somebody, the younger woman felt. It made her fillings rattle to hear the female defense attorney whine on and on with the same tired argument for every client. Always, it was about compassion, and love, and Christian forgiveness, and loving the sinner but hating the sin. That woman was the next best thing to a feminist liberal that the new order would allow. Predictably, she would tell the judge that no sin was irredeemable. Then she would talk about Jesus's forgiveness, and our need to not cut off those who could be saved. Finally, she would close by saying that "showing compassion to our people" was the best way to undo outsiders' negative stereotype of Mormons, and win them over to faith. Win their hearts and minds, she said.

The judge was a real crowd favorite. He usually responded to the defense attorney's closing cliché' by stating, right up into the microphone, that if you grabbed somebody by their throat, their hearts and minds would follow. His position on the newly recriminalized act of homosexuality, for instance, was rationalized by the brief historical lesson he offered to the live and radio audience, for every trial of a gay person. He would point out that Thomas Jefferson, while governor of Virginia during the first American Revolution, had helped draft a law which punished homosexuality with castration, while some of the colonies simply maintained the death sentence for the offense. All thirteen held same-sex relations to be illegal, of course, as had all fifty states, of course. General Washington had supported drumming

homosexuals out of the Continental Army, even during the cold winter at Valley Forge when they were desperate for soldiers.

And so, the judge would conclude, there was a long established precedent for even secular society to protect itself from the scourge of homosexuality. However, “misplaced compassion is no virtue”, his honor would often say, “but a vice of weakness and cowardice”. After citing the most recent statistics demonstrating homosexual’s greater proclivity to be pedophiles, and the first Chapter of Romans, he would administer the same sentence meted out for having an interracial dependent one was unwilling to disown, or being in a mixed race relationship: banishment. Kelly appreciated the humor in that. She could just imagine the Mexican Army reaction when day after day, week after week, a trickle of homosexuals and mullatos and race mixing liberals came staggering through the desert towards their lines, hands up and begging for water and mercy. It was a more efficient way of getting rid of society’s unfit than the mass graves of the first few weeks of independence.

Kelly had her own, privately guarded theory about homosexuality, which was that it was simply nature’s way of removing those with defective genetic material from the gene pool, by preventing them from passing those chromosomes to the next generation. But the Church doctrine with Biblical support was predominant, so she kept her mouth shut and accepted the fact that sometimes even mother nature needs a helping hand in the evolutionary process. Being proactive, in a eugenic way, couldn’t hurt, either. And the mixed race people being exiled from Deseret to whatever fate awaited them? And those who created such hybrids? Well, maybe mother nature also had a way of driving some with defective genetic material to not keep it within their race, for the good of those who stuck to their own. It worked for her. But, the trial broadcasts hadn’t started yet, this morning.

Kelly put on her housecoat and another pair of socks to ward off the chill, then slipped out and across the unheated hall to knock

on the flaking metal door. Mrs. Murphy it on the second knock, as if her coughing had been a none-too-subtle plea for attention. Well, at least somebody is lonelier than me, Kelly thought. The older woman turned wordlessly from the doorway, waving Kelly in. As her eyes adjusted to the darkness and gloom, they rested for a moment on a picture on the bookshelf. It was of Emma. Emma smiling, her childhood friend happy before the drugs, before the partying, and before the Kenyan “International Student” who had been Emma’s boyfriend. The one who had ended up passing her around like a party favor to all of his third world brothers in the Black Student Union. Kelly preferred to think of Emma as the bright-eyed and happy girl she had grown up with, the girl who had won the sixth grade spelling bee, and played junior varsity volleyball. The cheerleader, not the girl the police had asked her to come and identify because her mom couldn’t be found that night. Mrs. Murphy blamed herself for what had happened to her daughter. She had often said so. Although it was obviously what she was looking for, Kelly had never bothered to disagree with her.

“How are you today, Moms?” Kelly asked the shuffling shadow retreating down the hall to her recliner.
“Oh, my arthritis gave me such fits last night, it was so cold, I hardly heard when you came in so close to curfew.” Mrs. Murphy whined. “That damn quack doctor won’t refill my pain pill prescriptions.” She droned on…“AND I went to bed hungry again because not all of us are lucky enough to have one of those fancy government employee ration cards for all the food we can stuff down our gullets.” As Mrs. Murphy ran through her ritualistic litany of ailments, aches, and pains, Kelly thought back to how Emma would often end up staying at her house when they were growing up. Many nights there had been no one home at Emma’s, to watch her. She had never complained about her mom’s drinking, or carousing, or bringing home different guys all the time. Emma had kept it all inside. Her dad had long ago given up and left, after one too many affairs became obvious. The courts had granted him no custodial rights, not even visitation. Mrs. Murphy had used

the child support money for booze and pills.
It was for Emma's sake that Kelly had helped her mom get the apartment as it had come open. The girls had grown apart by then, not seeing much of each other, headed in different directions. Emma hung out with a different crowd every week, just to be accepted and loved. Her dating profile was equally desperate and flighty. Kelly seldom dated and preferred her own company. They hadn't had any classes together, that last semester.
Kelly came back to the present with a start. She snapped to with a shudder as she realized that Mrs. Murphy had asked her, in turn, how she was. Kelly said "fine", then abruptly excused herself to go get ready for work. Her compassion had been exhausted more quickly than usual, today.
The police made three arrests in the case, but had failed to take the three African students' passports, so they made bail with the help of a Jewish lawyer hired by the University, the International Students Association, and the "Freedom for Fayed" campus fundraiser. They all hopped the next plane to Nairobi. Had that really been three years ago, already?
As she left for work, Kelly placed a roast beef sandwich left over from last night's supper, wrapped in a handkerchief, on the floor next to Mrs. Murphy's apartment door. She knocked once, then walked quickly down the landing stairs in order to avoid another confrontation. It looked like somebody had been moved into empty and thoroughly looted apartment downstairs. Her breath clouded as soon as she reached the front door. She pushed it open and tested the slush with her boot. Not too slippery.
Her morning walks to work were usually quiet. They gave her time to contemplate the differences between the reality of America, post-collapse, with the kind of Zombie Apocalypse or Global Pandemic or Nuclear Warfare scenarios she had read about before the fecal matter had hit the oscillating wind optimizer. This wasn't the Walking Dead, more like The Walking Dread, she mused. Kelly vaguely remembered having read a nonfiction book about the Balkanization of America, what had it been called? "Civil War Two", she thought, by somebody named Thomas

Chisum…no, Chittum, that was it. Well, Mr. Chittum never saw Deseret coming back, did he? Who had?

Kelly knew that history was full of historical events which nobody had seen coming. Most of them, people never would have believed were possible, beforehand. Imagine, she pondered, going back in time and telling a KGB officer in the Kremlin in 1985 that in a few short years, the U.S.S.R. would cease to exist, without a missile being fired? Or telling an East German yearning for freedom and McDonald's that the Berlin Wall was going to be coming down in less than a decade? They wouldn't have believed her. Hell, if somebody had told her a year ago that her country was going to come apart at the seams, she wouldn't have believed it, either. She'd have laughed. But yeah, as a Monday morning quarterback, it looked like it had been inevitable, and people should have seen it coming from a long way off. Maybe ever since 1965 and the Hart-Celler immigration act that completely changed who was flooding into the U.S., and from where…or maybe all the way back another century, the fourteenth amendment, that had changed the definition of who could be an American citizen, to include nonWhites, for the first time. Kelly wasn't really a scholar of history, and didn't know.

When the first serious moves for secessions began the summer before, and the increasingly nervous newscasters started using the word "Balkanization", Kelly had Googled the term, and found many historic examples of multiracial empires breaking up into more homogeneous, racially based and smaller states. Sometimes she found that it had happened relatively peacefully, like when Kemal Ataturk had had the wisdom and courage to dismantle the Ottoman Empire after World War One, and created Turkey and its' neighbors. Sometimes it got pretty nasty, as had happened in the Yugoslavian Civil War in the 1990's. That was the most obvious example, and where the term "Balkanization" had gotten its' name, she had learned. From what she knew of the here- and-now, the kind of ethnic cleansing going on in the former U.S. topped what had happened in Kosovo, but the internet was no longer around for her to double-check that guess. Kelly raised her head and walked on down the sidewalk.

Not able to focus on the more academic subject of the inherent instability of multiracial societies, her mind skipped a track like a scratched CD, to Emma again. The newly opened Brotherhood Butcher Shop in the old “Starbucks” storefront had her humming a stupid Lady Gaga song that she and Emma used to sing together, at full volume, using their hairbrushes as microphones, as they’d danced in her bedroom. That was before Kelly had begun to read mythology and philosophy and Emma had started hanging out with the stoner and skater crowd. Mrs. Murphy had never cared when her daughter had started going out and staying out later and later. She had just put Emma on the pill. No, Mrs. Murphy hadn’t been upset when she had found that Mexican boy from the day laborer camp in Emma’s room, either, Kelly thought back with a shudder. The mother’s lifestyle had been liberal before, by mainstream standards. The only that Emma had known to rebel against that was to try and test just how liberal her mom could be. There had never been a limit. Now, she was dead for it.

Kelly was surprised to look up and find herself nearly at the office, already. She would have killed for a cup of coffee, but that cost you fifty bucks, a week of hard labor in jail, and your job. That is, if you had one, in Salt Lake City, these days. If you didn’t, you didn’t eat, unless you worked for the state or the church, one way or another. Oh well. Squaring her shoulders, she pasted on a smile, and walked on in.

Chapter Nine

“We must reach out to our people. We must alert them. We must educate them. We must encourage them. We must inspire them. And here's a beautiful, wonderful thing: when you reach out to other people to encourage them and inspire them, you yourself will be encouraged and inspired. When you find out how many other people there are who share our concerns, our feelings, our values, our sense of responsibility, you cannot help but be encouraged. Even the hatred that you encounter from some people -- especially from people in the controlled media -- will be encouraging. For you will understand that they would not hate us so much if they did not fear us. And the reason that they fear us is that deep inside them they know that what we say is true. So let's get out there -- all of us -- and start looking for encouragement!” – Dr. William L. Pierce

Lenin Read A Book On Marx

The Alaskan wilderness might have retreated, but not by much. Why they had been sent up here on this fool’s errand was a mystery to the Navy Operations Specialist. As he closed the stiffly creaking door of the tracked truck, Rick was surprised to see a hairy bear of a man up on a rough timber rafter. He appeared to be sinking nails into a ceiling joist. He called up to the man, who looked more like a lumberjack than a carpenter. The man answered, and he was given permission to come up. Yeah, it was that kind of day.

Perched on top of the ladder, Rick introduced himself and did his best sales pitch. The Navy needed all of the electronics and computer experts they could muster from the civilian side, to help transfer their logistical framework computation systems and data centers to dry land. That had heard that he was one of the best. Could he help his country?

“Yes, I am, but no, right now as you can see I’m trying to build a cabin by myself, with my fourteen year old boy helping, for me and him and my wife. If you noticed, it’s snowing, and my roof isn’t done. Or my walls.” The burly man said, with more than a little frustration in his voice. He pushed his glasses back up his nose and patted snow out of his beard. “I’m not going nowhere until I finish that.”

Rick thought quickly. “Well, Mr. Rohm, my tracktruck made it up this hill okay. If you’ll go down with me today and take a look at the servers we’re setting up in the hockey field house, and see if you can help us with the hardware and the coding interface, I know a whole lot of bored sailors with nothing much to do who I can have up here tomorrow to finish your cabin for you.”

A rare flash of teeth glinted in the brushy face. “Alright, you’ve got a deal. But they stay until I say they’re finished, agreed?” Rick closed the deal: “Agreed, Mr. Rohm”. They climbed down the ladder, then shook hands on it. The local cop who had known where to find the prepper computer specialist looked very cramped as the four of them, Rohm and his son Alec and the policeman and Rick, squeezed into the cab for the braking grind and slide back down the rock-strewn canyon trail. But the lieutenant was pleased to have another civilian expert on the team, especially when he heard about the bartered labor in payment for services rendered. The next morning, twenty-three able seamen volunteered to get out their barracks. Rick trundled them, two at a time with their tools borrowed form an abandoned construction site, up the hill to do their part. It took them six days, but they got the job done, to the owner’s satisfaction.

Rohm was pleased that his cabin was finished, following one setback after another. Over a barbecued goat dinner that next weekend, he told Rick that he might be crazy to wait until January in Alaska to build a homestead, but the timing hadn’t fully been his choosing. The computer expert sat by the fire in his new fireplace and waxed rhetorical about how he wished that he could

go back and warn people of what was coming, and of what the high costs of open immigration would be for their country. Rick didn't say so in order to not offend his gracious host (the goat was much better than he had feared), but he knew that being able to tell them, well, it wouldn't do any good. Kind of like that story in the Bible about the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man, in Hell, looks up to see Lazarus in Heaven, and asks first for a drop of water, then if maybe somebody could warn his relatives to repent…and Lazarus had said that it wouldn't do any good, basically. He remembered that from Sunday School. People just don't care, for the most part, until a problem is right there on their doorstep, Rick knew. Why, worse than that, it had to barge right in the door and make itself at home, like Mr. Rohm and his son and wife were doing in their new cabin, before they even noticed there was a problem. Most of them were too chicken to admit the truth, anyway, back then. Besides, there had always been people warning them. Most people had just called them evil racist Nazis and ignored them. Nobody was ignoring them now. Heck, pretty much every body still alive WAS one, now.

Tommy's opinion of human nature was p retty low, and he had told Rick that he thought most people were sheep, not really able to make the most important basic decisions about their lives, much less any decisions that affected anybody else's. Rick could tell that Tommy wasn't a Democrat. Neither of them, to be honest, had much faith in what passed for "democracy", at all. Mob rule, it was, driven by demagoguery or celebrity or fame, and all too easily manipulated by the media and people in power. The vast majority of folks just needed to be led, and told what to do, for their own good, and for the greater good of the larger group, the way he figured it. It seemed like now, they were just as willing to do what the people making the hard decisions about detainments and detentions and curfews and racial hygiene laws and ethnic cleansing told them to do, as they had been eager to do what the anti-racist politically correct had told them to do, when they had been in charge. That said something. The Enclosures south of Anchorage, where the native Inuit and Eskimos from within a

hundred mile radius of the city had been relocated to, were proof of that. But no, people had been warned. The Klan and skinheads and internet White Separatist sites had been saying it for years, with few listeners. The people had heard. They had just been too scared or lazy to pay attention. Now, they sure were. They were seeking out the groups that had been preparing for this kind of thing, waiting for a Zombie Apocalypse or Tribulation or Armageddon or Racial Holy War or Civil War Two all along, and asking “Okay, What Now?”. “You were right. Oops. Sorry. So, what do we do now”…and they were getting organized and told what to do, now.

Rohm continued to work for the Navy, as did a large number of civilians, and was paid in fish and free heating oil and jenny fuel, like everybody else. But there were only so many cabins to build. All throughout the late winter the sailors and Marines and airmen grew restless. Few deserted during the coldest weeks of the winter. For many, however, only the weather and the distance from home kept them around until Spring. As far as winters went, it was the lowest morale point for American armed forces since Valley Forge.

A Quartet Practiced In The Park

Dozens of U.S. Navy ships kept the ice broken patrolling from the Aleutians to northern British Columbia. All winter long, back and forth. Three or four times they rendezvoused with a Russian frigate or one of the three “Ohio” class submarines still in service in the Pacific. Two others had been sunk by Chinese action, one had been damaged and forced to scuttle. Four others were still quietly patrolling, refusing to break radio silence to acknowledge any authority in the broken chain of command except the Commander in Chief, who wasn’t saying much from wherever her corpse had been carried off to by the looters of D.C.. The rest, another half dozen boats, had redeployed to the Atlantic and accepted U.N. command. The lone exception was the U.S.S. Nebraska, which had surfaced coming up the Mississippi after

going through the Gulf of Mexico. She and her arsenal, including fourteen ballistic nuclear missiles with fifty nuclear warheads, docked to unload its crew at the Port of Metropolitan St. Louis. The announcement of that docking shocked the world. The single negotiated redeployment made the new Unified Command of what the global media was beginning to call more and more “New America”, (after the term used by Lt. Col. John W. McNabb in a speech before delegates of a convention of Midwestern states in St. Louis) a power with mobile nuclear deterrent. Somehow, the hundreds of nuclear missiles in their silos at Malmstrom and Minot and Warren Air Bases, even though solidly under New American command when it all shook out, didn’t make as big an impression on the remaining world powers as the Nebraska did.

With the Seventh and Third fleets close to mutiny over the lack of direct sustained action against the Chinese, a decision was made at the Vice-Admiralty level. The sanctimonious idiots in Omaha had attempted to order the U.S. Navy Pacific Command to continue to stand down. The U.S. Strategic Command didn’t want to be upstaged by the swabbies. This conflict led to a spokesman for Offutt Air Base, the Strategic Command headquarters, pointing to Colorado Springs as an example of what could happen to Anchorage, if the Seventh and Third continued to maintain an independent command. Making such a threat through an e-mailed interview with the BBC was an error, because the civilian population of Anchorage reacted with fury. The U.S. Navy was forced to either act, or abandon their land base in Alaska. Vice Admiral Woods was in a corner, and he knew he would have to fight his way out.

The Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army suddenly stopped counter-signing any communiques from Offutt, demonstrating more instability of the command structure there. It was unclear who was in charge, or what their intentions were. Perth was notified, as were St. Louis, London, New York, and Brussels, as a courtesy. When Offutt next gave out a press release in which the board of Air Force brass there calling themselves the Joint Chiefs of Staff

made their next threat, it was too much. “If the rogue elements of the U.S. naval command in the northern Pacific region act unilaterally, outside of legitimate Joint Chiefs of Staff command, those vessels and their crews will be considered in mutiny against the line of succession approved military command of U.S. armed forces, as defined under the preservation of powers directives.” It stated in garbled military bureaucratic legalese. It was a threat, obviously, to Woods, signed by the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force. It was a huge gamble. And it was their last mistake.

Captain Byron Cuccini, in command of the U.S.S. Pennsylvania SSBN submarine, had no qualms about the chain of command, or legitimate civilian authority. He was a navy man, through and through. It had broken his heart, secretly, when his daughter Chastity had joined the Air Force, instead of following in his footsteps. Like a good father, though, he had hidden his disappointment, and told her that he was proud of her. She was at the top of her junior class at the U.S. Air Force Academy when things had begun to unravel. Like most of her fellow cadets, she had stayed on campus and helped maintain order in Briargate. That’s where she had been, when the Strategic Command had nuked Colorado Springs via Cheyenne Mountain’s bombing. That was where she had died. That made him the perfect man for this mission. Captain Cuccini didn’t hesitate. Neither did his XO, who had been there when Chastity met her dad at the dock as the Pennsylvania had made their last shore leave. They received ship to ship confirmation orders from Vice Admiral Woods. That was good enough for them. A set of launch codes was entered. A couple of cards were swiped. A pair of keys were turned.

The first lance of light tore up and arced southeast, higher and higher. A second, moments later, flew off in the exact opposite direction, southwest. As his ship shuddered from the launches, Byron began playing Elvis’s version of “Faded Love” over the boats’ comms. It reverberated through the steel decks uncomfortably loud, and was even overheard by a Russian submarine shadowing the Pennsylvania in neutral curiosity as

they watched the drama unfold. The Russkis didn't get it, but most of the crew of the Pennsylvania did. Long ago, on a family vacation, at some dinky little fake Country Western wannabe place, Cuccini had danced a father-daughter dance with his daughter. This one was for Chastity.

Most third party observers, foreign and domestic, thought the act was remarkably merciful. The Post Dispatch banner headline declared "Woods Shows Restraint". It was a purposefully small bomb, considering the number of missiles the Pennsylvania alone carried, and the number of multiple independent reentry vehicles, each with its own nuclear device, it could have unleashed. It was a Trident II missile launched by the Pennsylvania, carrying a single W76 warhead in the 100 kiloton range, which airburst about one mile above southern Omaha, and generated an electro-magnetic pulse which short-circuited 90% of the avionics, electronics and computers within fifty miles of the U.S. Strategic Command headquarters. That meant very few vehicles, aircraft, radios, or even electricity functioned from the epicenter to Shenandoah, Iowa and to Columbus, Nebraska. Outside of the twenty mile radius, some electronic devices were shielded by flukes of geography, topography, or architecture. It wasn't as horrific as the apocalyptic scenario depicted in fictional novels such as "One Second After", but even in their hardened bunkers, it grounded the strategic bombers and precluded any nuclear response. Then, or ever.

This was considered purposefully merciful because the height of the burst minimized fallout, as well as EMP damage. The radius area of total destruction was nearly two miles in every direction from directly below the blast, even with it happening at nearly 6,000 feet. Unshielded personnel, military or civilian, five miles away from the epicenter received third degree burns to exposed skin, and fires were started from the heat of the fireball at that distance. Offutt Air Force Base (around 10,500 personnel) suffered a 100% casualty rate. There were no survivors in the field of total destruction from I-29 to I-80. The combined death toll

from the Offutt blast in the first week was estimated at 123,000 dead, with twice that number having been injured.

By way of comparison, the second missile of the same type, which headed in the opposite direction, also carried the same warhead…only it carried twelve of them, and its' target was Beijing.

In The Streets The Children Screamed

Gerta was on her way back to Germany when news flashed about the latest American mutiny, coup and counter-coup. Another city destroyed, hundreds of thousands dead. Her blood went cold and the thought of how many missiles were still in play, and how many factions were splintering off, outside of anyone's control. At twenty thousand feet, the atmosphere in the Lufthansa cabin was still subdued. Then, while she was calculating how the destruction of Offutt would affect her delegation's mission…or Col. Smith's…

The intercom buzzed, and a stressed out voice announced, in German: "Ladies and Gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking. Because of…an unstable political situation on the ground, our flight plan has been modified. We have been diverted to Madrid for a layover until German airspace is reopened. Please remain calm, and enjoy your flight. Thank you."

What in the world could have caused her government to establish a no fly zone over the entire nation? Were they that worried about the American's nuking one of their own air bases, as horrible as that was?

Although it wasn't available on the civilian market, her boss the Ambassador had an in-flight mobile satellite phone, and he was gripping it tightly now, with a whiteknuckled grip, as he listened to someone shrieking on the other end. His face was calm, but Gerta had played poker enough times with Helmut Keebstritz to know his tells. His left eye just twitched. This was not good.

The first call was to the Prime Minister in Berlin, whose Chief of Staff had told them about the attack on Beijing, and that the government feared a massive counter-strike against the West. The second call was to the Secretary General's office, back in New York. They were begging the Naval switchboard in Anchorage to patch them through to Vice Admiral Woods, who was "busy at the moment". While that call was ending, a large Chinese naval convoy of twenty-eight ships (and several thousand men) bringing ordinance and munitions to the People's Humanitarian Expedition in California disappeared in three large mushroom shaped balls of atomic flame, just ten miles West of Half Moon Bay. The wind was to the East.

Thousands died instantly, but even more would sicken and perish over the next three days as radioactive rain was forecast to fall throughout the Bay Area to San Jose. Hundreds of miles north, the carrier group wing of the USS Abraham Lincoln began air strikes against Chinese troop concentrations and depots from the Puget Sound to Victoria.

By the time she had landed in downsized Spain, the French Ambassador to the U.N. was notifying the Security Council that their contingent would be withdrawn from North America to help quell growing unrest caused by Muslim rioting in Paris, Marseilles, and Lyons. It looked to be a busy day. No time for jet lag.

In the airport itself, the Spanish 24h channel was showing split screen views of satellite imagery over Omaha and Beijing. Crowds gathered around the reception area monitors in fascinated awe. A stewardess scrambled to turn up the sound as the coverage switched to a map of China. The map then focused in on the nation's capital. Gerta knew the area well, having travelled there several times on diplomatic missions. She recognized the red dots showing overlapping strike zones in Haidian, Fengtai, Fangshan, Daxing, over in Tongzhou, up in Changping, at Nanyuan Airport, and a blob of crimson over the Underground City. Also, the Air Bases at Shahezhen and

Tongxian, and one at Huairen. Scrolling numbers sped across the bottom of the screen. Somebody trying to guesstimate casualties? From her knowledge of the population in the areas, Gerta would bet upwards of five million, easy. How the Chinese would respond, if their government was still intact, was next on everybody's guess list. How they would respond if it was not, was off the books.

She carried her own bags from the carousel to the sidewalk, where they waited as a group for taxis. Petrol was in short supply here, based on the long wait. At least the Spanish had repeated their 1492 performance and involuntarily detained and deported all of their Muslims over the last six months. France should take notes from her neighbor, Gerta chuckled to herself. Since the Republic of Catalonia had broken loose from the rest of the country in a popular referendum, Madrid and Barcelona had become rivals.

When they had checked into the Madrid Hotel Coslada and made contact with the embassy staffs in New York again, Gerta and her team met with the Ambassador to share thoughts. Helmut was adamant that they return to New York, but most of the staff wanted to stay where they were until the no-fly order was rescinded and they could return home to Germany. Of course, he was the boss, but all flights had been grounded an hour ago, so they were stuck. He suggested they try to get something to eat and some sleep, and see how things looked in the morning. Most of them would be up all night watching the news.

It wasn't Gerta's responsibility to decide where the peacekeeping troops would come from to replace those France would pull out of the Baltimore and Hagerstown regions, but she did figure that Mark Smith would seize the opportunity to widen the area now controlled by his Marines, if they had the manpower to police it. That was somebody else's headache. The Colonel held the ruins of the capital and the adjacent areas of Arlington, Alexandria, and Herndon, but made him little more than a glorified policeman and

caretaker. He depended on armed White citizen patrols to bolster his force of six hundred Marines in the areas he claimed, for all that.

With aid programs to Africa being withdrawn as the tribal and inter-tribal and international and civil wars expanded and became uncontrollable, Gerta noticed that there had been many European nurses and doctors in the airport lined up for flights to Reagan National and J.F.K.. “Doctors Without Borders” was still up and running, even with the E.U. economy funding it tottering on the edge of collapse. There also were a lot of wealthy refugees from Turkey milling about in the lounge area, stuck in diplomatic limbo.

Gerta went back to her room alone. She was not in the mood to join the “Armageddon Watch Party” a few of the others were having. Her room service cheeseburger came as she finished her shower. She had thought that she would be too wired or tired to sleep, but she passed out sitting on the floor in front of the t.v., with her back against the bed. On the silent screen flames climbed high into the night as a firestorm engulfed Beijing.

The Lovers Cried And The Poets Dreamed Hope hunted. She had always hunted or been hunted. As she stalked the prey, her mind subconsciously took a mental snapshot, a glimpse of off color. Later it might be transferred to her sketch pad as a blur and a limb moving out of its’ natural rhythm, as if ready to jump off the page. She paused to brush her light brown hair away from an eye green as the neon fletching on her nocked arrow. The light flickering through the bare trees spun red and gold highlights from the loose ends. Hope moved slowly, with a liquid grace born of years living in danger. Closer. The Sheriff’s deputy practically stumbled down the Ozark Mountain trail towards her, noisy as the flash mob that had stood chanting in front of her family’s car when she was four. Her mommy had yelled at her daddy to just go, to drive through them. Hope had been scared by the sound in her mommy’s voice. Daddy had rolled down the window to ask the angry black men to move. They hit daddy. They were everywhere,

all around, banging on the roof. Glass broke. Hands came in, grabbing mommy. Mommy was screaming her name and crying.

She'd covered her head, and slipped out of her car seat to the floor. Something broke, there was a whoosh, and it was bright as day again. The smoke had been thick and choking. "Mommy! Daddy! Hot-Hot-HotHot!" Hope heard again, as if another girl had been there to say it for her. She had heard thumping, and loud booms. Somebody had opened the back door and pulled her up, coughing and gagging, into the cool, clean dark night air.

The elderly White shop owner and his wife who had saved Hope didn't know what to do with her. She was an orphan, now, with no family she could tell them about. The tags on the burnt car were from out of state. If they gave her up to the authorities, the little girl might end up being given to homosexuals or some other kind of perverts, or to nonWhites. She had been through enough. From the moment he had fired into the black mob to scatter it away from the flaming sedan, the old man knew that he had a responsibility to the little girl. The way that his wife held onto her, he knew that he didn't have much choice in the matter, anyway.

For ten years, Hope had lived with them. They unofficially homeschooled her, and she learned to work in the store. She searched each and every black face that came in. Once or twice she saw ones she recognized from that night, ones who lived in the neighborhood. When she got old enough, those turned up dead, with no suspects or witnesses to their brutal slayings. She never saw all of them, though, so she began to hate them all, for the ones she couldn't find.

Life spun on "ifs". If the man she grew up to call 'grandpa' had not stubbornly stood guard to protect his store from the looters that night, to be there. If the police had asked more questions about the White couple dragged from their car and killed during the "protest". If his wife had not salved her pain at never having been a mother by wanting to keep Hope. If the deputy looking for the teenaged girl who had been breaking into people's hunting cabins

to steal food and supplies had not stopped to check out this cabin, a half mile off the blacktop.

That deputy's mind was on everything except his job, a s he clambered through the brush. David Bowden couldn't believe how stupid this ignorant hick was. The world was grinding to an end, and he was worried about somebody sleeping in his hinting cabin. The unwashed, illiterate redneck should be glad that he lived here, instead of most other places. The national and even state situation was chaotic, but here on the County level in rural Arkansas, the collapse had been slower, gentler, and more manageable. Most people had wood for heat, even if they didn't have a jenny and fuel. First the news had been full of the protests and riots, out West and then all over in the cities. There had been no trouble around these parts, especially after the Tyson's plant up the road closed due to fuel shortages and lack of deliveries. In less than a week most all of the Mexicans had just packed up and left in the night.

The hunter behind him stumbled into Deputy David when he stopped to catch his breath against a tree. Things throughout the Ozarks bordering Missouri were tense, but even as the stores sold out and closed and the gas pumps ran dry, it was okay. People kept telling themselves, and each other, how lucky they were not to be in the shape of the poor folks in Springfield, or down in Little Rock. Bless their hearts. People were tightening their belts, more and more. Those folks needed their prayers, but they didn't need to be coming here with their troubles. The main roads in and out were blocked and manned by deputies. The Governor was voted out of office by the state legislature for wanting to close off the black neighborhoods, Channel 4 said, before it went over to the Emergency Broadcast System test pattern.

Once it had become clear what was happening across the country, they had to lock up a few of the local boys who had taken it upon themselves to run the only mixed race couple and their

kids out of town. A few days later, they'd had to turn them loose, just as easily, due to a lack of witnesses. The long-active Klan group a county over had gotten one of their own elected Mayor and won control of most of the City Council and Sheriff's department. That had driven some of the drug dealers out of there and running his way. More headaches for him, from other people's troubles. David's boss, the Sheriff, also was playing along with the Klan, rolling over and agreeing to combine his force with the other County's. The lone Hispanic jailer had been 'released from contract'.

The deputy himself wasn't a racist, far from it. He had even dated a black girl in college. Mainly to prove that he wasn't like that. But things were so quiet that Deputy Bowden had been assigned to waste some of their precious gas investigating these cabin burglaries. He wondered if the hunter would be on board to help him out if he got a chance to do what he was thinking about doing. Maybe so. He had heard, based on the kind of garbage the cabin owners had found and the sign that had been left, that they thought the suspect was a female, alone. Maybe if Bowden caught her, he could have a little fun with her, before he brought her in. Or, he might let her go, if she played along without any fuss. Of course, sometimes he liked it when the girls resisted. After all, he had become a cop because he liked to hear them squeal and cry. That's how he happened to be sliding down this trail with a disgruntled property owner one minute, and a second later be kicked in the side by a mule. Deputy Bowden felt lancing pain under his ribs, into his guts, and looked down to see dark blood spatter on the wet leaves. His blood.

Hope loosed three more arrows before either of the men had sense enough to try to turn and run. Neither of them made it back up to the road.
Hope's grandpa had been a deer hunter, too. As soon as she was old enough, he had taught her to hunt, and shoot. They had been up here several times, which is how she knew the area. But when things had gotten bad again in the city, the old couple had gotten

worried. They were too elderly and the neighborhood was too run-down and third world for them to sell the store, even if anybody had still been buying anything, by then. The police came by less and less often, as they raced from one hotspot flareup to another. People in the city had gone crazy, and fed off of the violence and racial conflict on t.v., inspired to make their own. The city Mayor announced rolling blackouts every day due to the failure of the power grid. Electricity was rerouted to 'nationally strategic usage areas'.

The black men and 'youths' who loitered in front of the store had always leered at Hope. She got 'asked' by three or four of them, every day. When she began puberty, and filled out, things got even worse. When she said 'no', the inevitable response was always a disbelieving "Whatsa matta baby, don't you LIKE black people? You ain't RACISS, is you?" They would laugh and fist bump each other and dance around her on the sidewalk, grabbing their crotches and hooting obscenely. They just got bolder and pushier as things fell apart.

One night after supper, her grandpa had told Hope that he wanted her to take their pickup, which still had some gas in it, and go camping up north, where they had gone before. He helped her pack the next day, not looking into her eyes. She had known that they weren't really going to meet up with her in a few days. They weren't going to shut down the store and pack what they could into the delivery van. Hope had felt it. But she played along until she made it past the stalled cars along the interstate and up into the hills, when she gave herself permission to cry along with the radio. It was the first time she had let herself go since she was four. She pulled over to the side of the road, unable to see. She should have given them one more last hug. After a bit, she regained her composure. She wouldn't cry again. With Pine Bluff behind her, Hope headed north.

Hope knew that things here were not falling apart fast enough for the chaos to hide what she had done. From what she could tell, most of the Ozark Mountain region seemed to be Klan country, and they punished any lawlessness by anybody ruthlessly around here. She had to go. Jittery with shock, she took the pistol and

extra magazines from the deputy and the knife from the redneck hunter as soon as they had quietened down and bled out. Then she retrieved her arrows and cleaned and straightened them as best she could. From the cabin she got a gas jug and cut a water hose to siphon fuel from the patrol car before taking the shotgun and ammunition out of it and driving it off of the road and into the woods.

It took three trips to hike everything she needed to take with her to the pickup she had hidden three weeks ago. Thankfully it started once she poured some gas into the breather. God bless grandpa, if he was still alive, for teaching me to drive and shoot, she thought. Hope wondered if the old couple were still alive. She didn't feel one way or another about it, surprisingly. Not any more. Probably not. It would have been just like them to send her off and then go out together, holding hands like they always did. So sickeningly cute.

Hope looked in the cracked rear view mirror and saw sad green eyes looking back at her over a freckled nose, so she practiced making innocent faces and smiling. There, that should get her through the county roadblock and over the state line. Better than hiding in boxes in a storeroom while your parents' bodies burn, she chided herself. Maybe she could find a place where she could draw squirrels and rabbits and deer, instead of shooting them. That would help to clear her head. The old sketch pad beside her on the truck seat, a gift from her grandma, was held still from sliding by the deputy's Glock. Hope wondered if there was anywhere left in the world where people could be artists, these days. Maybe she could open a gallery and become famous and rich.

Chapter Ten

“I don't believe in democracy. In the second place, neither did our white forefathers. I believe, as they did, in a republican authoritarian republic with a limited electorate -- just like the one the writers of our Constitution meant this country to be. When these white Christian patriots sat down to write the Declaration of Independence, there were no black citizens for them to worry about.” – Commander George Lincoln Rockwell

Whiskey and Rye

Carolyn was caught off guard by the hero worship the other delegates gave to Lt. Col. John W. McNabb. When he and his bodyguards walked into the room, attentive silence met the forty-five year old officer, rippling outwards in a wave centered on his confident smile. People parted, and lined up. A cute little girl in a pink shirt ran up to hand him some flowers. She looked to be around five or six, and he accepted them with a gracious grin. As he made his way to the podium once again, shaking every reaching hand on the way there, the reporter wondered if they even noticed the dark circles under his eyes, or the tension pulling at his blandly handsome face and eyes, even framed by his glasses. Carolyn had done her due diligence in research, and knew the back story on that, but who didn’t have a tale of heartbreaking loss, these days? It reached her heart, and made her soften towards him. That didn’t sell papers any more, or produce the ad revenue that kept her fed-sometimes directly, as merchants traded goods for advertisements. No, what sold papers was giving people hope, and the feeling that someone was pulling things together instead of tearing them apart. That was the story here. This guy.

John was speaking now, joking about the lingering cold, thanking the delegates for passing his unified command resolution, and discussing the specifics of the resolution to integrate all standing

local, state, and national military forces in their represented constituencies into a single chain of authority. She noted with approval that for this speech, he was once again wearing his dress uniform, medals shining. McNabb listed each state and territory by name: Northern Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, with condolences, North and South Dakota, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Eastern Wyoming, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Northern Arkansas, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Western Kentucky, representatives from Tennessee, and Western Pennsylvania. With each of the twenty-two names called, their delegates stood to be honored by applause from their peers.

With that done, McNabb turned the tables and surprised her by praising “the brave men and women of our armed forces fighting in the Pacific and on the West Coast”, and then asking for a moment of silence to remember all of those who had been lost. Every head bowed and every eye closed in the room, even her own, before she even knew that it was happening. When the Lt.Col. said “Amen.” and raised his face, Carolyn saw a tear distinctly fall from his jawline. Wow, she thought, this guy was either very good, or the real deal. She wasn’t sure which was the most dangerous.

Shifting gears, the speaker smiled sadly and asked the delegates to return from their home states in two months’ time “to help me take the next crucial steps required by our people to restore them to their rightful place among the nations of the Earth, and, like our Founding Fathers, now that we have moved to provide for a common defense, to secure domestic tranquility.” It sounded to Carolyn, from the front row, like a campaign speech. It probably was. But for what office?

Every camera, still and video, caught the scream of rage as the stout woman in the red dress stumbled forward into the podium shot, pushing her huge purse in front of her as a shield. They caught McNabb reaching out to push her back, his guards rushing

forward, and her face turning away. Then the room was lit by a flash and roar centered on the purse for an instant. Thick white smoke spread out like a wave, as the delegates stampeded towards the doors. Shoving, grunting, cursing, screaming. Carolyn was carried along by the press, unable to see John. She tried to step to the side, out of the irresistible current of people. Then she was swept to the door, and nearly out. She grabbed onto the wall and pulled herself free of the herd. Her eyes searched through the smoke. As most of the delegates cleared out, she saw a cluster of media in front of the raised platform of the podium. They were snapping pictures in the haze. Keeping her head low, Carolyn held her breath and forced herself to stop coughing as she moved towards the group.

The speaker knelt before the smoldering, broken podium that had saved his life. It had shielded him from the worst of the bomb blast, but his right arm hung limply, and blood streamed from his face and head on that side. His head was down, his eyes were closed, as he prayed over the body he held close to him in his left arm. The body of a little girl in a pink shirt, her blonde hair stained with blood, as his.

The attempted assassination made international news, even with everything else going on in the world. The London Daily Mail found the suicide bomber's family, and interviewed her, while the funerals for the four victims of the blast were still being planned. The motivation for her act, as described by her family, was her sorrow over her daughter and her mixed race grandson being driven out of their community. The Daily Mail went to the southern Missouri town and interviewed people there, stirring up local animosities which had cooled since the citizens had been bitterly divided a few months ago.

There had been only a few nonWhites in town, when the sporadic ethnic cleansing began. Some had supported accepting all refuges, regardless of race, to prove that they were a welcoming community. That faction, led by a local Pastor, had been opposed

by another faction, led by the Chief of Police. The Chief wanted to keep out any element that might endanger the town. When more black refugees showed up at the city limit barricade, things had gotten nasty. One of the churchgoers at the barricade had invited them in, despite orders from the deputy on duty not to. When he climbed into the cab to move the truck blocking the road, the deputy tackled him. The arrest led to the church congregation attempting to storm the police station where he was held. The crowd was dispersed after a brief fight in the street. By order of the Chief of Police, all persons of non-European ancestry and their immediate families were expelled from the city limits. Most of the church went with them. They had helped the bomber construct the bomb and choose her target.

The reporter with the Daily Mail, a short dark woman of Pakistani ancestry, interviewed the Lt. Col. as he sat up in his hospital bed, his arm in a sling and his face and scalp bandaged to his neck. She trilled in a high pitch that made his headache worse:

“In my country, the British Nationalist Par ty has recently gained several seats in Parliament. As you know, Scotland’s independence led to the Royal Navy being dismissed from Scottish bases and ports. The more peaceful, socialist government there has adopted the Euro with the withdrawal of British banks. Some of the B.N.P. members advocate racial separation, similar to the event which led to the attack on you. In light of your injuries, what advice would you offer for those who believe that humanity should be divided by hatred and intolerance?”

Smirking with the good side of his face, McNabb whispered “Build bigger podiums”. Carolyn, by his side, didn’t need to interpret.
The next day, supported by one of his hyper-alert guards, the Lt. Col. placed a wreath on the little girl’s grave, and cried with her mother and father and brother. No media were allowed at the graveside service.

A Pink Carnation And A Pickup Truck

Charles scanned the satellite radio channels and cycled through them again. The satellites were still up there, but the service was still out. He eased off of the powerful semi engine after his routine mid-day ten minute idle just to keep everything charged from the alternator. There were times, such as the last week he had been stranded here in La Crosse, Wisconsin, when he was glad to be divorced. At least, he was glad to not have to worry about looking out for anybody but himself. His ex could play piñata down in Odessa with her Mexican new husband who his kids called 'poppy' now, and he could continue siphoning diesel from his tanker into his tractor tank to stay warm at night. Suited him fine. Here was, on the side of the road at a truck stop, like always. He hadn't moved his rig in so long that a snowbank had formed on the north side, around it, halfway up the fenders.

Like most Army veterans, Charles was used to hurrying up and waiting. But at fortyfive, he had little patience for the games of interstate commerce. Besides, when the lot lizards looked like Nanuk, it was too cold for him. Minnesota hadn't even tried to plow the roads clear on their side, so it looked like he was facing a glacier of ice to his west across the line.

The long-haul truck driver had talked to the other handful of drivers, mostly pulling military cargoes, who had made it this far to the dead end. He had learned that attacks by Indian tribes in North Dakota had shut down the shale oil field operations, so there were no delivery jobs left there. He knew that his dispatch center was gone, turned off forever when Stillwater was burned by the First People's Liberation Army. Anything he had left in Texas, including his kids, were in a foreign country now – either the Republic of Texas or La Republica del Norte, depending on which side of the I-10 the front was on, at the moment. He ticked off his remaining options: he could backtrack and head north to the twin cities, and sell the remaining half tank of diesel for their heaters, and make a bundle off of it. That is, assuming he could get through and the diesel wasn't just officially confiscated. The Minnesota National Guard were said to do that kind of thing, even

though they were technically nationalized, now. Or, he could sit and wait for a thaw, which could come next week, or next month. Or, he could head south and barter it in Madison. It was overpopulated more than ever, now, with the evacuation of Milwaukee.

Charles may not have quite graduated college, but he could read a map well enough to have made a decent trucker, and he could read the writing on the wall well enough to know when it was time to quit. As he was procrastinating, his decision was made for him by a M.D.O.T. snow plow's distant rumble. He would wait and see what they actually did for the road, before he decided.

The next morning began a sunny early March day, and Charles stuck his head up in his cab. He had been unable to sleep much because of the continual grinding and crunching of snowplows and graders coming through from the west, then making raucous u-turns right in front of his front row parking spot and heading back again. They had been around four times over the last six hours. I-90 was good to go. In fact, his was the only rig left on the lot. Time to shake a leg.

The sun helped melt off the leftover snow in the center of the two lanes as he rumbled into Minnesota. He had planned on taking the Highway 52 exit to Rochester, but the offramp was blocked by a herringbone formation of purposefully jackknifed big rigs. At the top of the ramp sat two Humvees manned by a squad of Minnesota Guardsmen. The Staff Sergeant with the shaved head and alert eyes was in his late thirties, much older than the rest of his bunch, who looked to be fresh out of high school. Maybe Charles was just getting old. It seemed that the Guard was in charge of protecting the Mayo Clinic, and yes, they could use some extra diesel fuel. Now, down to some dickering.

Some Say The World Will End In Fire

Kelly smiled throughout the service, as visiting Church elders from Twin Falls to Page were acknowledged. It only really irked

her when they tried to Bible-beat her at work. The break room Bible Study sessions always ruined her lunches. What a way to spend your only day off, she thought, but service attendance was mandatory, or virtually so, for government employees. She wondered if Karen was sitting somewhere right now bored, or hungry and cold, or if her sister was still alive. Jeesh, so grim, so eeyore, she groused at herself.

The best thing about Sundays was her chance to hear on air voices of people who didn't normally broadcast throughout the week, like Will O'Douley. Before the collapse O'Douley had been a successful conservative writer and host of his own t.v. news talk show, 'The O'Douley Data'. Kelly remembered him referring to Martin Luther King, Jr. as a 'true conservative' once, back before. But with the collapse of the major media networks, O'Douley was back on the air as best he could manage and sounding like Heinrich Himmler on meth. Probably his Jewish bosses fleeing the country like rats from a sinking ship to make Aliyah had disillusioned him more than a little, but it was still funny to listen to. He broadcast now from Spokane, and claimed to be the leader of a guerrilla militia movement resisting Chinese occupation. He might even be telling the truth. Kelly didn't know, or care. But she did have serious doubts about O'Douley's grander claims to be running the show from Missoula to Yakima. That was militia country, but not necessarily HIS militia country.

On the way home from church, she picked up a few apples which had appeared from out of nowhere at an illegal black market kiosk on the corner. No businesses were allowed to be open on Sundays, by law. At least free barter was accepted there, and her gloves got her four nice fruit. She went home with her hands, and the apples, in her jacket pockets. It looked like somebody as doing something in Washington, for apples to be here before April.

Two of the apples went to Mrs. Murphy, who gave her a new pair of gloves to replace hers, since she never went out any more,

anyway. That made it a really good day. It was amazing how the little things in life meant so much, now.

If It Had To Perish Twice

Harry Lee missed Hu. He missed the push and pull of what he had seen as their partnership. As he listened to Spanish radio broadcasts celebrating the sacking of Merced after Chinese peacekeeping forces declared an end to their humanitarian mission and withdrawal from the city, he missed America. How had things gotten so f'd up? He let his shoulders sag for a moment, then squared them again. He would survive. So would his family. They always did.

Even after the bulk of the Chinese troops from California had been redeployed to stop the Russian advances on Hegang and Jiamusi, Harry had thought that the reversals might be temporary. Once the Chinese military leaders had announced that the new capital of the People's Republic would be at Sanya, near the Yulin naval base, it was only natural that they would reconsolidate their forces in southern China while playing defense in the north. He waited every day for a nuclear counterattack against the pirate fleet, as he thought of them, ran by Robert Woods. It became more and more clear that they did not want a nuclear war against both the American navy and the Russians, though.

Instead, terrorist attacks against the reduced garrisons in Burnaby, Santa Rosa, and Tacoma demoralized the strategists back home even more. The over seven million dead in and around Beijing, and the invasion by Russia, convinced them of the need to begin to cut their losses. Then the Seventh and Third Fleet had begun attacking Chinese positions daily, in earnest. The round eyed devils had went from 'zero to hero' with it, Harry thought mirthlessly. Who would have thought they would go nuclear, too?

The looming threat of more Chinese cities being lost, more than the guerrilla attacks, broke the will of the newly rebuilt Central

Committee. They were purged almost immediately by military commanders from Yulin. General Jiang, who had been recalled to organize the defense of Heilongjiang province, broke with the new regime and declared The People's Republic of Shenyang an independent state. Jiang asked the Russian General in his sector, Korestky, to discuss terms for a cease fire agreement in Harbin. At the same time, their United Korean allies had begun attacking Chinese garrisons in Seoul.

When U.S. aircraft began hitting anything moving with a red star on it north of Portland, Harry had cashed out. First British Columbia was evacuated, with thousands of ethnic Chinese civilians following the retreating troops southwards. Then Seattle was hurriedly looted, and abandoned. The golden horde clung together as it receded, even those who had been here for generations fearing reprisals by the victors. The former immigrants already outnumbered the soldiers, by that point. The roads were clogged with Asian refugees. They hunkered down in Tacoma to lick their wounds and regroup.

While American militia groups harried the Chinese rear guard, Harry made his plans. He was, if anything, an opportunist. He also saw the end coming. All through the first week or March, as the perimeter around the Bay Area of Chinese control shrunk, he had his employees gathering every American flag, previously outlawed as a symbol of terrorism, that he could find. He chose Petaluma to position between the People's Humanitarian Peacekeeping Forces and the Republica irregulars chewing up Stockton. Like the frog in the boiler of heating water, knowing just when to hop was everything. When the Anglos saw 1,300 obviously Chinese people, led by Harry Lee, waving American flags and chanting "Go Home!" outside the Chinese-American Friendship Office in Petaluma, they were bemused. Several videotaped it. The next day the footage was broadcast on Telemundo and Univision. That had not been a part of the plan.

Harry Lee went into hiding, hunted by the peacekeeping forces as a traitor. Several members of his family, including his wife, his older brother, and his youngest son, were captured and publicly executed. Lee's miscalculation was that in order to save face, the People's Humanitarian Peacekeeping Force withdrawal had not been completed. A major reason for this was that they had no available transport to go home, and no support from the Chinese navy to withdraw. A secondary distraction was their internal uncertainty over whether to support Jiang in the north, or the Yulin regime in the south. They held the Bay Area. Harry waited, in the darkness, alone.

I Think I Know Enough Of Hate

He began his early morning staff meeting with a prayer, short but sincere. It took him just a few minutes to line his staff out for the day. Kip was asked to move the Klan lawyer meeting back to three, and make sure he was met and welcomed when he flew in from Branson. His security team was instructed to watch out for any agents of the Bank that might want to snoop around the office before their scheduled meeting. They also were given the names and descriptions of the expected media interviews for the day. They were more paranoid than he was, after the attempted assassination. His secretary was given a list of letters to type and a recorded tape of dictated correspondence to transcribe and mail. In ten minutes, they were finished and dismissed.

Lt. Col. McNabb showed Carolyn his heavily redacted and annotated map of the North American continent. The huge unfolded paper covered the entire boardroom table surface in his new office in the Old Courthouse building. This particular room had featured an exhibit on the historic Dredd Scott case, but the displays had been hauled downstairs to the dumpsters out back. There was room now for his desk, two chairs and a couch, and the board room table and its' chairs, where he held staff meetings…when it wasn't covered with maps, that is. Today was a map day.

As he leaned over the map to describe what was happening in Canada, the still healing scars on the right side of John's body made him wince for a moment. With Quebec declaring their independence and inviting Francophone refugees from the intifada going on in France to relocate there, Toronto had no choice but to let them go, as civilly as possible. That made it possible for Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba to formally secede from the Dominion, as well. They had sent delegates back for the second phase of the convention. It wouldn't start for another week, but they were already in town.

The battle lines shifted on him almost every day, so the borders did, too. Kip, his Chief of Staff, kept erasing and redrawing as new reports kept coming in, continually. John himself was busy drawing up plans for the different committees to divide the delegates into. One would tackle Energy production and allocation, to get as many operational power plants back online as quickly as possible and restore electricity to as many regions as they could. The second would dive into Agricultural Operations, and allocate resources for seeds, fertilizer, equipment, and fuel to begin large-scale preparation of the ground and planting as soon as the Spring thaw was complete in the nation's breadbasket. The third, of course, would oversee Unified Command integration of the armed forces for the twenty-two states and territories invited to attend.

Most of the delegates who had made it back to St. Louis were knee-deep in barroom dramas over what a new nation would be called, or the national song, or their uniforms, or what its' flag should look like, or what its' seal should have on it, of all the absurdities. None of the imagery and flash really concerned McNabb, even though he understood that it was those kinds of things which helped inspire and unite and motivate people, so they would have to be handled, too. Okay, a fourth committee for "Administrative Symbolism", then, he guessed.

And fifth, a “Currency Committee”, to take stock of how much physical gold the allied regions still had control over, in places like Fort Knox., protected by the loyal Army base there. Probably around $150 billion there. All together, enough to start a new currency with, based on the gold standard, for the spread of interstate trade and commerce. McNabb’s ‘New Dollar’ plan was a favorite pet project.

Smaller subcommittees would look into immigration control, which included continuing the deportation of insurgent, potential terrorist, and nonWhite population elements, and the establishment of international relations with foreign governments. It was going to be a busy Spring. They’d take it day by day. At some point the Republican and Democrat and Libertarian and Constitution and Nationalist parties would begin lobbying the delegates to affiliate with their platforms, plank by plank, but that would take them time.

This afternoon, the presumed Chairman of the convention had meetings with the soon arriving delegate from the North Arkansas territory, a lawyer from the Klan family whose organization had taken over and kept order in their town and county, then expanded to adjacent counties. Then, with a member of the Board of Directors of Banks of America, who wanted to try to talk (and bribe) him into establishing another private, corporate bank as a new Federal Reserve. Like that would happen. But before then, they had to get him to his first of three interviews with foreign media, this morning.

Back in the newsroom at her desk, Carolyn switched her microcassette recorder on ‘play’. It was hard not to sneer at the cow-eyed reporter from Le Temps, the largest French language newspaper in Geneva, as the Swiss journalist asked the same trite questions based on the same liberal assumptions as their playbook dictated. Here we go. John’s familiar voice sounded tinny from the small device:

“That is a scientifically incorrect statement. Homo Sapiens sapiens are not a race. Humanity is a species of which there are several subspecie, just as canines, dogs, are a species of which there are many different breeds. All dog breeds are members of the canine species, but many dog breeds differ genetically in their intelligence, temperament, and inherited personality traits. Human races, such as Whites, Blacks, Asians, and their various hybridizations such as Hispanics and Jews, are analogous to different dog breeds, in that regard. If you were to go and tell a veterinarian, or a member of the American Kennel Club, that the only difference between the different dog breeds is in the color of their fur, they would laugh at your silliness. Unfortunately, some people are more concerned about the pedigree of their pets, than the pedigree of their grandchildren.” He sounded irritated. She needed to remind him to keep his cool. They still had not crossed the line of being more than friends, but he had learned to trust her instincts when it came to public relations.

“Yes, so you say, Monsieur, but that is racist, is it not? Oui?” the reporter shot back. With Scotland going independent, and Corsica breaking away from France, and the Flemish-speaking northern Belgians seceding and joining the Netherlands, liberal Europeans were on edge, these days. Her photographer clicked pictures frantically from every angle as McNabb walked them around the third floor of the rotunda, just to keep them moving. He paused to straighten his glasses thoughtfully and inhaled deeply, before responding.

“If science is ‘racist’, if nature is ‘racist’, if the truth is ‘racist’, then what does that say about the ‘anti-racist’ worldview? Everybody says there is this RACE problem. Everybody says this RACE problem will be solved when the third world pours into EVERY White country and ONLY into white countries. The Netherlands and Belgium are just as crowded as Japan or Taiwan, but nobody says Japan or Taiwan will solve this RACE problem by bringing in millions of third worlders and “assimilating” with them. Everybody says the final solution to this RACE problem is for EVERY White

country and ONLY White countries to “assimilate,” i.e., intermarry, with all those non- Whites.What if I said there was this RACE problem and this RACE problem would be solved only if hundreds of millions of non-blacks were brought into EVERY black country and ONLY into black countries? How long would it take anyone to realize I’m not talking about a RACE problem. I am talking about the final solution to the BLACK problem? And how long would it take any sane black man to notice this and what kind of psycho black man wouldn’t object to this? But if I tell that obvious truth about the ongoing program of genocide against my race, the White race, Liberals and respectable conservatives agree that I am a naziwhowantstokillsixmillionjews. They say they are antiracist. What they are is anti-White. Anti-racist is a code word for antiWhite.”

Carolyn replayed the interview she had recorded as a precaution, just in case it was quoted incorrectly or out of context. That is, if the European papers even dared publish it. The North Italian Republic had just voted to leave the rest of the boot behind. From their capitol in Milan to the Appenines, they were doing pretty well…while the rest of the country had nothing going but their dead tourist traps. Not many people were going on vacation and buying souveniers, these days. So much Balkanization was going on in Europe for some reason, maybe following the American trend. They wanted to be fashionable? Sure, but not if it meant being racist. Of course, the Post-Dispatch would run the article. After expanding from a weekly back to daily publication, an article about the Lt. Col.’s emerging leadership of the convention was featured in every issue. She made sure of it. Today’s articles were printed up and laid out separately in the old fashioned way on the drawing board in the center of the newsroom. All of the reporters jockeyed and lobbied every day for their stories and their bylines to get the most prominent feature. The most envied, above the fold spots, were already taken. She typed quickly.

By the time she finished her rough draft blurb and printed it out, competing articles were shoulder to shoulder in the ‘National’

section. Several were worthy adversaries. “Tensions out west remain high after L.D.S. separatist commandos from Deseret claimed responsibility for a raid on the Aztlan border station in Durango last week, during which several Mexican military advisors were killed.” was next to “Delegations from Spokane and Boise arrived at the Old Courthouse Wednesday to petition the convention for more troops to help push back Chinese incursions across the Columbia Plateau.”, which seemed like old news, especially with the Chinese in full retreat, already. It would probably be trumped and replaced by the updated story:

“At a news conference under the arch, representatives from both the Idaho National Guard and the Free Washington Unified State Militia praised the Unified Command for their actions, and urged the rest of streamlined America to join them in their two-fronted fight. In response, a column of some 5,000 volunteer mounted infantry are reportedly moving southwards from Calgary to cross the former border in support of their new fellow Americans. Resupply and rearmament by airdrop has been pledged from a U.S. air force unit stationed in Butte.”

That was more interesting that the “In Boston, anti -occupation protesters pelted United Nations peacekeeping forces with rocks and bottles during a three day long clash that left dozens dead and wounded”. The international section was so dramatic and sensationalistic, these days. Their lead article ran with:

“In Baton Rouge today, the New Black Panther Party has announced that their successful evacuation of survivors from a New Orleans irrevocably flooded for the final time by Hurricane Shaniqua is, quote, “an indication of the success of the single party system of democracy”. Former Nation of Islam spokesman Kwebeke Msufime, who led the breakout of the besieged Houston African-American community when the Texas National Guard withdrew from the encircled city as the Mexican Army approached last June, officially announced the unification of the N.O.I. and the B.P.P. under Atlanta's leadership, a sign of hope and future

stability for the nation of New Africa. Msufime, leaving behind the traditional suit and bow tie of the old N.O.I. for a more dashing African tribal look of animal skins and urban camouflage, stated that:

“Just like our brothers and sisters who had their back to the water when they died fighting in Chicago and Detroit, our people in New Orleans were starved out and surrounded by the Mississippi and the ocean which come flooding in. A quarter million of our folk from each of those butcher shops made it out and we got them back. Traded the devils from the Redneck Riviera for them so now we can play on the beach, right? Many of those fighters from Chi-town and Motor City now serve in our great New African army. Some of you are here today. You remember how the Indiana and Illinois Guards and the Michigan Militia surrounded your neighborhoods, turned off your electricity and running water, blockaded food deliveries, and tried to kill you all. If that wasn't bad enough, you remember how some of our people turned on one another, as gangs didn't want to turn their guns in all the same directions, at first. But they learned. We learned. We know who the real enemy is, and we know his face. Real thug life is here and now. Real thug life carried babies across the causeway on their backs. Real thug life carried sandbags, not t.v. sets. And now we feed our own. That's thug life. So let's turn our backs on New Orleans, it's just one more wasted city, and leave it behind like we have so many others up north and out west. We have our own country now, where thug life rules. Let's keep it real…”

Some people were having a real hard time seeing that China was on the ropes, Carolyn saw, based on the secondary “International” articles: “Igalut, the capitol of Nunavut, having elected a pro-Chinese city government, has declared themselves a sovereign nation and is seeking Chinese diplomatic recognition. Other aboriginal militants have claimed to have taken control of Yellowknife and declared themselves the Republic of Denendeh, but that cannot be confirmed, as no contact has been made with

the Northwest Territories capitol in over three weeks, since the city was reportedly under an organized aboriginal attack."

There was still some humor, though: "An organized crime syndicate in New Jersey has released to the media videotape purporting to be their liberation of the Liberty Bell from Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where the German commanding officer in charge of a heavy presence of peacekeeping force patrols has declined to comment on the reported loss."

Some stories just seemed too bizarre to be newsworthy. "A Carnival cruise liner packed with elderly Jewish-American zealots on their way to fight in Palestine was boarded by Cuban pirates last month off the coast of Miami after the pirates were apparently tipped off by the Dade County Sheriff's Department, which has assumed the duties of the armed forces of southern Florida. The Haitian crew were killed by the pirates, and the passengers held for ransom for three days until no Jewish community could be contacted by radio or phone in North America or Europe with the resources to ransom them. An envoy from the Paris Jewish community was assassinated in Normandy after he invited the pirates to bring the Jews there, but the leading Rabbi of the largest Buenos Aires synagogue had persuaded the Argentinian government to negotiate the release of the 1200 hostages at the price of 10,000 Yuan each. Their resettlement there, however, was stymied when they refused to leave the ship in Havana. Further complicating the transaction was the condition of disrepair which had caused the closing of the Panama Canal Zone, requiring the ship to attempt to skirt the coast of Brazil, still technically at war with Argentina. At present, the cruise liner is anchored off the coast of Rio de Janeiro, a city still under military quarantine due to the cholera epidemic there, but supplies onboard are expected to be running low." Really? Who cared, when there was a local hero story to give people hope, Carolyn thought?

In the end, Lt. Col. McNabb's interview with the Le Temp reporter was scooped by the Post Dispatch, and ran just below the fold on the front page.

Chapter Eleven

“My feelings as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a figh ter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them and who, God's truth! was greatest not as a sufferer but as a fighter. In boundless love as a Christian and as a man I read through the passage which tells us how the Lord at last rose in His might and seized the scourge to drive out of the Temple the brood of vipers and adders. How terrific was his fight against the Jewish poison. Today, after two thousand years, with deepest emotion I recognize more profoundly than ever before the fact that it was for this that He had to shed his blood upon the Cross.” -Adolf Hitler

Is Also Great, And Would Suffice

The Deseret Department of Public Safety was its normal chaotic racket today, but Kelly was as taciturn as always. Her co-workers were used to her not talking to them, and her bosses had interpreted her quiet nature as meaning that she was trustworthy to handle more sensitive materials. The truth was, she just hated people. The headphones, which were supposed to be tracking praise music, were delivering her very own private playlist. At the moment, ‘Separate Ways’ by The King was being sadly crooned in her ear, and the words made her smile at their appropriateness for the last few months:

“I see a change is coming to our lives
It's not the same as it used to be
And it's not too late to realize our mistake
We're just not right for each other…”

But at least, she thought, at least instead of wondering what happened, people have finally gotten around to wondering what’s

going to happen next. And while Elvis sang, Kelly typed her heart out, for them, in rhythm. Thank you, thank you very much.

The file took shape with each letter. She was transcribing a debriefing report from the front: “The L.D.S. Air Force bombing of Parker Dam, formerly known as the chokepoint of the Colorado River, has continued despite Mexican Army rebuilding efforts for over a month now, as has the Gull forces occupation of the Hoover Dam 155 miles further north. This spike through the jugular of La Republic del Norte has caused the ongoing mass evacuations of Phoenix, San Diego, and Riverside due to a lack of drinking water. The Central Arizona Project and the Colorado River Aqueduct are dry now, and this action has made it possible…solidify defensive lines…recommend… Air Force bombing of the evacuated cities in order to prevent their reoccupation has…despite minimal concern over drift into Deseret territory.” People were getting blasé’ about mass destruction warfare.

Kelly finished typing up the report. She printed it off, sealed it in a courier envelope, and sent it by messenger to an office upstairs she had never been allowed into, and was glad for that. After her lunch break, during which she pretended to read a dog-eared paperback copy of The Book of Mormon and ate some fresh yogurt and not-so-fresh ramen, she found a courier standing at attention at her desk. She had no idea how long he had been waiting there, but it must be an important message he had to deliver. This was an urgent classified communication that had to be hand delivered. He tried not to look down her shirt when she bent over to countersign the seal as having been delivered, but she caught him and made him blush with a raised eyebrow. Today’s fashion was insulation from the ankle to the wrist, but she hadn’t broken Brigham, yet. As he hurried away embarrassed, Kelly efficiently unsealed the paper and began to transcribe it for delivery back down the chain of command.

“Prophet Rammell and the Council of Fifty have authorized the Deseret Air Force to begin regular F-16 patrols from Hill Air Force base along the border of the Republica occupied zone in California to monitor both Mexican and Chinese troop movements there. Operation White Horse, which will include the use of all of our Lewisite and Mustard at Toole, will take place the moment our Church is threatened.” Kelly whistled between her teeth. This was a big one, countersigned, straight from the top of the food chain. Last week the Prophet told a congregation at the Mormon Tabernacle that Deseret was watching the situation in southern California closely, as it also lay claim to the San Diego area as a potential outlet to the Pacific Ocean. So, he really meant it.

Maybe the gamble was that the rest of the world would be distracted by the civil war going on in China between the north and south, or the Indian troop movements along their frontier looking to take advantage of it. It reminded Kelly of the old story of the school boy who was yanked up by the teacher for kicking another boy on the ground. “What’s wrong with you, why are you kicking that boy while he’s down?” the teacher asked. Her mental digression was interrupted by an obnoxiously loud cleared throat at her elbow. Another courier, with his hand out, ready for the copy of the message as soon as she entered it into the system for general e-mail delivery within the department. These people were serious.

“What do you mean, ‘these people’? Her mind cackled at her. You’re one of them. The days were getting warmer and longer. Even near dark, the temperature was pleasant as she made her way home. Just yogurt and noodles had left her ready for dinner. It was amazing how much an important part food played in their lives these days. It used to be just fuel, or an excuse to socialize. Now finding it and preparing it and eating it was more urgent and ritualized. People hadn’t developed eating disorders after the hungry times, though, from what she had seen. In fact, the extra walking and physical exercise and not eating as much empty calories had made most people healthier. Those who hadn’t

messed the bed because they couldn't get their blood pressure medicine, at any rate.

A group of uniformed school kids came snaking down the sidewalk on the opposite side of the street. While they held hands and cleared a path for their exhausted looking teacher, they sang with innocent enthusiasm "I am gonna march with the cavalry, fly over the enemy, shoot the artillery, I am gonna march with the infantry, 'cause I'm in the Lord's army. Yes, sir!..." Kelly was reminded of what she had been thinking just after lunch. Oh, yeah…"What do you think I got him down, for?"

That night, after checking on Mrs. Murphy, Kelly made luxurious use of the restored full-time energy grid from the reopening of the coal mines in Wyoming. She microwaved some leftover chicken and had a dvd movie watching marathon, all by herself. "Mad Max", "28 Days Later", and "Dawn Of The Dead" kept her giggling until past two in the morning. She wondered if, like Dr. Pangloss had insisted, she really did live in the best of all possible worlds. It felt like old times, except for the Feral Canine Eradication Program popping off shots in the distance.

We Drive Our Ships To New Lands

Eurail had long been the most efficient and cheapest way to get around Europe, except for the stations that were unsafe due to crime. Spain had been notorious for rapes and robberies. That was before they had cleaned house while nobody was looking, Gerta assumed, as she awoke from a four hour nap in her berth. The breakaway of The Republic of Catalonia and the Basque Republic had made the Madrid government more paranoid towards their Muslim and African population. The TGV from Madrid to Paris took ten hours, but with even U.N. and diplomatic flights grounded, they had the only game in town. The train was packed with civilians trying to get home in the panic, but her job did have its perks, she considered, as she rolled over and sat up. She wondered where they were. Looking out the window did no good, not at nearly 200 miles per hour. Well, when they stopped

in Paris, the next leg to Brussels should only take another hour and a half. She was suddenly feeling alone in the world, and missing her parents, as well as her brother and sister-in-law and nephew. What were they doing, right now, in Landshut? Probably sleeping, if they were smart, she thought. It was still early morning outside.

After freshening up a bit in the public restroom at the end of the car, Gerta guided herself along the wall to the dining car for a croissant and strong black coffee, imported from Brazil before the cholera epidemic had fueled a blockade. Only two other members of her delegation were visible, a couple engaged in a romantic breakfast against staff policy. She casually waved at them and sat at the other end of the car by herself. Before long, a Eurail employee came down the aisle offering copies of ‘Le Figaro’, a popular French center-right newspaper. One glance at the headlines made her re-check the masthead to be sure that they hadn’t delivered a satire like ‘Le Canard enchaine’’, by mistake. No such luck.

Ten minutes of near-frantic banging on a half dozen private cabin doors and shaking a few reclining seats of the lower-echelon staff had the grumpy and fuzzy-eyed German ambassador and his employees awake and checking their voice mail and texts and emails. Apparently they had all hit the hay hard following their stressful two week involuntary layover in Madrid while the E.U. internal borders had been locked down, right after the bombings of Omaha and Beijing. Frantic messages awaited them. After a half hour of listening to, reading, and responding to messages, the Ambassador rejoined them in the dining car and confirmed that ‘Le Figaro’ had essentially gotten things right, for once. The paper, placed on board with the baggage and food service during the brief stopover in Barcelona that they had all slept through, was today’s edition, printed only a few hours ago. It was the most popular French paper in The Republic of Catalonia, so that figured. Since they were already on the way to Brussels, and had crossed the French border, they had received a special

dispensation to continue on to the UNDP headquarters at Rue Montoyer, where they would be met by the German ambassador to Belgium, as well.

The hurried staff meeting had little to go on except for what the official channels had confirmed from the paper, but the Ambassador was able to fill in the blanks well enough. The rapid abandonment of the northern and central regions of China by the military regime which had propped up and then replaced a new Central Committee in the first seventy-two hours after the destruction of Beijing had destabilized the entire Chinese command structure. By the end of the first week, Sanya had been declared the new capitol of the People's Republic, but the true power lay at the Yulin Harbor naval base. General Jiang's response was to declare the independence of the region under his control north of Beijing, and seek terms with the advancing Russians.

The Indian Army had meanwhile mobilized in Ladakh and struck north into Pakistan to finish up the Kargil war of 1999, and taken Kel, Gultari, and Hushe, then headed for Skardu with minimal resistance. Islamabad threatened to unleash the atomic genie on India, if they did not withdraw immediately. She followed the troop movements with her eyes on the power point map. The emergency military government of Shanghai, in shame, threw in with General Jiang's faction, and squadrons from the Dachang and Chongming air bases crippled the loyalist forces at the Hangzhou Jianqiao Airport with two days of sorties.

By the next day, armor and mobilized infantry units crossed the Karakoram Pass from Indian territory for a do-over of the 1962 attempt there, and had taken Mazar, Xaidulla, and Kangxiwar, before the Chinese frontier garrison at Tianshuihai redeployed to Changmar, and called for help from Yulin. The Chinese military regime responded the only way it still could: with a hail mary, nothing left to lose launch from all of their nuclear submarines still obeying orders.

There wasn't much need for any interpreting on the Continent, but they did need more analysts. Gerta began crunching numbers and population figures in her head, as the names of cities were listed. The Chinese had bombed New Delhi, Jaipur, and Lucknow with multiple strikes, some of which had ended up undershooting into the Himalayas. The missile they had intended for Novosibersk had ended up in Mongolia, and Vladivostok's in the Sea of Japan, but the Russians were responding, regardless.

Most shocking, in an immediate sense, to the U.N. delegation, was the delayed Yulin push back from the U.S. strike on Beijing. They had been waiting for it for two weeks, like a downstairs neighbor waiting for the upstairs second shoe to fall. Some of the more macabre of the Germans had placed bets on whether the Chinese would incinerate Anchorage, or the fleet itself, or both. As it turned out, they must have used the old launch trajectories from a year or more ago. The submarine which took skewed vengeance for the seven million dead and dying in Beijing aimed for targets on the Eastern seaboard of North America.

Of the sixteen SSBN missiles which came roaring up and eastwards, five splashed harmlessly into the Pacific Ocean on the way over. So much for Chinese technical prowess, the German interpreter thought with gallows humor. One exploded over Lake Ontario, creating a fresh-water tsunami that destroyed Toronto, Mississauga, and Hamilton. Another struck in the Green Mountains National Park, sparking a wildfire that raged for miles in Vermont. Two more overshot completely and fizzled out in the Atlantic. The remaining seven, however, found their intended targets, more or less. Fort Lee and Sheepshead Bay each took hits that would have killed them all, if they had been back in New York. A hit centered on Cambridge cancelled out Boston, as did Pawtucket for Providence. She thought of her countrymen in their tanks as a red dot appeared over the Philadelphia international airport, indicating a ground zero there, and of Mark Smith and his Marines, when they marked off Baltimore, further south.

When they switched trains in Paris, the station was under heavy guard by armed young men with “Front Nationale” armbands on their right sleeves, and a stern look in their eyes. Most of the passengers were herded out of the Metro stop and away, but the Ambassador’s credentials got them onto the nearly empty train to Brussels. Gerta sat down and began researching and calculating on her tablet, again.

A little over two hours later at UNDP headquarters, people had calmed down enough for her to be heard over the cell phone conversations and muttered curses in three languages. She had some numbers for them. As a preliminary estimate, the previous day’s casualties, collectively, stood at around four million in India, and over five million in North America. She began to run down the subtotals by area: New Delhi, 250,000; Lucknow, 2 million, roughly; Jaipur, just under two million, Toronto, 1.5 million, Mississauga and Hamilton, another half million, New York, a couple million; Boston, a half million, the same with Baltimore and Philadelphia, and less for Providence. There wasn’t much they could do about it, except count the numbers and report them to each other. One thing was for certain, they wouldn’t be going back to FDR Drive soon, if ever.

The Russians didn’t blame General Jiang for the att empted attacks on the Motherland. They did make the entire island of Hainan radioactive, though, and depopulated eight million from China’s southernmost province, over the next forty-eight hours. The Chinese naval contingents which escaped the destruction of Yulin Bay fled east towards their recently acquired colonies. Some of them avoided the massive pincer movements of the Russian navy coordinated with the American Fifth and Sixth fleets from Australia, for a while.

Pakistan’s crude atomic attacks o n Ludhiana and Rajkat that weekend only took a half million lives altogether, but they proved their point and opened up the occupation of Jammu, Kashmir, and Rajastan.

For her part, Gerta had started smoking again. She had quit nearly a year ago, not long before the world went crazy. She had resisted the urge during the first shocks to her system, when the Islamic State had snuck three small nuclear devices into Tel Aviv and Jaffa. While the world had recoiled in horror, Israel responded to the dirty bombs by nuking Beirut, Damascus, Cairo, Tripoli, and Amman, all at once. While they counted their dead and prepared to repel boarders, the Jews had threatened Baghdad and Tehran with the same treatment, and stated bluntly that Mecca and Medina would be next. “Operation Goliath”, they had called it, with clear intent. It was small reassurance that Jerusalem, too valuable to either side to risk losing, had been spared. By the time the Middle East, or what was left of it, had gone back to conventional warfare for the endgame, things had gotten too far along for the world to intervene, or even care as much about the collapse of the U.S., as it otherwise would have. Well, she had had enough of counting the dead and interpreting for the soon to be dying. She was finally going home for a much needed vacation, where the NPD had won a majority in Parliament and hopefully wouldn’t let in any mullahs with bombs while she caught up on some sleep. That threat was real, now that Turkey had joined the I.S. caliphate. The Golden Dawn Party had swept into a majority in the Greek parliament when non-Muslim Turks started flooding across the Bosporus. At least she could try to put some ghosts behind her, and see her family, again. She wondered where she would get tobacco from.

We Are Your Overlords

He was furious. How dare she, outside of the chain of command, with no title or office or authority? And what was in the sub Captain’s head, that he would obey her ‘suggestion’ as if it were an order, without consulting him or, okay, without consulting anybody in the Unified Command? What would General Harrison think? That he was trying to stage a coup? Why would Carolyn think that sending their only mobile nuclear asset downriver to

offload two SEAL Away teams in the ruins of Memphis was a good idea?

Her response, when McNabb had Kip and his team ‘escort’ her to his office to question her, was that she had wanted to have them liberate some things from Graceland and the Sun Records Studios, for his birthday. His birthday. She had put American lives, and a nuclear submarine loaded with enough missiles to kill millions more, at risk for a treasure hunting, no, a looting expedition. Purely for personal gain. The men involved might not have minded, but it was a flagrant misuse of power and influence.

He should be planning the campaign against the Cherokees and Choctaws in northeastern Oklahoma, to clear the way for the reclamation of the rail centers in Kansas City. Instead, he was having to deal with this, this…personal stuff.

Granted, the USS Nebraska had come back without any loss of crew, and undetected by the disorganized New Africa-allied population below the shattered pyramid, crushed in when a 747 had nose-dived into it. The plane had been shot down by an RPG while trying to take a planeload of Whites out of the city when I-40 had been shut down. They even had brought back lots of goodies from Memphis, ostensibly for him. But it could have gone horribly wrong, and cost them their mobile nuclear deterrent, and their nation’s future. Those fourteen missiles, and the silos at Malmstrom and Minot and Warren, were all that stood between them and invasion by the biggest kid left on the block, whoever that turned out to be. The Nebraska was the only part of that which was mobile. What if those missiles had been lost, or taken by New Africa? The worst thing was that he had given the Captain a severe verbal lashing for undertaking the mission, and the officer had taken the abuse as if it were a legitimate, official reprimand from a superior officer. Well, that’s what the Unified Command was for, he guessed.

Carolyn was unrepentant. Instead of being hurt that he was angry, she responded to John’s fury with her own. She began by sitting

in the chair in front of his desk like a guilty little girl called to the office of the principle he used to be. As he stomped and paced and waved his arms and fumed, however, she got mad and began talking back.

“You are the most unappreciative, ungrateful man I’ve ever known! Any body else would be impressed and thanking me and wondering why anybody would do something like that for somebody else. Not you. You just wonder if it’ll get you in trouble with General Harrison, who doesn’t deserve his job as much as you do, any way….”

The Lt. Col. interrupted her: “Don’t go too far. I’ve given you unprecedented, virtually unfettered access, but I won’t tolerate anybody from the media discussion sedition or…”

“The media? Sedition?” Carolyn spat. “Oh, you idiot. You’re too blind to see the old buzzards hanging onto your coattails, letting you be the front man, while they hold on to the power? They’re jealous of you because you’re smarter and braver and tougher than them, and willing to get your hands dirty. They’re using you!”

He stopped in front of her, putting his hands on his hips. “This is not about anybody else but you, and anything else but what you did. Don’t try to change the subject. I should have you arrested, if I ever thought you would do something like this, I never would have let you get so close! If I had ever known you were capable of such a stunt…”

“Oh, you didn’t know I was capable of doing anything without asking for your permission, first? You didn’t know I could make moves and get people to do things for me? That’s so rich. How do you think I got here? How do you think I got so close to you? You didn’t know I would do something like this?” Carolyn was smiling icily, now.

The Chairman of the Convention had dismissed the delegates for the day this morning, when news of the devastating attacks on

the American East coast had come across his radio. He had ordered all flags in the city, which were still the Old Glory fifty starred version, for now, to be lowered to half staff, and declared the convention closed for a day of mourning for their lost fellow Americans in those cities back east. He didn't think things could get any worse, until the Nebraska pulled back up to its mooring. What he had thought yesterday must have been just a routine training run to keep their engines clean and their batteries charged turned out to be THIS, and the Captain's bad luck to give his report on this of all days was unfortunate. John looked at Carolyn, looked out his window at the arch in the distance, and tried to rein in his temper. But she kept on…

"You had your goon squad, who everybody in the city knows you use as a hit team, by the way, come and drag me out of a meeting with my editor where I was promoting YOU, to get yelled at because I tried to do something nice, and then you insult me worse by saying that you didn't think I was capable of doing it? What, do you think I wasn't smart enough? Not ruthless enough? Not Machiavellian enough? Haven't you heard the story, John, about the little old lady who lived by herself in the woods? You know, she was out gathering firewood one day, and found a snake half frozen to death, so she felt sorry for it and took it inside and put it by the hearth to thaw out? Remember that story?"

Lt. Col. McNabb looked at her like she had lost her mind, like he had lost all respect for her. She stood up, tears streaming down her face in rage and hurt. His secretary on the other side of the door had probably retreated to the end of the hall. Kip's desk there probably wasn't even far enough away for this to be a private conversation.

"Well, that snake, he thawed out, and he coiled and struck and bit her, and as the little old lady lay there dying, she asked the snake, Mr. Snake, you were frozen and about dead, and I saved you, I brought you in and warmed you up and saved you, and this is

how you repay me?” some southern Tennessee had crept back into her voice.

John was still listening to her seemingly bizarre rambling, as Carolyn stomped to the door, then turned and pointed her finger at him like it could kill. “And that snake, John, do you know what he said? He said, “Idiot, you knew I was a snake when you brought me in.” She made sure to slam the door, as she left. Hard. The pictures rattled on his wall. One fell with a crash.

He didn’t make much progress in trying to formulate a response to the bombings of Boston, Baltimore, New York, Providence, and Philadelphia, that afternoon. Not that there was much they could do. He was glad at least that so many hundreds of thousands of people had moved west, out of the cities, over the last eight months. The black riots had ironically saved their lives by spurring White flight across states and regions. Now, how would the loss of Toronto effect his planned annexation of the three Canadian prairie provinces? McNabb’s secretary wouldn’t meet his eyes when he left for the day. His security team didn’t say a word on the way back to the Hyatt. McNabb dreaded seeing tomorrow’s paper. For more reasons than one. Never make an enemy who buys their ink by the barrel.

Chapter Twelve

"I advocated the preservation of the white race, whatever it takes to preserve it. The white race is the most endangered species on the face of the earth."
–Pastor Richard Butler

No One Here Gets Out Alive

Two brief tours of the facility while he had been Senator and Vice-President elect had not prepared Perry Bellefont for just how big Fort Hood was. The base had needed to spruce up their image after that crazy raghead doctor had shot it up, and he needed to toughen up his image, so he had taken a walk-through as a mutual back-rubbing photo-op right after the primary. He had taken another right after the November election, to personally thank the base commander who had broken military protocol by personally endorsing Bellefont's patriotic credentials. Major General Hampton had probably earned their ticket a million votes throughout the south and west with that one endorsement. Running for public office in Texas without a military record required some finesse. He had been able to position himself as a conservative, even as a right-winger, without it, though. The party establishment had even said that they kept him on the ticket because it was better to have him inside the tent pissing out, than outside the tent pissing in. He guessed that sometimes you had to be careful what you pretended to be, because that's what you ended up becoming.

Bellefont's decision to bail on New Y ork and trying to reassert his by-God Constitutionally legitimate authority over the nation had been his best move yet, as it turned out. At the time it had been a pragmatic move, based on the fact that Texas needed a hero, and had the resources and history to pull off nationhood. Oh, and this was his home, that too. The green graves of his sires, and all that. Now, the rest of the cabinet and executive branch who hadn't

taken an oath of loyalty to him and given up on the U.N. jockeying for position, well, they were finely ground ash being blown out over the north Atlantic.

When he had first cornered the party's nomination for Vice President after that shrill feminist witch had won all of their female and minority votes, Perry had been struggling. He had never been a good loser. It was something he didn't like to practice at. Making it worse, losing to a woman, especially an ugly and old woman, had hurt his pride. If she'd been some young hottie, heckl, he could understand that. Not that shriveled up, flappyjowled, used up old lesbian. But if you wanna play in Texas, to paraphrase Charlie Daniels, you gotta have a cowboy in the band. So, he had picked himself up from the campaign trail, brushed himself off, put his Stetson on, and climbed back on the horse for another ride. That round carried him to D.C., even if he was riding shotgun instead of leading the charge.

It had taken a careful balance of reigning himself in after his primary campaign rhetoric had gotten him labeled "the uncensored voice of violent militarism" by his opponent's spin doctors. Perry had pushed for a strong defense budget and a tough foreign policy. That just cinched up the veterans, the military families, and what the President had condescendingly referred to as the "flaggots", the patriotic types, for him. She needed that constituency, are at least a big slice of it. The Texas Senator, not the Lord, would provide. Amen.

Because of his perceived expertise in military affairs, the Vice President had presided over day after day of emergency base closure oversight meetings as racially mixed units had been locked down and dismantled, then reconstituted after segregation. The mainstream media had been all over that, even with the country tearing itself apart. A White officer got shot by a black soldier, or a group of Mexican enlistees took over a recruiting center, and he got blamed. Firefights broke out between different racial groups in Fort Bragg, with the Whites coming out on top,

and he got the blame. White soldiers got massacred by black enlisted in Fort Benning, and guess who got blamed? You guessed it. Perry. Not just by the sniveling, grasping, Jew-driven media, either. No, he had to hear about it two or three times a day from the Wicked Witch Of The East, too. He had known that there was no way in hell their ticket could get re-elected, after basically giving up on a racially diverse armed forces. It was like they had admitted that multiracialism didn't work, that diversity, well, it wasn't such a strength, really, after all. The military had been used as a tightly controlled lab for social experiments since the Korean War. From racial integration to homosexual rights, social change had been pushed in the armed forces, first. It was kind of fitting that the armed forces had been the first elements of society to push the failed experiment of multiracialism back out, in many places.

Frankly, Bellefont had only liked the first couple of weeks in Washington. His wife, a trophy he'd picked up from a Houston oil family he'd needed to finance his second Congressional run, hated the Naval Observatory grounds, and hated the security always present, and hated the D.C. parties and social dinners that came with the house and the job. His kids hated the Sidwell Friends school, and the 'fake posers', as they called them, there. If anything, they were all happier living on the base here at Hood. It was a damn site better than the two bedroom apartment they had been cramped into for a couple of months at One UN New York.

To man y, Perry was the President, even though he hadn't been sworn in to take the oath of office. In all honesty, he hadn't taken the oath yet because he wasn't sure that he wanted the job. More and more, as the Mexican Army pushed north into his beloved Texas and the Governor dithered in Austin, he felt needed there. When the state government evacuated the capitol city and the Governor resigned in disgrace, he knew that the eyes of Texas were upon him.

Major General Scott Hampton's calls to the U.N. headquarters hadn't gone through official channels. The commanding officer of III Corps at Fort Hood had been trying to reach Bellefont, personally. On the third try, he got his secretary, and then Perry himself. Gen. Hampton was seeking permission to consolidate the command for the defense of Texas under his staff, basically co-opting the Air Force. Bellefont told him that the fate of the nation rested on what happened in Texas, not what was happening, or not happening, in New York. He would come home and assert civilian leadership over the situation and give Gen. Hampton the command of all of the armed forces in the great state of Texas, in exchange for his support. Ten minutes later, the call ended with a plan already in motion.

When the Secret Service had listened to his rationalization, they had obeyed orders, with very few exceptions, and simply had the Sikorsky VH-3D Sea King fueled up at the U.N. helipad hangar where Marine Two had been parked. Well, it was Marine One, now, Perry thought. Those exceptions he released from duty, against his vindictive instincts, to win over the loyalty of the rest. La Guardia was closer, but out of the question, since a company of Italian U.N. blue helmets had moved in to secure and hold it, and JFK was out of commission, but Westchester County airport had been secured by New York State Police up there. A couple of calls had begun the process of maintenance and preparation of a former JetBlue A320 airbus that would carry the hundred or so federal employees and staff from the Executive branch that he wanted on his list. Gathering them together without creating a panic with the U.N. had been accomplished through the planning of a fake birthday party for his son the next day, which he of course wanted his closest friends to be at. His reduced but still loyal staff briefly interviewed each of the party invitees in person, to see how many were willing to go to Texas.

In addition to Perry and his family and the five members of his staff, eight secret service members, eleven Marines, (four of them from Texas), and five Air Force flight crew were with the program.

In addition, the junior Congressman from Laredo and his girlfriend (Bellefont would let the Congressman and his wife sort that out, once they got home) and the sycophantic Senator who had been elected to replace Perry in his Senate seat and his three staff members and wife and kid, and the other Senator who was flying stag because his family had stayed in Fort Worth, were signed up. Two other Congressmen were missing in action in D.C.. Another had been on a fact-finding mission in Israel, so she wouldn't be taking up any legroom on this flight.

Outside of the military and Texan group, they would have along the Secretaries of the Department of Education and the Department of Veterans Affairs, a Deputy Secretary of Defense, an Under-Secretary from Homeland Security, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, and members of their families, along with a mix of Executive branch staffers, policy wonks, and chain of succession loyalists. About eighty five people he could trust. Enough to plan a murder, or start a new religion. Or, just maybe, a new government, a new nation. Several of the people he invited had turned him down. Most disappointing of these were the Secretary of the Department of Defense and the Secretary of State, but they both promised not to say anything to the U.N. until he was gone, not even to the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., herself. They were all just secretly glad to be rid of him and the truncated power he represented, truth be told.

Bellefont set the loyal military folks to rounding up and fueling vehicles for the motorcade, so they could be lined up and loaded up at a moment's notice. The party invitees were instructed to walk over to the ballroom with their one bag of luggage each was allowed wrapped up as a birthday gift. To the U.N. staff watching the procession, it looked like his son was going to be one lucky kid. By the time the vehicles filed out of the parking garage and began to be quickly loaded, it was too late to stop them. Not that anybody particularly felt like trying.

The Sikorsky with himself and his family and a couple of agents aboard had already lifted off from the helipad. They kept the post-apocalyptic wagon train below them in sight as it twisted and turned northwards through the city. First Avenue up to 58th, then the wrong way west to Park Avenue, and north again. Their bird's eye view helped the caravan avoid a multi-car pileup at the intersection with 60th, which the agents were able to radio back and forth to steer clear of. Over to Fifth Avenue and the wrong way past the pond, where a clutch of penguins, obviously wandering free from the Central Park Zoo, huddled in fear. They had clear sailing until a pile of tires blocked the way to Marcus Garvey park, which seemed to be an armed encampment. Veering right to avoid Harlem, they took 116th over to Harlem River Dr., then the 278 to the Hutchinson River Parkway, where things cleared out, and the sporadic sound of warning shots from surrounding rooftops faded away. It took three hours, over twice the normal drive time, for their seventeen vehicle motorcade and armored personnel carrier escorts to drive the forty miles, due to having to drive around barricaded streets and openly hostile (as in, shooting at anything moving) neighborhoods. Perry was standing beside Marine One, patting the smooth metal skin affectionately for the last time, as they rolled in and started transferring onboard the plane.

When they had landed at Robert Gray Army Air Field Airport in Fort Hood, Gen. Hampton himself was there to meet him, with an honor guard and a brass band playing "Hail To The Chief". It was good to be back home.

A Feast Of Friends

Randall had been fighting these dirty jihadist Arabs in Grand Rapids for over a month. Since the Michigan Militia had been integrated, consolidated, educated, and relegated to the Unified Command, he had been riding and walking from one strip mall to the next. From one shootout to the next. Most of the terrorists they couldn't catch alive, but when they did, they spoke better

English than the blacks they had mainly wiped out around here. Most of them claimed to be American citizens, even. But they sure hated America, whether they had been born here, or brought here. Running a party store or a 7-11 one day, blowing up a car bomb the next, pretty much, as far as the Lieutenant was concerned. They also were well armed, probably by their Islamic State contacts, before international transport had shut down. At least, Randall hoped that they weren't still shipping more AKs, M4geries, LAW rockets, RPG-7s, and heavy machine guns into Lake Michigan from the Atlantic. Rumor had it that not all of the fishing boats travelling back and forth again these days were hauling in whitefish. The twenty-five miles from Grand Rapids to the waterfront was heavily patrolled by militiamen like himself, but you couldn't be everywhere at once. The Lucky Strikes he smoked came across that way, as did loot from Milwaukee.

His militia unit had watched Detroit burn last August as bombload after bombload of incendiaries from the 127th Air Wing at Selfridge roared in. Randall had fallen in love with those A-10s. Their ground support had saved his butt when they got cut off and surrounded in the Dearborn pocket. The Arabs had hit them from behind while the Michigan Militia was tasked with driving the black rioters back into Mexicantown where the MS-13 were tearing them up. Taking fire from all sides, Lieutenant Balderson and his platoon had made a stand at the 153 cloverleaf where they had clear fields of fire in all directions, and called in air strikes on all points of the compass.

He would never forget the roar from behind coming nearer and passing over him to make a Red Robin up the road disappear in a flash as another hostile position was attrited. A cargo van launched itself out of the Planet Fitness parking lot, over the curb, and up the grassy bank. The driver obviously didn't know they were too close to the Militia position for the Thunderbolts to hit. Randall and Craig and Terry, who had been together from the start, kneeled behind their Yukon Denali and tried their best to take out the driver. One of them must have been lucky, because

at close to one hundred yards the van veered into the guardrail and ground to a halt. The free side door opened at the same time as the back doors, and several active targets engaged them at long range…at least it was long range for his AR-15 and flipup sights. Craig's 30.06 had a high dollar scope made for taking deer at twice that range. The heavy rounds punched through van doors and walls and Arab traitors as if they were Bambi. The last one left the dubious cover of the van and tried to run back across the road to the ditch. He didn't make it.

The Islamic Center of America was burning so ferociously when they broke out of the cloverleaf that they had to take the eastbound lanes westwards past it. Dozens of dead Arabs, several clusters of them grouped around crew-serviced heavy machine guns on trailers attached to military vehicles, were scattered around the parking lot.

Moments later they came under fire again, and the eighty men Randall fought beside pulled quickly off the road into the cover of the forested fringe to their left to dismount and do what they did best. They had finally taken the Henry Ford Community College by dusk, as the enemy fell back. He spent the night camped in River Rouge Park watching the Thunderbolts pound the Joe Louis arena and the Civic Center from six miles away. The Ambassador bridge was bombed to push the insurgents into a corner. It had taken them three more days to work their way east, block by block, to the river. The 1st battalion, 126th cavalry of the Michigan Army National Guard had become his best buddies then. Troop A from Cadillac took seventy percent casualties overrunning the New Black Panther Party positions around the Opera House, where the former electric company lineman had seen the effects of BGM TOW-70 guided missiles crewed by defecting black soldiers being used against American armor.

Those mutineers knew they had nothing coming if they surrendered, so when they ran out of ordinance they hid out in the Detroit-Windsor tunnel. The Air National Guard flooded it, making

the issue moot. Several hundred black militants holed up in the towers of the Renaissance Center. The water and power were turned off to the block, and Bradley Fighting Vehicles ringed Jefferson Avenue to wait for the inevitable surrender. Randall had been reminded of footage he had seen of 9/11 victims jumping from the twin towers in New York, as Randall had watched most of the black leaders take the easy way out from the rooftops. Some of them appeared to have fashioned makeshift cardboard and paneling wings for themselves, to try to glide. None of them were able to jump far enough to reach the water.

The Battle of Grand Rapids, by contrast, was a cakewalk. For one thing, six months of starvation, a hard winter, and mounting casualties had reduced the number of insurgents on the ground here, and everywhere. For another, it was a lot harder for them to hide in plain sight and blend in, as this part of the world just kept on getting Whiter. The ones who were left were just as desperate, though.

At the moment Randall's group was bunking out in Millennium Park, enjoying a day of rest. That was the plan. Balderson had first gotten involved in the Michigan Militia Corps, the Wolverines, a couple of years ago, when Terry, a buddy at work, had begun sending him e-mails about it, then taken him shooting with them. His original motivation had been to have an excuse to get out of the house. Barbara was not a happy housewife. She was always on him about there not being enough steaks in the freezer, or the yard being mowed, or the kids taken to the park, or the dog walked. It was a way to get some breathing room, some man time. A few weeks into it, meeting every weekend with the same group of guys, and the talk shifted from guns to politics. He began to understand their distrust of the government. Randall had never been into conspiracy theories or wearing tin foil hats, but some things like Ruby Ridge and Waco couldn't be ignored.

Along with his growing anti-government political activism, Randall became involved in the group's tactical training. Sure, at first it

was just cool and macho to run around in the woods with a gun, but after a bit he really got into the military science of it. After a year, he was put in charge of his local group. His buddy Terry wasn't too happy about that, but the other guys didn't seem to mind him being a shot-caller. His wife would not call him "Lieutenant Balderson", though. Barbara was suspicious of why he was spending so much time gone every weekend, so he brought her to a meeting with him. Before long, she made friends with a couple of the other wives, and his kids played with their kids. Under the militia's influence, she pulled their kids out of public school, and began home schooling them.

Randall and Barbara began to prepare. The whole Balderson family got involved. Whether it was the Zombie Apocalypse or SHTF or whatever it was called, they began prepping and planning for different scenarios and contingencies. Their marriage became more solid, and happier, as far as Randall was concerned. When the economic downturn accelerated, they liquidated their savings account and invested in canned food and ammunition. A few months later, the riots began. They, and the group, had seen it coming a mile away. The local groups began meeting with other local groups, networking and organizing into larger, interlocking cells. When the cities erupted, they became proactive. First, they moved their families to safety, then they went on the offensive. Randall hardly recognized himself, these days. He wondered if his kids would.

He had become a warrior, but he still was a rockabilly guy. That gave Randall a distinctive character and flair among the other mid-ranking Michigan Militia leaders. That was especially true as their ranks grew with newbie volunteers who all wanted to look and act like the R. Lee Ermey or Rambo. He leaned against the beaten up Jeep's bullet-riddled door and used the side mirror to comb back his pompadour for the hundredth time today. A black leather motorcycle jacket draped over his Kevlar vest. On his helmet, which always ruined his hair, was the Sharpie enscribed motto "Front Toward Enemy". He had an image to uphold, here in

the latter days of the Apocalypse. People had certain expectations. A shrill whistling sound broke through faintly over the noise of his I-pod. He glanced up, and before he could pop out the ear bud, a blast lifted him off the ground and threw him back to it. Randall almost landed on his feet, but not quite.

Nobody noticed as he pulled himself up by the door handle, because other mortar rounds were coming in, all around him. One hit a truck squarely, as men jumped out of the back to find better cover. Others fell short and spouted sand up from the beach at the Splashpad. They must be coming from the 196, he thought, looking around for his squad. Craig and Terry were bent over low, running towards his position from the lake. Another series of mortar rounds struck, a couple of them hitting together, turning Terry into a red mist and blur as he watched. Craig made it to the Jeep beside him, out of breath. Randall and the inked-up motorcycle mechanic looked at each other and shook their heads. As suddenly as it had started, the attack ended. All of the Arabs were gone by the time they got to the suspected launch site. This was the kind of hit and run fighting the enemy had been reduced to, but it still stung.

The next morning, after tending to their wounded and trucking off their dead, Randall's Michigan Militia unit faced no resistance driving across town to pull security at the Gerald R. Ford international airport. They were technically all a part of the U.S. armed forces, now. Orders were orders.

Just after midnight another mortar barrage began, this one hitting the terminal building. He had just been sitting down at a table in the dusty former Bell's Brew Pub to eat his MRE when the roof fell in ten feet away, interrupting another song in his ear. By the time he and several other militiamen had made it out the back doors to the gates, the mortars had gone quiet, but a chilling, warbling chant had replaced it. The spotlights were being shot out as he could see the perimeter fence shake from attackers coming

through or over it. He ordered the men around him to take cover behind a line of motorized baggage carts.

“Hit them as soon as they come onto the tarmac, so you can see them good! Let’s rock and roll!”
He didn’t know any of the guys around him by name, but they followed his orders, and held their fire until the dark shapes emerged from the breached fence-line onto the half-lit runways. Randall quickly shrugged off his motorcycle jacket to free up his heavily tattooed arms. He took a deep breath, hit ‘play’, and pulled back his charging handle to chamber a round as the guitar kicked in. Oh, my boy, my boy.
Just four minutes later they had repelled one wave, then another came at them after regrouping and awaiting more reinforcements through the fence. Where were their own reinforcements? Where was their air cover? Randall changed magazines for the third time, and quickly lit a cigarette. Who knew, it might be his last. Well, everybody has to quit, sometime. He had meant to give up the habit, just not necessarily today. Three more left…magazines, not coffin nails. He had more than enough of them to last him.
He could hear firing from the front of the building, now, but he wasn’t sure which had been the diversion, and really it didn’t matter, too much. He had enough on his plate. TCB, baby, Taking Care of Business. A couple of guys to his left were down, one not moving. Here they came again, screaming about ‘Allah Akbar!’ and ‘Death to the infidels!’. At extreme range for his AR, he saw a staggered line, jogging forward while looking from side to side at the guys beside them. They were trying to get encouragement that they weren’t going in alone. Nobody wants to die a hero alone, when it comes down to it, not even when promised a bunch of virgins. Randall had never understood that part. Personally, he would have been motivated a lot more by the promise of like, seventy-two really experienced kitty cats, but these were some messed up dudes. Now the first line were in range…
One in red, he led, and bled..
”Well it’s been ten years and a thousand tears, and look at the

mess I'm in…" He sang the song along with his I-pod, as loud as he could. He tried to line up a shot to take two with one bullet, for fun. One went down, the other staggered, but kept coming.
"Well I sit and I pray, in my broken down Chevrolet…"
A couple of them were trying to let loose with some wild shots on the run, without effect, so far. He spaced his shots calmly, taking out the ones directly in front of him first. "There's got to be a better way!", Randall cackled at the joke around his Lucky Strike and widened his arc of fire, to cover the gap where they were closer.
"Take away, take away, take away this ball and chain…" His carbine locked back, the magazine empty. He smoothly pushed the release button, let the empty fall, and slammed a full one into the bottom, heard the click, slapped the bolt release, and lined up for another shot. When he regained his sight picture, he saw that the ragheads had turned tail and were loping off.
"…cause I'm sick and I'm tired, and I can't take any more pain…" He had no qualms about shooting all of them he could in the back. Pop!
"…never to return again, take away, take away….." Pop! Pop! Hey, we all feed the gods we choose to serve. He was the Ayatollah of Rock-and-Rolla, daddy-o! His ears rang in stereo like microphone feedback.

Whole Lot A Shakin' Goin' On

The Mexican Army had as serious a resupply problem as he did, Captain Ming calculated. Their supply lines up Highway 5 was being interdicted around Bakersfield by regular strafings and bombings from the flying Mormons. Of course the little brown people were used to smuggling things, so they got enough supplies in to keep the pressure on. Still, not having the option of defecting or retreating had stiffened up his men, the thirty-five hundred who were left.

Hu's, err, ' assassination by the Americans', and General Jiang's recall, had left the Chinese Navy in control of the People's

Humanitarian Mission in North America. When Beijing was lost, and the Civil War began, Admiral Liu's loyalty, as a Navy man, had been with Yulin. Now, they were gone, too. Jiang had sold out to the Russians, but privately Ming knew it was the only move the General had left. With popular uprisings in Japan and Korea threatening the garrisons there, and an insurrection in Manila, the last report he had received from the Philippines was when the two American fleets hiding around Australia began shelling Davao City. That had been six days ago.

Small craft swarm attacks by hundreds of fanatical Muslims on jet skis, speed boats, and cruisers had cost the U.S. Navy three ships while they had moved through Indonesian waters. That had slowed them down and kept them from getting into the fight sooner. They were able to stand off and sink five Kapitan Patimura class corvettes, two submarines, three missile boats, and a Ahmad Yani frigate who got too close, as well as several smaller craft. The Indonesian government had called for a jihad against the 'invading infidels'. Jakarta and Surabaya had each gotten a visit by a carrier air wing bearing gifts, in response. As they broke off and headed north, the fleets sent over a hundred Tomahawk cruise missiles into the two cities, and another score into the Indonesian naval bases at Kupang and Tahuna. Each missile carried a thousand pounds of explosives. The Americans didn't expect any more trouble on the way back. The three day delay in Indonesia had allowed the Chinese fleet to regroup in Manila

Bay, and the surviving elements limped in piece by piece. Wary of each other in the aftermath of the civil war and the loss of their chain of command, twice in a row, the naval officers were divided. Some cruised east towards Hawaii, ostensibly to 'provide relief to the garrison there', but mainly to get out of the range of American and Russian guns. The majority, however, redeployed north in the East China Sea and made overtures to Jiang. Ming waited to see how that would work out for them.

Admiral Liu was a stubborn man. He knew his superior well enough to understand that his resentment of General Jiang had played just as large a role in his decision to back Yulin in the civil war as had his loyalty to the Navy. Well, he had bet on the wrong horse, and now they were all suffering for it. Something had to be done about that. Without resupply by sea, or reinforcement, or withdrawal, they would not make it through the Spring. They already were crowded into the Bay Area with their backs to the ocean. What was it the Americans said also…"time to fish or cut bait".

That maniac pirate Vice Admiral Woods had been sinking any ship that they sent through the Golden Gate within hours, and there was no Chinese naval force this side of Honolulu that could lift the siege. A new state government had declared itself up in Redding, and invited American military forces under the control of St. Louis to intervene in California. Ming was glad that St. Louis was a long, long ways away. Almost as far as home, in the other direction. And just as unreachable.

Admiral Liu's flagship was now a nearly new type 052D destroyer, the 'Changsha', at anchor in the bay. Captain Ming's ship, the Haikou, was a decade older and five hundred tons lighter, but he knew and trusted his crew like they were his family. His ship had the responsibility for air defense of the rest of the fleet, and the U.S. Seventh fleet liked to test that, nearly every day. That was why Ming and Liu anchored at opposite ends of the bay. Liu's orders, for the safety of the flagship. A dozen frigates, corvettes, replenishment ships, and landing ships rested in a neat staggered row between them.

It would be easy enough to cross the space under some pretense, and easy as well to do the job. Keeping the other captains from doing the same thing to himself in turn, afterwards, would be the challenge. Ming knew that he could do a better job of running things than the stuffed shirt in charge. Maybe he could break them out and get them home, where they could rejoin the

navy. Jiang would have no problem with him, once Liu was out of the picture. It was the honorable thing to do. Not for himself, but for others. For his country. For the people.

Chapter Thirteen

"What we really want to do is to be left alone. We don't want Negroes around. We don't need Negroes around. We're not asking -- you know, we don't want to have them, you know, for our culture. We simply want our own country and our own society. That's in no way exploitive at all. We want our own society, our own nation...." –Dr. David Duke

I Don't Need Your Civil War

Four identical looking green Jeep Cherokees, the official Church vehicle of preference, were lined up at the curb outside the Department of Public Safety for the ongoing trials of suspected homosexuals. A couple of skinny looking mission boys in their white shirts and black ties were giving out free cups of water to those lined up on the sidewalk to get a peek inside at the proceedings. "Free water! It's the real thing, not Coke!" they called, as they walked up and down the line. Kelly kept moving, going around back to the employee's entrance, where an armed security guard in the black uniform of Church security checked over her government employee I.D. before letting her in.

Now that the ice was melting away and the breeze carried the promise of a permanent thaw, it was getting harder and harder for her to hide her hammer under her clothes. Based on the look the guard had given her, that wasn't all that her warmer weather wear was showing off. For some that was a good thing, but sometimes, it was a bad thing.

Kelly put her lunch in her desk drawer and fantasized for a moment about a forbidden cup of coffee, or three, before heading to her desk. Along with a stack of overnight interdepartmental correspondence and a couple of red-sealed courier messages marked 'urgent', as most things from upstairs were these days, as a paper. The Salt Lake Tribune was a government sanctioned

publication, and today the office rotation of their copy had begun at her desk. Probably the night security trying to butter her up, figuratively or otherwise. She took her shoes off, wiggled her toes, and indulged in a few minutes of scanning the paper, since she was the first one at work, like usual. She liked to compare the official, censored version of reality with the uncensored narratives she heard from a dozen different perspectives on the shortwave most nights. It was kind of like going to a magic act, and knowing the secrets to all of the tricks.

The Deseret Ministry of Information was obviously competing with the developing power center in St. Louis for the hearts and minds of their northern neighbors with the headline story: “After fighting a losing campaign for independence for five months, the United Dakota Sioux Nation and the First People’s Army have formally surrendered to expeditionary forces of the Wyoming, North and South Dakota, and Montana National Guards, along with mounted infantry from the Canadian prairie provinces. The rebels at press time were laying down their weapons and agreeing to a new treaty consolidating them in a single reduced reservation in South Dakota. Both Montana and Wyoming each agreed to provide a herd of 200 cattle each fall to the 2000 surviving Sioux in a gesture of good will to their neighbor states. A commission of state governors and regional military leaders from Montana, Minnesota, Nebraska, and the provisional states of Manitoba and Saskatchewan are cooperating in the relocation of Sioux from their territories to the new reservation by next Spring. The citizen posses of Pierre and Bismarck, as well as the Wyoming Rancher's Co-op Militia, are to be congratulated for their crucial defensive roles in putting down the insurrection, and will be rewarded for their heroism following the auction of forfeited Sioux land and properties.” Kelly figured the Prophet was angling for a sweetheart deal for some of that beef, himself, with that fluff job.

Salt Lake City, angling for any support it could find in the more anti-theocratic E.U., generously offered diplomatic recognition for the Basque Republic, the Republic of Catalonia, The Kingdom of

Corsica, and Scotland, in hopes that they would reciprocate. Kelly wondered what weird political prejudice had made them leave out the North Italian Republic in the public offer? Probably some obscure shadow diplomacy going on, there.

The economic news, if it could be believed, showed that things seemed to be coming together. “In Provo, the Deseret Commerce Commission is regulating standardized barter exchange between Wisconsin cheese and dairy products, Nebraskan wheat, and Iowa corn, with the Deseret Dollar. All three states are expected to have produce and crop surpluses this year, and will be exporting to neighboring states, as well as to Europe, once the buyers have brokered a deal with the Republic of Quebec and their partner France to safeguard maritime shipping through the Great Lakes to the Atlantic, where the French navy will escort convoys of grain and agricultural products to a hungry Europe. The continuing multinational European defense against Godless Islam has stretched resources thin for the European civilian market. Discussions are already underway in the Council to prioritize manufactured items needed here which can be obtained from European sources, from armaments and automobiles to factory machinery and industrial parts…”

It wasn’t often that news crept into the local paper from the East Coast, especially since the bombings last month. They had merited a special sermon from the Prophet about God’s just punishment for wickedness, sin, and lust. A lot of Mormons had friends and family back East, though, so he didn’t lay it on too thick. Now, an epidemic seems to have broken out: “The Superflu epidemic being called “Da Trots” continues to ravage occupied regions of the East Coast. Individuals in the most devastated areas, where many of the radiation poisoned survivors have weakened immune systems, seem especially vulnerable. United Nations spokesperson Sue Chi-Len, in an interview from Brussels, denied that continuing conflicts between infected minority groups in the quarantined sectors of lower Manhattan are spilling over into areas previously unaffected by the outbreak. She

did confirm, however, that some carriers of the disease had been shot in the water while trying to float away from the internment hospital grounds for the infected on Staten Island. Vigilante groups in southern New Jersey have begun forming firing squads armed with weapons taken from U.N. peacekeeping force posts which they have overrun, and are reportedly executing any and all persons who show symptoms of infection. U.N. Patrols all along the Atlantic seaboard have been reduced until more vaccine shipments arrive under heavy guard from their laboratories at Fort Dix."

In other international news, the banner story was "Calcutta government broadcasts re - transmitted to North America from the Indian space station via short wave indicate that troops from the surviving Indian Army units east of New Delhi have crossed the Ganges to block Chinese human wave attacks which have overwhelmed Bareilly from encircling the badly stricken capitol. Tens of thousands are estimated dead in the battle, and several thousand more were killed last week when the Indian Air Force used tactical nuclear weapons in the destruction of the Chinese railroad hub of Shiquanhe, a major staging area of the invasion." Kelly thought back to the article about trade through the Great Lakes, and wondered where the Canadian maritime provinces loyalties lay, these days. She would have to find the station broadcasting from Halifax, again, and listen between the lines. For now, other employees were filtering in. Time to start her day.

As she had passed Mrs. Murphy's door this morning, she had heard the trial broadcasts already blaring away inside. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. The more things changed, sometimes, the more they stayed the same. Lately, Kelly had been thinking about getting a cat. Large animals like dogs weren't allowed in her building, and besides, people had learned that their domesticated canines would run off and join the packs of wild dogs eating scraps and cats and small children, if they got the chance. But, she was thinking that she might get a cat. Either that, or go on a date. One or the other. Maybe it was the Spring

weather, making her feel like birds and bees and snuggling with someone or something.

There wasn't much dramatic in the day's courier messages or interdepartmental mail she processed and forwarded, regardless of the 'urgent' stamps. Just more troop movement reports from Nevada and requests for material and equipment and reinforcements. Some minor crime reports, hearkening back to the days when that was the only kind of issue this office handled, but those took second place, these days. The shift from crime fighting to armed forces had been motivated by one of Prophet Rammell's first secular sermons, in which he had stated that "We seek a paradigm shift in our values, a revolutionary worldview in our people, and a fundamental change in the form and focus of our governing bodies." The leader claimed that "the guiding principle of the State should be that what is good for the Church is good, and what is bad for the Church is bad." He added that, "at this stage of the revolution, our weapons of choice are the pen, the leaflet, the keyboard, the videocamera, and every other weapon of mass construction which allows us to reach out to our people and awaken them to the dangers which threaten our very existence." Things sure had changed, since then.

A little after six she had reached a stopping point. She never got caught up completely, but sometimes she could draw a line in the sand, or on her desk in between piles, and call that 'quitting time'. As it was, she was the first to arrive and the last to leave, which helped her supervisors overlook her…questionably adherence to accepted religious doctrine.

There definitely were more stores open along her walking route home. Gas was for sale again to civilians, for $10.35 per gallon, limit five gallons per household per week with ration card, and push-carts selling hot sandwiches and cold drinks were on every street corner. Kelly grabbed a roast beef and cheese and a bottle of tea in a recycled water bottle and got back two pre-1965 silver dimes for the new ten Deseret Dollar note she handed the old

man. As she passed by the school, she was reminded that it was nearly time for the Church's semi-annual General Conference next Sunday, the first Sunday in April, by the adolescent Priesthood class belting out "Father Abraham" in cracking but enthusiastic voices. They were practicing for the big event, when Kelly knew that Prophet Rammell and the Council of Fifty would present their plan to drive east through Nevada and take San Diego, as an outlet to the sea. It would be like Saturday night in Sioux City when the Reconquistadores caught wind of that.

The roast beef and cheese sandwich was so good that she wished she had bought two. Maybe Mrs. Murphy was still up. Sometimes the old lady actually cooked something worth eating, when she had the groceries. Kelly didn't feel quite like being alone tonight. Not yet, anyway. She went over for a visit. Mrs. Murphy was happy to have the company. They laughed a bit about Emma's fear of spiders after two big ones crawled out of the corner of the kitchen. Then she smashed them with some old newspaper and enjoyed some deviled eggs Mrs. Murphy had made the day before. The chickens on the roof, tended by the landlord and his wife, were producing more again, it looked like.

When Mrs. Murphy began yawning, Kelly excused herself and crossed the hall to her humble commode. She fidgeted and fussed about in an obsessive compulsive manner until it was nearly 9:55, then broke out the set for her nightly ritual.

One of the strongest signals she could receive lately had been Radio New America, the St. Louis station run by the staff of the Post Dispatch. She tuned in just in time to hear their top of the hour news: "The Arkansas State Guard, augmented by local militia, The Knights Committee, and separatist groups, probed south of Interstate 30 last week, driving fifty miles deep into New African territory without encountering any organized resistance. Reports from similar sorties out of Tennessee and all along the border indicate a paralysis and power vacuum in the New African military, as civil unrest and anarchy have been reported

throughout the lower Mississippi Valley. Reports of starvation and cannibalism in Vicksburg may be the result of infrastructural instability following what is rumored to have been the third internal coup in Atlanta so far this year. Self styled “Tribal Chief” Demarcus (Dubble D) Donroy, the military commander in charge of New African defenses in Jacksonville, stated in an interview with Havana television news reporters recently that he was willing to open discussions on “mutual coexistence”, widely considered to be code for New African withdrawal from Florida, if a cease fire could be brokered by the Republica government.. Donroy also stated in the interview that he felt a great calling to lead his soldiers to Atlanta “to clean house and restore peace and prosperity to my people”. The Cuban Army has not yet officially responded, but has withdrawn their front lines from Gainesville to Ocala in an apparent gesture of good will. Their inability to force the surrender of the privateer fleet at Guantanamo Bay has led to territorial losses at home for them of late, losses which they are sure to want to make up for….” Kelly switched it off.

After the newspaper at work this morning, she felt like she had information overload. There was nothing she could do about any of it, not even share it with anybody. Her world would probably change again next Sunday after the General Conference, and she was like a leaf on the breeze. Not for the first time, she considered leaving. Getting out of Deseret wasn’t the hard part, it was who got in that they kept a tight control over. But where would she go? What could she do? In the end, she was better off here in Salt Lake. She had an apartment, a job that paid better than most, and plenty to eat. She also had access to more inside information than most of the sheep. She just didn’t feel at all motivated. That was her problem. Maybe, she thought as she drifted off to sleep with a book, maybe she really should settle down and get married and raise some kids and be a good Mormon woman. Maybe. And just maybe there was still some sin going on in Las Vegas worth bombing them for, too…but somehow she really doubted it.

The next day at work, her supervisor called Kelly in for an unscheduled job performance review, just before lunch. A black uniformed Gull officer stood silently in the corner of the office, watching her. Was this about her Thor's hammer? Surely if it had been about the radio, they wouldn't have bothered with all this trouble. They would have done to her what they did to Jimmy, right? Her supervisor began by praising her job performance, her work ethic, and her discretion. She had never leaked any of the secret or classified material which had crossed her desk. That had even been confirmed through interdepartmental false message correspondence, she learned. In light of her proven trustworthiness, she was being offered a promotion, of sorts: an independent field command. She knew what that meant: she was being recruited to be an undercover agent for the D.D.P.S.. A spy. In enemy territory.

At first her heart leapt, hoping that there might be a position out west, near to where Karen was, or had been, so she might find out something, anything, about her sister. As it turned out, they wanted to send her in the other direction. The officer told her with a smile that her solitary lifestyle made her perfect for this particular assignment. She didn't know quite what he meant, until a quiet knock came at the office door. When her supervisor answered it, in walked Jimmy, looking as awkward and embarrassed as ever. She was doubly surprised to see him, since she had never expected to, again. Not alive, anyway. Over the next few minutes, he explained with a red face that his 'arrest' had been a setup, to test her ability to keep potentially dangerous information to herself, and to gauge her hunger for knowledge. They had also been keen to measure her ability to live a double life without breaking. She had passed, with flying colors. Kelly was still in shock. First being dragged on the carpet, then Jimmy being alive, and here, and everything for so long being a sham? She was fighting to hold back tears of confusion. It took her a moment to regain her composure.

“Look, Kelly, this isn’t about being a fanatical Mormon, or even being a believer. It’s about being an asset to the Church, and to our mission to protect our people, and our faith. You’re already doing that. There is no litmus test for faith involved. You have all the skills for the job.” Jimmy reassured her.

“Okay, but if I go, I have somebody I need you guys to check in on and look after, and

I don’t mean a cat”, she joked.
“Alright, Kelly, we’ll take care of Mrs. Murphy, we promise.” Jimmy smirked. Blaine County, Nebraska. The armpit of the universe. The largest town, Dunning, only

had a hundred people left in it. The whole county only had about four hundred souls, but over a third of them were Mormon, and surrounded as it was by more heavily non-LDS territory, it made the perfect easternmost listening post for the Deseret Department of Public Safety. Her duty would be to file reports weekly on the local situation, and most importantly on any news about the political developments in New America, which Nebraska was firmly a part of. “Since we have lost our other sources of New American direct intelligence with I-80 being closed down at Omaha, your job is a front line operation,” Jimmy explained to her while showing her a map of the state. Now, it’s too deep, too far forward, to send couriers back and forth without arousing suspicion, so you’re going to have to use a shortwave radio to be in touch with regular encoded reports.”

“Gee, I guess it’s lucky I’ve been around one of those things lately, huh?” Kelly kidded him.
Jimmy turned serious. “Luck had nothing to do with, Kelly, but we’ll need to teach you how to transmit, and how to encode, and decode. We also have to ingrain your backstory: You’ll be travelling with another young woman, an E-2 from Hill who is a believer. At Kelly’s blank look, he explained further “She’s an Airman. Not an Airwoman, not an Airperson, an Airman, that’s her rank. But forget that, because to you, she is Sister Patricia, and

you are Sister Kelly. Sister Missionaries."
"Wonderful cover, I'm sure I'll be very convincing", Kelly jibed. "Yes, you will be, after your briefing", Jimmy reassured her, "but let her do most of the talking. She's also trained in martial arts and hand to hand combat, so while you'll be armed, let her do most of the fighting, if it comes to that, too."
"And what do I do for the mission, smile and look pretty?" she asked. "Yeah, that's what you're good at", Jimmy flirted in a more direct way than she would have believed he was capable. "That, and send in those reports until we tell you otherwise."
She met her partner the next day. Patricia was a quick-witted, kind of nervous acting Paris Hilton type in her early twenties. They got to know each other while the operation of the shortwave transmitter function was explained. Jimmy taught the code to both of them over the next three days, 'in case one of them was incapacitated', as he put it. Kelly soon learned that the ditsy act Patricia put on was just an act. The E-2 taught her to disassemble and clean and reassemble and fire and load the identical .40 Glocks they both would carry on their mission trip. Then she taught her how to do it again. Then she taught her how to do it right.
The trip would be 750 miles, 650 of that on I-80. The only town along the way they might face interrogation in was Cheyenne, a major New American Army base, and Air Base, now. The 115th Field Artillery Brigade of the Wyoming National Guard, part of the Unified Command of New America, controlled all traffic coming and going, but their cover story should pass muster. Being two young females made their chances much better.
The area had been well reconnoitered while the LDS Air Force had generously provided air support for the New American struggle to keep the Wyoming Rancher's Co- op Militia, enthusiastic amateurs, from being overrun in Fort Collins. The cowboys had been lured into a trap and ambushed by probing advances of Mexican Army units. The Republica del Norte 'advisors' had snuck through Lamar, around the dead zone of Colorado Springs, up and around the fallout-choked free-for-all of Denver, and hit the forward units of the 1st Battalion, 157th

Infantry Regiment of the Colorado National Guard south of Windsor. The 157th had been expecting an attack straight through Boulder, and dug in to receive a frontal assault. Unable to withdraw quickly without leaving behind the slower 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery Regiment they were covering the flank of north of Boulder, 1st Battalion drew back slowly. Third Battalion, unwilling to abandon their heavy cannons, were about to be overrun. Their brass called for air support from any friendly forces. Before the 153rd airlift wing of the Wyoming Air National Guard in Cheyenne could scramble and respond, Hill had F-16s en route. It was a diplomatic gesture of friendship of brotherhood, of course. The pictures they took of New American ground defenses and positions were just a bonus.

While the birds from Hill were en route, the Cowboys had ridden in, hell-bent for leather, in their two hundred SUVs and pickup trucks. By the time the Wyoming Rancher's Co-op Militia hit the brakes, they were sitting in front of Boyd Lake. The 3rd Battalion 157th Field Artillery Regiment had made it back to Lake Loveland, a mile away. They were in sight of each other. One of the cowboys sardonically declared it a successful rescue, over the radio. With regular Mexican Army units in sight, they both put their backs to the water and made a fight of it. Three companies of Mexican mounted infantry in commandeered civilian vehicles tore up Hwy. 287 between them, while flanking units engaged them to the east and west. The Cowboys broke through the line at Eisenhower Blvd., and took over fifty percent casualties as they were encircled again at the soccer field in Loveland Sports Park. Meanwhile, the Third Battalion's point-blank artillery barrages at the Statue of Liberty replica kept the Mexican forces from closing to finish them off.

Both forces were relieved when the nineteen F-16s from Hill began releasing their combined effects munitions bombs over the forward elements of the Mexican forces at Horseshoe Lake, and worked their way south. Each plane carried eight of them, and each of them could take out a platoon on the ground. With subsequent passes, their Vulcan gatling guns spewed forth 500 rounds of eviction notice at the already fleeing Reconquistadores.

The boys from 1st Battalion 157th Infantry swung in from the north and cleaned up the hold-outs between the Medical Center of the Rockies and Johnstown. The main body of the Mexican advance didn't stop running until they were in the concrete canyons of Denver. That was one place Kelly knew she never wanted to be.
They would cut north from I-80 at North Platte, long before they got into the danger zone near Omaha. If all went well, it would be about a thirteen hour trip in the Green LDS Jeep Cherokee they were being issued. "That sure beats pedaling all the way on bicycles", Sister Patricia laughed. Kelly figured they would get along just fine. They would be staying with a local Mormon family in the village of Dunning, until they found a place of their own. The family had no idea of their real mission. She wondered if she did, for that matter.

The Day Destroys The Night

Okay, the whole flag thing had just been a stroke of inspired luck. The committee had been debating patterns and colors and historical designs, when he happened to walk in to give them all printed out reports on the Agriculture Committee's progress in locating secured quantities of seed corn for planting across Illinois and Iowa, and stopped to listen for a second. The delegate from Arkansas, that Klan lawyer, pointed out that they needed to have a flag as obviously American as possible, to emphasize their patriotism and direct successorship from the United States. The lady from Kansas argued that the stars had already been done in circles and squares of all different designs and numbers, and so anything they came up would just look like an older U.S. flag. The Chairman of the Second New American Congress, as the papers were calling it (and the media, not him, had begun capitalizing the "N") sliced the Gordian knot with one question. "Why not just leave it blank?"

At first they had all just stared at him blankly. Then, they all began talking at once. "Brilliant!" It's original, any way…" It's never been

done before, it would mark us as our own, but with direct ties, and with a style no other territory or state has used…" One of the delegates wanted to fill the blue field with a Christian cross, to represent the dominant faith of White America. Another wanted to fill it with a Celtic Cross, to symbolize White Nationalism. McNabb would have personally been fine with either of those, but the quickest and most efficient way to get this pushed through was to choose more important battles to shed each other's blood over.' Get'er done', as Larry the cable guy used to say, back when he had been a kid. An hour later, he was handing out printed reports to the other committees about the newly proposed flag, the one with an empty field of blue. Let people wonder about what it meant, if that's all they had to do. He had a country to build.

With the delegates from two dozen states and territories in the capitol, downtown accommodations near the Old Courthouse had gotten kind of scarce. John had decided to move both his offices and his residence, to free up space for the Congressional committees to meet in, and for the delegates to stay in. A week had barely passed since his last 'conversation' with Carolyn, and already his security staff was overseeing the furniture and household accessories being moved into the empty turn of the 20th century four story warehouse he had picked out.

The sturdy red brick structure had been converted to lofts in Downtown West, just eleven blocks from the Old Courthouse. The remodeling should be done in another two weeks. It gave him plenty of space for the added security Kip had brought on after the assassination attempt. The first floor would be an office space for his secretary and Kip and himself, with a reception area in front and a common kitchen and lounge in the back for recreation and hosting small gatherings. The second floor would have ten individual bedrooms, one for each of his security staff, and showers and restrooms and a small lounge where they could eat or hang out. Kip's suite was on the third floor, along with a library and the large armory, probably the most important room in the building. On top, the fourth floor would have his master suite, a

safe room, another armory, and a private lounge. It also held the only access to the roof, where General Harrison's birthday present to him resided: the Lt. Col.'s very own newly refurbished Vietnam era Bell Uh-1 Iroquois, delivered straight from Lambert Field, complete with two pilots as his own aircrew, now on full time staff with the eight member black-uniformed security force. The Iroquois was armed with two 7.62 mm M-60 machine guns and two 7 round 70 mm rocket pods, one of each on either side.

Kip had picked up the other five new guys from the Air Force Special Operations Group ParaRescue team when they had moved over from Wright-Patterson. As far as Harrison cared, it was just an inter-Unit personnel transfer. He was happy to be busy as acting Commander in Chief of all of the armed forces between the Appalachians and the Rockies. It seemed to McNabb that he was doing a good job of bringing all the militias and private armies and Guard and Reserve units and regular armed forces together in a single chain of command. Their coordination and joint operations had been getting smoother every day, that was for sure. Good enough to stop the bleedout of career officers to Bellefont's little empire in Texas.

With the moving, and the Congressional meetings every day, he hadn't had time to worry about the argument with Carolyn. His birthday had come and gone without a word from her, or even the damn birthday presents she had risked a nuclear submarine to have looted, for that matter. The Post Dispatch hadn't mentioned him in a week, but the BBC and London Times and all of the other international media now permanently ensconced in the city followed him around like puppies. If anything, now more than ever. He knew that Carolyn's absence had been discussed in the newsrooms as a story unto itself, but not worth reporting on if they wanted any future access to the Congressional Chairman. She kept her distance, and he didn't feel that he had any reason to apologize, so it was a stalemate. Maybe he had a reputation among the power groupie newshounds. Three or four of the

female reporters had been in competition with one another for a few days to get the most face time with him.

One of the features that McNabb liked best about the warehouse building, aside from the fact that it was the tallest structure on the block, was the small enclosed patio garden in the back. It was just enough room for some grass and a few bushes and two trees for a shady area. He had a couple of tables and some chairs brought to the circle of shade. In the corner of the patio garden, up against the high cyclone fence topped by razor wire, was a row of flowers newly planted, to pretty the place up. At the end of that row was one smaller mound from which nothing would ever grow. It was a tomb of sorts, for a body which had never lived, and yet would never die. Barbie rested there, in peace.

Over the next two weeks, the Second New American Congress made quite a lot of progress. Without partisan bickering, nearly eighty more coal powered plants were located in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois that were in operational condition, and plans made to bring them back online with coal that would be shipped by rail from friendly areas in West Virginia. They should be added to the power grid by the anniversary of the collapse, in May. At the same time the Agriculture Committee reported that the seed, fertilizer, and tractor fuel had been located, along with the coordination of mechanical parts and repair to get the machinery running, to plant the Midwest's corn crop by the regular start time next month, beginning in Illinois and working their way north through ,Iowa, Nebraska, and Minnesota through June. They were focusing on getting the highest volume yield areas planted first, then working the marginal areas with whatever they had left over.

The Unified Command of the armed forces was a done deal, they had a new flag to begin painting and sewing everywhere, and they had set the next Congressional meeting date for two months from now, in the middle of June, right after the planting season was done. The gold in Ft. Knox and three other Federal reserves had been counted, and the gold from fifty-six major bank vaults

across the nation liberated and added to it, to back a new currency, a new monetary system, really, called the New Dollar. Those notes were being printed right here and introduced, first as pay for the armed forces, then to trickle down from there. Reaching out to other countries and managing international relations, they had all willingly left up to him. Eagerly, in fact. He didn't blame them.

Lt. Col. John W. McNabb thanked them all for their hard work, urged them to stay in touch during the recess, and reminded them to work on organizing the scheduled general elections planned for November. Representatives and Senators from each state and territory would be elected through the popular vote, just as lined out in the U.S. Constitution. They would try to go by that roadmap, as well as they could, under the current circumstances. General Harrison, as the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, functioned as the head of the Executive branch in theory, but in practice, John ran the ship of state's day to day operations, and everybody knew it. There was no Judicial branch above the county court level, with the exception of a few district courts still holding irregular sessions, but that was evening out. In fact, McNabb wanted an outsider, like himself, to help him rebuild a Supreme Court, instead of the Federal judges from the capitol who were waving their hands screaming "pick me", practically. Maybe that Klan lawyer, the delegate from Arkansas, Jason Roberts, he seemed to be up on the Constitutional structure of the Court, as it was meant to have been. He'd schedule a meeting. And open diplomatic relations with a select few countries, since that was his baby to spank.

The morning after the Congressional delegates all went home for their two month recess, he moved his personal effects into the newly finished 'warehouse', as they all had taken to calling it. The smell of new wood and paint was welcoming. The workers were just sweeping up the last of the construction debris from the inside remodeling. The Lt. Col.'s security team was adjusting the outside cameras and inside monitors through walkie-talkies. This

was home. He was so exhausted from the Second New American Congress that he slept most of the next day while his staff moved in and the groceries, linens, towels, toiletries, appliances, and other items liberated from the Galleria Mall were delivered and installed.

The next few days John spent giving interviews in his new office to the Sunday Mirror from the U.K., the Bild from Germany, the Rossiyskaya Gazeta from Moscow, and again, the BBC. It was often the same questions, these days. He had no comment on the actions of Vice Admiral Robert Woods or the U.S. Seventh and Third Fleets, as they were not integrated into the Unified Command, but he was in communication with the Admiral and hoped their forces would cooperate more closely in the near future. No, he was not the acting President, or anything like it. His office and position were officially as an appointed Congressman from Indiana, and the Chairman of the just-completed session of Congress. In their opinion, the Presidential line of succession had been broken when the Vice President, having resigned through his actions and never taken the Presidential Oath of Office, had declared himself the leader of a foreign nation, and the remaining successors were…rendered unavailable to fulfill the duties of the office of President. That is why a new Constitutional Convention was planned, to begin June 15th. An acting President would be chosen, a system of government maintained and confirmed, and then this fall, general elections would be held.

The tall, leggy young reporter in the short skirt from the Bild asked him his opinion about the ongoing deportations of German Muslims from shariatowns by the NPD led government. His response was that it was not his place to comment on the internal security measures of sovereign nations, but he certainly supported their right to secure their borders and protect their citizens. A brunette from the Sunday Mirror had all but climbed up on his desk asking him whether it was true that he was one of the most powerful men in North America, and was he in fact building a new nation, here, or resurrecting the United States. McNabb

had demurred that it took many men and women working together to return their nation to the intent of its founding people, regardless of any changes to the government itself, or its continuity.

The male reporter from the Russian Rossiyskaya Gazeta sat stiffly, and gave away his true role through his military bearing. He was there on state business, and more than just because the paper was government-ran. The Lt. Col. had acknowledged that by speaking frankly with him. He wished to extend his gratitude and appreciation to the people of Russia for their help in delivering General Ferguson's command out of Afghanistan. The people of America were indebted to Russia for this act of friendship, and would honor that friendship in the future. In fact, he would like to extend and offer for the Russian government to open a consulate in St. Louis, at their discretion. At some point in the future, he would be interested in discussing the return of Gen. Ferguson's command to…home, of course. He steadfastly avoided using the term "United States" any more. It was barely too early to consistently use the term "North America", but the foreign media already were, almost exclusively. He would let them do the legwork on pushing that meme, for him.

The BBC crew were interested in videotaping reams of New Dollars being printed, the Air Force honor guard at Lambert field raising the new starless flag, and lots of B roll footage of McNabb walking up the Old Courthouse steps, McNabb talking on the phone, and McNabb's mini-motorcade driving through town. They even filmed McNabb attending services at the First Baptist Church, which these days was teaching that people of European ancestry were the true Israelites of the Bible.

When the video shooters packed up their gear, they, the Daily Mirror, and the German and Russian journalists all boarded the Lufthansa flight they had collectively chartered together from London. John thought that was funny, the Germans and Brits and Russians working as a team. He watched as they took off from

Lambert, headed north to the newly reopened O'Hare. That took him back a few months to those bitter days in Chicago. It seemed like so long ago, now. The fifty passenger CRJ-200 would land, refuel, and head east again across the dark Atlantic to Heathrow, in about thirteen hours. A world away.

As Kip and John and the two guards pulled back into the loading dock of their new home, Alan, one of the new guys, was standing at the reinforced metal gate, grinning like a possum. While they had been out, a courier had made a delivery. When he opened the package, McNabb first say the handwritten note in the familiar script: "Sorry this is late. Let me know if, and when, you have time for me. I'd like to talk." It didn't have a signature, but didn't need one. Inside the large box was another box, containing a silver plated Colt .45 with the initials "E.A.P." engraved in the handles and "T.C.B." on the slide. Under it was a gold record, the first, with "That's All Right" and "Blue Moon Of Kentucky". He couldn't help grinning, too.

After a cigarette to think about it, he asked Daniel and Mike, his pilots, to fire up the Iroquois. He wanted to take a sightseeing tour. Within half an hour they were skimming over the Old Courthouse, around the arch, and over the river, where two U.S. Coast Guard cutters guarded over the surface moored USS Nebraska. Through his headset, John directed his pilots to circle around northwest. A small crowd looked up when they landed in the grassy area of InterCo Plaza. They came up to shake his hand when he walked across Dr. Martin Luther King., Jr. drive (have to rename that soon, he thought to himself) to the Post Dispatch offices. In his mind on the way over, he had fantasized that she would meet him at the door and run into his arms. Life never works out quite like you plan. It took ten minutes of stomping around with his bodyguards and a trail of reporters not so subtly following him before one of them pointed him to where she was with a smirk. Oh well. She looked happy to see him, even if she did pretend to be put out by the interruption in her routine.

He practically dragged her into the helicopter at gunpoint. They didn't say a word until the Iroquois, which he'd had painted solid black in jest, came to rest on the roof of the warehouse. The crew and guards discretely withdrew downstairs. Then, showing her the panoramic view of the city around them, he popped the question.

"What do you mean, you want me to quit my job? Are you crazy? I'm like Barbara

Walters and Dianne S awyer and Margaret Thatcher rolled into one!" Carolyn exclaimed. "Actually, I was thinking more along the lines of Eva Braun or Leni Riefenstahl, but
whatever. No, this government, this new country, all of these people you see around you,
Carolyn, they need you. Okay, I need you. The people are going to need a government,
and that government is going to need a Press Secretary. I'm offering you the job." "But would I be working for the government, whoever or whatever that is, or for you,
John? I don't know about this. I'm comfortable where I am. No offense, I'm flattered, I
guess, but…I worked my way up to the top…" McNabb interrupted her. "One, you'd be
working for me, if that makes any difference. As MY press secretary. And two, you're
not at the top, yet. Not quite. But we can get there, from here. Together. You and me.
And three, I can guarantee to double your salary and give you the virtually unlimited
resources and power of our new nation, here. Now, I understand we have some things to
work out, but I know we can get past them and work together for the greater good of…"
This time, she interrupted him.
"Oh, shut up, you arrogant MAN. You had me at 'unlimited resources'." They

laughed together, and it felt easy and light.
She gave the Post Dispatch notice of her resignation, but promised them favored
access. A week later, they visited his pastor for a private ceremony witnessed by Kip and
his bodyguards. The next day Carolyn had moved in, sharing the fourth floor suite with
John. She gave her first press conference the following Monday at the Old Courthouse.
She formally introduced herself as Carolyn McKenzie-McNabb, Press Secretary to the
office of the Chairman of the New American Congress.

Chapter Fourteen

"There is a race war against whites. But our people - my white brothers and sisters - will stay committed to a non-violent resolution. That resolution must consist of solidarity in white communities around the world. The hatred for our children and their future is growing and is being fueled every single day. Stay firm in your convictions. Keep loving your heritage and keep witnessing to others that there is a better way than a war torn, violent, wicked, socialist, new world order. That way is the Christian way - law and order
- love of family - love of nation. These are the principles of western Christian civilization. There is a war to destroy these things. Pray that our people see the error of their ways and regain a sense of loyalty." -Pastor Thomas Robb

To Chase A Feather In The Wind

Gerta was really getting sick and tired of her sister-inlaws' constant whining and complaining, and the kid running wild without discipline. That was probably why she was happy to get the call from the Ambassador to the U.N.'s office. It was an unofficial position, of course, as there were no formal diplomatic relations between Germany and New America, but they were going to be opening a Consular Office in St. Louis. She had the experience in North America, had a good resume', and had proven herself loyal to the Ambassador. Would she like for him to put a word in with the Chancellor on her behalf? They also were negotiating opening offices in Salt Lake City and Killeen, Texas, so she wouldn't be the only German Consul out there. She was packed and putting Bavaria behind her again before dinner.

The Tides Have Caused The Flame To Dim

Nearly 10,000 God-fearing evangelical Christians crowded standing-room-only into the Ford Arena in Beaumont to hear

Pastor Huckleberry deliver his weekly sermon. Many more watched from home on satellite television, if they had it, or from corner Telecast Centers set up on every block in the city. The former Governor had adapted a special blend of inclusive, race-neutral liberation theology that carved a niche for himself here on the border between La Republica del Norte and the socalled 'Republic of Texas'. That was his main selling point: Protestant Fundamentalism, color-blind.

His army of true believers, known as "The Faithful", kept an eye on the entrances and exits, as well as on the crowd itself. The racist, divisive "Christian Identity" denomination was becoming the dominant dogma in most churches up North, in the areas where Whites had completed ethnic cleansing operations. Some more open-minded churches, like the one implicated in the attempted assassination of that Indiana Congressman, had been shut down, driven out of their communities, or even, as in that specific case, arrested. Several members alleged to have helped build the bomb had been hung. Such a backlash against diversity loving churches and the men of God who pushed them had left a vacuum. Pastor Ike filled that vacuum as a shepherd for the mixed race families who had nowhere to turn to bask in God's love. That left him as the biggest and best and last show in town for the "Jesus Loves Everybody" guilters. He wore it well. His sermon would be simulcast in Spanish, with an interpreter on stage. The mixed nature of the crowd, about 50/50 Mexican and American, were what caused the worry of his security people. You never knew when the Republica would decide to make a push to take his little pocket of the Coast. He had to be ready. Any of them could be terrorists or saboteurs. He strolled to the microphone, waved to the masses, and yelled "Hello! Hola!", as the choir sang behind him a sweet rendition of 'Kumbaya'.

"Praise the Lord, How many of you have enjoyed the Praise Music here tonight? Hallelujah! If you've really been blessed, let me hear an Amen! Amen! Ya'll know, a lot of people just south of us want this whole country for their own, and want to kick out the

light skinned folks, and a bunch of other people just north and west of us, they want this whole country for their own, and want to kick out the brown skinned folks, but I'm here to tell you that this is God's country, Amen, He made all the different people, praise Jesus, and he made it all for all of them to share in His love, Glory! Red and yellow, black and White, they are all precious in His sight, Jesus loves who? Jesus loves which of them? Hallelujah, Jesus loves ALL of the little children of the world!

Now, before the altar call for volunteers to join the Faithful and help carry the word of the Lord to the unbelievers beyond our borders, I want you all to join me in praying for Mr. Bellefont over there in Fort Hood, this evening. Oh, he was a sinful man, a man of lust, a man of greed, a man of power, and when he first came back to Texas, he became a man of more power. You see, most of the good-hearted, God-fearing, patriotic folks thought he was the President, and so they did what he told them to. All the brave military soldiers got behind him from all branches, hoping to save their country. But he fooled them , he sure did. Praise the Lord. Old Bellefont wasn't the President at all, he never was. And as soon as he got set up, and the military behind him, me and others were wondering if he was going to choose the righteous path, the narrow path of God's love and compassion and understanding, or if he was going to refuse to turn from his wicked ways, and choose the broad and easy way, the path of sinners. Well, you all know what he did. He raised up a false idol, a new Babylon, a golden calf false nation he calls "The Republic of Texas", just because he says so. He turned his back on the United States, and then when the rest of the government died in New York, there wasn't anybody left to question him, or call him a liar, or stand in his way. Nobody except God. Nobody except Jesus. Nobody except the Holy Ghost. And we, his Faithful, his sheep, his flock, his church. We will pray for Mr. Bellefont. We will ask the Lord to convict him to repentance, but if he does not repent and turn from his wicked ways, then we will know that he is the one foretold. The one spoken of in Revelations, brothers and sisters! The prophecied! You know the one I mean. The one who was

grievously wounded but survived, the one who came preaching peace, meaning only to destroy, the one known as the Anti-Christ! If that is who he is, then we will know him by his fruits!..."

Over a hundred new volunteers to join The Faithful came forward for the altar call. After being interviewed, trained briefly, and armed, they would join the forces of light patrolling the I10 No Man's Land border area. Rev. Ike was thinking of pushing northeast to Lake Charles. The New African chaos was much more promising than butting heads with either the Republica or the Republic, with or without the vowel. His saber-rattling against Fort Hood was necessary to keep the flock loyal. The truth be told, though, the 3rd armored cavalry regiment bogging down the Mexican Army in the northern suburbs of Austin kept the Aztlan Reconquistadore Catholics out of Beaumont.

On the previous week's program he had torn into the Mormons much more v iciously, since they were too far away to do anything about it. He had said "The self-appointed Prophet Rammell, the leader of the Deseret Mormon cult, said yesterday during a flyover inspection of artillery that was abandoned by the Republica del Norte Aztlan Reconquistadores when they surrendered Barstow to LDS Crusader forces two weeks ago that 'The smoke from the Sodom that was Las Vegas still rises after God's divine retribution on that city courtesy of two holy atomic fists from Hill. As His servants we shall continue to serve as instruments of His will against any city which is held by the Aztlan invaders within our reach, and let me tell you, the Lord's reach knows no bounds!' Well, let me tell YOU, Mr. Prophet, you and your cult are not without sin, you are not God's judge and jury. You are liars and misleaders teaching from a fake book.

Now he wants to try to represent Christianity to the world! In an interview with the BBC last night in Salt Lake City the official Council of Fifty spokesman refused to speculate on whether McCarran would be used to send out LDS Air Force strikes against Aztlan held San Diego or the ruins of Los Angeles, next.

He did self-righteously indicate, though, that the armor and artillery gained through the capitulation would be used to strengthen their campaign into California Del Norte…

I don't think the Latino people are buying it, though, Mr. Prophet. Not after you deported and murdered so many of them. The Mexican ambassador to the U.N. warned the General Assembly last week that further territorial advancement of Deseret would inevitably lead to conflict with Mexican interests in the region. This follows several weeks of relative detente during which there has been no direct conflict between Deseret and the Mexican administrative authority while the LDS provided air support to New American forces during the Battle of Fort Collins. See how the secular New World Order is coming together, there? The Mexicans have accused Mormon sympathizers in the mysterious explosion which sank a packed container ship entering San Diego harbor loaded with Mexican troops on leave from the San Jose front, six days ago. Noone so far has claimed responsibility for the attack, but we all know what kind of cult was involved, don't we brothers and sisters? Yes, we do! Praise the Lord, Hallelujah!..."

The right Reverend Huckleberry sat in the dark playing his guitar, trying to picture the look on Rammell's face when he had heard that broadcast, or on Bellefont's when he heard this week's. He lived for that stuff, stirring people up, pushing buttons, getting a reaction. Most people were so shallow, so petty, so dramatic, that they were easy to play. Ike took another hit of the purple haired bud the Mexicans had brought up with their last shipment. As long as he had The Faithful and the U.S. Army's 842nd Transportation Battalion to keep the Port Arthur to Beaumont port open and free trade flowing in, he could build his empire right in the middle of the chaos. It was a lucky thing one of his congregation had told him about the 842nd commander's fetish for young Mexican boys. Keeping that particular taste and offering absolution for it, had been key. His deal with the Mexican Mafia kept the drugs coming in and the Mexican navy out, from the ocean side, just like Bellefont did the Mexican army from the landward side. Yeah, it

was good to be a lord, when the Lord was King. No king but Jesus, no voice of the Lord but Ike's. Hallelujah. He definitely liked his version of religion better than what they were doing in New America, these days.

All My Exes Live In Texas

President Bellefont moved his coffee cup off the folded over newspaper and wiped away the wet ring. Since Dallas's little fling with city-statehood had been crushed, the 'Morning News' was his favorite newspaper, once again. Of course now, he got it about once a week, instead of every morning, but that was probably more bad news than was good for his heart. Not all of it was grim, this time. "French President Le Pen praised ongoing cooperation between New America and the Republic of Quebec during her speech the night before last in Montreal, marking the first visit to North America by a European head of state since Civil War Two began." Civil War Two? Who had started calling…it… THAT? Yikes, he would have to contact the militia commander running the Dallas Fort-Worth metroplex for him like his own personal neo-feudal fiefdom, and have him slap some sense into that editor.

Those North American folks were a big bear, though. He had to handle that delicately. They could be friends, or enemies, depending on how he played it. He would send an envoy to that jumped-up half-bird Colonel running things in St. Louis, and try to smooth things out before they got cross. The Major General might know someone who would be ideal for the job. Heck, maybe even open diplomatic relations. Can't be fighting on two fronts, now. Cross-border incursions by renegade redskins were bad enough, up in Oklahoma.

Texas was a huge state, and the northern half of it under his control was bigger than many European countries. He did have a few thorns in his side, like that tinhorn Biblethumping charlatan over on the coast, but they had stopped the Mexicans cold, and even better, had pushed most all of the pre-war Mexican-

American population south, behind the front lines, with them. THAT sure had changed things in the Lone Star State.

Plenty of people had sworn that he was loco when he declared the Republic of Texas in session and himself acting President. Even Hampton had dared to public ask him if 'the timing was right' for that kind of move. Oh, ye of little faith. He could have established a Provisional Government of the United States in Texas. He could have declared himself the head honcho of the whole enchilada, according to the regular order of succession. The SAFE move would have been to take the Oath of Office with the first Federal judge he could find, and declare himself acting President of the United States. Or, he could have called it President Pro Tem, and tried to gather the little lost sheep unto himself. Heck, he had been listening to Huckleberry's b.s. sermons for too long, to start thinking in those terms. But, he knew what he meant. Yeah, that would have been the safe move, but he remembered Julius Caesar, and had decided not to make the safe move. He could have tried to be President of the U.S. and hold together the whole shebang, but he just didn't see any future in it. Too many sides, too many divisions, too much damage done. Even the authority of calling himself POTUS was mooted by the impotency of the office. So, he had thrown that crown away. But Texas…Texas was something worth saving. That was his rationalization for declaring independence, anyway.

It seemed like a good idea at the time. When all of his rivals and contenders for the Executive office died in the big apple, he knew that he had made the right choice. Only divine providence could have led him out of New York, like Moses being led out of the land of Egypt, to save his people. He was right where he was supposed to be. The timing had been perfect, too. He couldn't have planned it better, himself. Just when some of the officers had begun talking about resigning their commissions or removing him, BOOM! There was no higher power left for them to appeal to. General Hampton's support had helped keep most of the career soldiers in line, the ones who others followed.

But here he was, on top of the world, the wife and kids were safe and happy, and his 4th Infantry Division had just pushed the Mexicans, of all ages and genders and national origin, out of Johnson City, and were pushing east towards Oak Hill, in the suburbs of Austin. Most of their casualties as they rolled the greasers back came from car bombs and I.E.D.'s, not direct combat. That had changed, as the brown tide receded. And now the Germans wanted to establish a Consulate in Killeen. Not too close to the front, but right up on the nerve center of things. He liked how those Krauts worked. The French and Quebecois and Brits, too, were looking to recognize his Republic of Texas in exchange for beef and petroleum. Well, cows and oil were two thing he had a lot of to spend. He bet the upstart North Italians and Basques would be writing any day, too.

It was already getting hot in southern Texas, warmer than Perry remembered for April. Maybe all of the rock and dirt and smoke thrown up into the atmosphere by the hundredodd nuclear blasts had changed the environment, at least temporarily. All the experts had predicted a 'nuclear winter'. The opposite seemed to be true, unless this was a fluke.

Even in Texas, many small towns had been divided by the presence of mixed race families and especially mixed children, often being raised by tired White grandparents who were stuck with the kids their daughters dumped off on them after getting knocked up in college by some black football player, as a stereotypical story went. Then the whole community would be split, pro and con. In the end, most were exiled, or their supporters drove out those opposed, but either way the communities chose sides over them. A lot of people ended up on one side or another that they had never consciously planned on being on, if they had ever planned on taking a side at all.

In the past, such social divisions had often been resolved by the faith community and the counsel of Pastors, but the modern universalist churches more often than not were the agitators for

social change, rather than the preservers of social order. Most leaders of the millionaire megachurches promoted multiracialism in order to widen their cash flow. As America had unraveled, they had appealed for calm and love and for peace. Rev. Joey Ovalsteen had just delivered a feelgood ‘Candyman’ sermon calling for his parishioners to support the new amnesty bill when a group of Mexican youths drug him out of the car in which he and his El Salvadoran boyfriend had been holding a private prayer session. They raped him in the street, then yanked his head back by his hair and cut his throat from ear to ear while they finished, as a warning against homosexuals in their neighborhood. Apparently the irony of the act escaped them, on more levels than one.

The ranks of the televangelists were further thinned when the DayStar Network and Pastor John Hatchee demanded their followers join them in Norfolk in a new Crusade to go fight for Israel, and save the Jewish people from a second Holocaust. Hatchee died of a heart attack during his first day at sea. His followers turned back from their Crusade, and most became fervent followers of Rev. Ike Huckleberry, the former Governor. That’s how he had become such a pain in the neck for Perry.

Benny Himm had faith-healed his way onto a first class flight to India, where he had converted to Hinduism before so many of that country’s holy shrines melted in nuclear fire. Jerry Lee Cary had overdosed and died on camera, praying with a black former prostitute. No wonder the Identity movement was picking up speed as people became disgusted with the liberal Christianity.

President Bellefont was not what one would call a person of faith, himself, but he did understand its power to unite and inspire people to incredible collective efforts and courage. He also was politician enough to understand that since most White Americans were at least nominally Christian, any leader wanting to influence them had best learn to speak their language. He could ever understand why so many wanted to create more hurdles between

themselves and the people they were supposedly trying to control than there had to be. To Perry, anything that made it more likely for Joe Blow to be standing with him tomorrow was a good thing, and anything that made him less likely to be, was a bad thing. Simple as that, pragmatically. This was politics, not a rhetorical debate, and not rocket science. It wasn't about being right, it was about being in power to do right. They could sit in a corner by themselves and be right all alone all day long, and not get anything done, or they could do like he and Mr. Machiavelli, and get things done. 'Choose, she croons', as the man said. He wanted Austin back, and not just because it was the capitol. He wanted San Antonio back, and not just because of the Alamo. They were TEXAS, and symbols mattered to people. They mattered, to him.

Gen. Hampton interrupted his reflection by sticking his head in the door as he knocked. "Sir, the visitors from Australia just landed. Their flight layover in Mexico City got extended when the authorities there found out where they were coming, I guess."

"Jesus, Scott, you scared the tar out of me, you're like Satan's own Jack -in-the box, always poppin' up without warning!" the President laughed good-naturedly. The General chuckled. "Sorry, Sir, I just wanted to let you know, it's like the monkey said when he got his tail cut off."

"Right," Perry said with a grin. "It won't be long, now."
Come Together, Right Now, Over Me

The badly rutted dirt road was punctuated by the occasional rock outcropping poking up through the weeds. It snaked on, up and down and across a couple more shallow creeks that her pickup splashed through with a thrill. Through valleys, past caves, and by some shacks where she half expected to hear 'dueling banjos', she drove. The teen felt like she was Daisy from 'The Dukes of Hazzard'. "Yeeeee-haaaaaaaaaw!" Hope yelled experimentally out the rolled down window. The Spring air felt good in her hair.

She passed through the little village of Quartz, where a lot of new construction seemed to be going on, and finally was at what some folks in this part of the state had called a “compound” and others called a “church”, but all spoke of in hushed tones of awe, respect, and a tinge of fear. It had seemed like her best bet, after the night before last.

Hope had driven into town on the way through to Missouri, and been amazed at how strangely normal everything looked. A half hour later, she had finally topped the rise overlooking the state line and seen a wooden tower emblazoned with the words “Wild Bill’s” at the border. A line of Missouri National Guard vehicles and state policemen lined all four lanes and the median. Hope thought about it, sitting there, and knew that if they knew what she had done…if they knew about the cop she had killed, especially…she sat on the shoulder for a few more minutes, then pulled out into a tight U-turn, headed back south. An eye on the rear view mirror for a couple of miles verified that they didn’t pull out to follow her, and she relaxed. Passing the huge ongoing outdoor flea market in the Wal-Mart Super Center parking lot, she been caught by dusk just as a group of armed militiamen wearing a cross and blood drop patch lowered the revised New American flag, the one without any stars, for the evening. As they marched back up the Courthouse steps, Hope pulled into the darkening theatre parking spaces. The first person she had asked in the pizza parlor a couple of doors down looked at her in suspicion. A lot of outsiders were looked at that way, these days. This town looked pretty normal. They had electric lights and people walking down the sidewalks, and there were even a few vehicles chugging around, about half of them using wood gasification or recycled vegetable oil systems, so they smelled like mobile French fries and made her stomach growl. But they probably had taken just about as many outsiders as they could handle, if they were like most places.

It kind of surprised her, then, that as she walked out of the pizza place the lady who had given her the odd look followed her

outside and apologized for being unfriendly. “I’m sorry to seem so rude. It’s just…We’ve had some trouble from outsiders around here, trying to mess things up”, she explained. She pointed accusingly at an older, bleached blonde woman locked up in standing stocks. She was held in a painfully stooped position with her head and hands locked into a wooden bar with holes cut just for the purpose, right beside the veteran’s memorial. “And some who have been here long enough to know better, like that one, over there.” A couple of young boys were taking turns throwing gravel rocks from a filled in pothole on the street at the shackled woman. The dirt and grass under her was churned up. It looked like that was where she lived. “No, it’s okay, I understand. I was just wondering where I might find a place to stay for the night. I’m just passing through, but I’d rather not drive at night, if I can help it.” Hope reassured her.

“Surely, child, and I don’t blame you for that, not with this evil world the way it is these days, and THOSE PEOPLE running loose everywhere, a-raping and looting. Look, keep going north, and just a couple miles outside of town on the left there’s a roadside park you can camp out in tonight, it’s been used as kind of a refugee camp over the last few months, but it’s empty now. They’ve all been assigned host families and jobs and assimilated as citizens. You could, too, if you apply for citizenship. Pastor Roberts says we’re always looking to help our people.”

“Well, I’m just travelling through, Ma’am, but I will go find a spot to camp for the night, there. It’s been a really long day”…Hope was interrupted by the loudspeakers hooked up outside the Courthouse clicking on, then broadcasting at what ‘Spinal Tap’ would have called a “level eleven”:

“ May I have your a ttention, please. It is time for curfew. Please bow your heads in a moment of silence as we play our nation’s new national anthem…”Oh Beautiful, for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain….”

“Oh Lordie, child, you’d better g et a move on now, before you get picked up for being out after the curfew! Come on by in the morning and I’ll fix you up with some breakfast and give you directions out to the national office. Good night, now!” she finished, dismissively. Hope easily found the former welcome center, now equipped with a row of port-a potties, several modular cabins with bunks inside, and three larger tents, all empty, just as she had been told. She flicked the switch and was surprised to find out that the lights worked here, too. Now, to see if the showers worked. THAT would be a miracle.

They did. She seemed to have the whole picnic area to herself, but as she chose a bunk in the cabin nearest to the bathroom with the actually running water, she kept her bow and the shotgun and pistol close by. Even in a place this ordered, there might be plenty of men who, alone or in packs, would see a young girl travelling alone as an easy target. She pulled out her sketch pad and drew the face of the kind woman who had helped her find this shelter, adding detail to it until she got drowsy.

Hope was awakened by the sound of an engine, and awoke as headlights quickly shut off. A car had pulled in, driven quickly to the far corner of the parking lot, and killed its engine. She waited, listening. No door opened. That was weird. She waited a bit more. Still nothing. She decided that rather than sit here and wait for whoever was out there to sneak up on her, she was going to sneak up on them. Quietly slipping on her pants, which she had slit open from the ankle up the calf to make them easy to pull on or off without taking her boots off, Hope grabbed her bow and quiver. This would be night work, if it was called for, and needed stealth. She felt to make sure her knife was still strapped to her side, then slipped out the door, easing it shut behind her.

It would have been hard to approach the car without being spotted, if anybody had been looking. There was no cover around it to take advantage of. But, the two men were too distracted by their own business to notice anybody sneaking up on foot. Hope

crept closer, her first arrow nocked, until she could hear their voices clearly in the still night.

“I don’t know, Jeb, you know, it’s illegal now, and they don’t mess around, they hang people for doing it these days, and us, they’d probably hang twice, and think it was funny.”, one said. “It’s not like it used to be back when we were swingers. Times have changed.”

“You better still call me ‘Boss’. And you better use your mouth for something better than whining like a girl, or I’ll file an anonymous report about what you’ve been doing with those two daughters of yours! You think they wouldn’t hang you for that?” the man nearer to Hope growled in return.

“Well, only if they knew, and it’s not like I don’t know about all the kids you got to come over to your office from the school and ‘intern’ there, just so you could…”came the reply.

“Hey! No need to go there. Hey, look, my liquor stores still have a good bootleg business going on. I can get you some more money to help out with your family. Just like always, you know, Pete? Just like when he picked up that little girl walking home from school last week, right? Or the tiny one the week before that? Nobody ever found out, they’re just considered runaways, just like I told you they would be. Just keep doing like I say. We’re a team. You be nice to me, and I’ll be nice to you….”

Their conversation ended as the car began to rock. It was a dark night, but Hope could still tell that the windows were fogged up in the Cadillac. She knew what was going on, she had heard the black boys crudely and cruelly joking with each other about it, to try and impress her, while she was growing up. She was disgusted. There wasn’t enough food in her stomach to throw up, but she wanted to. This had to be stopped.

Stepping forward, she felt for the door latch and pulled the passenger side door open with her left hand, keeping the arrow

knocked with her right. As the dome light of the car came on, she reseated her left hand on the bow and redrew. When the older bald man on top turned his head around to see who was interrupting them, Hope sent an arrow into his back, severing his spine and pinning him to the heavier man below him. The arrow punctured through the second man's liver, and into the seat. The man below began to shreik and try to pull himself forward to get out through the driver's side door. The man on top was trying to say "What-whatwhat the…" as Hope drew her knife and drove the spiked point deeply into the base between his brain and spine, cutting off communication between the rest of his body and his control center. Paralyzed from the neck down and dying from asphyxiation as his lungs received no orders, the last thing he saw was a small pale hand efficiently stab a big blade under the right jaw of his former employee below him. The blade jerked savagely back, ripping out the carotid artery. A geyser of blood sprayed up into Jeb's eyes, and then he couldn't see anything at all.

After her second shower of the night, required after she had finished her work in the queer couple's car, Hope slept a few hours, then repacked her kit and drove back into town. Considering what she had overheard, she doubted anybody would care too much about the mess back there. Not enough to investigate, anyway, and she would be long gone, if they did. She stopped at the pizza parlor as promised. The woman from the night before was already there, preparing the fresh dough for the day. She explained that she had just re-opened the shop because the former owner had been run out of town, and she was really busy. Wiping her hands on a towel, she stopped long enough to give the girl half a pepperoni pizza left over from the night before for free. Then she wrote down directions to the place she should go for help, around there. Hope gave her the drawing she had made of the woman, for her help, and headed out of town.

There were three other vehicles in line to get into the steep driveway on the right, before she pulled up to the gate. Another of

the uniformed militiamen like she had seen on the Courthouse square the night before with the flag stood there with a clipboard. She didn't miss the machine gun emplacement behind him to his left, aiming downhill, either. Probably, that was the point, since the two guys behind the gun looked friendly enough. Her name wasn't on the visitor list, and she didn't have any references, but her story that the lady in town had sent her seemed satisfactory to the guard, once she put on her 'lost little girl' look. She had to wait an hour and watch work crews building barracks buildings and guard towers, but she did get her interview.

Hope has kind of surprised that the person she was directed to was a grandmotherly type busily cooking in a kitchen off the church congregation hall up the hill. Kids ran everywhere under and around her legs. A couple of them called her "great-grandma", confirming Hope's suspicions.

"How old are you, young lady?" she asked.
"Umm, seventeen, nearly eighteen", came the lie, unbidden.
"Uh-huh. Riiiggghhhht." was the only reply. 'So,… what is a seventeen, almost

eighteen, year old girl doing, on her own?"

Over the racket, the visitor told her story, leaving nothing out. For some reason, she trusted this lady. It took several minutes, even trying to be brief. At the end of her tale, eyes wide as she waited to hear condemnation or anger or pity, at best, Hope was surprised. The wizened lady smiled warmly at her, opened her arms, and gave her a big, generous, sincere hug. She couldn't help it, she just started bawling. It had been so long since she could.

The matron insisted that Hope stay for dinner, and so she did, and ended up telling her story again to some of the other staff members of the Klan organization. Many of them seemed to live there, or nearby. They were the ones who were in control of all of the Arkansas counties bordering Missouri, and had sent the

representative from the area to St. Louis. Much of the talk was centered on his discussions with an army officer there. He was working hard in town planning an election for the fall, already, and organizing the city government with the Mayor and City Council, who were also all members of their group. They all seemed excited about the future of their organization, and this new government. Apparently, this was something they had been waiting for. Almost like they had expected it to happen for a long time. Hope didn't see how that could be true, though.

Their leader was a preacher, a very kind, grandfatherly type. He blessed the food. It turned out that his wife had been the lady she had talked to in the kitchen. After dinner, he talked with Hope and some of the other teenagers there about some religious ideas that she didn't have time to really think about until a lot later. At the moment, she was too busy secretly looking at a couple of the hot guys in the group. She had never been around so many White guys her own age, before!

That night, they let her sleep in the women's dormitory up the hill. Before she went to sleep, the preacher's wife asked her to consider staying. They could keep her busy and out of trouble, she said with a wink. Hope said that she was really tempted to, for a lot of different reasons, but she had a dream she had to follow.

"What dream is that, missy?" The lady had asked.

"I want to be an artist. I want to learn how to draw and paint better. I have to find a place where people still do that kind of stuff."
'Well, you sleep on it, and we can talk about it some more in the morning." The lady of the freehold said good-night, and left Hope to her thoughts and dreams.
By the time she had finished up her breakfast, she was sure of it. The fact that there were still good and decent people in the world, and places like this, made her want to create, to make something beautiful and stunning, even more. The world was more worth it,

now, if that made any sense. She had made up her mind. She told the lady and the Pastor what she wanted to do.
“Well, if that’s what you really want, then I might know just what you should do. Here’s an idea. Jason has told me that there’s a really good school for people your age called the “Grand Center Arts Academy” in downtown St. Louis. If I were you, and I’m just offering this as a suggestion, but if I were you, I’d think about going there for a year or two, and then you can see about going to the Art Institute in St. Louis. Or, by then, they might even have the Art Institute in Chicago running, again. A lot of people are moving back in, there, too. But both the schools are all White, of course, now, and it will be, too.”
This was a big moment for Hope, and she knew it. It was kind of scary.
“But, I mean, I don’t have much money, how would I pay for it? And how would I join it? ‘Cause, really, I’m not exactly seventeen. Yet.”
“Well, you let me talk to Jason. We have trusted people, members and associates, who travel from here to St. Louis every other day. People who work for us, and for Jason, and for the new government. Stay here again today, and rest, and I’ll let you know what Jason says tomorrow. Probably, we can get you a safe ride up there, find somebody to help you get enrolled in school, and find a good family to live with. Would that be okay?”
Hope hesitated. It was a lot to commit to, all at once, even with no other options, and nothing better imaginable. It almost seemed too good to be true. She was wary.
“Okay. I’ll stay another day, and we’ll see. If it can be done…I guess I’ll go. It can’t be any worse than where I’ve been.” She said, trying to sound tough.
That day she helped the ladies in the kitchen, and watched the kids while some of the moms took a break. One of the women in charge was the mother of the boy she was most fascinated by. She was the daughter of the grandmotherly lady. They had a HUGE family. In fact, it seemed like most of the people there were all related, by blood or by marriage. Hope then watched a group of the men working constantly on the new buildings. The food was

SO good here, all homemade. She would get fat if she stayed here for very long. She made sure not to eat too much when any of the cute boys were looking at her. Towards dark, some of them drilled in marching formation, and there was a class on field-stripping and cleaning their rifles, for militia training. They looked like fun, to Hope. Then there was a Bible study class, and afterwards she found her bunk. None of them had said a word to her about the deputy or the hunter or the two gays in the car, she realized. The teenaged girl on the cusp of something big slept deeper than ever, without dreaming.

After the breakfast plates were cleared away and washed the next morning, a man Hope hadn't seen before drove up, and introduced himself to her as Jason. He was the Congressman, she realized, blushing deeply. "Have you ever gone for a ride on an airplane?", he asked.

Chapter Fifteen

United States Congress, “An act to establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization” (March 26, 1790).

SEC.1. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That any alien, being a free white person, may be admitted to become a citizen of the United States, or any of them, on the following conditions, and not otherwise…*

Everybody Get Together, Try To Love One Another…

The Church of True Israel was the newest and best-attended congregational house in Kentwood, the bedroom community south of Grand Rapids where Randall and Barbara Balderson had decided to sink roots. The Michigan Militia Lieutenant was an electric company lineman again, and making good money since there were repairs to be made everywhere, constantly, with the grip coming back up to full power once more. Their kids had been some of the first ones back in class to re-start the Kentwood Middle School and High School as a remarkably non-diverse venture, and loved it. A year ago, he had been complaining to anyone who would listen that his oldest son, the sixteen year old, did nothing but lay around and play video games all day, while his youngest was rebellious and defiant and a smart-aleck. Now, they both seemed like pretty well-adjusted boys.

Their dad being a local hero, and all of the other kids in awe of him, probably helped their attitudes, he reckoned. The local papers had played him up as having singlehandedly defeated the jihadists at the siege of the airport, and he was cool with that. It put some heroworship into the old lady’s eyes, too, and that was never a bad thing. They were all in their Sunday best for church.

The offering plate held more New Dollars with every passing Sunday. After his usual remarks about the importance of

continuing to be on the lookout for drug dealers and mixed race people trying to pass as White, the preacher called on Randall, and asked him to stand up. He did, not sure what to expect.

“Brothers and Sisters, most of you know Brother Balderson her e as the brave officer who led his men to free the airport from the Jesus-hating Muslim scum. He fought throughout our town and all over the state, for us. Now, I’d like to tell you that he is asking for our vote to represent us in St. Louis, as the next elected Congressman from southwest Michigan, as the new redrawn district is simply being called, and fight for us there.” The pastor paused. “Well. Brother Randall, you’ve got my vote. And if any man or woman in this congregation truly loves God, and loves their people, you will have theirs, too!”

Randall smiled his thanks, raised his hand to Heaven, and looked around him to wave at the people clapping and even cheering for him. Barbara looked up at him in shock.

After the service, people lined up at the potluck luncheon to shake his hand and promise him their votes. A lot of them were already eager to offer advice about what the new Congress should do about the border or the economy or the government or the Mexicans. Some were already asking for favors, or offering them. His head swam with the names and ideas and deals he was supposed to remember, right off the bat. He caught Barbara’s eye across the room. She was corralling the kids, and taking her resentment out on them. Momma wasn’t happy.

“Oops, baby doll, I was meaning to tell you, first, honest.” He apologized to her later, after they got home. “The preacher must have just really got excited about the campaign when a few of the Militia volunteers went door to door in his neighborhood canvassing for votes, I guess.”

“So, you’re running for Congress. Well, you talked about it before, but I always thought you were joking. Is this something the Wolverines have talked you into?”

“Nah, the guys are all on board, and they’re going to be my campaign staff and volunteers and work to get me elected, but

with most of the fighting done, we need somebody down there to represent militia interests, and blue collar workers, and Michigan. It's important that our voice gets heard." Randall reasoned to her.
"Okay, so if we're going to do this, and it will be a 'we', not a 'you', Mr. Congressman, what are the platform issues? What are you for and against?" Barbara teased.
"Well, Ma'am, I'm all for the stars being erased from the flag and the national anthem being changed to "America, the Beautiful", because I can sing it better than the "Star Spangled Banner", and of course it's more fitting for the new situation, too. I support burning all the Korans left in a pile that reaches to the moon in a fire that can be seen from Mars. I support St. Louis and Killeen and Salt Lake City having diplomatic relations and exchanging ambassadors or whatever because, hell, we may have different visions of America, but we're all still Americans, and all still White, so we oughta be friendly, if we can be…."
"Yippeee! You've got my vote!" Barbara shut him up by jumping in his lap and kissing him. "You know, Congressman Balderson, the kids are gone to culture night. They'll have their heads full of European heritage for another two hours. We have the house all to ourselves…."
It looked like that saying about men in power must be true. Randall looked forward to going to St. Louis after November, more than ever. Come to think of it…in a week the local semi-pro baseball team, the West Michigan Whitecaps, were going down to the new capitol. The ball game would be fun. His boys would really love the chance to see the big city and take a break from school for a day or two. He bet Barbara would enjoy getting out of town, too. As his mind was redirected to other happenings closer to home, Randall thought about baseball, and Meatloaf's song "Paradise By The Dashboard Light".

I Think I See My Friends Coming, Riding Many A Mile

Captain Ming personally emptied Admiral Liu's ashes into the ocean, dumping them overboard while the white-gloved honor guard looked on and offered a decidedly unoverboard while the

white-gloved honor guard looked on and offered a decidedly ungun salute. The ‘heart attack’ had been so sudden, and unexpected. It must have been the pressures of the job, and the situation. The other officers were quick to offer their condolences to Ming, and acknowledge his superiority in the shortened chain of command.

His radio operator usually only spoke to him when the American Seventh Fleet’s overflights got too close or they intercepted something decipherable. He had at last given him some good news yesterday, while Liu had lain in state for the crews to pay their respects to their dead Admiral. A destroyer, five cruisers, and three troop ships were on their way from Hawaii. Without resupply, they could not hold Pearl Harbor or Hickam Air Base. They had evacuated from Honolulu, where the civilian population had been so reduced due to food riots and starvation that there wasn’t much left to rule, anyway. They didn’t exactly count as reinforcements, but it would strengthen Ming’s position, if he could ensure the newcomer’s loyalty. They were still going to be an unknown quantity, at first.

The 1,800 new arrivals did bolster the Chinese position, which was now Humanitarian and Peacekeeping in name only. After the remnants of the fleet from Pearl snuck into the San Francisco Bay under the cover of darkness the next night to avoid being spotted and sunk by the American’s carrier air wings, Ming began meeting and getting to know the officers. After he was satisfied that none of them posed any threat to his authority, he ordered a general Captain’s Council to begin crew reassignments. Once done, that make sure that all of the surface to surface and surface to air combat operations crew quarters and stations were fully staffed at all times, throughout the two dozen ships he now commanded in the Bay. It also would help him determine how many he could spare for shore patrols and holding their land territories.

With about fifty-three hundred total now in his command, that gave him roughly a battalion of land forces available to defend their shrunken territory. Ming decided to go on the offensive, and defend as far forward as possible. Two companies of Chinese Marines converged on San Jose from Mountain View and Milpitas. Their surprise attack caught the Republica forces unprepared, and pushed them south, out of the broad valley and into the more easily defensible chokepoint at Morgan Hill. The Mexican defenders lost nearly a hundred men, the Chinese fewer than twenty. That gave them more fighting room, more looting room, and more room to undertake agricultural efforts to feed themselves, in case they came under siege from the north. One of those companies would be sufficient to hold the line, there, astraddle the 101. The other Ming redeployed to Santa Cruz in case of a seaborne assault. He positioned another company in Livermore, with a reserve in Dublin, to cover the East. Four more in Novato, Napa, Fairfield, and Concord covered the north. There was far less pressure on his lines there from the American guerrillas and militias testing his defenses, but he preferred not to show weakness.

Captain Ming considered himself a long-range strategic thinker. He had been able to reestablish communications via satellite with General Jiang. Jiang had ended up holding onto everything from the carnal house of Beijing to Harbin in the north, where began the roughly hundred miles of demilitarized zone that the Russians had insisted on, as a part of cease fire agreement. Ming had offered his support and loyalty to General Jiang, and reported the sad news of Admiral Liu's death. Jiang had accepted Ming's oath of allegiance, and assured him that The People's Republic of Shenyang would welcome them all home with open arms to help rebuild their nation and restore its honor…but right now, he couldn't lift a finger to help them. The rest of China was in chaos, with warlords, famine, disease, and foreign troops from India, Pakistan, and even Vietnam running wild wherever they could reach. They were on their own.

His next long-range concern became how to feed the five thousand men in uniform and eight times that many surviving Chinese citizens who had re-concentrated to the Bay Area as civilian refugees under his protection. That problem solved itself. Ming pushed one of his two reserve companies north from Novato to retake Santa Rosa, and although improvised explosive devices and snipers all along the way harassed their advance, they took enough of Sonoma County that he was satisfied. Over the space of a week he bussed two thousand Chinese civilians into the farms there, guarded by the Novato company, and began intensive efforts to prepare a late Spring planting of crops there.

Further down the road, Captain Ming foresaw a real problem if the baby steps that Deseret, the Republic of Texas, and New America were taking towards diplomatic relations grew into something more. He had to figure out a way to turn the three American entities against each other, and away from him…or at least to focus them on the Republica del Norte. But, how?

Oh Dance In The Dark Of Night, Sing To The Morning Light

The ‘Indomitables’ had saved them, and that was a fact that neither he nor his surviving men could deny. Col. Mark Smith looked around at his bleary eyed command staff, sprawled over the tables at the Amphora Greek restaurant in Herndon, Virginia. So many faces were missing, faces of men he had served with in boot, in OCS, in Germany, and here at home. The three hundred and thirty survivors of his Marine command and the 3rd ID out of Fort McNair, along with a handful of French and U.S. Air Force pilots and admin., and the fifty-odd militia, were crashed out in a fleabag motel across the street. It was shaped like a “U”, as defensible a position as they could find before the storm came down, carrying toxic rain from the slagged out wastes of Baltimore up northeast. If it hadn’t been for the Virginia militia named after their Confederate ancestors, many of the jarheads would have been caught out in the open by the torrent outside. They had gotten them off the 267 and under shelter just before the clouds

opened up. Mark just wished they didn't have to stand around dressed in Rebel gray uniforms. For a man whose greatgreat grandfather had held the crest at Little Round Top, it was downright spooky.

He thought briefly of that German woman who had promised him armor support from the Heer, but he figured that the German armor had been turned to lava when Philadelphia got it, so he expected no help from that quarter. Smith had no way of knowing that at that moment, Gerta was flying overhead, four miles up, headed to O'Hare and then to Lambert.

When the Chinese missile intended for Baltimore blew, over thirty-five miles away, he had been standing on the south side of the White House lawn, and had seen his shadow light up like a negative silhouette in front of him. Several of his troops on the north side of the building were blinded, those that looked in that direction, and some in the open areas of the national mall in between his position and the Capitol got sunburned. It was that close. Probably right over Towson State, from what he could figure.

If the Col. had thought that the natives were restless before, he had really been in for a treat when the ugly red cloud rose up to block out the mid-morning sun. They had flown on C-130s from La Guardia into the long disused Bolling Air Force Base, held by a mixed French/U.S.A.F. transition team at Joint Base Anacostia/Bolling as the French got ready to make like a baby and head out. The Anacostia side was so quiet you could hear crickets, after the U.S. Naval Aviation units there had taken part in the evacuation of the bigwigs to New York. That had disappointed Smith, he had hoped that the Marine Helicopter Squadron there had been left intact. It wasn't.

Bolling barely had enough warm bodies to hold their own perimeter, but an armored convoy from Fort McNair had kept the South Capitol Street bridge open for them while they force-marched three miles up the 295 and across. To their left, across

the river, the blackened ruins where Reagan National Airport used to be had told them that they were not on a class field trip. After some brief mutual back slapping, they rode the last couple of miles to the Capitol in deuce and a half trucks behind the big smelly M113's of A Company, 1st Battalion, Third U.S. Infantry regiment. That night, the gangs mass attacked them like a scene from 'Zulu'.

It had cost the lives of eighty-one men, nearly sixteen percent of his combat strength, just to clear and hold the national mall. Thirteen U.S. Army soldiers from Company A bought it, too. They had been attacked with everything from Ak-47s and RPGs to machetes, hatchets, and shovels. It felt almost like there was some resentment among the black community at having been left behind by the government when they evacuated. They had attrited over twelve hundred, by the dawn's early light. It was one thing to say that the tree of liberty had to be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It was another thing entirely, when the tree was rotten to the roots.

The five remaining Marine companies had pushed back the perimeter to Union Station, and over to the Lincoln Memorial, but it had been costly. Another twenty-eight good men had died during those two weeks. They relied on the 3rd ID to help them get their wounded out and back to Bolling for medivac to New York. Their third week in, the gangs ceased resistance and dispersed, and the Marines broke through to the other side of the Potomac. Things were going pretty well. They were working with local militias in northern Virginia and southern Maryland, expanding their AOC. They confidently asked the U.N. to declare the Capitol Administrative District pacified. Then Baltimore went up, and all hell broke loose.

Obviously, they had no idea at first that New York had gotten hit, hard and twice, and was out of action, as were the other northern U.N. commands. They received only scattered reports from surviving Blue units in Massachusetts, Eastern Pennsylvania, and

New Jersey. They didn't have time to worry about it for long, though, because the Battle of Rorke's Drift, Part II, started with the pounding roar of thousands of running feet. Right at them.

It seemed to be a pretty area-wide involvement. Bolling was overran and evacuated their three dozen staff north to regroup with the Marines. Fort McNair's commander wanted to be stubborn, thinking he could ride out this storm just like he had ridden out so many others over the last few months, but this time was different. They came right down Potomac Avenue and cut off the National Defense University and the War College, enveloping the Fort itself like a swarm of ants covering a caterpillar. There were thousands of them. Only those units north of Nationals Park were able to fall back to the mall.

It took them a day, a night, and another day of hand to hand brutality to fight a rear guard action and drag all of their sorry asses together in the only direction left open to them, due west. They lost so many squads and platoons cut off in pockets with names like the Air and Space Museum and the Pavilion Café and the Sylvan Theater that by the time they got to the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, they were all able to ride by it, and just stare. There were enough seats for everyone.

They gathered up a few squads of their outlying patrols along the way, and one of them was coordinating with the 'Indomitables' in Tyson's Corner. The militia commander was a former college professor who looked awkward with the M-4 on his shoulder. He took one look into Smith's eyes and said "That bad, huh?". When the Colonel didn't dignify that with an answer, he flinched, and said "Okay, uh..Colonel, where do we go now from here?"

Mark ordered his m en to take a six hour nap in the Sheraton Tyson's, then looted the Wal-Mart next door for food left behind in the back stockrooms. There were a lot of nonperishables. He was amazed at how few times the looters even bothered to check behind the doors to the stockroom. He then told his staff and the surviving officers what he had in mind.

“Don’t worry, guys, we aren’t running in a blind panic. There’s a method to my madness. I intend to get to Dulles, get some aircraft there working, and get out of here. Who’s with me?”

“Where to, Sir?”, a forlorn looking Army lieutenant asked. His Captain, the highest ranking officer from Fort McNair who had made it out, gave him a dirty look to shut up, but Mark answered him, “Well, we can’t go back to the U.N. Command, they’re out of the picture, for now and maybe for keeps. I don’t think any of us here want to go any further south, we’re not tan enough for that. So that leaves Deseret if any of ya’ll are Mormons, to the V.P. if you’re Texans, or to St. Louis, for the rest of us. For me, at least. But first, we have to get there and clear the place and see what we can get running. Thank God we have those pilots with us, even the Frogs might come in handy. So, let’s do this thing, one step at a time. Are we clear?”

An hour later they were on the road, and the storm clouds were building. Nice of their local guides to bring them to the Amphora. Too bad they weren’t serving. He’d kill for some gyros. The sign said “Open 24 Hours”. Mark was disappointed.

And My Spirit Is Crying For Leaving

The welldressed lawyer sat comfortably in John’s new office. He was leaned back in his chair, keeping an eye on the teenaged girl playing pool with his guards in the lounge. Their discussion of the Scottish and Italian and Spanish balkanizations had been just a preamble to the elephant in the room they were about to acknowledge.

“So, Jason, let me get this straight, you want me and Carolyn to take on a teenaged orphan or runaway girl who also happens to be a cold-blooded killer and is probably wanted for multiple counts of murder, including of a law enforcement officer?”

“Well, when you put it that way, it does sound kind of bad. But I can assure you that no charges have been filed…and no charges

will be filed. She's NOT a replacement for your girls, John. Noone ever could be, we know that." He leaned forward. "But, we would consider this to be a personal favor, Mr. Chairman…John…kind of a bond between your people, and ours." He leaned back again. "Besides, if you want to legally adopt her, I can handle all the paperwork in no time, it wouldn't be a problem at all. She's bright, hard-working, courteous, and easy to get along with. She's also a very good artist, which is why we'd like to see her placed in the Grand Center Arts Academy they just reopened. You'll be amazed by her. We vouch for her."

"You know your word is gold to me, Jason, but I have to talk to Carolyn first, you understand. She's what…fourteen, fifteen? You know what it's like, having two women in the house, even under the best circumstances. But she can stay here until we decide if it will work out fulltime or not, and we won't just throw her out on the street, no matter what, I promise you that." The Lt. Col. offered, cautiously.

"That's all we can ask. Thank you. And next week, I'd like to bend your ear about moving some Unified Command troops into the Arkansas River Valley, to solidify our gains there south of I-40 and I30." The Klan lawyer pushed.

McNabb laughed, holding his hands up in mock surrender, "Okay, Okay, you can buy me lunch." Jason stood up and walked to the door. "Hope, come here a minute. I want you to meet someone." John punched two numbers on the phone, and spoke the same words to Carolyn, upstairs.

The Congressman from Arkansas had a flight to catch, and soon gave Hope a hug goodbye, telling her that he would see her in a week. After spending the afternoon together, the three of them decided that Carolyn would turn the fourth floor lounge into a bedroom for Hope. Moving the couch out through the elevator and a bed and dresser and makeup table and lamp and other feminine things up took the better part of the evening and well into the night. Times like that were when McNabb was glad that he

had a security staff to do the heavy lifting, and a woman to do the interior decorating.

He spent that time flying out to Lambert and discussing the new arrivals they were expecting. Gen. Harrison had been talking with a Marine Colonel who was bringing in a mixed bag of soldiers to join up. They had been stuck at Dulles outside D.C. for several days trying to cobble together enough airworthy planes to get them there. The negotiation of them joining the Unified Command had been the easy part. Having the flight engineers and mechanics tell them how to get those big jets fueled and fired up took days. United had the worst terminal at Dulles, and that was probably what saved the two 787-9s they were able to get running from being vandalized and trashed. They had replaced the tires, flushed the fuel tanks and lines, and used generators to charge the batteries and systems onboard. In the next day or two, they would give it a try.

The Lt. Col. and his Commander-in-Chief looked over the passenger manifest that the Marine officer's subordinate had painstakingly read out over the radio. It had taken an hour while a technician on the Lambert end had written them down. Smith was bringing in two-hundred and thirty-five Marines, ninety-four U.S. Army soldiers from 3rd ID at Fort McNair, Companies A and B; ten U.S.A.F. pilots, seven French Air Force pilots, three French AF admin., four U.S.A.F. admin, and seven U.S.A.F. Special Operations Group from JB Anacostia/Bolling base security. They represented all of the armed forces from the U.S. capitol area, and possibly the largest remaining force on the East Coast. Oh, and nine civilian militia members from Northern Virginia, calling themselves 'The Indomitables'. Whatever.

"Hey General, since this is our European command, coming home, a re you going to step aside once Ferguson and his division get back?" John joked. Harrison spat a stream of sunflower seed hulls, his new habit now that tobacco was so hard to import, and grinned. "What makes you think the Russians are

even gonna let him leave Novosibirk, son? They got 18,000 highly trained and motivated mercenary soldiers under their thumb, now. Putin'll let the European contingents of the coalition go home, but I'd bet you my left one that 'Ferocious Ferguson' ends up marching into Mongolia or Xinjiang, now that the Chinese don't need it, no more."

"Well, Sir, I'll have to have words with the Russian Consul about that, once he gets set up. Not much we can do about it but complain, but I will, if our boys and girls are serving under duress." McNabb assured his superior officer.

"Good luck, soldier!", the older man replied. "I'll have to give you another promotion, to full bird, so Smith doesn't think he outranks you, come to think of it!"

McNabb's headache was getting Col. Smith's command in and debriefed and assigned quarters before the joint flight of Consuls from France, Germany, Russia, the Republic of Quebec, and the United Kingdom all arrived in a bundle from O'Hare in four days. It was going to be tight. They had just aired out and cleaned up eight blocks of classrooms and professor's offices in the St. Louis Community College. That would provide Consular Office space for each of them, as well as for the Australian Consul, scheduled to arrive separately next week. The final two were held for Consuls from Killeen and Salt Lake City. Discussions of formal diplomatic relations were underway with both Deseret and the Republic of Texas. He hadn't released that announcement to the media, yet.

The Community College hadn't reopened and wasn't being used for anything, and most of the damage to the buildings on campus was cosmetic, external, and being repaired. As a bonus, they would be right next to Busch Stadium, where the Cardinals had started playing ball again. An exposition game against the West Michigan Whitecaps minor league team, as a test run, was scheduled for this weekend. Everybody in the city was excited about it. Maybe Carolyn and Hope would like to go to that. He wouldn't tell them that the hot dogs would be fresh, and come

straight from the stockyard pastures in Forest Park.
On the flight back to the warehouse, John thought about other complication. Here he was, supposed to be setting up to have diplomatic relations with Salt Lake City, and the SatComs officer on the Nebraska was reporting that a U.S. Navy specialist he was communicating with on the USS Abraham Lincoln in their communication division under Admiral Woods had gotten it from GitMo that…well, long story short, somebody was sending regularly scheduled, encoded shortwave broadcasts from central Nebraska…which were being responded to, just as regularly, with brief encoded shortwave transmissions originating in Provo. Yeah. Prairie espionage. Go figure.
In hindsight, the 1195th Truck Company of the 734th Transportation Battalion of the Nebraska National Guard stationed in Kearney might not have been the best choice to back up the fourman Blaine County Sheriff's department, once discrete inquiries had been made about any new arrivals in the sparsely populated area. But they were closest, they had the trucks and the gas and the personnel, and nobody had expected one of the two spies to go out in a blaze of glory, taking three soldiers with her. A woman, of all things. Two of them.
The two women were working in the Sand Hills High School cafeteria, posing as Mormon Sister Missionaries. Exposing them as spies would queer the diplomatic negotiations he was trying to establish with Deseret. That would be embarrassing for both sides, or even cause another war that neither side needed. Especially not him. There had to be a more subtle way of making his point to Salt Lake…'that's it!', he remembered having thought, as he had ordered the arrests. 'In order to not queer the negotiations, label the women as lesbians.' He had really had the idea as soon as the suspects had been identified. Well, they were two nonrelated women, living together, and it was a felony in the state now. The County Sheriff didn't have enough people to effect a multiple felony arrest, so they asked for help. Nothing to see here, folks. Just a couple of lesbians getting what they deserved. But then the hotheaded one, that turned out to be an Air Force deserter who had switched to the Deseret side, had opened up as

soon as the no-knock warrant was served, and she and three Guardsmen truck drivers were dead. Well, they had found the shortwave transmitter and plenty of other evidence. The best way to bury the thing would be to just shoot the other one, too. But the Lt. Col. was curious. He wanted to know what Salt Lake was planning. As his Iroquois touched down, he made the decision to rescind his ‘martial law expedient trial’ order, and have the surviving spy brought to St. Louis. He wanted to look her in the eye, and question her himself. That was the only way to be sure of what was going on, out west.

Epilogue

It's Been A Long Time Since I Rock And Rolled

John’s eyes scanned the Post Dispatch headlines for the day through his new glasses, made by an optometrist just back in business. The first stories “Back On The Road!” about the first New American automobiles rolling off of the re-staffed assembly lines in Detroit, and “Don’t Count Us Out!” about the new census efforts planned for next year, he skipped over. He knew what they said, because he had written them, himself, or rather, Carolyn had, for him. The below the fold stories were actually news for him:

“Malthus Was Right”: “The continental population of Africa has declined over the last twelve months precipitously, from its height at over a billion persons a decade ago, to back near the 1950 level of 220 million, according to a Red Cross International report issued from Paris. The study, based on weeks of field research, concluded that the unchecked tribal warfare, starvation, and disease epidemics have left many former urban areas of the continent empty of human life, especially south of the Sahara desert. The extinction of some seven hundred million persons has unfolded while the rest of the world either watched helplessly, or has been distracted by their own problems…”

“Next In Line”: “In Mexico City, the loss of jobs and remittances have finally taken their toll on the national economy, forcing the national government to lease the nation's oil reserves to Brazil in exchange for Brasilia's pledge to support the interests of the Mexican people both above and below the Rio Grande…”

“Below The Belt”: “More turmoil looms in South America as Venezuelan attempts to pacify Bogata led to reprisals from the Fuerza de Liberation Columbiano cartel administration in Cali. Peruvian Air Force strikes against FLC laboratories and

warehouses have weakened the cartel's hold on the former Columbian capitol, but Venezuelan troops are still seen as invaders, rather than liberators, by most citizens there. Ecuador has vowed to maintain their neutrality…"

"Jumping Ship": "French television reports that refugees from inland areas of New Africa crowded the docks in Mobile over the weekend, attempting to force their way onto a Senegalese freighter which had docked there a week earlier and advertised their intention to provide any person with medical training or military experience passage and repatriation in exchange for terms of indenture. After boarding as many of those who could provide proof of their experience or education as possible, the ship disembarked, leaving the remaining mob to loot the shipyards before turning on one another…"

Folding the paper and placing it over the finished lunch plate, the Colonel rubbed his eyes and stretched. He needed to get ready to leave soon, if he was going to avoid having to debate the relative qualities of Budweiser and Busch with Gerta. The new German Consul was coming over to give Hope her German language lesson, as she did every afternoon when the teen got home from school.

Charles, the grocery delivery truck driver originally from Texas, was backing his van up to the rear loading dock, with the new guy Jeff and Glenn both directing. McNabb's noting of the routine activity on the security camera monitor up near the lounge ceiling was interrupted by the phone ringing out front. Damn! That would probably wake Carolyn, upstairs. She needed her rest before her daily Chairman's briefing to the growing press corps at the Old Courthouse. Oh well, his secretary would get it. Kip's clipped voice came over his radio a minute later, telling him that he had a call from Randall, the Militiaman turned Congressional candidate from Michigan. The one he'd met in the line of admirers at the ball game, Kip reminded him. The rockabilly singer who had belted out the juicedup version of the new national anthem "America the

Beautiful", before John had thrown out the first pitch. With the teenaged son who'd kept making eyes at Hope. Oh, he had promised to help him find a three bedroom close to downtown, hadn't he? Promises, promises…

The Colonel gave the former Wolverine the number of a Unified Command resettlement coordinator who was converting duplexes to single family units next to DeSoto Park. After telling Randall to use his name to get a closing, he handed the phone back to his secretary, a woman whose family had made the harrowing cross-country migration from Reno, across the northern Great Plains, just to be a part of New America. "Thank you, Brenda."

"No problem, sir. Will you be visiting t he Workhouse to interview the Johansen prisoner today? I can call ahead and have her pulled off City Janitorial Detail, to save you time, if you are." the former Californian asked, helpfully.

"Good idea. Kelly's been writing down everything she rememb ers about their command structure and units. Most important of all, she's helping us understand what Prophet Rammell and the Council of Fifty really want. She'll probably win a pardon soon." John grinned at the thought. "Tell them I'll be there in an hour. No, two hours, I'm supposed to review Col. Smith's plan to establish a DMZ with Bellefont along the Red River before he takes off for Texarkana. I'll need Congressman Roberts from Arkansas' input on that, since the Marines will be moving through his Klan's area of control. Would you call Jason for me in, say, ten minutes, and patch him through?"

"Yes, Sir. And remember, you told Carolyn that you were going to take her and Hope up in the Iroquois to visit your folks in Indiana for the weekend." Brenda reminded him.
"Yeah, I'm tingling with anticipation to see how Hope will act on her first helicopter ride, but it's high time that the old family meets the new family." He hadn't decided yet whether he would visit the graveyard in South Bend, or how his girls would feel about that. Either set of them.

McNabb stopped short, walked back over to the table, and picked up the newspaper. He opened it, spread it out, and looked at the date on the masthead. ‘Well, I’ll be…’, he thought out loud. It was Cinco de Mayo, again. The day had sure come fast.

Waiting For The Sun: Hasten The Day, Part II

The Fifth Year After the Breakup of the United States By Billy Roper

First published: November, 2014
Any resemblance in this book to any persons, living or dead, or to any institutions, organizations, or entities, is entirely coincidental. This is a work of fiction.

Dedicated to the memory of two lawyers; my friends Ed Steele and Victor Gerhard. A bit more than a decade ago, when I first reviewed his book 'Defensive Racism' for him, I remarked to Mr. Steele that we had enough books already. Well, Ed, to quote Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday in 'Tombstone', "It appears my hypocrisy knows no bounds". Rest easy, brother. And to Vic, as my legal counsel and ViceChairman and friend, I'm sorry that you slipped away without me noticing. Thanks for always being there.

'Waiting For The Sun' is a sequel to 'Hasten The Day', also by the same author… Foreword: Hyperinflation and unemployment, accompanied by another round of bank bailouts and failures, lead to the devaluation of the U.S. dollar and the collapse of the stock market and the U.S. economy. Executive Order amnesty for illegal immigrants leads to unprecedented numbers of Hispanics flooding in and taking de facto possession of the border states. Protests and looting become race riots, then ethnic cleansing. Hispanics claim the southwestern quarter of the country as 'La Republica del Norte'. Blacks claim the southeastern quarter as 'New Africa'. The Republic of Texas is reborn in the northern half of the state. Canada fragments, as Quebec declares its independence. Chinese peacekeeping forces occupy the Bay Area of California in order to insure the safety of Chinese citizens

and their property. United Nations peacekeepers occupy the East Coast. A Mormon state called ‘Deseret’ rises again, centered on Utah. Then, things go nuclear. And in the Heartland of America, a renewed people stand up, dust themselves off, and begin forming a ‘New America’…

Chapter One

“Everyone who has ever built anywhere a new heaven first found the power thereto in his own hell.”
— Friedrich Nietzsche

And crown thy good with brotherhood…

John’s eyes were so tired that his right one twitched. It had never quite recovered completely from the bomb intended to put him down for an eternal nap, nearly five years ago. He slipped his hand up and under his glasses, rubbing his temples and then his eyes with his thumb and trigger finger. The tension eased for a moment. His head swam, and his ears were ringing so loud that it was a distraction. In his early forties, it was more a question of mileage, than year model. Or maybe, it was being the dad to a toddler. The General moved his hand down as if straightening his uniform. He tried to focus on what the German Ambassador was saying. Gerta Rausch-Schmidt played fast pitch. You took your eye off of the ball at your own peril, around her. Even here, in his office in the Old Courthouse, she leaned back in her chair as if she was at home. He wished she was.

“If a Major of the Deutsche Heer was forced to re -deploy his forces out of northern Philadelphia when it was bombed, then that is an issue for the German government to assess”, Gerta stated. She was middle-aged herself, but well preserved, and spoke with a light accent.

“Surely, our brothers, and sisters in the NPD haven’t so quickly forgotten our vo cal support for your NeuAnschluss last year, have they, Gerta? After all, you’re a southern girl yourself, aren’t you?” The Brigadier General in the Unified New American Armed Forces Command and Speaker of the House of Representatives of the New American Congress responded with a weary smile.

Her blonde head shook. “No, Mr. Speaker, we have not. We are very pleased to consider New America our friend and ally, not just on the Austrian question, but in every sense. However, if Major Strosser used German military equipment and personnel in a manner for which he did not have approval by either the U.N. or the Chancellor,…” Gerta began. John slapped his knee in frustration.

“Oh, come on, we’ve went round and round about this, already. We had a Marine Colonel of our own lead his company out of D.C., along with ragtag U.S. Army and Air Force and even French Air Force survivors, the very same day. I think you know Col. Smith, right? You knew him before that happened. Nobody is acting butt-hurt that they did what they had to do when the missiles fell. So come on, tell me, are ya’ll bothered more by the fact that Strosser high-tailed it West into Pennsylvania, or that he used German taxpayer paidfor tanks, or that he hasn’t bothered to phone home to report in for over four years, that bothers you so much?” John pushed her. For the last few years Gerta had been a close friend of the family, as well as the German Consul, and then Ambassador, to the fledgling Republic of New America. Many times after she had tutored General McNabb’s adopted daughter Hope in German, French, or Italian, she had stayed over for dinner with the family. Often, if the Cardinals weren’t playing a home game, the best entertainment was debate. That, and going to church, but there were six other days in the week. They had both gotten to know how to push each other’s buttons.

“No, John, the trucks and tanks and planes and other material the U.S. European Command left behind when they evacuated was payment in full for whatever we might have left here when our U.N. contingents were cut off. But we are concerned about desertion.” She pulled her skirt down closer to her knee. “We understand that Major Strosser took up the defense of a small town called Prosperity, in Pennsylvania, yes?” Gerta asked.

“Yeah,” John confirmed, “It’s about forty miles south of Pittsburgh. The local militia had kind of ingeniously used steel plating from the local steel mill to build a wall around the town.” His fingers absentmindedly traced the top of a black leather holster holding the silver-plated Colt .45 as he remembered the details. A gift from his wife, it had once belonged to Elvis Presley. “That had kept the looters and refugees out since Cinco Day. They’d set themselves up as a strong city-state through trade. But, when Baltimore and New York and Philly and D.C. and Toronto got hit, a new wave of refugees poured out of the East Coast cities. The rural areas around them were flooded, again. Everybody thought they were going to be next to be bombed. You remember how it was…well, you were back over there that day. Anyway, it was a panicked time. If Strosser hadn’t shown up when he did, Prosperity might not have been able to make it, but they did.”

“So, your militia fought us as invaders in some places, but when German tanks were shooting scared American women and children refugees, they became heroes. I understand. They saved them the bullets. And, they saved them the guilt.” Gerta sighed heavily and brushed back a strand of her flaxen hair. “I do understand. The German government has no desire to request the arrest or extradition of Major Strosser or any of his men for their actions. They will not be charged with desertion or dereliction. However, they will be stripped of their German citizenships, if they do not choose to come home voluntarily. Agreed?”

“Gerta, do you know how many Pennsylvanians are descended from German Hessian mercenaries who refused to go back home after the first American Revolution was over?” McNabb asked playfully. They had already joked about that particular irony, before. “Sure, we’ll offer them New American citizenship, in exchange for past services rendered. Most of them have already put down roots around Prosperity, joined the local militia, and started families there, anyway.” His back hurt from sitting so long, so he uncrossed and recrossed his legs. “Besides, nobody on our

side fussed when that old actor who used to talk to his car and run around on the beach was granted citizenship by you guys with a refugee visa."

"Ja, ja. Zehr gut. Now, John, I mean, Mr. Speaker…you do know what "Speaker" translates into, in Latin, yes?" Gerta smiled. "The N.P.D. is grateful for our mutually beneficial trade in your corn and wheat for our manufactured products and autos again this year, and glad to have a friend such as New America, which is still among the world's strongest nuclear powers." Gerta hesitated, looking down at her hands, then out the window of John's office at the marble arch in the distance. "Of course, officially Greater Germany does not possess nuclear weapons, and does not desire them. Officially." She gave the recently promoted single-star General a wink of one blue eye. "But, as you know, when the Party emptied out the last of the shariatowns, they had to be sent somewhere. We needed an...ahem, a final solution, as they say it, to the Muslim problem. With Turkey already becoming a caliphate of the Islamic State, they were the closest…how do you say… contenders?" John nodded and shrugged for her to continue. "Well, the tens of thousands of Muslims we dumped there put more pressure on the Greeks trying to hold them out of their own yard, as you know. So, we have had some resentment from our Golden Dawn friends in control of their parliament in Athens. Our economic aid to them has not been all out of brotherly love." she added, cynically. Her frown showed tiny lines at the corners of her mouth.

"But what does that have to do with me? With us? With New America? We don't have any forces East of the Appalachians. " John interrupted. The meeting was running over time. He had three appointments waiting their turn.

Gerta held up a wellmanicured hand to stop him. "Let us not be coy, John. We have been friends for far too long for that, yes? Look, we know that you have met with the Russian ambassador last week. We know that you were told that the 11,400 members

of the old U.S. armed forces out of the coalition troops in Afghanistan have been moved by rail to Volgograd, finally. Finally, after being used as “auxiliaries” by the Russians to beat their Islamic Republic neighbors into submission, all those Stans, over the last four years. You are talking to Ferguson, yes? Only eleven thousand left, General, but they still have some armor and they still have some air power and we know that Lieutenant General Ferguson has given his oath of loyalty to General of the Army Harrison and the Unified Command. They haven’t…how do you say…’gone native’ on you, John.”

He tried to be in the moment, and not think about the rest of his day. John said a quick and silent prayer for patience and wisdom. “No, they haven’t. But while we are in contact with them, they know that we still can’t bring them home. Our hope is that when the situation improves…”McNabb began.

“ The situation will NOT improve, here or there, unless we or you or somebody else improves it, we both know that. We also know that “Ferocious Ferguson” and his division are going to Tblisi, next, to drive the Islamic State jihadists out of Georgia. The Russians fear their soft underbelly is exposed, as they should. THAT is what your meeting with the Russian Ambassador was about, yes?” Gerta dared him to deny it.

“My compliments to your agents,” John said in acknowledgement, but with a sour look on his face. Gerta chuckled, a deep, throaty laugh of amusement.
“Oh, don’t be too angry, Gen. McNabb. We know that you have people of your own in Killeen and Salt Lake City and yes, in Berlin, too. Like it is said, ‘Keep your friends close, your enemies closer, and your closest friends the closest, this is true, ja?” Gerta’s eyes sparkled.
“Okay, assuming that was true, how does it affect Greater Germany?” he asked. A flight of transport planes hopping from Lambert Field to Scott Air Force Base, newly reopened on the east side of the river, made him have to speak louder than he

liked, to be heard.
“Oh, anything that happens West of the Urals affects Greater Germany, of course, these days, more and more. But, in this case, we come to you because we owe a favor to our Golden Dawn little brothers, for pouring our Muslims out so next to them in the first place and making their problems worse. In short, when Gen. Ferguson hits the Islamic State from the Northeast, the ripple effect will push more Muslims to the Southeast. And this is not a good thing for Greece, no, not at all,” the German Ambassador frowned again. “So, we need you to make sure that the Muslims do not get the…the domino effect..yes…that Greece is not overrun. We need something to happen in the West, to keep them from running that way, when Ferguson hits them in the East.” She leaned back, finished.
“Holy…so that’s what you meant about us still being a nuclear power? You want us to”…..John stopped himself from saying it out loud. His office had been swept for bugs, this morning, as it was every day, by his personal Secret Service security team. He still didn’t like saying it, though. He remembered Colorado Springs, Omaha, D.C., Baltimore, New York, and a dozen other cities, all now gone.
“Everybody says that John McNabb is the smartest man in the New American government.” was all that Gerta said in direct response. “But of course, we understand that the loss of the two American airbases, with so many lives, and the way the Turkish government joined in, the stab in the back, is a sore point for many in your armed forces. It would be completely understandable if a little revenge was in order, yes?” The petitioners waiting under Brenda’s watch in the outer office would have to wait a bit longer.

We can’t go on together, with suspicious minds…

Kelly’s daily routine had allowed her to forget the parades in honor of the wrongfully arrested Sister Missionary she had been welcomed home as. She would never forget the months of debriefings and interrogations and close monitoring the Church

had put her through to make sure that she hadn't been turned, though. Her arrest for espionage was covered with a Homosexuality charge by the goons that killed her partner (in a mission sense of the word, not in a lesbian sense). In Deseret, homosexuality was a capital offense, these days. Even in New America, it was a serious felony. She'd ended up spending six months in a medium security workhouse jail in St. Louis, being interrogated every day by former U.S. Army intelligence officers and their poster boy, McNabb. They knew her mission, knew her contact, and knew her history. They had their stuff together, for sure. He'd even known her birthday, and brought her a cake in her cell when she turned twenty-five. How thoughtful.

After her pardon "for diplomatic relations" when the Deseret Consulate opened, she was placed on conditional release. Kelly had been allowed to work for the Consular General sent from Salt Lake City, and live in the old Community College Consular offices near Busch Stadium. That had been a boring year, winning back the Council of Fifty's trust and doing menial and boring secretarial tasks. Worse than the workhouse, really. They hadn't remembered her birthday. Almost two years after her mission had begun, she finally was 'recalled' home to a hero's welcome, and debriefing. 'Now, THAT was a cooling off period', she had thought at the time. She was back in Salt Lake, and because of her name recognition as a heroine for Deseret, had been boosted up. She had learned to demonstrate more faith than she felt, as well. Kelly Johansen was amused to find herself the First Counselor, or Head, of the Department of Internal Communications within the Deseret Department of Public Safety.

She enjoyed the larger apartment perk, which all of her old personal belongings (except for the illegal shortwave transceiver and a few banned books) had been moved out of storage and into, for her. With Mrs. Murphy, her across the hall neighbor and dead friend Emma's mom, in the L.D.S. Church-run nursing home, there was nothing left for her in the old place. She still visited every week, and brought the old lady treats. She even sat

and read the Book of Mormon to her. Deseret produced gasoline from shale oil deposits, but it was still rationed for civilian use. Most of the petroleum was needed for Gull, Beehive, and Saint units. Their grinding urban warfare operations in the ruins of Los Angeles, San Diego, and Phoenix required constant resupply. The First Presidency claimed all of the land to the Gila River and the Pacific, but the Mexican Army hadn't given up Tucson or Chula Vista. Kelly didn't mind walking a few blocks to work, to help the cause. It was closer than her old place had been. Being right next to Southridge Park made the apartment prime for her, too. With so many Saints moving into Deseret from all over North America in the first couple of years after the collapse, places like hers were at a premium. Most places that big went to Bishops. She was one of the elite, now. Or so they kept telling her.

The pictures the Gull unit clearing the U.C.L.A. campus of La Republica del Norte holdouts took in her sister's dorm room hadn't brought closure to Kelly. The room was a mess, but Karen had always been sloppy. With their artillery barrage on the guerrillas encamped at the hill, there were plenty of bodies, both of Aztlan Reconquistadores and their White female slaves, but none of them had fit Karen's description. A few of them had been close, close enough that Kelly had looked at their post-mortem pictures used to document Mexican atrocities against Whites. None were her sister, though. Karen might still be out there, somewhere. Most likely, she was long dead and lost, Kelly knew and accepted. Just one more dead White girl among the millions of others who had died when southern California fell to the Latino rebellion. She was grateful for the pictures of the dorm room, anyway. Rank did have its privileges.

Sometimes Kelly wondered if Karen might have headed north, when things got really bad. If she had made it out of El Lay, and gone north of Fresno, she would have been in the area occupied by the Chinese. The People's Humanitarian Expedition forces had rounded up thousands of Whites from their area of control and shipped them off by rail to Carson City and Reno. In fact, a

commune of former Hollyweird A-listers were now trying to farm in the desert. Everyone had been really impressed with Kelly's patriotism when she encouraged Deseret forces to keep pushing to the Sierra Nevadas and the Pacific. With the exception of maybe her Intelligence Division handler, Jimmy, none of them guessed that her motivation was personal. Karen might be one of the fifty-three million who had died throughout North America during the last five years since the collapse. She might, on the other hand, be among the hundred and eighteen million displaced persons and refugees, squeezing out a new life somewhere. Either way, Kelly had felt that the annexation of Nevada into Deseret was completely justified, since it might help her find her sister. But, no dice, she hadn't been found there, either.

Throughout Deseret, from the Snake River to the Arapaho National Forest, and from Bakersfield to Farmington, a standing A.P.B. was out to every local, County, and Deseret National law enforcement agency to keep on the lookout for Karen. It still took Kelly by surprise to see the posters with the picture of the oval-faced brunette who looked so much like herself. That was about all that she could for her sister, except pray. Kelly wasn't very good at that, not that she didn't get enough practice. Church every week, like every other good Saint. Some better than others.

She still lived alone, in her big apartment, and still didn't date. Jimmy said he thought that she should, just to get over the lingering suspicion of the false charge leveled against her, but she stood firm. Nobody who mattered believed it, and those who believed it, didn't matter. Her books were Kelly's life. He just wanted her to date, so he could propose marriage to her, she was sure. The former gamer still was a bachelor in his midthirties, in a place where most men in his position had two or three wives. He said that he was holding out for her. What a nerd.

He was probably more intrigued by her, than attracted to her, she felt. That conversation they had drifted off into in her office after work a few weeks ago was a prime example. Jimmy had pointed

out that the scripture was clearly against interracial relationships, so they could use that as a commonality with New American prisoners they interrogated. Kelly had responded that even for the nonreligious, since not all New Americans were Christian Identity, it was logical that multiracialism destroyed the true diversity that nature required for natural selection to continue the evolutionary process. Whenever she said things like that. Jimmy would look around as if he expected a Bishop or maybe Prophet Rammell himself to be standing over them, frowning.

His paranoid reaction just made her go furt her with it. “I mean, really Jimmy, we’re not much different from dogs, different dog breeds are the same as different human races, we may be members of the same species, just like they are, but nobody goes around telling the kennel club that the only differences between a pit bull and a poodle is in the color of their coat, do they?”

Jimmy turned green and tried to caution her. “Well, of course I understand what you mean, but you oughta be careful saying that we’re the same as dogs. Our divine spirit…” Kelly interrupted him.

“Absolutely! That’s exactly what I mean! And so, since we’re more important than dogs, it’s silly for people to be more concerned about the pedigree of their pet, than they are about the pedigree of their grandchildren, isn’t it?...Jimmy? Hey, where ya goin’?”

No, Kelly liked her life simple and unentangled. She couldn’t imagine living as anybody’s wife. Least of all, as a sister wife. Now that she had access to all of the outside world’s information and remaining media, she didn’t even need to be an outlaw, any more. There was no reason to have a shortwave at home. She got more than enough data feeds at work.

Deseret had achieved the Church of Latter Day Saints’ grandest dreams from 1850, and then some, but they weren’t the only game in town. In addition to the New Americans who had captured her, and the Texicans, the Chinese still held the Bay Area. They’d rebounded and had expanded back into the Central

Valley all the way to the Sierra Nevadas at the heels of the Mexican withdrawal. ‘Yep’, Kelly thought, ‘They let us do their heavy lifting for them, then moved in to fill the vacuum when La Republica wasn’t quite so Norte, any more’. To give them credit, the 5,000 Chinese naval and Marine personnel who had been stranded in California had been a tough nut to crack. Stuck in place when their mother country dissolved in civil war and invasions and nuclear attack from both Russia and India, they’d survived. It had taken the strict regimenting of a hundreds of thousands of Chinese-American civilians to do it, but they had pulled together. ‘Just like Asians do’, Kelly mused. ‘Just like Mormons are supposed to, in the hive, too.” It was what she hated so much about her theocracy. That, and being ‘Sistered’ to death every breath. And coffee. She missed coffee. And rock and roll. And….

So, the Chinese were now Deseret’s neighbors , unable to expand north because the formerly United States’ 7th and 3rd fleets, based in Anchorage, had established bases and zones of control all down the West Coast, from Vancouver to Seattle to Portland, and further. They provided arms and training to the anti-Chinese guerrillas in northern California. This morning, Kelly was tasked with distributing the latest briefing on the emerging chain of command in the Pacific Northwest, as Washington and Oregon formed territorial governments within the expanding Republic of New America. She sipped her water and wished that it was coffee, or at least tea. It was such a pretty fall day outside, just cool enough to need a sweater. For lunch, maybe she’d skip the Saints Cafeteria at the old McDonald’s that most government employees ate at. She might go to the gym next door for a quick workout, instead. It would help her clear her head.

Kelly was just getting off the stationary bike when Jimmy walked into the gym. Instead of approaching her, he waved and stood awkwardly by the door. She knew that he was there to see her, and it wasn’t a social visit. Maybe he was embarrassed to be standing inside the women’s entrance of the gender-segregated

workout room. Whatever. Like always, Kelly enjoyed making his face turn red, so she took longer than usual to towel off the bike. He waited silently while she took a two minute shower and changed back into her conservative LDS approved work clothes. She left her damp auburn hair up in a ponytail, to scandalize the more rigid staffers. Her old Thor's hammer, which she'd been allowed to keep throughout her incarceration, remained under her blouse. When she came back out of the dressing room, he hadn't moved. A couple of women came in, stared at him, and left. Okay, she had pushed the fun far enough. Kelly walked up to him and smiled.

"Hey, Jimmy. Walk with me back to work?" she asked, winking. He looked relieved to be leaving. The two women who had stopped in the parking lot looked relieved to see him go, too. Kelly couldn't help but think how funny it would be if a Deseret government secret agent spymaster got the cops called on him for being a pervert. He recovered his composure quickly, though, she had to give him that. He straightened his tie and opened the door for her. Always the gentleman, she thought, amused.

Jimmy was obviously stressed. He wasted no time in getting right to the point. "Kelly, we need you to look into traffic between the Orange Free State and a group of South African expatriates in Ogden. They're Saints, but they're Boer first, if you know what I mean. We need to confirm who they're talking to, and when, and about what. We'll put together the why, and we already know the how." Jimmy stopped in the parking lot and looked at his watch. "The file should be on your desk by the time you get back. Don't assign this to your subordinates, we want you to handle this one personally." He made himself smile.

"Okay, what do you think is happening?" Kelly asked. The Orange Free State had maintained their independence when the rest of the Republic of South Africa had gone the way of Zimbabwe. Whites from all over the southern tip of Africa had fled inland to hold a strip from Pretoria to Bloemfontein. They had survived the

slaughter of almost every other White person south of the Sahara. After the collapse, when the world wasn't watching, they expanded back out from Lesotho to the Vaal River. Their racial policies, as a state, were just a bit to the right of Albert Speer.

"Well, we don't think they're really Calvinists pretending to be Saints," Jimmy quipped, back in his game. He liked to tease Kelly about the depth and sincerity of her belief. "But, the Orangers were willing to reach out to the Indians for mutual diplomatic recognition before the Hindus got nuked. We think they wouldn't have any qualms about working with the New Americans. In fact…" he hesitated. "In fact, we think that they're coordinating heavy weapons left behind by the Chinese when they retreated south being shipped out from the old Coast Guard station in Astoria, Oregon. It looks like they're smuggling mortars, heavy machine guns, RPGs and TOWs, or the Chinese versions, and tons and tons of ammo through Durban. Ultimately, what we need to know, since Oregon is an official Republic of New America Territory, now, is how deeply St. Louis is involved." He stopped to retie his shoe.

"Alright. After I figure out what they're saying and to who, I'll reach out to the 'friends' I made during my little 'vacation' back East." Kelly assured Jimmy, sarcastically. He stood up, brushed his slacks, and punched her on the shoulder like a socially retarded teenaged boy, then quickly walked back into the office ahead of her. Kelly sighed deeply. 'Workworkworkworkworkworkwork', she muttered to herself as she followed him in. 'Hi ho, hi ho.'.

Till Gabriel blows his horn…

The ambush along both sides of Highway 45 caught the Ma rtyr's Brigade convoy as it moved through Sam Houston National Forest. It was clear that the Right Rev. Ike Huckleberry's bearded Bible-thumpers wouldn't get any closer to the capitol tonight. The Republic of Texas was pushing back, after three years of watching the Church of the New Dispensation forces swallow up Houston and occupy it with apocalyptic converts. Texas Rangers

walked along the half-melted asphalt as small fires still burned long each side of the road. The Apache gunships called in from Fort Hood after the zealots had bunched up in the open had finished things off real quick. There was nothing left but crispy critters, here. Rev. Ike would probably have to hold a prayer vigil on his satellite broadcast tomorrow, to recover the lost souls. Or at least to replace their numbers with fresh recruits from throughout the Bible belt.

Five years ago, before hyperinflation and a stock market crash and record unemployment had collapsed the U.S. economy, few evangelical Christians would have joined a Holy War. The Church of the New Dispensation was just a fevered dream in the drugaddled mind of a former governor. Uncontrolled immigration hadn't yet led to protests and counter-protests and riots, and then to ethnic cleansing. The thin veneer of multiracial democracy hadn't sloughed off, leading to secession and rebellion and racial civil war. There still was a United States of America, five years ago. Now, instead of being a talk show host and author and dieter, Rev. Ike led the Gulf Coast from Galveston to Port Fourchon. He was known as the uncensored voice of virulent Judeo-Christianity. His control of the harbors and ports in that stretch of Texas and Louisiana made him an asset to his cartel backers. Huckleberry's mixed-race, inclusive brand of Fundamentalism gave him inroads into the New African territory of Louisiana, as well as the Mexican converts in Houston. His empire was growing.

His most fervent followers were those who had nowhere else to go. Liberal White refugees pushed out of southern Texas when the Mexicans took over, or from the Southeastern states when the blacks had taken over, were his best customers. They had lost everything, couldn't go back, and had nothing to lose. Rev. Ike offered them a purpose in this life, and the next…as well as three hots and a cot and roof over their heads, when they joined his congregation. Most of all, since those who were inclined to come to his area were guilt syndrome stricken White liberals, he

allowed them the chance to maintain their illusions. Even after being kicked out of their own homes, even after watching their neighbors being raped or killed, many were more afraid of being called a ‘racist’, than they were of dying. They wanted out of the nonWhite ruled areas of the former United States, but they weren’t willing to admit why. Kind of like the people who used to pretend that the reason they dare not take a certain interstate exit was because of ‘poverty’ or ‘institutional racism’. Several prominent Hollywood celebrities who had gotten out of Los Angeles before the Mexicans took over had guest shows before and after his broadcast on Rev. Ike’s satellite t.v. channel. One of them, an aging actress who’d had double mastectomy surgeries after making a fortune in Indiana Jones type movies, was very popular with the feminists who joined his cause. Her cluster of diverseraced adopted children were on every day, pretending to like each other. The show had a good run before one of her Asian boys stabbed her to death in her sleep, then killed the rest of his family, including his adoptive dad. The replacement show starring a White rapper from Canada wasn’t nearly as popular with the Church of the New Dispensation’s older viewers, but the young girls liked it.

From the Midwestern States and the upper South, even, recruits came to Rev. Ike. The Heartland of America, the ‘flyover states’, the ‘red states’, had pulled together as the growing ‘Republic of New America’, with its capitol in St. Louis. New America was, after half a decade of brutal and bloody pogroms and ethnic cleansings, over 98% White. From the Appalachians to the Rockies, and even to the Cascades, those with mixed race offspring or family members were no longer welcome. They, too, found their way to the Church of the New Dispensation. It was a strange brew the former governor cooked, like the most flamboyant and multicultural ‘P.T.L.’ or ‘Daystar’ mish-mash from pre-collapse t.v.. Ex-hippies, Judeophiles, the parents and grandparents of mullatos and homosexuals or adopted third worlders, and members of the dozens of congregations which had declared themselves ‘sanctuary churches’ for illegal immigrants,

all flocked to his one world church. They came as modern Crusaders. Only, Ike set them on a Holy War to build up his own theocracy. Only the most trusted of his closest followers knew that the Church's real purpose was bringing in drugs from Mexico and Central and South America for the cartels. Most of them were blindly sincere in their belief in a brown Jesus who loved everybody the same. They knew not what they did.

Because they had nonWhite spouses or offspring or family members, or were nonWhites, themselves, most of Rev. Huckleberry's followers didn't have a choice about what side to be on. They were heretics from the Christian Identity denomination churches that had become widespread throughout New America, and were growing in the Republic of Texas, as well. C.I. taught that people of European ancestry were the descendants of the Biblical Israelites, and that only Whites were God's chosen people. In fact, the dominant Protestant denomination in the White areas of North America held that only Whites were descended from Adam and Eve, and that nonWhites were 'Pre-Adamic'.

When the state of Israel was attacked, nuked, and nearly overran by the Islamic State and its allies, many American Jews made Aliyah, and left to volunteer to fight for their nation. The collapse of the U.S. economy, and then of the political system, stripped most of them of their wealth and power. Without the mainstream media presence they had steered through their ownership or control of most outlets before the collapse, Jewish Americans lost much of their former influence, as well. Most of them had just enough assets left to leave en masse. Many ended up dying in the ashes of Tel Aviv, or being bulldozed into the Mediterranean. Those who did not leave, died at higher rates than most other population groups due to starvation and violence after the collapse, or in the pandemic which swept Boston, or the bombings of New York.

The Jewish population in southern California and the other Southwestern states occupied by La Republica del Norte fared better than those in the Northeast and Midwest. In the sunbelt they were, in large part, able to buy pardons from the Mexican conquerors. By doing so, they were able to escape the fates of their White neighbors. Tens of thousands of Jews were able to migrate to Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey, and join the Jewish communities there. The wealthiest continued to Buenos Aires, where over 200,000 already lived. Only after the Argentine-Brazilian War were they expelled. Rev. Ike had helped several tens of thousands make Aliyah a year into the collapse, himself. He'd encouraged Evangelicals to round up Jews from their local communities and bring them to his young theocracy for shipment to Israel. Of the six and half million Jews in the U.S. and Canada on Cinco Day, when the Latino revolution began, less than three hundred thousand remained. Almost all of those lived under assumed names, hid their ethnic identities, and attempted to assimilate into White communities. Some were more successful than others, for a time.

With Israel pretty much gone as a viable state, and the Jews no longer a force to be reckoned with in North America, the politics of the Church of the New Dispensation had evolved away from sycophancy of the Jewish people. Instead, Rev. Ike now focused on a universalist, multicultural vision for the masses. It was how he bridged the three races, and the three worlds. That was how he had taken over from the Gulf Cartel and absorbed the Zetas to bring in more cocaine and marijuana and methamphetamine than all of the other cartels, combined. The amazing thing that the Candyman was able to do was defuse the Tribulationist wing of Fundamentalists who wanted to head off to the Holy Land themselves. At first, many of his Judeo-Christian recruiting pool feared they had missed Armageddon, and been 'left behind'. Rev. Ike reassured them that despite scriptural mistranslations, they were in the time of Jacob's tribulation right now. By his reckoning, they only had a couple of years to go before God's kingdom would return to Earth for a thousand year reign of glory. Their job,

he told them, was to expand the territory Rev. Ike was acting as ‘steward’ for, until the Lord’s return. They were building the foundation for God’s physical kingdom on Earth, he preached. He sold drugs to help his flock escape their new reality, drugs of both the physical and the spiritual kind.

Perry Bellefont, the aging former Senator and Vice President, had laid down his chance to inherit the decapitated mess left when the President had died in D.C.. He was quite content to be the President, instead, of the Republic of Texas. Especially now that the official capitol had been moved from Fort Hood back to Austin. Even though it had been cleaned up and rebuilding continued, population regrowth was slow for the city, since it was so close to the Mexican army positions north of San Antonio. Perry’s much younger trophy wife and kids still lived on base at Hood, in fact. He stayed at the Governor’s residence in Austin, where he could direct the day to day affairs of the Republic. The commute was close enough to go back and forth every weekend, though. The important thing was that his family was safer in the middle of a military base than they were in public, where one of Rev. Huckleberry’s ‘The Faithful’ suicide bombers and assassins could get to them.

Perry’s dream, and indeed the dream of all Texican patriots, was to reconquer the Alamo, and reclaim it as an image of Texican independence. It would be a hard fight. Especially with the frothing New Dispensationalist thumpers converting with sword and fire. He had really wanted to get Houston back. The Republic of Texas was big enough to survive as a landlocked country, but it didn’t have to be. It didn’t need to be. It shouldn’t be. All that sweet crude, begging to be traded internationally, just waiting to go out…Perry hated Ike Huckleberry. The President hated the Church of the New Dispensation penitents who clogged 290 from Brenham East. He hated the flagellants who stood at the Texarkana checkpoint between his territory and New America’s, periodically and rhythmically beating themselves with baseball bats and whipping themselves with belts. They reminded him of

that scene from ‘Monty Python’. The R.N.A. Marines could go ahead and shoot them, as far as he was concerned. Lord knew they wanted to, bad enough, you could see it in their eyes when he visited the border. But, the BBC or NTV or Post Dispatch TV cameras were always there, hoping for something juicy to broadcast. The Republic of Texas wouldn’t let them in. That would be suicide. The Republic of New America didn’t want them. That made them a humanitarian disaster, waiting to happen, right there on the border.

General Hampton interrupted Perry’s consideration of his northern immigration problem by knocking on the open door, before stepping in. Scott, of all people, had earned the right of informality in the Republic, if anyone had. He held a sheaf of papers in his hands, Bellefont noticed. Oh, goodie.

“Mr. President, if you have a moment, I’d like to go over the latest intelligence reports from the New Braunfels front, and then, the Joint Chiefs have a revised list of prioritized lendlease military hardware they’d like to ask the British Ambassador to forward up his chain of command.” the highest ranking military officer in the Republic of Texas explained.

“Ain’t it funny, Scott, how even with their North Sea platforms, the British can’t pump enough to export to the continent?” Perry’s greying sideburns scrunched up the sides of his face as he grimaced. “If the B.N.P. would just send a few destroyers to break the blockade and give us back our ports, we could give them enough oil for them to choke on.” he added, thoughtfully. “What’s the point in holding onto the majority seats election after election if they don’t USE that power for more than just rounding up the last few Muslims and giving them the boot?” The President was no fan of parliamentary procedure. The largest city in the Republic of Texas, Dallas-Fort Worth, dominated the Texican Congress. They were a bit too liberal for Bellefont’s taste. All that talk about free elections, for example.

General Hampton stood at parade rest, as he normally did. “I’m with you, Mr. President. They could sit offshore and shell Huckleberry and his crazies straight to heaven, or wherever they’re in such an all-fired hurry to get off to. That’d be worth a few tankers of the black and sticky stuff, for sure.” Scott paused for a moment. “Too bad the Atlantic fleet joined the 7th and 3rd after the U.N. coalition got atomized. We could sure use them, about now.” he stated the obvious.

“Yep, that we could, Gen eral, that we could. We also could use a few of those ICBMS the New Americans have so many of, but if you wish in one hand and spit in the other, guess which one gets filled the quickest?” Perry joked, grimly. He liked to play the cowboy, like most Texicans who didn’t know one end of a horse from the other.

Scott looked into the far corner of the room, where the single-starred Republic of Texas flag stood. “Well, as long as everybody, the Mexicans and the New Dispensationalists and the Mormons and the New ‘Mericans THINK we have nukes, that’s a deterrent, too. We’ll bluff them. Our scientists at the nuclear science center at A & M say we are real close, sir. REAL close. Until then, we’ll just ‘fake it until we make it’.”

President Bellefont thought for a minute. “I agree. And that’s EXACTLY why you will make sure that those Biblethumping Luddites don’t bring their “Jesus loves the little children” songfest within sight of Bryan. Are we clear, General?”

“Crystal, Sir. The junction at Navasota i s our final fallback position. The Rangers will not fail you.” Scott promised him. At ease in his mind over the Eastern Front, Perry’s mind shifted West.

“Fine, fine. Next item of business: anything of note seen on the border patrol overflights along I10?”…
Hear that lonesome whippoorwill…

Premier Ming, First Citizen of the Party Central Committee of the People's Republic of California, hated having Englishspeakers call him 'Chairman'. It sounded too much like a capitalist slur. That's why he made all of his subjects, even Americanized traitorous expatriates like Harry Lee, call him 'Premier'. Just like Jiang, back home. After a period of exile and waffling, Lee had proven useful in whipping the Americanized Chinese into shape as laborers and breeders for Ming's ruling class of soldiers. The 5,100 strong survivors of the People's Humanitarian Expeditionary Peacekeeping Forces in North America, augmented by a remnant from Hawaii's garrison, were firmly on top.

They made sure that Premier Jiang, leader of The People's Republic of Shenyang in what used to be Northern China, knew how well they were doing. That made it more likely that he would send reinforcements, or, better yet, transport home, when he was able. Right now he and his People's Republic of Shenyang survived at the pleasure of the Russians who'd defeated them. Jiang acknowledged that Ming was the undisputed ruler of the Chinese in California now, having killed off or outmaneuvered all of his superiors. They spoke via shortwave once per week. How long either of them could hold on, though, was a different story.

With their eighteenth century manual farming methods, Ming had learned to eke out a subsistence agricultural living from the fertile soils of the Central Valley. That required a return to feudalism, but Ming preferred to think of it as pure agrarian Maoism. Peas and beans and other vegetables had replaced most of the citrus crops, but nobody starved to death, these days. Unless he wanted them to.

Almost no Whites, Latinos, or blacks remained, from Bakersfield to Sacramento. It had been a close thing. At their lowest ebb, the Chinese peacekeepers had nearly been pushed backed into the Bay. The arrival of the Hawaiian garrison, and most of all the mobilization of all of the Chinese-Americans, had flipped the

script. They had expanded to a sustainable area, and could ‘hold their mud’, as the Americans said, Ming thought. Their realm’s capitol remained in San Francisco, where Ming’s compound centered on The Presidio. The Mormons had them boxed in on the South and East, and the New American-armed guerrilla terrorists came at them constantly from the North. But Central California was firmly his domain. His serfs, his harems, his soldiers, from the mountains to the sea.

He did not know how content his men were with their plight. Like him, they didn’t have much choice in the matter. Unable to go home, several years and thousands of miles away from their families, they had been forced to build a new life here. It wasn’t so bad to be a warlord, though. Not when there were twenty Chinese-American women for every one of his soldiers. And, he kept a personal harem of round-eyed women of different hair colors. A couple of them had come up from the south when the Mexicans had taken over Hollywood. One had been on a soap opera, and the other played in a movie about cars that turned into robots. Ming liked to parade the former movie and t.v. stars in front of his men.

“So,” Ming asked Harry Lee, “How solidly are the American naval powers under the orders from St. Louis? Do they tell them what to do directly, or are they equals, or rivals?” He eyed Lee suspiciously. Ming was like a time-bomb without the courtesy to tick. He could go off at any time.

Harry seemed unbothered by the contempt in Ming’s voice. “There was a moment, when the Atlantic fleet sailed all the way around to join the 7th and 3rd fleets, when Admiral Woods might have been questioned, when his leadership might have been overruled. But, sorry to say, Chair…., err, Premier Ming, that moment has long since passed. Woods has made sure that all of them have joined the Unified Command. They have even changed the flag they fly, to the starless one of New America.”

“Ah, they are bringing Washington and Oregon into their Republic as Territories, so they can get the Seattle-Tacoma gateway ready once again to accept major shipping. Then, what?” Ming asked Lee, already fearing the answer from the older man.

“Then, Comrade Premier, they will bring th e 7th fleet from Anchorage permanently to Seattle. The 3rd fleet can keep watch over the North Atlantic for them well enough just in case the Russians get hungry to take Alaska back.” The Chinese had learned to distrust and hate the Russians all over again, since they had taken thousands of miles of Chinese soil and turned the whole island of Hainan into a glow in the dark space ornament, four years ago.

“After which, the 3rd fleet will be in Anchorage, the 7th fleet will be in Seattle to harass us, and we know why they are working day and night to dredge out the navigation channels in the lower Williamette and Columbia Rivers,” Ming reminded his vassal. Sometimes he felt like he was dealing with infants.

“Yes, meaning the American 4th fleet, and t he Task Forces that used to be the 2nd Fleet, making up what is left of their Atlantic fleets, they are going to be put in Portland. Or even closer. Their submarines will be able to sink every ship we have in the San Francisco Bay.” Lee realized, thinking out loud. “Perhaps we should move our ships out of the Bay, and into open water, to disperse them…”

“It is not for you to presume to decide our military strategy. You are a civilian. Your position is… still tenuous enough!” Ming snapped. He gripped the arms of his red velvet throne with pale knuckles. The comfort women kneeling chained to each leg of the chair cringed at his anger. “Besides, what do you think the American fleets on loan to the Australians, the fifth and sixth fleets, what do you think they will do when two or three more ports are opened up here for them? Hey? On their own West Coast? With no People’s Navy in between them and their home?” Ming’s voice rose, shrilly. “ Now that they have shipped all of the

Asians out of Australia and New Zealand and forced the Indonesians and Malaysians to surrender? They will come home, and they will come for us. We must be ready." Ming stood up and pointed dramatically at the Americanized man. "You must prepare the serfs for war!"

Harry Lee shrugged in dismay. He was too old and too tired to go back into hiding again. His family was gone. He had nothing left to lose. He would have to stand and fight. "Yes, Premier. We will begin training the agricultural workers today. They will be ready."

Ming nodded, waving Lee away. He breathed deeply, then took a drink from the flask inside his robe. He next had to accept an audience with an emissary from Deseret about a few hundred Chinese survivors the Mexicans had never gotten around to either killing or sending North when they'd held Los Angeles. Now they were the Mormon's headache. They wanted to make them his. The Premier had already decided that he would push for concessions from them around Lompoc, in case there was any equipment worth salvaging in the ruins of Vandenberg Air Force Base. No matter what, he would take the refugees, though. After all, they were his people. They would be more men for cannon fodder, and more girls for the breeding pens. Ming looked at the two women at his feet. His current stock were nearing their expiration date.

The Premier of the People's Republic of China in N orth America emptied the flask. It had been a gift from Admiral Liu, the man he had killed to gain this position. The man had been like a father to him. As a second child, Ming had been raised in a state orphanage, so he never knew the difference. Harry Lee reminded him too much of Liu. Well, everyone outlived their usefulness, sooner or later. Lee had already used up eight of his nine lives.

Chapter Two

"...And God proclaims as a first principle to the rulers, and above all else, that there is nothing which they should so anxiously guard, or of which they are to be such good guardians, as of the purity of the race. They should observe what elements mingle in their offspring; for if the son of a golden or silver parent has an admixture of brass and iron, then nature orders a transposition of ranks, and the eye of the ruler must not be pitiful toward the child because he has to descend in the scale and become a husbandman or artisan, just as there may be sons of artisans who having an admixture of gold or silver in them are raised to honor, and become guardians or auxiliaries. For an oracle says that when a man of brass or iron guards the State, it will be destroyed...."
-Plato, The State, Book 3

When the night winds softly blow…

Carolyn was worried. H ope wasn't doing well in her first year at the Art Institute. After only four years of being her mom and watching the teenager become a young woman, the move to Chicago had seemed abrupt. Having a new baby girl of their own had kept her and John distracted a bit from Hope, the last two years, she knew. Carolyn wasn't yet thirty, and despite being over a decade younger than her husband, she wanted to have a couple of kids, at least, to replace the girls he had lost in the flu epidemic during the first year after Cinco Day. And then, going back to work as the Speaker's Press Secretary, and leaving little Cindy with Brenda had been tough. Oh, John's secretary had kids of her own and was as good a nanny as she was at answering the phone and typing letters, but it just wasn't the same. Carolyn felt guilty over that. She felt guilty for going back to work, no matter how much John needed her to keep the media wolves at bay. She felt guilty for not giving Hope as much attention towards the end as she had given her the first two years. And, she felt

guilty for feeling guilty, because it all just had to be done. Life got in the way of what you wanted to do, and how you wanted it to be, sometimes.

Chicago had grown back fast once the Atlantic trade through the Great Lakes opened up, and wheat and corn from throughout the Midwest began to flow out in container ships that returned with German tractors and trucks and cars that Detroit, just getting their production lines going well again, wasn't able to compete with, yet. Not in quantity, at least. The occasional container of French wine or cheese or clothes in the latest European fashion signaled that there was already a new upper class elite in 'The Windy City' to enjoy those luxuries, once again. Places like the Art Institute reopened, and Hope had been eager to sign up for the second year of new students. Her transcript from the Grand Center Arts Academy had been better than mediocre, but it was who her adoptive father was that had gotten her into the Art Institute. Hope knew that, too, and resented it, as many nineteen year olds would.

At first it was just poor grades. Then absenteeism, reluctantly reported by her Secret Service minders. Eventually she learned to slip them and hang out with a crowd that, incredibly, still wanted to be Bohemian hippies and stoners, after all that had happened within their short lifetimes. John and Carolyn couldn't understand her complete abandonment of the values and beliefs they had tried to teach Hope. For four years, she had gone to the Church of True Israel with them every Sunday. She had been surrounded by the best minds on the continent. She had been given every advantage. She had been taught the truth, and shown the difference between right and wrong. Hope knew better. John had flown up in his Iroquois helicopter and made a spectacle of talking to her about it in front of her friends to embarrass her and make her seem uncool to them, but it had the opposite effect. The so-called friends tried harder than ever to drag her down, knowing who she was, after that. One of the guards found pot in her room, then she was arrested for vandalism. She was caught spray

painting an anarchist ‘A’ on the veteran’s memorial. In the old days, that would have gotten her a fine. These days, the sentence was ten lashes, in public. Once again, because she was the daughter of the Speaker of the House, the sentence was suspended. Carolyn had wanted to pull her out of school and bring her home. John flew up again and had what he thought was a heart to heart talk with her. By the time he got back home, one of her guards was calling, saying that she had slipped out, again, and they were looking for her. She turned up three days later, coming off a high.

John put her into rehab, and arranged it with her professors so she could continue to do her course work for the two week period. Things had seemed fine for a while, after that. She hadn’t been in trouble in a month. The fact that several of her friends had mysteriously been ‘mugged’ and beaten within inches of their lives while she was under her doctor’s care might have had something to do with that. Kip had given specific orders that none of them were to be killed, this time. It was a hard call for him to make. One of the unspoken secrets of ‘The Warehouse’ was that Hope had developed a serious teenaged crush on the Chief of Staff. Kip had to examine his own motives before confirming the order to rough up the hippies and give them a stern warning. None of them had come around Hope, since.

Jason Roberts was very concerned and upset to hear this news. The Congressman from North Arkansas, and lawyer for the Klan organization which controlled a tier of several Counties in the Ozarks, had helped rescue Hope from a life as a fugitive refugee, years ago. He hated to see her come to this. As they finished up the dessert that their local grocery delivery driver Charles had brought over as a special treat, they changed the subject to lighter things.

Randall, the flamboyant rocker Representative from the new state of South Michigan, eyed his plate in mock apprehension. “I don’t know, it’s kinda green. I don’t eat much green. Just stuff that eats

green.” He joked. Barbara, his tall red-haired wife, sat very close to him, happy to have some ‘adult time’ with her husband, since their kids were old enough to watch themselves.

“Well, take a nap! Anyway, Sweetheart, you don’t always have to eat at the top of the food chain. Sometimes you can eat from the bottom.” Barbara remarked. “I thought you’d eat anything that wouldn’t eat you first, and give some things a run for their money.” Carolyn, who had once been nearly a vegetarian, hardly blushed at the old joke. John and Jason hid their smiles by taking bites of the cool dessert.

“Ha! Take a nap, yourself, beautiful.” Randall answered. “ I may not want to eat grass, until the grass has a chance to eat me back, but anything willing to chew its cud to fill my belly is alright by me. The enemy of my lawn is my friend.”

“Man, there’s nothing li ke a good Montana steak and Idaho baked potato, but Key Lime pie! Real Key Lime pie! It’s been a long time since I tasted anything citrus!” Kip, the youngest of the group and the only single man present, exclaimed.

“Charles said that it ‘fell off the back of’ a truck carrying a special delivery from Lambert Field for the French Embassy” John confirmed. “So, we have the Front Nationale to thank for this tart and sweet goodness, huh? Thank you, Prime Minister Madame Le Pen!”

“And also for getting t he Republic of Quebec to help guard our shipping through the St. Lawrence Seaway, both ways.” Randall added. All of them knew how important that partnership was to their Trans-Atlantic trade.

“It’s good, but I wish the Swedish Democratic Party would s hip over some buttery pastry, next. I’d kill for a Kringle!” Carolyn cooed. Jason set down his fork and looked at her strangely.

“I didn’t know that we had a Swedish ambassador, yet?” he asked. Carolyn turned a deep red and looked like she’d been caught in a major gaffe on the job. The tiny blonde had let her hair grow out to her shoulders in curls, but still looked like a teenaged elf.

“No, we don’t, but they need to send one, soon!” she muttered in a barely audible tone. Toddler Cindy stood at her leg, leaning against her, reaching up for the pie on the table with both hands. She couldn’t even see it, but she heard them talking about it.

“Soon! Soon!” she repeated. Everyone laughed at the tow - headed little doll. It washed away some of the worry about Hope.
After the dishes were cleared away by Glenn, one of John’s elite guards doing double duty as a busboy while an unseen guard played cook in the lounge’s kitchen, the men went upstairs to the private library. Barbara and Carolyn stayed downstairs to visit with Brenda and help put Cindy to bed. They had had enough political talk for one evening.
It was a chilly late September night, and the guys felt it in the elevator. The ‘nuclear autumn’ still made winters come earlier and last longer, than they had before Cinco Day. John’s library was on the fourth floor of the fortified and converted private residence that the McNabbs called ‘The Warehouse’. There, they settled into comfortably overstuffed leather rocker-recliners.
“Of course, let me know if there’s anything I can do to help Hope, even just to talk to her, or maybe take her back to the Christian Revival Center for a few weeks, if she needs a semester off.” Jason offered. “We have plenty of people there to keep her occupied, now.”
“I’d heard you’ve expanded, in more ways than one,” John quipped. He and Kip exchanged a grin. Randall snickered in approval as he found himself a chair. His pompadour needed rebuilding, and sure enough, he hauled out a comb and began to groom it.
“Yeah, we did kind of annex two more counties. Pretty much everything north of Interstate 40, from the Mississippi within sight

of what's left of Memphis, to the Arkansas River across the Oklahoma line, it's all Klan country, now." Congressman Roberts explained. "We pushed the Cherokee troublemakers back across the river, but of course we're still dealing with some raids by the Creek tribe into Ft. Smith. Just some skirmishes. The Eastern and Southern half of the state is still pretty depopulated. It's kind of a noman's land between us and New Africa, on the other side of the Big Muddy. And, we have about 300 full time residents at the Church property, now. About 8,500 members in the Knights Committee militia, and 1,100 more in the Youth Corps, up and coming…although we really don't like to talk about our numbers."
"I understand. Well, I appreciate your offer. If she gets in more trouble, that might just be the best thing for her, a little vacation. But, you know, at nineteen, really, there's only so much you can do, I mean as a parent." John frowned. Kip nodded, sadly, beside him. He missed Hope more than any of them, and worried about her the most. "But, the real reason why we asked you to fly up, Jason, is that there IS something we need you to help with…"
"It's the kind of thing that we'll have to ask you to keep to yourself, or at least within your family, for now, Counselor." Kip added, leaning forward. "It has to do with the final restructuring of the national government." The Congressman from South Michigan finished his hair care and made his comb disappear as he spoke from Kip's left.
"And," Randall added with a characteristic smirk, "it'll require you to move up here, so your dad will have to speed up teaching your nephew how to run things down there." He always had to be in other people's business, and make sure that they knew it.
Jason took a deep breath. Over the last five years, the Constitution had been re-ratified by all of the 24 states, some whole and some new and some Balkanized, that made up New America. The Re-Constitutional Congressional Convention that McNabb had ramrodded had simplified the decision for their state legislatures by starting out with just the first ten amendments, the Bill of Rights. They'd simply changed 'United States of America' to 'The Republic of New America'. Congress's last act before adjourning was codifying the original Naturalization Act of 1790,

limiting citizenship to White persons of good moral character, as the eleventh amendment. All of the other amendments had been left behind in the dustbin of history. The twelfth amendment, the next year, had given the electoral franchise back to women, after the Congressmen had gotten back home from their first trip, and heard from their wives.

With a gold standard, no Federal Reserve Bank system, and a national government which was both National Socialist and Libertarian by turns, issue to issue, power was sorting itself out. Political parties like the Nationalist and Constitutionalist and Libertarian Parties had reemerged as powers on the state level, but not on the national, yet. Neither of the old parties were still around in any strength. McNabb, as the Speaker of the House, functioned as the civilian head of the Executive branch of government, and General Harrison served as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. This Provisional Government was in effect until a date one decade from its inception, three years ago. At that point, national elections for President, Vice President, and both houses of Congress would be held. That was the plan.

The four men had discussed before that, aside from local and state level courts, this left the new nation lacking a Judiciary. Jason looked skeptically at Kip, then at John and Randall. All of them were smiling at him. They already waited for his answer.

“So, you think it’s time, Mr. Speaker?” he asked. “Time for a Judiciary branch to decide what’s Constitutional, and what isn’t, about what we’ve done? I mean, are we ready to take that risk?”

“Sure we are, Congressman, so long as we hold all the cards in the game, and we do. In addition to being a Representative, you’re also a lawyer.” John stated. Jason nodded. “ That’s good enough for me. I want to create a new Supreme Court. But first I need an Attorney General to help me select the Justices from surviving Federal Judges, so we get only the right nine people. Our people. I want you to be my Attorney General, Jason.”

“Were you thinking about a whole cabinet, then?” Jason asked, after a moment’s consideration. Kip produced a small notepad covered in his chicken scratch, tapping it for emphasis. He nodded in confirmation.

“A half dozen posts crucial to speeding up the recovery and rebuilding process,” the Chief of Staff began. “First, for Secretary of Defense, we’re tapping General Fred Grace, the former Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and the only surviving member of the old Joint Chiefs of Staff. He’s on board and won’t interfere with Gen. Harrison’s Unified Command authority.” Kip made a jot beside the name on his notepad.

“Okay. I don’t know him, but I know he was one of the first to support the plan and give it a sense of…of continuity and legitimacy.” Jason noted. They had his undivided attention. “What other posts?”

Kip flipped a page. “Like we said, you for Attorney General, Marine Lt. Gen. Mark Smith for Secretary of State, since he has experience dealing with the Europeans; and the rest, to be passed out as favors.”

“The idea is that the Representatives in the states most involved in the positions are best suited to know who would do an efficient job and be loyal.” Randall butted in. “That’s why I’m picking a Ford Motor Company engineer from my neck of the woods, South Michigan, as Secretary of Transportation.”

“And, the honorable Congressman from Iowa gets to pick the Secretary of Agriculture, because they’ve got corn. The Representative from West Virginia gets to choose the Secretary of Energy, because they have coal. Also, then they’ll be in our pocket.” John clarified with a sly grin, leaning back to lace his fingers behind his head.

“I see,” Jason said. “What kind of problems do we have that you need a Secretary of State to help sort out?” He looked worried. There must be some things he didn’t know about.

John held up a hand and started ticking off fingers: “Germany has asked us to nuke Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara, as soon as Ferguson hits the Islamic State from the West, so the refugees won’t overwhelm Greece. “ Jason looked startled, but John continued. “Long story.” He lowered one finger. “We’re coordinating the shipment of cast-off Chinese weapons and armaments all the way across the Pacific and down to southern Africa, smuggling them to the Orange Free State there.” He

lowered another finger. “AND, we, or rather the 3rd and 7th and 4th fleets, are cleaning up and dredging out and repairing the Ports of Seattle-Tacoma and Portland so we can bring home the 5th and 6th fleets home from Australia, finally, too. We’re re-taking the West Coast, Jason.” While that all sunk in, The Speaker began methodically cleaning his glasses on an embroidered white handkerchief.

“Okay, okay, I see what you mean. You could use a whole team of State Department people for those issues.” Jason commented, shaking his head. “It’s a good thing Gen. Smith has his own staff.”

With a sick smile, John peered through the lenses as he held the bifocals up to the light, then reseated them and continued his litany. “I need him, Jason. That way, I can focus on the domestic civilian side of getting British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington from Territorial to State status. That is, as soon as they pick state legislatures who’ll ratify the revised Constitution and establish internal governments, which we can help them with.”

“And that will put us in direct contact and conflict with the Chinese in California.” Randall added. Don’t forget that we still owe them, big time, for what they did to Baltimore and New York and Philadelphia. The liberty bell, man!”

“That’s right, but there’s also the problems of the Mormons, everywhere out West, and eventually, Bellefont down in Texas, though we’re getting along okay at the border, right now….except for those Church of the New Dispensation weirdos who want to cross through to his territory.” Kip interjected.

John mimed lowering two more fingers. “So, when Congress reconvenes next month, I want to have a final slate of nominees to offer them for votes. I want confirmation votes before the Thanksgiving recess. And, I want your name to be on that list. Can I count on you to be my Attorney General, Jason?”

The Congressman from North Arkansas exhaled a puff of air. “I think so. But, I’ll have to talk to my wife and discuss it with my family, before I make a final decision, if that’s okay. And, I’ll need to pray about it.”

McNabb nodded sagely. “We all will, Jason. We all will.” He got up

and stretched, signaling that the meeting was over. “Just like every other day that ends in ‘y’. “

…On their knees the war pigs crawling…

Major General Gerald “Ferocious” Ferguson saw himself as a modern day Roman ‘Legatus’, a commander of legions. With his broken nose and balding head, he even looked a bit like Julius Caesar. When you thought about it, that’s what he had become. Here he was, exiled, or at least not able to return to the homeland, for years. Not able to cross the Rubicon, or the Atlantic. After they had force-marched up out of Afghanistan all the way to Russia, the European contingents of the Allied coalition in Afghanistan had been transported by rail westwards and home. There was no railroad across the ocean. The Russians did provide enough transport planes to take the relatively few Australians and New Zealanders leap-frogging back down under. Ferguson, with more troops than he knew what to do with, had sent two Companies of Marines and a handful of liaison officers to each country, to reinforce the U.S. embassies there, and help guard U.S. citizens stranded in those nations when Cinco Day had brought air travel to a halt. He’d sent another Company of jarheads Australia’s way to strengthen the 5th and 6th fleets stationed in Perth, on loan to the Aussies as a ‘joint command’.

They just might be his ride home… some day. Putin’s successor was a hard c ore Ultra-Nationalist, and wanted Ferguson to kick Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia back into the stone age, to stop the spread of the Islamic States’ fundamentalist jihad northwards. Then, he wanted the Turks fighting with the Iranians over Tabriz to get a good swift kick in the rear. After that, he promised to ship them by train over to Sevastopol so they could get their cruise home.

Home seemed like a faraway place, right now. His staff had been back in regular communication with the Unified Command almost all along. The last several months, they even had been getting

mail from New America, passed from hand to hand across the world. Some of it did more harm to morale, than good. After five years, there were more than the expected number of ‘Dear John’ letters from fiancés and wives who had stopped waiting. Many parents and grandparents and other family members had died, during the breakup since Cinco Day, and some of his men learned about that, the hard way. The men and women under his command who heard nothing at all from Stateside considered themselves the lucky ones. They had long since learned that thinking about home could be a fatal distraction.

In exchange for shepherding the American forces out of one ‘Stan, the Russians had employed them in cleaning out three others. Ferguson couldn’t count the number of Muslim corpses they’d piled up over the last half decade. All he knew or cared about was that it had cost over 4,000 American lives. The ones left, just over 11,000 of them, were combat hardened and efficient, like no other force on Earth since World War Two had been. Their air power had been reduced to a few dozen Apaches and Cobras and Blackhawks. Once they became permanently mobile, taking and holding airfields cost more time than the mission itself. They used up the ordinance they had, and depleted their jet fuel reserves, in the first six months in Uzbekistan. Then, General Ferguson had made a generous gesture of turning over his remaining F-16s, F-15s, and C-130s to the Russians, who had used them to pound the heck out of the last Chinese regiments in Xinjiang Province, before taking it all the way to the Tian Shan mountain range. The Russians had stopped at the Takla Makan. That desert was border enough for the Western Chinese Front.

It had been in Turkmenbashi, on the Eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, that ‘Ferocious’ Ferguson had called a general staff meeting to discuss the disposition of forces. They had chewed their way through most of their ammunition and heavy weapons in the Kaplankyr Reserve fighting. Since the Russians hadn’t been pushy enough to disperse his units, he still had the entire division with him. So many units had been decimated or hollowed out,

though, that a total reorganization was in order. Without any direct orders or local chain of command above him except for their neo-feudal Russian lords, he was on his own. That gave Ferguson an awful lot of leeway. And THAT is where the idea of the Legatus had been born.

A Roman Century had been roughly the size of a Company. So, the first step had been to fill in standing Companies, by stripping down nonessential Companies such as the Air Support units that weren't needed any more. They and other non-ground pounding Companies were disbanded, and their personnel reassigned as needed to bring the combat units back up to full strength. Those Companies were then re-designated as numbered Centuries. Following the Roman model, sixty Centuries, or six thousand men, made up a Legion. When it was all said and done, Ferguson had almost two full strength Legions under his command.

The next order of business was conversion of arms. With ammunition and replacement parts for most weapons systems, even personal arms, about gone, a change had to be made. 'When in Rome, to continue the meme', Ferguson had joked to his Russian procurement liaison officer. The Colonel hadn't known what a 'meme' was, but had gone off on a tangent about how the Russian 'Czar' title was named after the Roman Caesar because the Eastern Roman Empire had continued on through Russia. It had taken until the end of the year, but by the third anniversary of Cinco Day, Ferguson's two legions had been outfitted with Russian uniforms to replace their worn out B.D.U.'s, and Russian weapons to replace most of their own. The re-training only took a few weeks. After that, they sported AKs instead of M4's, and phased out their Abrams and Bradleys for BMP3's. Most of them had learned to speak at least a little Russian and Uzbek, too.

Ferguson was aware of the German plan, and was dead-set against it. At least, he wanted to make sure that the goofballs in St. Louis didn't nuke Istanbul. It wasn't that it used to be

Constantinople, ancient capitol of the Byzantine Empire, and all that Bravo Sierra, that bothered the General. What he was worried about was that he was going to have go through it, to get from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, on his way home. Didn't they have any globes left, back Stateside? In a very undisciplined manner, his mind drifted off to the silly old song he'd seen on cartoons as a kid: 'Istanbul was Constantinople, now it's Istanbul, not Constantinople, been a long time gone, Constantinople, why did Constantinople get the works? That's nobody's business but the Turks…"

As he had crossed the Caucasian Mountains headed South, Ferguson had wondered whether the name for White people really did come from those peaks they had climbed heading into Europe after their captivity from Israel, as legend told it. More pressing matters soon filled his thoughts, however. After the 2008 war with Russia, the South Ossetians bordering Russia and the Abkhazians on the coast had been independent. With the Islamic State faction operating in Georgia, that made it a four way war, even before they had dived in. First, they had to take Tblisi, the Georgian capitol. Then, they had to cut south and push the I.S. out of the formerly autonomous Republic of Adjara, now a caliphate. It was going to be a long winter ahead. This place was ugly as sin. No wonder Stalin had wanted out of it so bad.

Don't take your guns to town son…

Petty Officer Tommy Bullens, formerly of the U.S.S. (now the N.A.S.) Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier, sat in front of his radio, giving coordinates to Oregon State Militia guerrillas in Eureka who had a truckload of Chinese HJ-10 anti-tank/antihelicopter missiles they had 'found'. The abandoned weapons would be trucked north into Oregon, to the southernmost Marine post at Medford. Then, they'd come in produce trucks to Eugene, where Tommy and his buddy Rick and the rest of the crew dredging out the Williamette River would manage getting them over to the abandoned Coast Guard station in Astoria. There, an Australian

fishing boat would pick them up, and trundle them towards southern Africa, where they were needed most. ‘The Orangers would be able to take out anything on wheels or that the kaffirs could still get in the air with these babies’, Tommy thought to himself. Water pattered on the steel roof like a drum. Tommy was glad to not be freezing this late in the year, for the first time in a long while. This was better than Alaska, but did it have to rain ALL the time? It sure made being outside in the fall a bummer.

Marines attached to the 7th had located several retired and deactivated Corps of Engineers who had survived the relatively brief but brutal Chinese occupation of this part of the Coast. Those guys oversaw the operation underway in Yaquina Bay. Half of the Newport’s 7,320 remaining residents were glad to have jobs working on the dredging operation. They got paid in food, the best coin in the land. New American Dollars backed by gold were just getting into circulation here. With the hundred or so Marines, twice that many Naval personnel, and a few hundred recently arrived workers from outlying areas, the place was jumping. Some of the workers were actually living in old cargo containers, lined up near the construction zone like trailers. As in Portland and Seattle-Tacoma and Coos Bay, the city benefitted by having its power restored. The four ports were anticipating a bright future as the homes of the New American Navy. People were already moving to Newport from the downsized neo-medieval villages of Salem and Eugene.

Tommy still had to get used to thinking of himself as being in the ‘New American’, rather than the ‘United States’, armed forces. Over the harbor the flag that flew looked almost the same, except it lacked any stars at all in the blue field in the upper left corner. The old flag had been called ‘The Stars and Stripes’ or ‘Old Glory’. Because of that empty blue field and the ongoing process of expansion and reconsolidation, the New American flag was often called ‘Unfinished Business’ or just the ‘Starless Stripes’. At least, that’s what Rick said the sailors called it, under their breath. Tommy was stuck to the radio set, gathering information, twelve

hours a day. ‘Light duty’ posts had extended shifts. ‘Lucky me’, he thought. He’d gained twenty pounds in the year he’d been posted in Oregon, first in Astoria, and now here.

He and Rick were both in their late twenties, but the few local girls only went for the officers, anyway. Might as well not bother trying, and stay out of the rain. Tommy’d had a girlfriend, back home, before he’d enlisted. The last letter from her came just before the mutinies by black and Hispanic enlisted had erupted. He wondered, sometimes, if she had survived. Probably not. She’d been in college at the time. In Miami. Actually, Tommy thought about her, more than he did his family. Sometimes he daydreamed about blasting his way through the New African tribes and the Cuban Army and into South Florida, to find his folks and rescue her. Mostly, though, he just tried to think about the future. Rick’s family had been in Denver. He figured they had probably bought it when the argument over chain of command between Omaha and Colorado Springs went nuclear. It had really given Rick some satisfaction that they had been able to even up that score, eventually.

After all the friends he had lost in the racial mutinies before the Pacific bases had been locked down and abandoned, it had given Tommy some satisfaction when they’d had some visitors at the gate, last week. The ragged and dirty looking White woman, with her black boyfriend and three mulatto kids, had been begging for food and water. Just standing there looking helpless, in the rain. A group of Marines and sailors had gathered around the gate, out of curiosity. They’d promised to help her out, in exchange for some information. Through questioning the filthy and worn-out female, it was discovered that the blended family had walked all the way from Portland, where they had hidden for most of the last five years. Apparently they had, as she put it, “salvaged and dumpster dived” to survive, since the collapse. Now, they had heard that multiracial families were welcome down in Houston, at the Church of the New Dispensation’s mercy. Rick had scooted five unboxed MRE entrees under the fence, then rolled five bottles of water to

her. The five refugees planned to walk all the way across the continent, to get there. Considering how well they had learned to hide from the authorities so far, up until now, Tommy thought that they just might make it. He kind of hoped that they did, and that maybe if there were any other mixed-race families left in hiding, they would get the same idea, too.

Tommy took the few minutes while the BBC North America station beeped off the time to consider requesting a weekend leave in town. He could do some shopping, and go to church, one thing he missed when he was on odd rotations. Maybe he COULD meet a local girl. Hopefully none of them would be the kind of idiot who falsely claimed to be descended from an Indian princess. Those kind of morons were rare these days, after the genocide of so many Whites by 'First People's Armies' in the Dakotas and Oklahoma. Blonde haired, blue eyed Indian wannabes. Tommy hated those stupid, 'love everybody' girls. That Becky, in Anchorage, had been nice, but then she had cheated on him, then gotten pregnant and didn't know if it was his, for sure. He was hurt, and he couldn't quit the navy, and she had refused to marry him, despite his pleading with her that it was the right thing to do. 'That's what happens when you try to man up', he fumed angrily, remembering her last goodbye. Tommy wondered if his kid was talking, yet. If it was his kid. Probably so, but it would never know his name to speak it. He wasn't wired like Rick, who could love'em and leave'em. Tommy had always been a serial monogamist. He wouldn't make it as a Mormon, for sure, he thought ruefully. He was too one on one, though he guessed you couldn't call it jealousy when all of the women were for one guy, instead of being unattached and willynilly. Come to think of it…

His consideration of polygamy was interrupted by the top of the hour chime. The BBC North America broadcast began with a few seconds of "God Save The Queen", followed by a station identification and brief summary of the day's top news stories. First, something for the former Canadians:

“The Governors of the Republic of New America states of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba held a joint declaration in Calgary today, welcoming British Columbia into New America as an official Territory…Speaker of the House of the New American Congress John McNabb joked to reporters that, quote, ‘now, Alaska won’t feel so lonely, up there by itself’, unquote…the mainly depopulated town of Whitehorse, in the Northwest Territory, has been secured by New American forces working to repair five years’ weather damage to the Alaskan highway before snow sets in to stay for the winter…”

“In the New American capital of St. Louis, a list of nominees for a new Executive Cabinet was announced today. The nominees will be questioned during Congressional hearings slated to begin in two weeks’ time in the Old Courthouse…”

“The British Ambassador to the Republic of Texas expressed alarm at reports of religious discrimination against Catholics in Houston, the disputed city at the center of a struggle between the Church of the New Dispensation splinter group, and secular authorities there…”

“United Na tions recovery operations in the Northeastern region of the former United States have successfully evacuated several dozen multinational peacekeepers who had attempted to establish an aid station in Portland, Maine, after they came under repeated attacks by insurgents there. No permanent U.N. presence in the region has been possible since the destruction of U.N. headquarters in New York four years ago. The former U.N. headquarters site is still considered to be too radioactive to reoccupy…”

“With the s upport of elements of the French Foreign Legion, Republic de Quebecois peacekeeping forces have solidified their occupation of southern Ontario, from Sudbury to the ruins of Toronto and Lake Ontario this week. New American negotiators have offered to cede to Quebec the northernmost borders of the former New York state, from Highway 11 north, to give Quebec

unfettered control over the St. Lawrence Seaway, in exchange for unlimited and open-ended access to transAtlantic trade through that channel…”

“Inte r-tribal conflict flared again last month in New Africa, as rival gangs fought for water rights at the Ross R. Barnett Reservoir just north of Jackson, Mississippi. According to a report from the St. Louis Post Dispatch, this most recent conflict is unrelated to the sporadic mass human sacrifices being carried out in Columbus, Georgia, by the military regime ruling Fort Benning. The New African ruler, King Escalade X, refused to comment on either report, except to blame inequalities and violence in New Africa on four centuries of institutional racism…”

“Australian authorities report that a second fishing vessel carrying military weapons has been intercepted in the Indian Ocean, on the way to rendezvous with an escort from the American 6th fleet under joint Australian and New American command. The New American government issued a statement that they reserved the right to aid any kindred people under genocidal attack, alluding to the Orange Free State in southern Africa. St. Louis granted diplomatic recognition to the Orange Free State on Monday.”

‘Well, there it is’, thought Tommy. He definitely needed to forward this up to command HQ, but it looked like their operation was no longer ‘top secret’. From now on, it was going to be ‘full speed, ahead!’.

As he prepared his report to his superiors about the announcement, Tommy left the radio on as background noise. Highlights from the most recent speech by the New American Speaker were repeated from the previous day’s broadcast. The familiar voice boomed out…”"We seek a paradigm shift in our values, a revolutionary worldview in our people, and a fundamental change in the form and focus of our governing bodies”……"the guiding principle of the State should be that what is good for the race is good, and what is bad for the race is

bad”… “to reach out to our people and awaken them to the dangers which threaten our very existence."

Tommy was determined to pitch in and do the best he could.
If I leave here tomorrow, would you still remember me?

The eightwheeled Ratel ‘Badger’ Infantry Fighting Vehicle rocked from side to side, the tires nearly coming up off the ground. It was an obscenely heavy armored personnel carrier, holding the extra weight of Pieter Du Toit and two other Afrikaners, George Krieger and Samuel Van Reinsburg, as well as the Chinese missiles filling the crew compartment. Unfortunately, the wheel wells were just high enough for a dozen skinny kaffirs to get their shoulders under on a side. Pieter had worked the crowd with the 7.62 mm coaxial machine gun until they had gotten too close for the barrel to depress. George kept working the gears, pushing the mass of humanity forwards, then dragging them backwards, to try and break free. The attackers poked and slashed at the tires with knives and machetes, but it did them no good, so far. Sam still had the top hatch open, lobbing grenades overhand in an arc up and out with his good right arm. His left was badly burned from the shoulder to the elbow. It puffed smoked after Pieter had patted it out with his shirt before climbing up top to take over the gun. The smell of burned flesh was sickening.

Rag-covered stick figures climbed halfway up the front snout of the vehicle. An explosion on one side as a grenade landed among them cleared a space which was almost instantly filled with more rail-thin bodies. Pieter had no idea how many of them were out there. He’d been a rancher before half the Whites in ZA had moved in on his range as refugees. Using the method he’d learned from his dad to count cows, he estimated them to be over eighty. Maybe as many as a hundred of the screaming dirties.

It was nearly two hundred miles each way from Orange Free State territory to Durban, where they had met the Australians. From the harbor they had been able to see the tops of several large ships in the distance to the Northeast, off of South Beach. It

had been a rush to get the crates stacked in the back and buttoned up, so they hadn't had a long time to think about it. The Orangers had to get in and out fast, because the sound of their engine and the presence of the boat was already drawing a hungry and mean-looking crowd. When Pieter raised an eyebrow and asked one of the 'fishermen' if they were his, with a wave in the big ships' direction, all he'd gotten in reply was a "Just you wait, mate!" and a laugh.

With little dawdling, they were on their way again in less than five minutes. George drove up Che Guevera Road so fast that the black scarecrows had to scatter out of their way. Sam didn't have to open fire from the topside until they'd made it up M13 to the Pinetown exit, where two derelict buses had been pushed in their way to block the road. A hail of rocks bounced harmlessly off the side of their armored hide. With a fancy fishtail and swerve, George got them around the obstructions while Sam kept the kaffir's heads down with a spray of lead.

Knowing that the route they'd taken on the way in would be crowded with 'South African Defense Force' mobs armed with machetes and homemade spears to try to hack them to pieces as they came back, George next took the R103 exit to the Old Main Road. This was their fourth trip back and forth, taking a different way each time. George, barely old enough to drink himself, had been a beer delivery truck driver in Durban before the government had declared all White land titles forfeit and all White private property nationalized. He knew the street layouts like he knew the angles of his girlfriend's face. That was right well.

It looked like every vehicle from the Toyota dealership had been piled across the Old Main Road just before the lanes split. They probably had. George cursed expressively, slamming on the brakes and turning towards the left…straight towards a horde pouring out of the Mbazwana Housing Project, right at them. Sam opened fire as they reversed, with Pieter holding on and turning his strawberry blonde head in every direction, looking for a way

out or around the cars and trucks. The front ranks of the ravenous city dwellers fell as the bullets mowed them down. Some of them made it to the mass of metal and glass. George did a scraping 180 degree turn, allowing Sam to rake his fire in a circle at the crowds now coming at them from all sides. With the momentary breathing room that offered, Pieter was about to suggest that they head through the Citrus Growers Association parking lot to the open field beyond, when the first Molotov cocktail hit the windscreen. It rolled off the snout to spread flame onto the road harmlessly. The second firebomb was better thrown, and hit the side, spraying burning petrol over Sam. He yelled and dropped down into the crew compartment, beating at his arm. Then the crowd closed in for the kill.

Pieter had a detached moment to marvel that someone in that herd had been disciplined enough to save the fuel to make the gasoline bombs for so long. To their credit, the ambush had been welllaid. Of course, that wouldn't be much comfort to his wife and their four children, when he didn't come home tonight. He reached up and pulled down the hatch, locking it. They'd have to work at it, to get in, at least. Another Molotov hit the roof and broke apart. Already hot in South Africa's early summer, the temperature in the Ratel grew even higher. Over the sounds of Sam's cursing at his arm and George cursing that he did NOT want to burn to death and the rising squeal of the engine, Pieter heard a distant whine. Scooting forward to look out the armored front windshield through the arms of climbing monkeys, he saw a cluster of silver streaks bearing down on them. At first he thought that the kaffirs had upgraded from molotovs to missiles like the ones behind him in the back. Then they grew larger and began disgorging smaller rays of light towards him. Pieter sat back and closed his eyes in a silent prayer for his soul to be accepted by God, as he waited for death.

The NAS Port Royal cruiser and the destroyers Porter and Carney hovered around the massive Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier. They shadowed the NAS (New American Ship)

Taylor frigate and the NAS Mount Whitney command ship, with Vice Admiral Davidson on board to direct the landing of a 1,900 strong Marine Expeditionary Unit from Task Force 62, following Task Force 61's Amphibious Assault Group. The amphibious ships nosed ahead of the Eisenhower group as a squadron of nine FA-18/E Super Hornets sprang off the deck to turn West and hunt for anything big enough to be worth killing.

Lt. Matthew Ball was glad to be up one more time. He hummed an old Irish drinking song cheerily to himself. It had been nearly a year since his last non-training flight, over Jakarta when the Indonesian ragheads had started to feel froggy again. The last four days on the way over, as they had been briefed on their mission parameters while their aircraft were prepped, he'd been anxious. Even before that, in the two weeks they'd been given notice to start packing their gear, Campbell and Irwin Barracks had been as tense as a kicked over anthill. He hadn't accumulated much in the way of personal property in the four years that his carrier wing had been stationed at Perth, just a few boxes of books and a guitar he'd learned to play during the down time. He gave most of the books to a Royal Australian Special Air Service Sergeant he owed 200 AUD to in poker losses. The guitar he wanted to keep, but just didn't have room for in his locker. All over Western Australia, American Naval personnel and Marines were giving away a half decade of accrued possessions to their longtime local hosts and spending money like…well, like drunken sailors did. Goodbyes were being said, and toasts being made. It was high time to fly.

The rumor mill had it that they were finally going home. Or, close enough. To the states, anyway. Things had changed a lot, back in the world. At the officer's club in South Perth, Matt had learned that Vice Admirals Davidson and Bryant had placed the 5th and 6th fleets, chomping at the bit under joint Australian command, under the control of Admiral Robert Woods, and the 7th fleet. Woods was formally a part of the Republic of New America's 'Unified Command'. That meant that Davidson and Bryant were,

too. Since things flowed downhill, Matt figured he was, along with them. That was fine by him. They all had watched on Sky News and the Australian Broadcasting Company as America continued to break up. It had been past the point of no return before they had been confined to base in Italy. Then they had to work their way through the Med and the Suez to onload as many personnel as they could evac from the Middle Eastern theatre, before ending up in Australia for the duration.

Helpless to do anything from halfway around the world, and with the Chinese Navy between them and home, they had no standing orders once the nonWhite personnel had been discharged, many of them literally. All of them had friends and family being raped and murdered, or starving and dying, somewhere on the other side of the globe, in places they had grown up in. You couldn't get past it. You couldn't get around it. You couldn't put it behind you. It was there, in the back of your head, like a coiled snake.

Who they blamed depended on where they were from, Matt noted. Sailors and Marines from the Southwest blamed the Mexicans. That is, except for those from central California, who blamed the Chinese. Those from the Southeast blamed the blacks. Working in the fields on the fleet-wide SelfSustenance Program farms they'd established north of the city in the Moore River Nature Reserve, he talked to a lot of enlisted from outside his air wing. The Marines were the most eager to get back in the fight. All of them were more than ready to get some back, though. Except for in a couple of places like southern Michigan, the Muslims hadn't done much damage to their homeland, but it had felt good to kick the Indonesians and Malaysians back down the ladder a couple of rungs. Even more satisfying was putting a couple of Chinese cruisers and their support ships at the bottom of the ocean. They'd caught them anchored off Christmas Island, obviously trying to get as far away from the atomic oven of Sanya as possible. It didn't work out too well for them.

At first, the relations between the Americans and the Aussies had been awkward. For the locals, it was kind of like watching your big brother get his butt kicked on the playground. You were embarrassed for him, and disappointed, but he was still your brother…just not so big in your eyes, ever again. As the weeks turned to months and then years, both sides had adapted. The fleets kept their machinery and weapons systems limbered up and operational, and helped earn their keep from time to time. The Australians learned to cope with over twenty-three thousand ticked off and resentful Yanks. It all worked out.

More than a few American servicemen requested discharge when it came time to sail. A surprising number had found time to meet ‘Shelias’ and start families. Their past lives seemed a long time ago and a world away to them. Something better left in the past. They weren’t considered deserters, under the circumstances. They were granted honorable discharges and wished well with their new lives. As many as eight hundred who arrived never got back on board, and felt happier for it.

The 5th and 6th weren’t leavin g the Australians completely in the lurch, however. Two destroyers, three frigates, and a cruiser with support craft would be left behind as a continued ‘joint command’ stationed in Perth. Most important to the Royal Australian Navy, five attack submarines would remain, to help patrol the coast. Another destroyer and two frigates would be left in Auckland, to help the Kiwis. Since the fleets had arrived topheavy with Marines and U.S. Army Infantry they’d picked up from Bahrain and Kuwait and Iraq, they also left four companies of each in Perth. The plan was to drop off another regiment of Infantry at Robertson Barracks in Darwin, on the way out.

In the final briefing before boarding, they had been told that the entire combined fleets would churn NorthEast to Honolulu, to reconnoiter the situation there. No communications had come out of Hawaii in over two and a half years. They had no idea what they would find. But, it had been theirs, so they were going to stop

and check out Pearl-Hickam, as their first stop. For all of them, it would be their first time on American soil since Cinco Day. However, one of the carrier groups would be diverted West for a different mission of an extended nature, they were advised…

Matt's wingman peeled away with him as he turned inland over Darwin, leaving the startling green ocean behind. His flight group spread out to cover more ground, but stayed in visual range of each other. They throttled back, knowing the target they were seeking was going to be hard to see on the ground in the built up city. He wished he could plug his IPod in and listen to a little inspirational heavy metal. Smoke rose from dozens of fires, some accidental and some deliberate, around the urban landscape. One of the smoke plumes, ahead and below, had the dark and oily look of burning fuel. That would mark their prey. In seconds they were there, swooping in. Lt. Ball flipped up the cover and gently tapped the switch, sending half of the 570 rounds from his 20 mm gatling cannon chirping out to chew up the road in a line leading up to and through the crowd pushing against the stalled APC trailing smoke. His wingman and another Super Hornet followed his lead, widening the path of destruction. Zipping past the scene of carnage, they turned as tight as possible for another pass.

George couldn't believe his eyes or ears. A whine and roar had come up on them and tore away the black horde from one side of the Badger like a cat swiping its paw at a litter of mice. The survivors scattered, shrieking, as the jets passed overhead. The driver wasted no time wondering who had been their deliverer, or why. He simply cranked the steering wheel around and said a silent prayer of gratitude as they bounced over two lanes of still moving bodies and off the shoulder through a parking lot, out of the rapidly evaporating crowd. Pieter bit his lip as they bounced over the culvert and into the open field, but they didn't stop until they had crossed the field and reached the safety of a grove of trees. There they braked hard and took a look at Sam's injuries. While they gave him a shot of morphine to get him home on, the

silver jets with the fake cockpits painted under their bottoms made a fourth pass over the ambush area. Dipping their wings, they turned away and headed South. It looked like somebody up there liked them, after all.

After a brief shelling of the waterfront by the big guns onboard the Eisenhower Carrier Task Force's ships, and vicious bursts of missiles from the two cruisers, the Amphibious Landing Crafts grated to a stop on the sands of North Beach and South Beach. The black residents of Durban fled before them, on foot and on bicycles and even in wagons. The Marines met no resistance that first day, and occupied the city by dusk. Two days later, the last of the blacks had been herded out of town, and they reached Pietermaritzburg. The next morning, having made radio contact, Orange Free State commandos met the Marines at Lake Howick. By the end of the first month after the American's arrival, the Orangers had occupied and held a wide channel to the sea stretching between Lesotho and Swaziland. They were no longer a landlocked nation, and there was nothing that the SADF or the Zims could do about it.

Chapter Three

"I have given my life to alleviate the sufferings of Africa. There is something that all white men that have lived here must learn and know; that these individuals are a subrace; they have neither the intellectual, mental or emotional abilities to equate or share in any of the functions of our civilization.
I have given my life to try and bring them the advantages which our civilization must offer, but I have become well aware that we must retain this status; white, the superior, and they the inferior, for whenever a white man seeks to live among them as their equal, they will either destroy him or devour him, and they will destroy all his work; and so for any existing relationship or for any benefit to this people let white men from anywhere in the world who would come to help Africa remember that you must continually retain the status; you the master, and they inferior, like children that you would help or teach. Never fraternize with them as equals, never accept them as your social equals; or they will devour you; they will destroy you." - Dr. Albert Schweitzer

With the lights out, it's less dangerous Here we are now, entertain us
I feel stupid and contagious
Here we are now, entertain us…

She'd been almost all the way to Klamath Falls, pedaling ferociously through the rain and the mud and practicing having conversations without using the words "Brother" or "Sister", when Kelly saw electric lights in the distance. Swerving through every puddle on the side of the road to avoid the fast-moving trucks that roared by every five minutes was tiresome. She'd hitched a ride with a Deseret DPS Patrol to the border, then hopped out, drug her bike out of the back of the truck, and gotten into character. Now, on day three, Kelly had all of the character she could stand. And then some.

Jimmy, for some reason, had really wanted to find out if New America was arming the Afrikaners. Maybe Prophet Rammell and the Council of Fifty were worried about being marginalized by the competition. Whatever it was, he'd tasked her with checking on the smuggling operation, personally. The three South African expats in Ogden had been arrested for espionage and possession of an unlicensed shortwave transceiver once it had become clear that their role in the arms deals was over. That had left the only trail to follow all the way up here in Oregon.

The lights turned out to be the airport, which seemed to be the focus of all the truck traffic coming and going. It looked like this part of Oregon was busy, at least. Maybe if there were that many new people in town, one more wouldn't be noticed. They might even have some pace where travelers could buy a hot meal and get out of the rain. She'd passed a Vietnamese restaurant a ways back, coming into town, that had been burned out, and a closed down mom and pop pizza joint. After what seemed like another hour of wet pedaling, even her blisters had blisters. She almost missed the hand-lettered sign advertising a road house. It said 'BBQ' and 'Open'. That's all that mattered to Kelly.

The place had electricity and a solid roof going for it, but it was about as redneck as you could get. Kelly winced at the loud acoustic country band screaming and thumping in the corner, but she was glad to be dry. She shed her shoes and coat at the door like it looked as if everybody else did, and squelched over the bare wood floor to a booth in her wet socks. As soon as the band finished their set, a short-haired waitress with a prominent mole on her cheek came over to take her order.

"Hey! How are you doin'? It's been just rainin' cats and dogs out there, hadn't it?" she asked rhetorically. Kelly smiled, nodded and wrung out her hair. Hopefully, her cover legend as a private mail courier was convincing. That sack of fake letters she carried was heavy enough, that it'd better do some good. The waitress ran through the specials while she pulled it back into a dangling damp

bun against her neck. There were no menus here. The choices were limited. More than anything else, Kelly needed something hot. She ordered hot coffee, taking advantage of not being in Deseret, and the BBQ plate special, not asking too closely about what it was they had barbecued. Hopefully not anybody's pet or road kill that had lain in the rain for too long. Barbecue could cover up a lot of smells and flavors. Kelly noticed that every table said 'grace' over their food before digging in, so she emulated them.

Halfway through her plate, having used the bathroom and changed into some dry clothes from the waterproof backpack bungeed to the back of her bike, Kelly was becoming pretty sure that it was deer meat. That's what she told herself, anyway. As she sipped her second cup of coffee, the whole road house grew quiet, as if at a hidden signal. People shushed the few people still talking, and the waitress made a production out of making a 'hold it down' motion with her hands, before reaching up above the bar to turn on the shortwave receiver there. It was time for the news, she realized, and the news really meant something, these days, to these people. It meant hope, and it meant their future. That was something to think about.

After a minute of crackle and squawks, the strains of "America the Beautiful', New America's national anthem, strengthened, then swelled to fill the room. First one, then another, then the rest of the restaurant patrons rose and placed their hand over their heart, just like in the old days. One table held four soldiers, U.S. Marines, by the look of them, except for their shoulder patches. They were New American Marines, and crisply saluted. Probably they'd flown into the airport. That was worth remembering. Kelly noticed, as she stood up to play along, that the road house actually had a New American flag in one corner. She couldn't get used to the starless blue field in the upper left, but it held the focus of everyone in the place. It was hard to keep track, as her tired legs didn't like to keep standing there, but Kelly believed she counted all eight verses, sung by a choir. A few of the people tried

to sing along, at least the first two verses that they knew, already. The last words came, more softly, as the music quietened, but somehow more urgently, for it, as if you were supposed to have to listen harder…

’”America! America!
God shed his grace on thee Till nobler men keep once again Thy whiter jubilee!”

The tired, wet, worn looking folk tried nobly to scoot their chairs back into place and sit down without making any noise. They were really into this, and didn’t want to miss a word, obviously. The broadcast began with the familiar voice of the announcer:

“Good evening, my fellow Americans, and welcome to the Post Dispatch Radio Network. On tonight’s broadcast, we bring you a press conference, uncut and unedited, held this morning at the Old Courthouse building in St. Louis. The capital press corps was received by Carolyn McNabb, the Press Secretary to the office of the Speaker of the House of the New American Congress. Here are her remarks…”

After something about discussing with Maine their desire to seek annexation to Quebec, and a fluff statement about how healthy everyone was with the extra exercise and the lack of processed foods (or very much food at all, for many people, and the sick folks had all died off, Kelly thought uncharitably), Carolyn apologized for being late to the press conference, quipping that she had been mildly sick this morning, but it was nothing very contagious, she felt sure. Kelly had never met Carolyn in person during her time in St. Louis, but her husband had mentioned her often. Too often, really.

A reporter from the London Daily Times apparently raised his hand and asked a long question prefaced by stating that the population of Florida had dropped over 60% since Cinco Day due to the high number of retirees dying off from a lack of medicine or health care Then he asked how the administration felt about the

Cuban Army bypassing the White enclave in the panhandle in order to lay siege to the New African city of Jacksonville. Carolyn reminded him that starvation and mass genocide, by both the New Africans and the Cubans, had brought down those population numbers in the Sunshine State, too, but that aside from a deep and abiding interest in the well-being of the Whites in that enclave, the administration had no comment on the conflict in Florida.

Some of the people around her began to eat again as they listened, so Kelly felt safe to finish her barbecue, too. The next question came from a young girl with a twangy drawl who identified herself as representing the Dallas Morning News. She played off the previous British reporter by asking Carolyn if New America would accept King William's invitation to a summit of all diplomatically recognized North American states, to be held in London. Kelly could just imagine that. La Republica del Norte, Mexico, The Republic of New America, Deseret, and the Republic of Quebec, all at the same table with the Republic of Texas? Even not inviting New Africa or the People's Republic of California or Nunavut, that would be crazy. She had a sudden vision of the Michael Corleone in the restaurant bathroom scene from one of The Godfather movies. She snorted into her coffee, earning a sharp look from the waitress. To cover, she held up her cup for a refill. She had really missed caffeine, yes siree.

Carolyn demurred that no date for the proposed summit had been set, but of course in theory, New America was a peace-loving nation who wished to get along with all of its neighbors on the continent. That brought a stifled blurt that was acknowledged as Carolyn recognized a journalist from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung who exclaimed "How can you say that when you have admitted to arming rebels in South Africa?"

Kelly actually spit a bit of coffee, that time, for real. A few disjointed thoughts popped into her head at once. One, absurdly, was that the reporter must not have voted for the NPD. Second,

that she really, really needed a way to stay in touch with the home office, or at least stay current with the news, when she was sent on these secret squirrel missions. And thirdly, it was going to be a long, wet pedal of puddles back home.

Flustered, she barely caught Carolyn's answer, just enough to learn that the New Americans had actually landed Marines and bombed and virtually invaded South Africa on behalf of the Orangers. That was way beyond the pale. Then the press secretary pulled the kind of ace in the hole political trick that only works once or twice, and only if the conditions are right, by telling the assembled reporters that she had an announcement of a personal nature to make, then pausing dramatically, then telling them in an excited voice heard around the world that she was pregnant. 'What a drama queen!', Kelly thought, but it worked, as the entire press corps erupted into 'awwws!' and congratulations, then applause.

Just when the conference seemed to be over, a different voice was heard. It was a voice that caused a tightness in Kelly's stomach. She had heard that voice during her months of confinement and interrogation. It belonged to a man who had brought her shame, disgrace, humiliation, and nearly cost her her life. He had also brought her hero status, a promotion, and taught her a bit about forgiveness. The Speaker must have been backstage while his wife and press secretary fenced with the journalists, she imagined. Kelly pictured him pushing through the curtain and grinning that goofy grin she had only seen once, on the day he had come to tell her that she was free to go. She imagined him taking his tiny little waif of a pixie wife into his arms and hugging her. All she actually heard the voice say was "I love you, sweetheart!", but her mind could fill in the blanks.

Being trained in psychological operations, Kelly recognized Stockholm Syndrome easily enough, even in herself. That didn't make what was going on inside her any less real, though. She

couldn’t coldly intellectualize it away. She was jealous. Knowing that really, really made her angry, at everybody involved.

Her good mood ruined, Kelly paid two New American gold-backed dollar notes for the meal and a generous tip, and another note and two pre-1965 silver dimes for a small but clean and warm and dry room in the back of the road house. She was so exhausted that she slept hard until they woke her up for breakfast. It was still raining, and getting chillier, as she headed back south, all alone.

Dawn is breaking everywhere, light a candle, curse the glare
Draw the curtains I don't care 'cause it's alright
I will get by, I will get by, I will get by, I will survive….

The desert can be as cold at night as it is hot in the daytime. That was especially true in early October. The Twenty-third mounted infantry, Company B, didn’t need any army field manual to tell them that. The Republic of Texas hadn’t gotten around to printing any field manuals, so that was a good thing. If your sergeant didn’t tell you something, you didn’t need to know it, especially not from a book. Most of the men in B Company were from West Texas, anyway, so they were aware of the desert also getting cold as much as they were used to riding until the horses’ sweat turned frothy. Truth to tell, some of them had been a little saddle sore when they first signed up, but that wore away fast. By the time they rode into New Mexico, they were all walking like John Wayne, when they walked at all. The Texican mounted infantry had a general rule: ‘don’t lay when you can sleep, don’t sit when you can lay, don’t stand when you can sit, and don’t sit on the ground when you’ve got a perfectly good horse made for it’. They dry camps they’d made the last few days, up until this morning, had been rough, though.

The Republic of Texas had plenty of gas, but horses were a lot quieter than trucks and tanks and APCs, and they could sure go places that wheeled or tracked vehicles couldn’t. Like the gully feeding into the Pecos East of Carlsbad, where Private Mike Brown sat at the moment, contemplating a horse’s life. Being

quiet was a good thing, when you were seventy miles behind enemy lines. The men and the horses stared at each other in silence. With bellies full of water, it would be time to move out, soon enough. He wished for another pot of coffee, but his nerves didn't really need it.

Mike was barely nineteen, and had been in the ninth grade when the public school closed its doors, but he was smart enough to know how to tie down his saddlebags, blanket, and machete so they didn't jangle and interrupt any siestas. Only the creak of saddle leather and a snort from an impatient mount gave any sign of their presence. In a couple of minutes, the Lieutenant came back at a lope. He wouldn't be moving fast enough to stir up dust unless the group of Mexicans they had hidden to avoid had passed out of sight, Mike knew. They had dodged being seen, once again. This was kind of like a big, life or death game of hide and seek, he thought.

As far as anybody in Tex as knew, there weren't any White folks left in New Mexico at all. They'd all been ethnically cleansed. Some had run off voluntarily, some had been pushed out, and the rest had just set and died. Well, a few had put up a fight, but when the whole Mexican Army had thrown in with the Reconquistadores fighting to take Aztlan back from the gringos and set up their Latino-only Republica del Norte, it had been like the Alamo all over. New Mexico had seceded, and begun kicking out the blancos. They hadn't stopped until they felt like it.

Those crazy Mormon cultists up in Utah, or Deseret, they called it now, had done good work in pushing the Mexes back past Flagstaff in Arizona, Mike's dad had taught him during his last season of home-schooling, two winters ago. He knew all about them, and he agreed that anything the Mormons could do, Texicans could do a plumb sight better. They were about to prove it, too. Those Church of the New Dispensationalist wierdos, perverting scripture, were a problem for the other side of the

country. The Mexicans were right up next to where he was from. Where he lived. They were within kicking range.

The Lieutenant had told them that a couple of looksee flights from Dyess and Goodfellow Air Bases hadn't been able to see any troop concentrations or armor or anything to worry about within fifty miles of the border. The Republic of Texas Air Force checked that out, pretty regular. That made good sense to Mike. But now, B Company had gone past that mark, and further into New Mexico than anybody had in the last year. Well, since he had been in the army, at least. Way up north, around Denver, there was plenty of Mexican soldiers, still snarling at the New American Yankees protecting their missile silos in northern Colorado from the Mexes. A newspaper he'd seen, all the way from Lubbock, had said so. Maybe they'd managed to sneak in behind him, here, and could lick'em good before they knew it, and get gone. The towns of Hobbs and Lovington, practically smack dab on the border, had been in the Air Force's no man's land zone, and been bombed to pieces a few years ago. Nobody lived there, now. Carlsbad was bigger, and it was next in line for a whuppin'. People around these parts hadn't forgotten the mass rapes of Whites the Mexes had used to get their own country, back around Cinco Day. Heck, they even still celebrated it every year by having raids across the border to see which of them could kidnap a White woman. Norte teens competed in the competition on their national independence day like it was just some kind of celebratory game. It was time for some payback.

Mike road beside Heath, right behind Jared and Randy, as the company cantered double file along the Pecos, sheltered from the view of anybody on the West side by the bank. Soon they could hear traffic passing by, every few minutes, on the road that ran parallel to the river. Wagons and carts pulled by mules and horses, but nothing gaspowered. Just the rhythmic rattle and clippety-clop and creak they were all used to. This was the dicey part. The looksee mission had turned into a raid as soon as the Lieutenant said the Captain figured that so long as they were

there, they might as well say ‘howdy’. The only question was, how close could they get to the biggest chunk of the town, before they got heard or seen and spoiled the surprise? Any minute now, they could get caught and have to go ahead and get’er done. Heath’s horse nudged into his mount, as the trail beside the river narrowed. If Heath hadn’t been a Corporal, Mike would have slapped him with his reins, for that. If he did, Heath would make him comb and pick his mare for a week, at least. That was the benefit of rank.

The Lieutenant had told them that before Cinco Day Carlsbad had been a big city, nearly 30,000 people, and half of them White folks, too. Now they figured it was probably closer to 10,000. More manageable a size for the ninety-eight Texicans to handle on their own, Mike figured. Nobody seemed to be moving in the buildings on their right, they seemed to all be empty. Maybe the town had shrunk back to the West side of the river, past the concrete bank they were rubbing shoulders against. That would work out dandy. It wasn’t like they wanted a repeat of the bloody Battle of Lawton, where a thousand screaming Apaches had butchered about this many Texicans from the Twentieth mounted who’d galloped off into Oklahoma to try to rescue a passel of White girls the redskins had captured in raids on local towns. That had been three years ago, but it still smarted. The next winter they’d put for the Indians by burning their food stashes and starving them into surrender, but the legend of the Battle of Lawton wouldn’t be forgotten soon. Neither would those poor girls, who were all crazy as loons by the time they’d gotten them back.

In a few minutes they had reached a broader area, like a park, where the ranks could spread out. Randy ended up on one side of Mike, and Heath on the other. There was a lake or something in front of them, and they performed a wheel left maneuver to position the drawn out double rank of riders facing up the bank at the city. At a wordless command from the Lieutenant, they loosened their machetes in their sheaths, drew their M4s and

checked their magazines, and chambered a round. Safeties off. Arms across saddles. Heath looked at Mike and grinned boyishly. Aside from a few skirmishes closer to home, this was going to be their first real fight. He looked at, him, grinned back, and gave the same cocky smile to Randy. Mike could hear people jabbering away in Spanish, right up there. He had an old song stuck in his head, about hotrod Lincolns. They had no idea what was coming.

There was no bugle player, here. The Captain rode forward half a length, so everybody could see him good. He drew his machete and raised it above his head, paused for a second, then twirled it around in a circle and brought it forward with a chopping motion like the thing had been made for. Ninety-seven horses leapt forward up the banks as spurs kicked back into their flanks. Ninety-seven Texican throats screamed the ancient warcry that had once been called ‘the rebel yell’. It was on.

Mike almost lost his grip when his horse skidded through some gravel coming up the hill, but they wheeled right all together without losing anybody, and crossed a street towards a boarded up Sonic. The Mexicans they saw were all screaming and running away, or throwing down their bags and crossing themselves. None of them seemed to be carrying any guns, and they all looked to be civilians. The rebel yell echoed again ‘yeeeeeeeeeeehaaaaaaaaaaaaaaawwww!’ as they galloped up a broad open highway past a motel where an open air produce market was going on. Some of the Texicans stopped to turn over the tables and smash the vendor’s carts, while the others continued on. Mike had almost forgotten to shoot, until he heard other riders doing it. That embarrassed him, but in a couple of seconds he was doing his part, too. He couldn’t get Nancy, his horse, to hold still, what with all the yelling and shooting going on, but he couldn’t really blame her, he was kinda excited, too. He took aim. A fat Mexican woman carrying a basket of laundry. She couldn’t run very fast. Some old man with ten pairs of shoes strung around his arm. He sure looked funny when he fell and flopped around. A bit further away, running away from them, a

group of small children raced for the open doorway of an old AutoZone store. Heath knocked three of them down with a burst of 5.56. Mike just could not understand how Heath could do something like that. He always had been the best shot in the Company. It must just be a Godgiven talent, that's all there was to it.

Four blocks further North they rode, shooting and reloading and shooting some more. A couple of Mexican men tried to rush them, and that required a little machete work. Mike sure was glad of his machete, it was the best cavalry sabre ever invented. When they got to the Wendy's, they wheeled right as planned. From out of nowhere, a volley of poorly aimed fire smoked up in front of them from what must be a government building of some kind. A dozen Mexican federales hid behind two police cars and took potshots at them as the line reformed. There was nothing to do but charge them, instead of waiting for them to get lucky. Mike yelled out 'follow me!' even though his wasn't the lead horse in the race. The federales were three blocks away as the Texicans bore down on them. They fired again. A couple of men from Company B lurched in their saddles, but kept riding. Two blocks to go now. A few riders pulled out of the charge and onto the sidewalk to raise their rifles and take more careful aim at the uniformed Mexicans.

As Mike's world bounced up and down in a blur, he caught breath enough to scream 'Gitim-GitimGitim!', just in case anybody was watching or listening. When he got within a block of the police cars, he noticed that there was nobody left beside him. He had beaten them all the finish! Another federale went down under heavy fire from the flanks as they were encircled on both sides. A horse he thought was Heath's raced past him, without its rider, and jumped the closest patrol unit, landing on top of the four or five still standing Mexicans behind it. That looked pretty cool. Mike wanted to do that, too!

Nancy, like most females, had a mind of her own. When she got to the bullet-riddled car's front fender, she stopped. Mike,

however, did not. He vaulted forward, over her head, and onto the hood, flat on his back. And his head. He couldn't breathe, but he could feel the single-point sling still around his neck. He raised the M4 between his knees, hoping that he had put in a fresh magazine and chambered a round after his last pause. A big brown face with a droopy black moustache under a light blue cap looked down at him. The Mexican said something at him in Spanish. He stroked the trigger just as the cop raised his hands to surrender. Mike inhaled, finally. "Sorry, Pedro, no hablo."

From the Lieutenant's vantage point, further back, Mike's final charge had bee n downright heroic. He told the Captain as much. Heath had gotten himself shot and trampled. He would live, but he wouldn't ever ride, again. Those two things together made Mike the new corporal. His mom would be proud to hear that. Maybe that girl at the hardware store would be, too. Chicks dug heroes.

It took Company B five days to get back to the Republic of Texas border, a day longer than it had taken them to get to Carlsbad. Out of their ninety-eight men, seven had died in the raid, or along the trail back. Another ten were wounded, four of them badly enough to be discharged. Mike said goodbye to Heath and the other wounded as they loaded them on trucks to take them to the hospital in Midland. Randy and Jared were curry-combing Nancy when he got back to the livery tent. He calculated that they'd put paid to four or five hundred Mexes during the raid. The one that he couldn't get out of his head, though, was a young woman who'd run down the road ahead of them with a squawling papoose over her shoulder, bawling at them. She'd taken a lot of shooting, before she fell. It wasn't the baby under Nancy's hooves or its screams that bothered Mike. It was that he had never seen the woman's face. He wondered what she looked like. Oh well. Some things, you just had to forget about, and let go. That was the cowboy way. He sidled over to see if they had any bacon and beans left without too many flies in it.

Did they get you to trade your heroes for ghosts?
Hot ashes for trees?
Hot air for a cool breeze?
Cold comfort for change?
Did you exchange a walk on part in the war for a lead role in a cage?

The castle wall was cool and sandy against his naked back, as he sat and studied the ancient scripture. Ben Rosenfeldt kept re-reading the words of the holy prophet Ezekiel. He wished that he could reference the New Testament book of Revelations for a later insight into the end times prophecy, but that would be chol. He wasn't a Rebbe, in fact, he had been agnostic before his job at Goldmach Sachs evaporated with the firm. He still remembered counting the upper floor executives as they had jumped and fallen past his window. Forty-four stories, down to the sidewalk in front of West Street. The same number as his age, he'd thought with black humor. He had seen it coming, once the dollar was devalued and then abandoned in the international monetary exchanges. They all had. It was meshugganah, but it was real. He had waited for the Board of Directors and Vice Presidents to stop their 1929 reenactment, before leaving the office. He had to think. He had to talk to his mother. He needed to go to Temple.

People of all faiths had re-embraced their religions during and after the collapse. It was amazing how many people found had God, or something, even a cause, bigger than themselves to believe in, when their comfort zones got violated. Ben was no different. The next two Saturdays, his synagogue had been full. Attendance was higher than it had been since 9/11. Much of the conversation after had been about the growing threat to Israel, and the rising tide of Anti-Semitism in the U.S., as hyperinflation and unemployment led to the electric grid crumbling. That evening, there was a brownout across lower Manhattan, as engineers and energy brokers struggled to reroute power from overload to under capacity secondary grids.

Beginning the next week, the riots and demonstrations over immigration amnesty spread from the SouthWest to other areas of the nation. The Mexican neighborhoods of Flatbush and Sunset Park in Brooklyn, and of Elmhurst and Jackson Heights in Queens, exploded in looting and protests that the NYPD could barely control. The next day they spread to East Elmhurst and Corona. Ben never went to either borough, anyway, but he could feel things getting more tense. Synagogues in Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, and Chicago were attacked and firebombed. Two Amish men in Pennsylvania were mistaken for Jews, and shot. Then, the news stations simply stopped reporting any racial crimes, or updates on the riots and protests. It was if they weren't happening, but Ben could see the rising smoke to the NorthEast and SouthEast from their E. 44th St. high-rise apartment in Midtown East. His twenty-eight year old wife, Connie, was unconcerned. A Shiksa trophy his banking job had made it possible to afford, she didn't worry her pretty blonde head about much of anything except for shopping and buying clothes and shopping some more. She didn't go to Temple with him, didn't want to convert, and Ben didn't ever ask, after the first time. That first time had only been under pressure from his mother. She was also disappointed, in typical Jewish mother fashion, that they hadn't had kids. The only thing comforting her about that was that of course any children wouldn't have been Jewish, anyway, since Connie was a Gentile.

Ben and his seventy three year old mother did go to Temple that next Saturday, and sat silently while the Rabbi made an unusual public statement that God was calling on all righteous Jews to make Aliyah to the Holy Land. He could see the point in being concerned about Neo-Nazis and other Jew haters, who had always come out of the woodwork when economic times got tough, but there was no Hitler on the horizon in America, Ben felt sure. The Rabbi was suffering from persecution complex. All Jews suffered from it from time to time, it was an identifying cultural neurosis, that was a proven scientific and medical fact. His therapist had shown him an article about it. His mother was

fired up and ready to go. When he got home, he tried to discuss the possibility with Connie, and paint it as a way to increase their buying power. She flatly refused to consider it, so he dropped the subject. Ben slept on the couch that night.

The next morning, he pulled all of his remaining assets out of their bank accounts, and used them to buy as much gold as he could find at every pawn shop he could walk to. No taxis were running for some reason, and the city buses were all parked by the curb, he noticed. Ben was unpleasantly surprised to find that all of his liquefiable assets combined only bought him enough gold to fill a small fanny pack, and most of that was in loose jewelry, several gold coins, and only a few small ounce and half ounce bars. He had been able to find enough silver to fill the bag the rest of the way up, with ingots and old silver dimes. He didn't know how long that would last, but he'd be miserly with it.

There wasn't a single firearm left for sale in any of the four places he looked, or so he thought. As he looked at the empty cases in the last shop, realizing that he was going to have to walk back twenty-one blocks with all that silver and gold before it got dark, he began to feel desperate. Normally, Ben wouldn't show any vulnerability to Russians. They were even more anti-Semitic than Germans. But he had no choice. Reaching into the pocket of his pants, he had pulled out a wad of $20 dollar bills. He placed them on the counter, and told the Slav staring at him over narrow glasses that he needed some protection. The big hairy man grinned, swooped up the roll of bills, and brought up a cardboard box from under the counter. Turning it towards Ben, he flipped open the lid. It held a beaten up old .38 special revolver and a box of ammunition. Ben nodded curtly, picked up the box, and turned around to walk out of the store. At the corner he stopped to take the pistol out, load it, and put it in one pocket, now empty of the wad of bills he had walked in with. He put the rest of the box of ammunition in the other. He had never fired a gun before. By the time he was finished, he would become quite proficient.

The smoke was worse the next morning, hanging over the city like a fog. His sinuses made his nose leak and his eyes water. He could feel his asthma start to flare up. Connie decided that she was going to her mother's, upstate, until the air cleared off. Ben was too sick to care, or to say goodbye when she left. Once she was gone, he wondered how she would get past the traffic jams in every direction out of town, but by then she was already gone, and cell service had been down for a couple of days. He thought he would feel better if he took a shower, but there wasn't enough water pressure. With his fanny pack of precious metals, his gun, and a rarely used yarmaluke tied over his nose and mouth as an air filter, Ben set off to go check on his mother. The elevators weren't working, so he had to take the stairs. That nearly caused him to have an attack, right there on the steps.

Normally it would have been a pleasant walk to her loft in the Flatiron district, but with the smoke and the sirens and the group of black looters breaking in storefront windows as if it wasn't broad daylight, the neighborhood seemed like a war zone to Ben. He hurried on. The power was off, so somebody had just propped the building door open, since the buzzer wouldn't work. The climb up the four flights of stairs took a lot out of him. His mom was happy to see Ben, but worried by how winded he was. She had been trying to call him all day, but the phones were down. And the t.v. was just showing the Emergency Broadcast System test pattern, the same thing on every channel. She was scared, and didn't know what was going on. Ben couldn't tell her, because for once in his life, he didn't have all of the answers.

That night they slept in the living room, with the kitchen table pushed up against the door. Ben hadn't been able to stop thinking about those looters and the propped open door, downstairs. Around midnight, by his watch and the Hannukah candles his mom had dragged out to light, they heard several shots, close by. The sirens never stopped, they just ebbed and flowed, like a continual tide, until the smoky dawn.

When the sun had risen over the river higher than the thickest smoke, Ben and his mother packed a rolling suitcase full of canned food. His mom insisted on shoving in the family birth records, a photo album, and her mother's copy of the Torah. By the time they had reached the ground floor, it was obvious that he would have to carry it most of the way. The streets were eerily empty, and for the first time in days, he couldn't hear any sirens. There were some random gunshots from uptown, though. Despite his mother's protests that she had to see her own Rabbi, Ben decided not to chance trying to make it to Congregation Talmud Torah Adereth El. That gave her something to kvetch about besides wondering if her fish were going to be okay and whether she had remembered to lock the door.

Sporadic looting continued, right as they watched. They tried to act nonchalant and keep travelling in a businesslike manner, but Ben's mom kept having to stop and rest, almost every block. The Chalmad Loft on 5th Avenue was on fire when they reached the corner, so they hurried to the other side of the street and continued towards the old 16th Street Synagogue. Armed men in long black coats and hats stood across from each other in the broken windowed storefronts of the Baby Gap and Zara's on the other side of Fifth Avenue. Ben shalomed them until they let them through. They ended up staying at the Yeshiva University, along with over 1,800 other Jews from the East 6th Street and 11th Street congregations, that night, as more trickled in. The School ran out of food on the fourth day. Word soon spread that the Rabbis had a plan to get out of the city, and a reason to do so, if they needed one: Nuclear bombs had gone off in Tel Aviv.

That set off hours of debating and arguing over whether the rumor was true or not, and what it meant, if it was. Most wanted to disbelieve it. Around dusk the armed guards managed to flag down a NYPD cruiser that was passing by. They simply walked out into 5th Avenue and leveled their rifles at it as it approached the intersection. That was one way to ask an officer for assistance, Ben thought, sardonically. The out of uniform cop had

his wife and two kids in the cruiser with him, a trunkful of guns and ammunition, and was headed out of the city. He was able to confirm two pieces of information that he had heard on his radio, however. One Police Plaza had been overrun by mobs the night before, and he considered himself retired. But more important to Ben and his mother, he confirmed that the rumor was true. War had broken out in the Middle East. Israel had been invaded, after an unknown number of nuclear devices had gone off there. The U.S. was unable to respond. Israel was on their own. The last he had heard, a nuclear war had started, from it sounded like.

Everyone was weeping and wailing and grouchy from being hungry and getting on each other's nerves too much to make any kind of decision right away, but the next morning everybody had calmed down enough to want to hear what the Rabbi's plan was. Apparently, the Manhattan Cruise Terminal had been taken over by black looters trying to get off the island. They were burning ships in frustration that they couldn't make any of them operate. La Guardia and JFK were both closed, and a no fly order in place for the entire Eastern seaboard. The Brooklyn Cruise Terminal at Red Hook, however, was being held by a joint contingent of Mossad and I.D.F. security staff from the Israeli Consulate up by the U.N. complex. About half of the Carnival Splendor's crew, nearly 500, was on board and just as eager to get the heck out of Dodge as they all were. A platoon of National Guardsmen from Fort Hamilton had been assigned to help hold the terminal, after a flurry of diplomatic maneuvers by the Israeli Ambassador to the U.N., who was also on board already with his family and staff. Ben began to see the plan. His mom was really not going to like the idea of more walking.

The decision was left up to each family whether they wished to join the Israeli Consular and Ambassadorial contingents and make Aliyah to their stricken holy promised land, or to stay and take their chances in New York. After much prayer and discussion and debate, again, only a couple hundred of the oldest and sickest Jews decided not to try to hike out. It was discussed that a

good Jewish boy who worked for the city had rounded up ship pilots for ‘special craft’ to get them down to Red Hook, once they got to the Hudson. That was still too far for some to contemplate schlepping. The rest decided that, without food, they should not wait any longer to leave. Ben thought it was like Moses leaving Egypt, just like the old days.

It took most of the day, with frequent breaks, but all 1,854 of them proceeded to march down 5th Avenue to NYU, where they had to stop for the night. The younger and stronger ones raided the cafeteria and food court on campus for enough to give everybody something to drink and a snack. That was better than nothing. The next morning, the older Jews and the children were tired, but eventually Ben and the other men coaxed them into hiking again, this time West, to Hudson River Park Pier 40. It was a sight to behold, if anybody had cared to watch, but most people had their own problems preoccupying them, that day. None of them had seen or heard any sign of police since they had left the Yeshiva School. There at the pier, half of them had boarded two tourist paddleboats that barely held that many even with standing room only. Two trips back and forth down the Hudson, each way only taking two hours, and they were all staring up at the huge Carnival Splendor cruise ship in south Brooklyn.

Ben’s mom complained that standing in line m ade her feel like she was in the Holocaust, all over again. Ben gently reminded her that she hadn’t been conceived until her dad had come home from his service with the U.S. Army’s Judge Advocate General’s office after the Nuremburg trials, and that she had been born in Flushing. She gave him a look that could freeze steam in mid-air, but shut up. The inching forward was tiresome, but the I.D.F. people were checking everybody’s I.D.’s, and only letting non-Jews on board if they were crew or immediate family of crew, or family of Jews. If the passengers were Jewish, that is, if their mothers had been Jewish, then the Israeli ‘Law Of Return’ granted them citizenship, automatically. Ben, who had considered having children with a non-Jewish woman, felt that considering

the circumstances, they should just be happy to get whoever they could get. But, that was the way it was. Three other lines converged with the tail end of the one they were in, from Synagogues and Jewish Community Centers which had made similar exodus's to their own. Stragglers from all over the city trickled in. Some were Orthodox by their dress, some were Reform, and others were just discovering their ancestry. Counting the ones who finally walked in, the next day, the 3,000 berth cruise ship was almost full, when they pulled away from the terminal in slow motion. It wasn't a very dramatic escape, but it made all the difference in the world, to Ben Rosenfeldt.

Their first day out, they saw hundreds of ships of every type and size leaving the coast, as people made their escape. God knew where they thought they were going, Ben observed. Anywhere must seem better than where they were. His mom got seasick and had to stay in their cabin. While the days passed, though, they saw fewer and fewer boats. They passed the time eating their fill from the ships' stores and planning their vengeance on the enemies of their people. A week later they had passed through the Mediterranean unmolested and were able to see the ominous smoke rising from the Israeli coastline. They could not land at the Haifa terminal, as it was too close to the occupied zone, and vicious block by block fighting continued there. Luckily, they had the Israeli Consul and Ambassador to the U.N. on board, so they were welcomed at Atlit, nearby.

With the help of the Aliyah seekers, the Israeli Navy was able to hold onto the Atlit Naval base south of Haifa, which was barely avoiding being completely overrun by the Islamic State forces. Fighting continued in Haifa, and even in Tel Aviv, over an hour away, for several months. Tel Aviv eventually fell, and Israel was reduced to a strip of shore twenty miles long and a couple of miles inland. Ben and his mother and a few dozen others of a more pacifistic bent took up residence in Chateau Pelerin, a medieval Crusader Castle on the grounds of the Atlit base, which was home to Shayetet 13, Israel's naval commando unit. The

I.D.F.’s surviving attack submarines patrolled the coastline, protecting the Atlit base, and their home base at the Naval Training Center in the unconquered corner of Haifa. After their enraged flurry of nuclear strikes during the first week of the war, Israel’s quiver was empty, but its enemies could not be sure the snake had been defanged. Operation Samson had destroyed Beirut, Damascus, Cairo, Tripoli, and Amman. Because of that doubt, here at least, the Israelis held on, and schemed to strike back. Most of the Mossad agents in European nations had been arrested and deported by the new nationalistic governments there. The likelihood that Israel would come into the possession of any more nuclear weapons was slim.

Three Saar class missile corvette ships of the Israeli Navy were visible out there, and probably a sub or two lurked underwater nearby, too, Ben reasoned. He knew that a half dozen patrol boats churned back and forth between Atlit and Haifa constantly, as well. He felt reasonably safe, after nearly three years of not hearing a shot. He had heard all of the stories about the American refugees strapping explosives to their bodies and blowing up I.S. patrols, or taking up suicide sniper positions in Haifa’s ruins. He’d seen with his own eyes thousands of unarmed American Jews running at I.S. machine gun nests a few hundred yards from the base perimeter. During the first year after Cinco Day, over a million foreign born Jewish volunteers had thrown themselves against the Islamic State, pushing them back from the coast between the two bases. Twice that many, as hard as it was to believe, had died trying to hold Tel Aviv, before the capital finally fell.

The human wave attacks were a thing of the past, at least. Mainly, that was because there weren’t that many volunteers left, and every Jewish life was precious. More precious than a few square feet of ground, even in the holy land, Ben had argued. The current total population of unoccupied Israel stood at around a quarter million Jews. A few more boatloads of Aliyah seekers had come in, from time to time, but never enough to make a real

difference. After his mom had passed, he had begun to be more vocal, without her judgemental eyes on him all the time. Trying to make a difference, of his own. He worked the plots of land where compost and sewage had turned sand into vegetables, like everybody did, and joined the work details to earn his keep. He even attended Shabat services every week. That part, she would approve of, at least. He taught economics as an elective at the University of Haifa, not far from the front lines that hadn't changed in 38 months. Very few students were interested in taking a class they'd never use, though, so he only made the trip twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Mainly, Ben spent his free time wandering around in his ancient castle, looking out to sea, and wondering if Connie had ever found what she was looking for. He knew that he hadn't, not even here in the promised land. A shlekhter sholem iz beser vi a guter krig.

Chapter Four

"I fully agree with General Washington, that we must protect this young nation from an insidious influence and impenetration. The menace, gentlemen, is the jews. In whatever country jews have settled in any great number, they have lowered its moral tone; depreciated its commercial integrity; have segregated themselves and have not been assimilated; have sneered at and tried to undermine the Christian religion upon which that nation is founded, by objecting to its restrictions; have built up a state within the state; and when opposed have tried to strangle that country to death financially, as in the case of Spain and Portugal.

For over 1,700 years, the jews have been bewailing their sad fate in that they have been exiled from their homeland, as they call Palestine. But gentlemen, did the world give it to them in fee simple, they would at once find some reason for not returning. Why? Because they are vampires, and vampires do not live on vampires. They cannot live only among themselves. They must subsist on Christians and other people not of their race.

If you do not exclude them from these United States, in their Constitution, in less than 200 years they will have swarmed here in such great numbers that they will dominate and devour the land and change our form of government, for which we Americans have shed our blood, given our lives our substance and jeopardized our liberty.

If you do not exclude them, in less than 200 years our descendants will be working in the fields to furnish them substance, while they will be in the counting houses rubbing their hands. I warn you, gentlemen, if you do not exclude jews for all time, your children will curse you in your graves.

Jews, gentlemen, are Asiatics, let them be born where they will nor how many generations they are away from Asia, they will

never be otherwise. Their ideas do not conform to an American's, and will not even thou they live among us ten generations. A leopard cannot change its spots. jews are Asiatics, are a menace to this country if permitted entrance, and should be excluded by this Constitutional Convention."
- Benjamin Franklin at the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention of 1787

There's guns across the river aimin' at ya Lawman on your trail, he'd like to catch ya Bounty hunters, too, they'd like to get ya Billy, they don't like you to be so free…

John always deferred to General Harrison when it came to military matters. That was the division of Executive powers they had agreed to when the Provisional Government had been enacted, three years ago. The arrangement was… extraConstitutional…but then, so was running on a unicameral system where a mix of civilian and military authority appointed and state legislature elected representatives to act with the powers of both the House and the Senate. For the next seven years, until the scheduled national elections, they just had to make things up as they went along.

That's why the four Generals, McNabb and Harrison and Smith and Grace, were still up at three a.m., drawing lines and dates on a large map of the Earth. The Speaker remembered when he'd first come to town, doing the same thing with Kip over a map of just the former U.S.. His world had gotten larger. Now, with a new baby on the way, it had expanded in a different way, too. General Grace coughed and waved away John's cigarette smoke. "I wish you'd quit those coffin nails before they give you cancer!" the oldest man in the room grumbled. "I don't see why you need me here anyway. I'm just a rubber stamp. I'll sign off on whatever you agree to do, you know that."

"General, you are nobody's 'yes man'," John assured him. "If I'd thought you were, I wouldn't have nominated you to be the Secretary of Defense. You're the only surviving member of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff. We need your experience in planning a multi-phase operation this huge." He stubbed out his menthol to placate Gen. Grace. Mark Smith smiled at the gesture.

"It is gonna be downright global in scope." Smith observed, looking at the distances involved on the map. "Fuel, food, times of travel…it's a logistical nightmare. We're talking a four continent operation, gentlemen."

"But it can be done. It will get done." Harrison said quietly. His scarred finger traced a line from Australia to Africa, and then to Southern Europe. "Let's take it from the top, step by step. Where are we, at this moment?"

Unable to resist the opening, Mark dived in: "Why, you're in McNabb's shiny marble and oak office in the Old Courthouse, in St. Louie, General. Is it Alzheimer's time already, Sir?" Gen. Harrison made an obscene gesture at his subordinate.

"Hey, I resemble that remark", joked Fred Grace. "But seriously… okay, the Sixth fleet and the Gerald R. Ford are doing rescue and recovery in Hawaii. Ugly business, there. Over the last month the Fifth Fleet, centered on the Eisenhower Carrier Group and their Air Wing, has been anchored in the Indian Ocean off of South Africa." His voice became all business. The operational air strikes began in Durban, but have expanded to include Cape Town, Maputo, Gaborone, and Bulawayo. The ship to shore line has shelled Port Elizabeth and East London, as well." Gen. Grace tapped spots along South Africa's coastline.

"What's the disposition of enemy forces, currently?" Smith asked. John and Fred both started to speak at the same time. Chuckling, McNabb gave Grace the floor.
"They had no air power left except for a few prop engine transports and a couple of helicopters, none of their jets or bombers were even operational, and their navy had already been reduced to speed boats and barges that would make a Somali pirate go home in embarrassment." General Grace explained.

“Now they don’t even have those. No armor, either. Just truckloads and cartloads of skinny black devils with AKs and M4s.”
“During my diplomatic discussions with the leaders of the Orange Free State, they indicated that they feel confident that they can handle anything anybody within a thousand miles of them can throw their way, now,” the Speaker added. They’re driving every black out of the northern half of South Africa. With our Marines and air support helping, of course. Everything above the Orange River, really. And, I bet they’ll hold it, this time.”
General Harrison sat down and reached his arm over the map, to cover the southern tip of the continent with his hand. “Okay, so that’s got them covered. I’m sure that in a few years they’ll be strong enough to make good friends. Our losses were minimal, less than a hundred casualties, and those all on the ground. I’m making this call. It’s time to reel in our air assets back to the Eisenhower, and disengage from their cleanup operations. Let the Orangers grow their teeth and claws by finishing the job by themselves. It’ll strengthen their pride. We’ll leave a company of Marines to serve as advisors, but no more. We have other fish to fry.” The other three officers all nodded solemnly. That’s why Harrison was the Commander in Chief. He knew when to fish, and when to cut bait.
“Now then,” he continued. “Let’s talk about the next step. I want the Fifth to go up the Mozambique Channel, and stay close enough to the coast that everybody in Dar es Salaam, Mogadishu, and the fly traps of Ethiopia sees for themselves that Americans are not extinct. They’re gonna retrace their retreat from four years ago, in reverse, right through the Gulf of Aden and up the Red Sea. They oughta remember the way back.” He smiled mirthlessly. “If they see anybody looking at them sideways, they’re to take them out, from Port Sudan on. Constant air overwatch, too. Jeddah might be dicey to get by. Mark, do we know anything about the state of the Suez?”
“Actually, the canal’s eighty miles from the radioactive zone of Cairo, so that’s not gonna be an issue,” the Secretary of State responded. “An Islamic State backed militia holds Ismailia,

halfway through. They charge a toll to any non-Muslim shipping that comes by, but the waterway is still open and navigable. It's non-negotiable, but we can either bluff or blast our way through. Now, Said, at the other end, is its own Caliphate, gone fat and soft from tariffs and tolls from that side. I figure we tell them that we're coming through, and if they don't like it, we're gonna be coming back in a week with 11,000 homesick Marines that aren't gonna be half as nice we are about it." They all shared a laugh over that imagined scene.

"Excellent!" Harrison remarked. "Like you set up with Athens when you met that Golden Dawn lady, the Greeks will help with air cover through the Aegean. Then is the hard part. We'll be on I.S. turf. The Cannakale to Gallipoli strait. It's wide enough, but remember what happened to the Aussies there in W.W. I.. " McNabb and Smith nodded. They remembered the old song 'Waltzing Matilda' song, even if their military history expertise had a few blind spots. General Grace scratched behind his ear, then spoke up.

"Too bad that we have to come out the same way, or we could blow them to hell and back on the way in. That's what makes it so hard." Fred noted. That had been on all of their minds. It was on Vice Admiral Davidson's with the fleet, too. "Then, phase two, right through Istanbul, to the Black Sea. Man."

John coughed. The other Generals looked at him. He'd sat back and let them carry the conversation most of the way. "Maybe that's it. Maybe that's the answer. "

Harrison shook his head, not understanding. "It's late, or early. I've been up all night, and I'm old. What do you mean?"

"Well, Mark has been wracking his brain to find a diplomatic solution to not having to fight our way in and out, that's his job. Fred has been trying to figure out a military solution to pointing the gun at the Islamic State. That's his job. And you've been thinking about when to pull the trigger. That's your job. I just remembered what my job is," the Speaker said matter-of-factly. They all waited. "My job is to do what we need to do and keep our German and Greek allies happy, at the same time. They want a diversion in Western Turkey ? Something to keep refugees from

running that way when Ferguson hits them in the East?" He paused, pointing at Istanbul. "Well, why not give them one!?!"

The pain of war cannot exceed the woe of aftermath…

In over three and half years, no shipments had come into Hawaii. No flights, either. Not from the States, and not from the Chinese, who had briefly occupied the islands. The only visitors during that time had been a few intrepid Japanese traders in fishing boats. Them, and the slavers. Hawaii had nothing to trade. The Chinese occupation had only really affected the survivors in Honolulu, but it was an unlivable ghost town of falling buildings and rotting trash. In those sandy streets starvation had led to cannibalism, once the invaders left. It had been a hungry time, even before they'd come.

After the first year, when the Chinese had gone, the first slavers arrived. At first, they were drawn by the hope of looting the outer fringes of fallen American civilization. When they saw just how far it had fallen, they lured surviving White women by the dozens onto their ships with the promise of food. Some of them, perhaps, didn't even mind being taken. The slaving expeditions ended after two crews were overwhelmed and slaughtered by a tribe of former surfers. Sometimes you eat the bear, and sometimes the bear eats you. Kowabunga, dude. Gnarly.

By the second year after Cinco Day, long after the last boat had left and the last plane had flown out, the population bottleneck hit bottom. Out of the nearly one and a half million Hawaiians in the islands before the collapse, less than twenty-three thousand were still alive on Oahu when the Supercarrier Gerald R. Ford, the heart of the Sixth fleet, pulled into Pearl-Hickam. Those survivors had the hard and angry stares of people who had eaten their pets, then eaten their neighbors' pets, and then eaten their neighbors. There was a wildness, a nervous flightiness, in their faces, even when they smiled. None of them were really all there. Part of their souls had been lost, along the way. Those who didn't quickly become dependent on handouts were the ones that really

had to be watched. Three patrols went missing, widening the perimeter into the city.

After warily setting up base security at Pear-Hickam and making contact with several tribes of survivors, the New American naval contingent discovered that the current population level was probably close to sustainable, given the rich Hawaiian soil. The tribes had separated out by race, then fought for the dwindling food supplies available. Because the Chinese had focused much of their animosity on the Polynesian natives, the Whites had a numerical advantage. While the Fifth fleet was strafing and bombing and shelling in South Africa, the Sixth fleet was planting the Navy Marine golf course in corn. The base had been trashed by the 7th fleet when they left it in retreat, and by the Chinese when they abandoned the islands, and by the local residents looking for anything edible or that could be used as a weapon. While two battalions worked to make the barracks livable and to reestablish electricity and potable water supply, another three reestablished order in the city and surrounding suburbs. Some of the survivors came begging, some were stand-offish after their experience with the Chinese, and some of them saw the Marines as meat on the hoof. By the time the Fifth was able to disengage from South Africa, the Sixth fleet had pacified the entire island of Oahu. They only had to kill half the survivors to bring the other half peace.

In the aftermath of the pacification of Oahu, the Marines found that a percentage of the survivors had not resorted to cannibalism, but had looted and scrounged and hunted and grown enough crops on small plots they could defend to make it. Hundreds had retreated into the forests, jungles, and rugged mountains, and eked out an existence, there. The island's post reclamation population ended up being twelve thousand civilians and an equal number of military personnel. A handful of survivors from the Four Seasons Resort at Manele Bay on Lanai, the next to the nearest island, actually churned in on pedal-powered tourist paddle-wheel boats, seeing the reconnaissance flights from the

Ford's air wing overhead. They reported that all of the residents of Lanai City, and as far as they knew everyone on Molokai, were dead. The Navy established a strict doctrine of 'don't ask, don't tell' when it came to processing survivors. What happened on the island, stayed on the island. Too many dark deeds had been necessitated, or made possible, by the collapse of civilization. There would be no investigations, no prosecutions, no trials, and no retribution. Everybody got a clean slate.

That turned out to be a difficult policy to enforce when they finally reached the island of Hawaii, and began to clear Hilo. The airport terminals were piled high with the skeletons of hundreds who had waited, hopelessly, for rescue. The cut marks on their bones told as much as the ashes of the cookfires on the runways. Signs of human habitation, such as smoke and new clearings, could be seen in the Hilo Watershed Reserve Forest, but nobody there wanted to be rescued, any more. The Navy left them alone.

In the end, all of the White Hawaiian survivors interested in becoming a Territory of New America, numbering around fifteen thousand, were consolidated onto Oahu, without any crowding. The nonWhite population was peacefully relocated on the other islands. Secretary of State Smith made a deal with the Argentinians to ship cans of corned beef, canned meat, and bags of soybeans, wheat, and potatoes by the container load to Oahu until local agriculture could become more self-sufficient on the island. That deal had been surprisingly easy to make, despite the protestations of the powerful Jewish lobby in Buenos Aires, now the single largest population of Jews in the world. They hadn't been too keen on Argentina making any deal with New America, but they'd been overruled by the military dictatorship's concern that their war with Brazil wasn't going very well. They'd already lost Rosario. The Brazilian front lines were staring at them, just across the Rio Parana. The examples of Paraguay and Uruguay after they'd capitulated to Brasilia convinced the Argentinians that they didn't want to be next. The Argentinians were glad to send a container ship of food every week for a year to Hawaii, in

exchange for six 10 kiloton tactical nuclear weapons. Especially with a New American destroyer escorting every shipment.

I once was lost, but now am found. ‘Was blind, but now I see…

She didn’t care how smart they were, or what they had been through, they just didn’t understand. It wasn’t fair. They didn’t know how she felt. She wasn’t a kid any more, she was nineteen years old. She was a woman, now. Nineteen was grown! She was definitely old enough to know what she wanted to do with her life. If she was old enough to move across country, live in Chicago, and go to the Art Institute, she was old enough to live her own life. It was her life, after all. Besides, Hope wasn’t like most teenagers. She had seen more and done more than most of the snoopy, nosey psycho stalker dudes her adoptive dad had trying to follow her everywhere she went. A lot of what she had seen and done she never talked about, because nobody would believe her, but she had seen some stuff. Done some stuff. Forgotten some stuff, on purpose. Tried to, others.

A part of her hated to hurt John’s fe elings. Hope had never really caught onto calling him ‘dad’, much less ‘daddy’. She had been too old, and too far along in life, by the time she came to live with the Speaker and his wife in St. Louis. Hope had never really felt close to Carolyn, either, but her adoptive dad’s wife had been nice and tried to be her friend, which was good enough, she guessed. They were all the family she had left, so they had to do. She used his name. But, Hope felt that she just couldn’t be serious all the time, and so driven, so devoted, so disciplined, so stern, as her John was. He was, like, really OCD. Stressed out all the time, over everything. No fun. Well, sometimes he did things for her, and she knew that he tried. It was just that it was hard for anything or anybody to be as important to him as his cause. Even himself. He was way beyond driven. He was committed, or should be, like he’d always joked. Hope missed his lame jokes and puns, all the time.

Then, there was the Klan group in Arkansas that had taken her in and helped her out. She hated to disappoint Jason or the rest of them, either. After all, if it wasn't for them, she would either be dead, or still on the run, doing whatever she had to do to survive. That was no kind of life. Because of them she'd had a few years of normal life. A chance to relax and learn and draw. When it came down to it, she hadn't been as into art as she had gotten older, but what else was there to do? Chicago was growing back and the place to be, she heard her friends at school say. So, she pretended to really want to go to the Art Institute. The only way that her adoptive dad would let her go was if a team of minders from his constantly growing private security force went with her.

The weird thing was, Hope never really knew how many of the security people there were. Of course, there were the full-time staff ones, the half dozen who lived with them in The Warehouse, with the pilots for the helicopter he kept on the roof. They had become her good friends, over the last few years. Like the platoon of them that stayed next door to the Old Courthouse capital building, they wore the black uniform of John's private bodyguard force. So did the platoon at the airport, and the one that officially travelled with her to Chicago. But she knew that there were more of them, because even though the uniforms stayed the same, they kept rotating in and out, different faces, same attitude. Like they were all her big brother, or something. Jeesh. They were always trying to get her in trouble, and tell their boss on her.

Hope had really started slipping out, at first, just to see if she could get away with it. It was fun to see how long it would take them to find out she was gone. Sometimes she would hide and pretend to have run off, leaving a window open. The she would watch to see how often they checked on her, and how they kept tabs on her activity without being creepy. She also tried to learn their habits and routines, like when they patrolled, but they kept changing up the patterns on her. It was like they were trying to confuse her, or something. All this paranoia and heavy-handed

security was a bit much. Just because of that suicide bomber, and a couple of sniper attempts to assassinate John since, that was no reason to think anybody would come after her. Gosh. Didn't they understand, she wasn't a politician or anybody important? She just wanted to have a life, without anybody telling her what to do.

Most of the time the security goons found her pretty quickly. She knew they had cameras and microphones set up everywhere, she had found a couple of them. Not knowing where they all were was kind of weird and embarrassing to think about. Sometimes, after some practice, she was able to hide and watch them looking for her, that was fun. Then she would come out and act like she had been in the bathroom all along and had no idea why they were all so upset. She'd even tried to flirt with a couple of them, to test how professional they were, but they were just as serious as cancer, and ignored it. That's when she started sneaking out, for real.

Nigel wasn't like the other guys she had known. He wasn't a Nationalist, he wasn't even an American, and he didn't think her adoptive dad was a god. In fact, he didn't even know who John McNabb was! Hope thought it was impossible that all British people were as cool as Nigel was. He was so brave, so adventuresome! She loved to listen to his story of how he had been an orphan, and unemployed like a lot of people in Yorkshire. He'd hitchhiked his way across Britain, riding on the back of army trucks to Liverpool. He'd been hungry and he'd seen things and done things, like Hope had. They had a lot in common. His parents were dead, too, killed in the mopups when the British shariatowns had lashed out against their hosts, before being burned out. It was so sad.

Hope was so glad that he'd quit his job on the ship bringing refrigerated insulin and aircraft parts across the Atlantic, and had jumped ship when it landed in Chicago. He wasn't technically a student at the University, but he hung around there a lot with a

small crowd of really cool, independent thinking freedom lovers. They liked to hang out in the Renaissance section of the Art Institute and have philosophical discussions about why the looters had destroyed the paintings but hadn't gone to the trouble of breaking the statues. Hope still agreed with the Christian and Nationalist ideals she had been taught. She even still prayed, especially right before tests. But, she didn't go to church in Chicago except for when her John came to visit and made her. She liked the intellectual discussions and the nihilist ideas Nigel and his friends had. Sometimes they smoked a little pot to think more freely, but that was all for the sake of art, and to expand their minds. Nigel was the kind of guy her John would definitely not approve of. Hope thought he was a hottie.

She didn't really like to smoke it, herself, it just made her feel dumb and not in control. She didn't like that. She was depressed enough, naturally. But, they did party with some people who did other things. It seemed like the only time she ever heard from her John was when she got into trouble, so she made sure that she got into trouble a lot, and that he found out about it. A little spray-paint on a statue of some old dead guys went a long way towards getting his attention. When Nigel had first met John, neither of the men had been very impressed by the other, she could tell. Maybe someday they could get along, if she and Nigel got married. Her kids might even have a cute British accent, if they were around their dad growing up, she hoped.

After she had to go to that dumb rehab place and learn those stupid steps, she decided to play it cool for a while. Carolyn was being such a you-know-what, threatening to force her to come home. Didn't she realize that Hope was a legal adult? She could serve in the Unified Command Armed Forces, or vote, or get married and have babies, if she wanted to. But, if they stopped paying the tuition, or told the professors to kick her out, she'd be expelled. Of course if John told her professors to, they would. Everybody tried to do what the Speaker wanted, to make him happy. It made her sick. Plus, Nigel was busy with a new job he

had, and couldn't see her until it was finished. He'd had a courier deliver a letter to tell her about it. She wanted to see him, but he had been clear that he couldn't, for a few weeks or so. That really bit. She missed him, and she was sooooo bored! There was nothing to do. Her life sucked. Why couldn't she be with the man she loved?

After a couple more weeks of going to her classes and catching up on the work she had missed, her grades improved. Hope was still Emo, though, especially around her guards. She chose to blame them for how unhappy her life was. The way everybody knew who she was now, or at least whose daughter she was, made it worse. It was like half of them were afraid of her and the other half wanted to take selfies with her and have her come to their parties to show her off. Hope had a word for people who acted like they were her friends, but really just wanted to be close to her so they could claim to know somebody in the Nationalist movement. She called them 'Papanazis'. She thought that was clever. Some of the cute guys wanted to know if she could introduce them to her dad, some day, and a lot of them asked her out just because she was the Speaker's daughter, and that, like, totally ruined it for her.

Chicago was a young city again. People Hope's age and i n their twenties and thirties poured in from around the Midwest, with coal trains from West Virginia, loads of raw steel from West Pennsylvania, beef from Montana and Wyoming and Dakota, wheat from Kansas, and corn from downstate Illinois and Indiana and Iowa. Those trains exhaled out again filled with pharmaceuticals and automobiles and trucks and tractors and mechanical parts from Europe. It thrummed with life. Hope loved the feeling of new opportunity and promise in the city, as the population of Chicago began to rival St. Louis's at a quarter million, again.

Despite the vibrancy of the boomtown, however, there were huge swaths of abandoned areas inside the loop, especially on the

south side of town. Hope never went into the dead zones. They were barricaded off, and populated only by ghosts at night. During the day, they had a life of their own, as salvage crews mined them for building materials, metals, and durable goods that could be refurbished after over four years of neglect. Her security babysitters, seen and unseen, wouldn't let her into an unsecure area like that. There were plenty of places in the repopulated neighborhoods where the scars of war and death and human suffering still showed. Buildings with the windows boarded up. Ruined edifices being bulldozed to make room for community gardens. Nobody had to be told what The Windy City had gone through. The marks were everywhere for them to see.

She was so sick of having to represent the family, and act proper all the time, with people watching her. It was like they thought she was some kind of European royalty, 'Princess Hope', or something. She hated being a celebrity. Nobody was real towards her, now. She was more sure than ever that there more of her adoptive dad's security people around than just the ones in uniform. Because of their black color, she called the uniformed Secret Service the "S.S." for short. That made some of them smile, and others of them cringe, a little. That's how she could tell the difference between which ones were cool, and which ones weren't. But there were always guys in suits with earpieces in their ears sitting in odd corners when she went out to eat, or passing her on the street when she went out shopping. They tried to be inconspicuous, and hide the wires going down into their jackets, but nobody listened to an Ipod that much!

The courier who tried to deliver a letter to her on Tuesday got tackled by some random guy walking by before he could hand the envelope to her. The courier on Wednesday was crossing the street towards her on his bike when a black Yukon Denali swerved in between them and stopped. When it pulled away, he was gone. The courier on Thursday just handed the page to her, nonchalantly, as he walked by her table. Before her minder could grab it, she read the note. It was from Nigel. His new job had

transferred him home to England. He didn't know when he would be able to come back. It was goodbye, for now. When Hope began crying, three men in plain clothes and two men in black uniforms rushed to her side, to see if she was okay. No, she wasn't. She was a real long way from okay.

Slipping away again was the hard part, with things tightened up around her. Buying her way onboard the big ship carrying tons of wheat and corn from the port of Chicago to England had been comparatively easy, considering the size of her allowance. She had enough left over to buy food from the crew along the way, and to live on for a while once she got there and looked for Nigel. She imagined how happy he would be to see her, and pictured him hugging her; his surprise, his love, him holding her in his arms. It would be perfect. Hope couldn't wait.

Life goes by so fast, you only wanna do what you think is right. Close your eyes, and it's passed, story of my life…

When Cinco Day kicked off the final collapse of the global monetary markets, it wasn't long before financing for the U.N. funded clinics and hospitals fighting the Ebola virus in West Africa began to dry up. The European doctors and nurses packed up and went home, except for the few true liberals who stayed on as volunteers and died. For the most part, within a month, the international health effort had retreated to Liberia, where it was headquartered. In another month, they had evacuated, too. 'Doctors Without Borders' became 'Borders Without Doctors'. Then the local regimes collapsed, and so did those borders. Most African nations had simply been artificial, White-created constructs. The real loyalty within those states was tribal and ethnic, and always had been.

The withdrawal of Western economic and humanitarian aid began a downward spiral in the region. By the end of the first year, Ebola and dysentery and the starvation resulting from the collapse of the infrastructure in several nations had killed millions. First, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, and Mali fell. The smaller states

didn't have far to fall. Millions more in Gabon, Cameroon, the promising and powerful Nigeria, and the Central African Republic perished in ethnic and tribal fighting, as Ebola swept eastwards like a wildfire before the wind. Nigeria's collapse was the most surprising to outside observers, but the collapse happened there with an unexpected ferocity, as the oil and other natural resources simply provided more reason for people there to fight one another. A coup d'etat in Lagos sponsored by the Muslim northern half of the country led to a semi-religious, semi-ethnic civil war between the Muslim Hausa tribe and the Yoruba and Igbo in the South.

Most of the survivors starved, with noone caring enough or able to send in pallets of food supplies. In six months, there were no standing national governments from Senegal to the Seychilles. In a year, the equatorial African population had shrunk by 80-90%. Power abhors a vacuum, though, so once the virus had burned itself out due to a lack of hosts, Islam took over. Not just in Nigeria, but in a reunited Sudan and then in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Caliphates were established. The mosques could be built small, as the populations had bottlenecked.

Somalia had already been a Muslim country. Mogadishu was still a huge city, however, as the Fifth could see as the fleet trailed the Eisenhower off the coast of Liido Beach . The smoke from cookfires could be seen on land. In between the Eisenhower and the shore, several fishing boats and scrapped ships bobbed up and down at anchor. The tiny black figures onboard simply stared at the New American fleet in awe. When they had passed the island nation of Zanzibar, off the coast of Tanzania, some natives in outrigger canoes had tried to chase them, of all things. The cruise missiles they'd fired off into Dar es Salaam just to say 'hello' in passing must have stirred the local hornets' nest. Because of that, standing orders were to prepare to repel boarders, or fight off pirates; but the sight of the huge aircraft

carrier was too intimidating for the Somalis to challenge. The Fifth continued north, towards the Horn.

So if you're down on your luck, I know we all sympathize Find a girl with far away eyes…

During the 19th century, the Kars region had been taken by Russia, a couple of times. In fact, there was still a sizable Russian and Polish minority in the city. As Orthodox Christians, the last few years of Islamic State rule had been pretty rough on them. At first, Christians in northeastern Turkey were allowed to continue to practice their faith if they paid a high tax for the privilege. Soon, though, the crackdown began, as the hardliners, angered by the Israeli nuclear strikes, got tough with any non-Muslim populations within their area of influence. There had been mass beheadings and executions when some refused to follow Sharia law. That gave General Ferguson and his hardened veterans some very staunch allies for the final assault on the area around the key town of 70,000 people. The local Slavs had served as guides for the American Foreign Legions ever since they'd wrapped things up victoriously in Tblisi.

Except for a week of R and R at the Sevan National Park in Armenia, they had never seen such a cold, dusty, rocky, mountainous, God-forsaken pile of gravel as the whole region they'd been fighting in. Amazingly, too many of the locals felt like it was worth dying for. Apparently, they thought it was worth killing for, too, as Ferguson had lost over six hundred and fifty men from his command in the siege of Baku, alone. It was a large city spreading out onto a peninsula in the Caspian, or had been, before they'd been shown a way in by one of the Christian guides through the Sumgayit Bypass Highway, around the lake. It was pretty tame, now.

After they made examples out of the President and Prime Minister of Azerbaijan for giving them so much trouble, Yerevan capitulated, giving them Armenia without too bad of a hassle. They didn't have enough manpower to occupy the three nations,

or begin separating out and retiring all of the Muslims, but that wasn't in their job description. That was what the Russians were following them in for, once they'd softened them up for them.

Iranian forces had not only reversed the I.S. assault on Tabriz, they'd pushed the Sunnis back over the old border and occupied Van, with the lake making a much more natural border between the two Muslim factions . Moscow had made a deal with Tehran that might save the two legion's bacon. If the Iranians would push towards the Bhutan River Valley and put pressure on Siirt, to give the I.S. two fronts to fight on, they would finally get what they had been after for a generation: accelerated Russian help with their nuclear program. Tehran had agreed, asking only to be told 'when'.

The week at Sevan was badly needed for making repairs on equipment and vehicles, caring for their wounded, and shuffling troops around to fill in the gaps from the nine Centuries, or almost a thousand men, they'd lost in the last six weeks. This was the bloodiest, costliest campaign they had been in, so far, since Cinco Day had left them stranded over four years ago. Ferguson's command was down to just over 10,100 men, less than half what he had started out with. They were the best of the best, though, and better than they ever had been. By early December, their lakefront vacation was over. It was pretty, but with the daytime temperatures hovering around freezing and dipping well below it at night, it wasn't what the New American Foreign Legions thought of as the typical Middle Eastern experience. It sure wasn't what they'd gotten used to in the 'Stans, except for their winters bivouacked in the high deserts.

Regardless of how hard the city defenders had resisted in Baku, what the Americans had been dealing with were not the best the I.S. had to throw at him, the General knew. Mainly, they'd faced goat-herders and farmers with AKs, one rusty magazine each, and a pair of second-hand boots. The legions had gone up against minimal armor and air defense, so far. His staff and the

Intelligence officers told him that a modern army defended what had been Turkey. That would be a true test of hi men, their Orthodox guides…and of himself and his leadership ability. When the Russian advance forces caught up with them at Yerevan after sprinkling garrisons all over the Caucasus like salt on a field of pepper, the legions crossed the border, into the Islamic Caliphate of Turkey.

Igdir had been bigger than Kars, but for some reason the I.S. declined to defend it. General Ferguson wished he could stop and take a better look at Mt. Ararat, since he was there, but time was miles in this chase. He left three centuries in Igdir to keep the road open in case they needed it, and to wait for the dawdling Russians, and another in Tuzluca, when they caught up with the local militia leader's ragtag fedayeen there. After watching his two top lieutenants be shot and spending a couple of minutes of dentistry with some hot pliers, he divulged that the main body of Mujahideen regulars was waiting to ambush them in Kars. Their plan was to draw the main body of American troops further west and away from their Apache and Cobra air support, which the I.S. had to learn to fear, justly, in Baku. With the necessity of leaving Century-sized garrisons in every small town along the way to keep the road opened and hold them for the Russians, 'by the time the body of the snake caught up with the head, the neck would be extended into the badger's mouth', was how the wiry little man had expressed the tactic, through the new gaps in his teeth. The Captain doing the interrogation and dental work, Rogers from the 27th Marines E.F., made a big show of paying the man generously in worthless old American dollars in front of the rest of his fedayeen, then ordered his men to prepare a defensible camp for the night.

After the normal Russian version of an MRE for dinner, General Ferguson had a communications officer radio back to the pilots waiting with the Russians in Yerevan, to have their air support brought up to meet them at 0900 in Dagpinar, ten miles south of Kars. They only had a couple dozen airworthy helicopter gunships

left, but they might make all the distance in the world if the I.S. had armor in front of them up the road. Then, he had a second call made, to the commander of the Russian forces in the Armenian capital. It was a message to be passed up the chain of command, from the Colonel to his commander, to the President of Russia: “Tell the Iranians that Ferguson says ‘now’.

The men were a bit bummed that it was close to Christmas again, and they were still stuck here. The soldiers with families, and children, were still dreaming of getting back stateside, some day. As he tried to sleep, Ferguson wondered how many more nights he was from home. He had to admit, it felt closer and more real, every day. Even though he’d never married, and wasn’t close to any of his family, he felt like he had a duty to his men, to get them home to theirs. They were his family, the only family he needed, the General thought, as he turned over in his blanket by the fire and rested his eyes before the climactic battle in the morning.

Chapter Five

“A gen eral belief seems to prevail in the colony that the Indians are little better, if at all, than the savages or natives of Africa. Even the children are taught to believe in that manner, with the result that the Indian is being dragged down to the position of a raw Kaffir.” –Mahatma Ghandi

You shake my nerves and you rattle my brain, too much love drives a man insane. You broke my will, but what a thrill. Goodness gracious, great balls of fire…

What was wrong with her? Kelly Johansen had never been the kind of girl to fall in love. Especially not with some overly macho redneck cowboy from Texas. But once she’d gotten back from the terribly embarrassing fiasco of an espionage operation to Oregon, the powers that be weren’t content to leave her be. Oh no, they had to see what else the Head of the Department of Internal Communications was capable of. So, they’d asked her to help the Ambassador from the Republic of Texas (the new one, the old one had all the ‘Brothering’ and ‘Sistering’ she could stand and went home) get acquainted with Salt Lake. Just in time for the Holidays. Jimmy said that she needed the distraction to take her mind off of Karen, since it always depressed her during Christmas to be alone. The last couple of years he had invited her over for Christmas dinner, though. If he was insinuating that he wasn’t going to this year, maybe he had a girlfriend. Kelly wasn’t sure how she felt about that.

The job seemed simple enough. All week they had been finalizing negotiations with the Argentinians, who had just concluded an advantageous cease-fire arrangement with Brazil after medium sized nuclear blasts had hollowed out Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and Porto Alegre. Plus, the Republica del Norte government in Phoenix wanted to negotiate Deseret letting the Mexican farmers who’d moved into the state park there have water rights from

Lake Havasu. Then there were the guerrillas who'd declared the Channel Islands independent and who'd been raiding the Mormon colony in L.A. like modern day Vikings. That kept the regular diplomatic corps of the LDS nation so busy that they needed her to show the Texican Ambassador where he was supposed to work, where he was supposed to sleep, and where he could eat, just like a toddler. The acculturation process would include covering local LDS laws he might not be used to, such as the prohibitions against caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol, and introducing him to the local Bishop for the capital region he would be staying in. Maybe even take him to church, and introduce him, the first time.

The failure in Oregon hadn't been her fault. That was obvious to everyone. The mission had just become redundant. But the way she'd questioned the logic and necessity of it afterwards had angered some higher ups. They didn't like to be mocked, on The Council of Fifty. No sense of humor, at all.

For most of her adult life, Kelly had avoided romantic entanglements. They were just too dramatic and icky and complicated, and always ended badly. It was safer to stick with her books, where the dialogue could be controlled with a turn of the page. That's why she was surprised to be attracted to Josh Walker. Maybe it was the tan Stetson hat or the ostrich skin boots. Or maybe it was the sunburned face, the pale blue eyes, and the dirty blonde hair peeking out for under the cowboy hat. Whatever the ingredients, Kelly liked the recipe.

She had still been feeling resentful at having to do this low-end diplomatic work, feeling like it was either some kind of punishment for Oregon, or a sign of distrust. Was she being sidelined, or pushed out of the way, because she wasn't devout enough? Had somebody called her out as a heretic? She couldn't let paranoia take over. Probably, they were just testing her, again.

So, when the long-legged Texican walked into her outer office, Kelly watched his graceful entrance through the glass half-wall

partition with little interest. It took a moment for her to notice how he seemed to glide into the room, like he belonged wherever he was. He looked to be in his mid-thirties, a decade older than her. Some kind of jock from an oil-rich family, his dossier said. She heard him announce himself to her secretary as Josh Walker, the Ambassador for the Republic of Texas, here to see Miss Johansen. He hadn't said 'Mrs.', or 'Ms.', so he'd done his homework, or somebody had, at least, too. That was promising.

Her secretary made a dramatic show of bringing him in herself, but Kelly couldn't judge, as she herself found a pile of papers to be studying officiously when the cowboy was presented. He politely took off his hat and half bowed. She thought about how tall he was, then remembered that she was still sitting down, and hoped that her cheeks weren't red as she rose to politely shake his hand. His grip was almost stronger than was diplomatic. She nodded at her secretary in dismissal, before they both sat down again.

"So, Mr….Walker, is it? How long have you been in Deseret?" Kelly asked. She took the moment to study him, liking what she saw.
"Just flew in an hour ago, ma'am, and came here straight from the airport." he replied. Kelly noticed that he was studying her, too. She felt her cheeks flush, and thought of what to say next.
"Mmmm-hmmm, and did you have a nice flight from Dallas?" Wow, what an inane question, she thought to herself as the words came out of her mouth.
"Well, I'll be honest with you, ma'am, I used to think that TSA was bad, before Cinco Day, but they never had such cold hands as a Mormon does, that's for sure." The ambassador joked. Kelly giggled like a schoolgirl in spite of herself. This was ridiculous. He smiled at her laughter. She thought about saying 'some of us have colder hands than others', but stopped herself. She was in charge here. She was the professional. He was the foreigner, the stranger, in Deseret. He should be the one off-balance. But, he wasn't. What she finally came out with was "So, you haven't been

to your place yet, or the office?"
The cowboy grinned at her. "It's pretty cold outside, you'd better get your coat, ma'am."
He was amused to find that the Republic of Texas Embassy was in a former Thai restaurant on E. South Temple Street. As he explored his new domain and met with the three full-time secretaries and the ten Texas Ranger guards who provided security for the Embassy, she enjoyed watching the ambassador work people. He gave them all a moment, a smile, a pat on the shoulder, something special. 'He should be a politician instead of a diplomat', she thought. Of course, there wasn't much difference between the two kinds of animal. After he made the rounds and told them there'd be a staff meeting tomorrow morning at eight a.m., he excused himself to go to the restroom. When he came back, Josh turned the tables on her by inviting her into his office.
"I think I'll keep the bull head and the deer antlers, they give it a Texas feel. What do you think?" he asked Kelly with a grin, as they talked over his new oak desk.
"Um, very authentic," she answered diplomatically. She was getting the hang of this political stuff. "They cover the old vent hood nicely. This used to be the kitchen." Oops, so maybe she did have a bit of refinement left to learn.
Mr. Walker…Ambassador Walker…'Josh', as he kept insisting he call her, just laughed and looked up at the corners of the walls. He wrinkled his nose. "I like Chinese food, I'll be honest with you. Almost as much as a big juicy steak or some fried chicken. I can wreck a buffet. But I never cared too much for Thai food."
She pushed a lock of brown hair back from one eye, surprised by him once again. "Well, neither did the Department of Public Safety. The Deseret government buildings, as you see, are right across the street, diagonally, and the President's mansion is just a block down from that. So, the location is perfect for an embassy. If it makes you feel any better, the New Americans are in the old Wild Grape Bistro down the street, and the British are stuck in the Café on 1st street, a block over. But no, we couldn't have an, um, alien people right at the footsteps of the capital building."
"You mean because they weren't White?" he asked, straight-

faced. Kelly couldn't tell if he was joking or not. She'd hate to play him at poker. Especially Texas hold'em.
"Well, Mr. Ambassador, Deseret had, and has, as much a right as the Republic of Texas to involuntarily deport any who do not conform to our cultural, ethnic, or religious wellbeing…" she began, quoting from the diplomatic playbook she'd been up all night studying in preparation.
"Shhhh…shhhhhhhh.." he actually was 'shushing' her! She couldn't believe it! Of all the nerve. "I didn't mean a thing by it, Kelly, and I told you before, if you want me to stop calling you 'ma'am', you have to start calling me "Josh", okay?"
She relaxed somewhat, her claws retracting. "Okay. I just wanted to clarify that the LDS is not a racist church, and Deseret is not a racist society, we just pray for each people to have their own place in the world."
"Whenever an "anti-racist" opens their mouths, the next thing they say, is usually in support of a future where White people become a vanishing minority – which is genocide." Josh stated emphatically. "We have the same policies to deal with the Mexicans as ya'll do, ma'am…I mean, 'Kelly'".
'Well, that was a good start,' she thought in further embarrassment. Leave it to her to start an international incident over Thai food. "Alright, fair enough. So, the government provides Ambassadorial housing just a block from here, at the Anniversary Inn, for all unmarried Ambassadors who live…unaccompanied. Would, ummm, you fit that, ummm…"
"No, I'm not married, and don't have a girlfriend, Kelly. Although I'm told that this is the place to come if you're looking for a wife, or three." Josh took a chance with that joke, a lot of Deseret officials would be offended by the slap against polygamy. Even though it was the established law of the land, they still were a bit sensitive about it, when it came to outsiders making fun.
"Well, that depends on how many you need." She hit him back with. That should show him that he had gauged her depth of commitment to the LDS accurately. He smiled back.
"So, tell me more about this place I'll be staying," he deftly switched the subject, without apparent segue.

‘Well, it has thirteen suites, four of them occupied, by the New American, French, German, and British Ambassadors, and a fifth that was used by your predecessor. The suites are all themed.”
“What, you mean, like a honeymoon place? Cool!” he chuckled. “Do I get the jungle room?”
She felt herself turning redder, if that was possible. “Well, I believe that the Jungle Safari suite was requested by the Argentinian Ambassador, they’re due to arrive here next week, and you’ll meet them then. They were very specifically interested in the accommodations, so we had to go over that with them before they arrived, as a top priority. If it’s okay, you’ll be living in the ‘Mysteries of Egypt’ suite.”
Josh shook his head in amusement. “Wow. Okay. With Cairo gone, I should feel honored, I guess. So, let’s go check it out, shall we?” he swung those long legs off of the top of his desk where he’d propped them to lean back in his leather chair.
Kelly scrambled to get up, but he still beat her out his office door, waving and saying goodnight to his staff as he led her to her own car, parked outside. She tried to keep her eyes on his shoulders as he strolled in front of her, but that didn’t help much, either.

Crying won’t help you, nah, crying won’t do you no good. Cause when the levee breaks, momma, we’ve got to move…

Eight counties in a cluster along the panhandle of Florida were 77% White or higher on Cinco Day. Stephen had settled in the middle of them, in Fort Walton Beach, after his wife died. They had found no insulin for her there, and complications from her diabetes led to further declining health after they had fled from Mobile. In a couple of months, she suffered a stroke, and mercifully, did not linger long. Stephen was inconsolable. He and his dog lived alone near Elgin Air Force Base. After a brief standoff and two casualties, the White personnel had maintained control over the base. Eventually, Tallahassee fell to black mobs, and the Air Force commandant held a staff meeting to debate what course to take. There was no chain of command above him, so Colonel Richard Strawn left it up to a vote. Should they attack

the New African rebels in Mobile, or adopt a wait and see attitude? The officers were hesitant to take sides, and to attack civilians, without clear orders. Major Puarez, in charge at Tyndall Air Force Base outside Panama City, was Col. Strawn's nearest Air Force neighbor and most natural ally in keeping order along the coast. When the New Mexico and Arizona state legislatures voted for secession and the shooting began on bases around the country, Puarez and two other Hispanic pilots from Tyndall had defected with three of their F-22s. Nobody knew whether they had flown to the Cubans occupying Miami or to the Mexican Army in Texas. Either way, the Captain next in line for command of Tyndall, Johnson, had been placed under arrest by the junior Captain, Lynch, for being a homosexual. Col. Strawn threw his support to Lynch as the new base commander, and so gained his subordination. The Captain in charge of the Naval Air Station in Pensacola volunteered two platoons of flightless Marines to help in the peacekeeping mission in the cities, if they became necessary. That was his way of saying that he would play ball, Strawn knew.

Food shortages and unrest in Panama City and Pensacola were closer problems, and easier to handle, without requiring fire missions. In those larger towns, the looting turned into race riots. Col. Strawn took over civil authority in the area by declaring martial law and talking the County Sheriff's departments into signing onto his plan to maintain order. In a combined effort, they deported the blacks, up to I-10 and eastwards, before real genocide began. Most of them came back in a few weeks, after they found no handouts in Tallahassee. When they did, they were met at every crossing of the Apalachicola by wellarmed roadblocks and barricades. That secured the eastern border of the White pocket. There was limited farming in the area, but plenty of fish in the sea, so they didn't starve, after all. The region was calm again by the time Stephen and his wife made the short voyage over.

Four and a half months later, a disorganized body of New African Army troops headed east from Mobile to loot the wealthy coastal communities there. Refugees fleeing the raping and murdering youths warned neighboring communities. One town decided to take a stand, and stop them in their tracks.

The town of Loxley, Alabama, sat near I-10 between Mobile and Pensacola. It was 90% White, and proud of that fact. The local town militia, called the ‘Loxley Rebels’, flew the Confederate flag from their pickup trucks, and all two hundred and thirty of them wore it as a patch on their camouflage uniforms, financed by a local businessman who ran a military surplus store. They were very enthusiastic about getting a chance to fight. Although the New African horde was on foot, they planned to intercept them at the interstate and turn them back before they could spread off of the road and into their town to rape and pillage. Their hunting rifles and shotguns were loaded. Over the radio, they chided the Air Force for not attacking the invaders with them. If they were whistling Dixie, they should have made it the short version. Meeting the enemy on open ground, the line of pickups and SUVs was swallowed up in a modern version of the heroic and suicidal ‘Charge Of The Lights Brigade’. Few of them made it across all four lanes of the interstate the New Africans marched down before being swamped and shot and hacked to pieces. The ones who did, kept going until they reached Stapleton.

Flyovers by the 33rd fighter wing from Elgin and the Blue Angels from the Naval Air Station in Pensacola both estimated the mob to number over 13,000, mainly men and teenaged boys. The Escambia County Sheriff’s department called up the militia they and the Air Force had been training since Cinco Day. Three days later, the battle for Pensacola took place on an island between two sections of the twin I-10 bridges over the Perdido River. Col. Strawn personally oversaw the ambush site preparations, setting up the militia barricades on the set of bridges on the east side of the island, to provide overlapping fields of fire from both the northern and southern bridges onto the island. The bridges were

only about two-hundred feet long on each side of the bridge, but they provided a natural chokepoint. The Highway 90 bridge further south had been purposefully wrecked by the militia three weeks earlier, to control immigration into Pensacola.

Eight hundred and fifty combined militia, Air Force soldiers, and deputies, more or less, stared down the oncoming horde, the vanguard of which poured onto the first southern bridge just as two new F-35 Lightning II fighters took off from Elgin. As soon as the pair of super-modern aircraft were airborne, they fired their AGM-158 Joint Air to Surface Standoff Missiles at the programmed target coordinates sixty miles away. Over two hundred black militants had made it nearly across the southern bridge onto the island before the first 1,000 pound penetrator warhead hit in the middle of the northern bridge, just at the Alabama/Florida line marker. Before they could recover from the shock, the second missile hit the bridge they were on behind them, sending the southern bridge pylons crashing over into the collapsed debris of the northern bridge. Hundreds of looters were killed or badly injured by the two missiles. Those who escaped the blasts retreated to the west side of the southern bridge, while those survivors ahead of the destroyed crossing had no choice but to move forward onto the island, off of the collapsed roadway. Because of the massive number of enemies involved, Strawn had kept half of the force in reserve, augmented by fifty Air Force Special Operations Commandoes of his own, from Hurlburt Field at Elgin, and a platoon of Marines from NAS Pensacola. With a hundred men on each of the northern and southern bridges, and two hundred more in the median in between and on the shoulders, the militia and deputies opened fire on the island.

Trapped on the island, the cut-off vanguard of the New African Army was massacred in minutes. A few survivors tried to jump into the water to swim back, but most were shot dead as they swam. Stephen stood with his feet braced against the concrete curb and leaned over the guardrail, shooting swimmers in the back methodically. His life had lost its' purpose when his wife had

died, and there hadn't been anything that he do could about it, until now. Some of the group of blacks hiding behind low scrub brush on the island threw out their guns and raised their hands. "Hands Up! Don't Shoot!" they cried, in the tribal chant so popular throughout New Africa. Stephen pressed the button to eject his spent magazine, reached down to grab a fresh one, and brought it up to slam it into the bottom of his AR-15. The black soldiers attempting to surrender began to fall as the men around him fired. Stephen slapped the bolt release, chambering a round, and joined in. He was glad he had found out about the invasion in time to get in on this. It was a small bit of retribution. Just a taste. It left him hungry for more.

The thousands of blacks stranded on the other side of the island recovered from the missile blasts and could see that, despite their losses, they still had the militia outnumbered almost ten to one. A large group began to move off the road and parallel to the river, in a flanking maneuver. Others ran north, to try the same thing from the other side. Their plan was obviously to catch the White defenders in a pincer and crush them in between two forces, each of which outnumbered them. From his vantage point standing on the hood of an Air Force troop carrier truck parked in the median emergency turnaround three hundred yards behind the firing line, Col. Strawn observed the carnage. Through his field glasses, he saw the horde of blacks moving off of the road and into the thickly wooded area that came down into a point to the south, near the river. Far fewer were going to the north, where the river was wider and deeper. The defenders on the bridge could see and handle them. Those in the woods, they could not. The two F-35s arrived on site, each dropping two more vertically delivered 1,000 pound bombs into the main body of blacks well back of the bridges. The four huge explosions looked to Strawn like the fist of God smashing down on the enemy, incinerating and pulverizing hundreds more with each circle of death left behind. The militia near the island ducked instinctively, but cheered the planes. He led in the AFSOC and the reserve force, personally.

By the time the 450 strong reserve reached the river on one side of the island, the New African militants were crossing a narrow strip of sand and wading across it, on the other. With Col. Strawn and the Commandos taking point, the two groups met in the heavy forest just out of sight of the interstate. The firing around the bridges resumed as the northern group of invaders made it to the water and hesitantly began to cross. Stephen was glad to have more targets for his repressed rage and sorrow. Even his dog had died and left him all alone in this rotten world. The front ranks of those wading in fell, and the rest turned back, giving up for the moment. Those jets and their bombs had taken a lot of the fight out of them. He really needed to pee and his ears were ringing too loud to be sure, but Stephen thought that he heard a lot of shooting going on way over to the south, past the island. He wondered what was going on, there. Everyone was looking in that direction, now, but all that could be seen was the trees.

Strawn and his men fought tree to tree and hand to hand in the forest, against the New African invaders. It was hard, in the smoke –filled woods, to tell friend from foe. The satisfying sound of the F35's GAU-22/A four barreled 25 mm cannons tearing up the enemy as the jets made another pass came to him as if in a dream. A man in dreadlocks and along fur coat came out of the smoke in front of him. He began to raise an axe, but Sergeant Cooper on the Colonel's right took him out with a burst of 5.56. Two more came, and Strawn fired, not sure if he hit them before they melted back into the smoke. It was getting harder to breathe, much less see, in the woods. The smoke from the bombs was drifting in more and more.

Right behind the F-35s, a flight of four F-15s that had been used primarily for training purposes before Cinco Day came in to do their part. Stephen sure was glad that the Air Force had kept ordinance around for demonstration purposes and as a part of the joint readiness command, as he watched their cluster munitions crumple the flanks of the attacking army. A general retreat began on the other side of the island, but the smoke was so thick that he

couldn’t see any details of what was going on. The bombs fell again, and again. Another flight of sleek jets, these looking different, zipped past at low level to unleash what looked like napalm on the other side of the river. They must be the Raptors from Tyndall, Stephen thought. Death rained from above, and he sure was glad to be a White man, that day. The only bad thing was that there were no enemies left in sight.

The ear-splitting roar of heavy munitions being dropped caused nearly everyone in the forest to throw themselves to the ground. One of the explosions came so close that it shook the earth, and shredded branches fell from the tops of trees, overhead. There were so many men packed into such a small area that there was almost no room to crawl without bumping into someone. Tears streamed down the Colonel’s face from the smoke, and he coughed uncontrollably as he crawled towards light. There was a clearing ahead. He stood up shakily, slapped Cooper on the helmet, and began to run forward. He could barely see five feet in front of him. As he loped around another tree towards the light, the earth suddenly gave way under his feet. For a heart-stopping moment, Strawn thought that another bomb had gone off, right underneath him, until his boots hit the water and he fell forward with a splash. Other men landed around him, so he didn’t feel like the only idiot. He got up as quickly as he could, so that nobody would kill their Colonel by landing on top of him. They had made it through.

The woods on the other side of the narrow river were on fire, and there were no New Africans to be seen. Strawn’s men stopped to catch their breath in the cleaner air of the river channel. He looked up to see the hundreds of defenders on the bridge staring down at them in disbelief. For no reason, he began to laugh. Slowly at first, a couple of his men began to laugh, as well. Then others joined in, almost hysterically. It was good to be alive.

By the time the bodies were all collected, it was determined that 2,873 New Africans had been killed or injured in the battle. Either

way amounted to the same thing, since the militia didn't take any prisoners. F-22 Raptors, along with F-15s and F-16s, all from Tyndall Air Base, pursued the routed black militants all the way back to Mobile, dropping ordinance and munitions on the rear of their column to keep them going and reducing their numbers by another eight to nine hundred, before they reached the city. Of the four hundred bridge defenders, only eight were killed, three of those due to friendly fire accidents and one due to a self-fired ricochet, and a handful wounded. Strawn's reserve force had lost thirteen Air Force SOC personnel, one Marine, three deputies, and twenty-four militia in the fight for the flank in the woods. His authority over the White enclave from Pensacola to Panama City was never questioned again, and the New Africans stayed away for three years, after the Battle of the Two Bridges.

The Coast Guard's three response boats stationed at Panama City, and the Naval Support Activity Center nearby, helped cobble together a navy of sorts out of commercial and private watercraft and shipping, to defend the region from any seaborne attack. Elgin, Hulburt, NAS Pensacola, and Tyndall rationed their fuel and maintained a deterrent from the air. For thirty-eight months they consolidated their strength, while New Africa starved on three sides around them. By the time Strawn made contact with Gen. Harrison and learned about the Unified Command, he was calling himself 'General', too, and held the 160 mile long stretch of coastline and sixty miles inland, with over a million souls, as an absolute ruler. The Republic of the Emerald Coast began negotiating with St. Louis to become a Territory of the Republic of New America around Thanksgiving in year four following Cinco Day. The first diplomatic overture was made right after the Second Battle of Loxley. The R.E.C. forces defeated the New Africans there and drove the pitiful remnants back across Mobile Bay, before blowing the bridges. Then, they erected a monument to the Rebels who had fallen heroically in the First Battle of Loxley, their own version of the Alamo.

Two weeks later, another front opened when the once-again advancing Cuban Army pushed the surviving blacks ahead of them, up and over and against the borders of the R.E.C. in a domino effect. While Kelly was showing Josh that White girls can cook Chinese food and Carolyn was telling John that she thought their baby was going to be a boy because it was kicking so hard, Stephen lay dying in a field hospital that had been a Pilot Travel Center parking lot, next to a vital I-10/90 crossroads west of Tallahassee that General Strawn had ordered his militia not to give up, at any cost. They hadn't. The sky was a dull gray and the asphalt was cold and wet beneath him, as the Chaplain stopped beside him to pray. "It's all right, preacher, I'm going to see my wife," Stephen said. A doctor walked over from the patient next to Stephen that he was tending and lifted up the red-stained blanket covering his stomach. He looked at the Chaplain, nodded, and walked on. So did the Chaplain. Stephen lay there wondering how long this would take as the shock wore off and the pain came back, worse than before. He gritted his teeth and gave into it, crying and begging to go. He called out for his wife until the blood loss helped him pass out, sometime after dark. She'd waited for him, though, and it was all worth it.

Shed a tear cause I'm missin' you, but I'm still alright to smile Girl I think about you every day now…

Sitting near their fire for warmth, the seven skinheads and three skinbyrds were almost shoulder to shoulder. Ghostgirl had to lean forward a bit to have room for her six string acoustic guitar, which she strummed while she sang. What she lacked in polish, she made up for with sincerity. All of them had heard the words before, since the song had been written long ago for another man.

"You're gone with the breeze, just like the leaves on the trees, gone are the times with your family, with your family…"
This time, it was being sung for their comrade Squidbert. This was his memorial. There was no body to bury or ashes to scatter,

because he'd been captured by the Chinese during a raid on one of the slanteyed invaders' food warehouses in Davis. They were supposed to have already been gone, but a few had stayed behind to load up the last of the supplies as they redeployed. That rear guard had shot and captured Squiddie. The rest of them had to run, and that burned them.

Squidbert was just the most recent in a string of fallen comrades they'd held memorials for over the last few years since the invasion of the Mexicans had driven so much of California's White population north. The top half of the state had seen a wave of refugees flood in, and then another following a couple of months later when the Chinese had taken the Bay Area and expanded outwards. A lot of people had gone hungry the first couple of years, and it had been a tough time. Many had moved on to Oregon, or died from starvation or lead poisoning. The Sacramento Skins had gone underground during the period of occupation by the 'People's Humanitarian Expeditionary Force', fighting a furtive guerrilla campaign when possible but stealing food and supplies as necessary, more than anything. The skinheads' base of operations was their campsite in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. They'd started out with over thirty in the woodpile. Half had dropped out, and half of the rest were now dead. Despite their hard living and partying, none of them had been from natural causes. After nearly half a decade living this life, they barely remembered anything else.

These days, there were all kinds of new activity in the area. Organized militia wearing the starless flag of New America operated all over Northern California, sometimes right out in the open. Just last week they had bartered a case of 7.62x39 mm ammunition they had no use for to a group of uniformed New American irregulars for a 24 can flat of chicken and dumplings and a bag of apples from Washington. It had been a nervous exchange at the California Highway Patrol Academy the militia had taken over, but the deal had been straight. There would be more trades of larger amounts of material for greater amounts of food, in the future. So, they were no longer fighting alone. With victory in sight, every loss hurt more. They had no idea what kind

of new world would arise from the ashes of the old one, but they hoped to be around to see it, after all they had been through.
When the song was over, Stomper stood up and gave the Roman salute to Squiddie, saying “Hail Squidbert!”. The rest of the group repeated his salute and exclamation. As the Alpha of the wolfpack, he had already given a speech about the fallen man’s bravery, and told a joke about how they’d met back in high school, before Cinco Day. Now it was time to bundle up in their sleeping bags and sleep through the coldest part of the night. Stomper and Valkie, his pregnant girlfriend, wrapped up together, spooning. The other two couples moved off a bit for privacy, and the other four single guys rolled dice to determine which of them would take the first watch.
There were four children with the group, ranging in age from six months to four years old. They were all the offspring of members of the skinhead crew, and had been born after the collapse. As Stomper lay thinking about Squiddie and wondering if maybe it was time to rejoin society and fight alongside the New American forces to finish off the Chinese, or maybe go south and take out some Mexicans below the Mormon Strip, the oldest girl began softly singing. Her song made no sense, but she must have been inspired by Ghostgirl’s song. Her words were lilting and weird: “Pal-meeto, Pal-metto, in the meadow, Palmetto,” over and over. It was almost a lullaby. They drifted off to sleep peacefully.
Deep in the cold night, a single shotgun blast roared out, waking the camp. The crew awoke to the sound of Valkie screaming. As more wood was thrown on the fire, the lighting increased. Stomper was found fatally shot, and Valkie had been wounded. There were no more shots, and no attacking enemy could be found. There were three shotguns in the camp, one of which was now missing. The remaining men suspected first the guard who’d been on duty, then another man, but nothing could ever be proven. They each had their own theories, and all vowed publicly to find out who was responsible and take vengeance. Without Stomper’s leadership, however, the group’s morale plummeted. Within a week the distrust led to a split within the crew. Two of the younger guys pledged to go berserker in Stomper’s name, and

headed off to fight the Chinese. Valkie, Ghostgirl and her boyfriend Trevor, the other couple Karen and Pokey, and the two other single guys returned to West Sacramento and volunteered to join the Bear State Militia. They took the four children with them. During their probationary period, they were treated to a traditional Thanksgiving dinner shared with a company of the militia and a group of several New American Marine advisors who were helping train the irregulars. They all missed their old crew, and Valkie never was able to look any of them in the eye without wondering who knew what had happened to Stomper. Life did go on, though, and a new life came with her son. Valkie named him after his dad, and taught him well.

Another turning point, a fork stuck in the road Time grabs you by the wrist, directs you where to go…

Day after day, night after night onboard the loud, smelly, cold ship, and she wasn't even outside of John's reach yet! Hope would feel safer once she got officially out of New America, which claimed western New York…or western New York claimed it. The northern part of the state, and Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, depended on the French Expeditionary Force for law and order, and were really more a part of Quebec than anything else. Once she had almost given up and wanted to get off, but the ship didn't stop for one person, no matter who she was, or who her dad might be. They'd gone up through Lake Michigan, then down again through Lake Huron, taken the St. Clair River to Lake St. Clair, and had a brief stop in Detroit for a day, where she'd gotten off the ship and taken a walk downtown to see the blasted stumps where the skyscrapers had been in this, the most war-devastated city in New America. When she made her way back to the British container ship, however, Hope found that there was a reason why people were moving back into Mo-Town. As a gesture of New American pride, a score of the new GMC Recoup utility trucks and Ford Progress multi-fuel hybrid sedans were being loaded onto the deck to re-introduce the brands to the European market.

She tried not to talk to the crew much, since they were all men and represented several different European countries. Some of them might want to hold her for ransom, or worse, if they figured out who she was. Before she'd come on board Hope had cut her hair off even with the bottom of her ears and started wearing shapeless men's clothing, to lower the chance for drama. Her tiny cabin was boring, so she slept a lot, and drew. Her Advanced Anatomy Sketching Lab professor would be surprised at what her imagination came up with. She took her meals alone whenever possible, used a bucket for a chamberpot, and came out of her cabin to shower and walk around the deck only after dark.

From the Detroit River into Lake Erie, they travelled on. The next day they stopped in Cleveland to load several hundred tons of raw steel going out. That was the last place where Hope could expect to see the New American starless flag. At their next stop in Buffalo and from there on out to the Atlantic, it would all be the white cross on the blue field with the four flowers of Quebec. Lake Ontario's shoreline was still badly eroded and misshapen by the Toronto tsunami. She was kind of disappointed that she didn't get a chance to see the Niagara Falls because of the stupid canal detour, but Montreal more than made up for it. When they stopped there for final provisioning before heading out to sea, Hope couldn't resist seeing the biggest city she'd ever been to, and the first foreign one, up close. Just sitting at the café and practicing the French Gerta had taught her during their tutoring made her momentarily homesick, but Nigel needed her. She was back on board before they pulled up the gangway stairs. There was no turning back, now.

From the moment she got on board until they hit the open Atlantic had taken eight days. By that time, John had postponed his meeting with the Argentinian President and flown to Chicago to carry out a search of the city. Nigel was found hiding out in the theatre in Millennium Park. He swore, even after hours of questioning, that he had not seen Hope, and had even tried to blow her off by telling her that he'd gone back home to England.

As soon as the Speaker heard that, he got a sinking feeling and radioed the Port Authority for a list of all the ships bound for Britain which had left in the last week and a half. There were four. John began to give orders, and from the military end, Gen. Harrison made the Unified Command assets available, while Secretary of State Smith contacted the Quebecois and their French allies.

One surprised container ship Captain was stopped by a flotilla of fishing boats off Cheboygan. Another was stopped by a Republic of Quebec Coast Guard Cutter as it entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The other two had already entered the North Atlantic. All of New America's major naval assets were in the Pacific. Carolyn was distraught, but they had to resign themselves to the fact that Hope would come home if and when she wanted to. The three dozen armed and plain-clothes Secret Service personnel who had been attempting to look after her in Chicago were redeployed to St. Louis to serve as Capital Police at the Old Courthouse. None of them were fired or disciplined for Hope's escape. It had been her choice.

The Old Courthouse Christmas Dinner was a tad less festive than it would have been for Gen. McNabb, without Hope being there. That morning, Carolyn waddled from their bedroom to the bathroom and back, then rang Kip to tell him that the Speaker was already up and in the shower. When John was dressed he kissed his wife goodbye, first on the lips and then on the pregnant belly, before telling her that he would send a car around to pick her up for the dinner at four that evening. His security detail for the day met him in stages, one at the elevator, one at the front door, two outside, and two more at the new Chevy Transcend SUV he'd traded the Mercedes for to be patriotic. It sometimes still amazed the Speaker that it took a football team and an International MaxxPro MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicle escort to take him twelve blocks to work in the morning. Two more S.S. guards, as Hope had called them, waited in the cab of the MRAP, which would also carry four of the other guards,

leaving him with one guard and a driver. There was another platoon waiting at the capital.

Kip was there waiting for him when he got to his offices, too. The Chief of Staff had hardly left since Hope had flown the coop. John thought he looked like he hadn't slept much, either, but he didn't say so, instead he just ordered them some coffee and vaped a menthol while they started the morning briefing. He'd switched to vapor cigarettes recently due to Carolyn catching pregnancy. Kip gave him the outline: Ferguson's New American Foreign Legions had defeated a numerically superior I.S. regular army group in Kars, but it had cost them half of their remaining armor and over two hundred killed and wounded. The Fifth fleet under Davidson with the Eisenhower had bluffed their way through the Suez and were cooling their jets in the southern Med waiting for the right time, and the Sixth around the Ford had basic utilities and infrastructure back together on Oahu. The Third fleet was wintering in Anchorage, and the Seventh fleet, God love'em, had the Lincoln at anchor in Seattle but had a presence in Portland and Coos Bay, too, where they were training and organizing guerrillas and militia against the Chinese in California.

An hour of signing declarations and proclamations and it was time for the 'drawer' meeting. That's what he and Kip called it when they didn't need the whole cabinet. Present were Secretary of State Smith, Attorney General Roberts, and Commander in Chief Gen. Harrison. Kip recapped the morning briefing with them, then John told Jason that he'd like the Attorney General to notify the nine surviving Federal judges they'd hand-picked about their nomination to sit on a re-constituted Supreme Court, and ask them to present themselves for confirmation hearings in the unicameral Congress on January 1st. He then asked for a progress report on the establishment of a Federal law enforcement and intelligence division. The Speaker would like for it to be built on his Secret Service, along with a Unified Command network of intelligence assets from that Petty Officer Tommy Bullens with the Seventh, his counterparts from the Third, Fifth,

and Sixth, and Captain Rogers with the Legions, to their covert operatives in Deseret and the Republic of Texas.

Next, John asked Mark for an update on their international relations. The Secretary of State told them of the Australian's request for more military assistance in light of increased belligerence by the Indonesians, the Orange Free State request for tactical nuclear weapons to use if necessary against Cape Town or Harare, and the Iranian encirclement of Batman. Jason joked that he thought that was the job of the bat-belt, and they all laughed, before Mark reminded them that their German allies expected western Turkey to get hard enough to keep any refugees shaken loose by the fighting in the east from crossing over into Greece or Bulgaria. And, they expected New America to do the hitting.

On their own continen t, Bellefont's Texican forces had attacked Republica del Norte towns in New Mexico again, taking some pressure off of the New American front around Denver, but the Church of the New Dispensation Faithfuls were reported to be plundering as far northeast as Baton Rouge, with little organized resistance by the New African tribes. And, the skirmishes between Mormon Gull units and Chinese troops in Santa Barbara got hotter with every day.

The President of Argentina had been asking for help treating their people sickened by the radioactive fallout after they'd used their fourth of six tactical nukes on the city of Santiago de Chile two weeks ago, but they seemed to have the medical situation in Mendoza under control now, and had just reached the Pacific at Valparaiso. McNabb asked Smith if the shipments of food were still on schedule every week to Oahu, and Mark confirmed that they were. That was the main thing the Speaker cared about.

In issues that didn't directly affect them, Chairman Jiang, in contr ol of the area of China north of the ruins of Beijing, had begun occupying the Korean peninsula, with the tacit approval of Russia,

and the Republic of Sri Lanka was now raiding inland as far north as Madurai, in southern India.

The biggest diplomatic issue on their plate was whether or not to validate the referendums in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine to join the Republic of Quebec, as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had. The Speaker was of the opinion that if they wanted to speak French, let them, and the Secretary of State agreed.

That evening at the Christmas dinner, the Speaker announced that British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington had been officially accepted as full states in the Republic of New America. He further added that within a matter of months, Oahu and Emerald Coast, despite both being geographically separated from New America at present, would become the 28th and 29th states, respectively. Before asking them to bow their heads to join him in giving thanks for their redemption and resurgence as a people and as a nation, John joked that it was a good thing they'd left the stars off, after all. The way things were going, that decision had ended up saving their seamstresses a lot of stitches. Dolly Madison surely looked down on him from heaven and smiled.

Chapter Six

"As long as he is moderately comfortable, the average man will not change his ways. Only when existence becomes utterly intolerable and there is no alternative can he be persuaded to do what he should have done from foresight and through self-discipline at the beginning. That is his unalterable nature, and it is why democracy is such a catastrophe." -Dr. William Pierce

Into this house we're born Into this world we're thrown Like a dog without a bone An actor out on loan
Riders on the storm…

Being in downtown Austin, the former Governor's mansion made an appropriate Presidential home for the leader of the Republic of Texas. Perry liked to give speeches from the second floor balcony, and make the media stand at the foot of the steps and look up at him. It was amusing. His kids being both moved out and attending A &M had made his wife feel safer about moving from Fort Hood to the capital with him full-time, so that made it more homey, too.

Today the reporter from the Dallas Morning News was being particularly jerky. Bellefont had never liked him. According to rumor he'd had a Mexican girlfriend who'd been among the million deported from the state when the former Vice President had declared it a Republic and cleaned them out. Perry believed that he should have went with her. "So, Mr. President, you're saying that there is no room for Fundamentalist Christianity in the Republic?" he yelled to be heard.

"Nonsense, Jerry, I said nothing of the sort. You weren't listening. Of course we all cherish religious liberty, it's enshrined in the Constitution. I know because I put it there, myself. Remember? What I said was, those who use their religion to undermine our security will be treated like our enemies, whether they are

carrying guns for the Church of the New Dispensation or just preaching their destructive doctrine on street corners. We don't allow Muslims here, either, Jerry, and for a good reason, if you remember."

The reporter was relentless. "Yes, Mr. President. Then, Rev. Huckleberry's missionaries arrested in The Woodlands will not be released, as he has publicly demanded?"

"Nobody makes demands of The Republic of Texas, Jerry. Especially not drug - running narcoterrorist charlatans. They'll be put on trial for sedition and treason, and judged by a jury of their peers, before facing a firing squad, you have my word on that. Nobody can say we don't believe in justice, in Texas. But these people teach the same muddled idiocy that brought down the U.S.. It won't bring down Texas. Not on my watch. We learned the hard way how to handle terrorists. Every non-White in the Republic has to become extinct. We need to remove these minor-league amateur races out of the game, and refine the playoff brackets a bit, if you get my meaning, Jerry. The whole state is ours, and the only part of Texas that non-Whites, no matter how meek, should inherit is however much it requires to cover them. That goes for anybody in bed with the cartels, and selling drugs, double. Next question!"

Bellefont pointed at a blonde shielding her eyes with her hand to look up at him who'd been patiently waving the other arm for his attention. "Yes, Ms. Prichard?"
"Mr. President, what time are you going to place the star on the Executive Mansion Christmas tree?" she asked, knowing he'd look favorably on the softball question and be more likely to give her an interview, sometime soon. The star reporter for the BBC North America in Texas was one of his favorites.
"Well ma'am, that IS a good question. I know that I've had all of ya'll standing out in the cold for too long already, this morning, but since you're here, if you want to come on inside and get warmed up, my staff have some refreshments ready downstairs for you.

You can set up and I'll be down in a minute to plunk the star of Bethlehem right on top of the big pine where she belongs. But first, I'd like to offer our prayers and best wishes to the brave men of our armed forces fighting in San Antonio today."
Perry closed his eyes and bowed his head, and most of the reporters did the same. The Republic of Texas Rangers on guard took careful note of which ones did not. "We know they'd rather be home with their families for Christmas, and we'd all rather them be home soon, and before long they will be. But we all know how important their bravery and sacrifices are for the future of Texas. Maybe next year I can light up a tree at the Alamo! Let's also remember our boys doing their part on the Brantley Lake front in New Mexico, and all just thank the good Lord for His bounty, His blessings on Texas, and His protective hand over His people. All these things we ask in Jesus' name, Amen." The President raised his head and smiled at them below. " Now, ya'll come on in here before you freeze to death!"

Now you always say
That you want to be free
But you'll come running back (said you would baby)…

The three largest Amish communities in the former U.S. were in Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. It came as no surprise to anyone that the ethnic Dutch and German farmers fared much better than their more technologically-dependent neighbors. In fact, their biggest problems as the economy tanked and then the cities imploded was that the 'English' all thought that they would head into Amish country and be safe. In Homes County, Ohio, the 35,000 Amish residents were nearly overwhelmed by three times their number from Cleveland and Columbus. True to their religious tenets, they did not defend themselves or even their property, and so many of their pastures and barns were occupied by squatters. In order to feed their families, however, the men who had taken over private properties ended up having to negotiate with the local Bishops of the community to work for

food. Working for and with the Amish, they became loyal to and defensive of the Amish communities.

By the end of the fall harvest of the first year after Cinco Day, several dozen of them had independently organized themselves into non-Amish militia defenders of the Amish community in Holmes and the surrounding counties. By doing what the Amish themselves could not, they made it possible for their hosts to do what they did best. Following the Ohio example, the Amish regions near Elkhart, Indiana, and in western Pennsylvania adopted similar ‘guest guard’ measures, reluctantly approved by the elders of their Bishoprics. It worked so well that while some urban areas of the country lost eighty to ninety percent of their population, the Amish communities not only gained twenty to thirty percent in population; their crafts, skills, and knowledge translated into unprecedented local wealth and political autonomy on statewide levels.

The Amish did not get involved in secular political struggles, but most of them recognized that their best interests as a community and as a faith lay in quietly supporting the New American attempt to pacify and reunite the Midwestern states. When New American militia pursued, prosecuted, and executed looters and thieves, that benefited everyone. Most importantly, even though the Republic of New America was dominated by believers in the Christian Identity denomination, the Amish were left to practice their faith in peace. In the end, that was all that they asked for. What they gave in return was a stable local economy and surplus food to feed thousands.

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, absorbed most of the final White flight out of Philadelphia, and kept separate from the United Nations occupational force that was temporarily able to restore some semblance of order there. When the Chinese missile brought death to south Philly, Lancaster County was over sixty miles away, and a fortunate wind spared them from the fallout plume. The German Major in command of the Heer contingent

evacuating the city, Strosser, had rolled his tanks and APCS right through Lancaster County without stopping. He had led his men to Harrisburg. In the former state capital, they attempted to reestablish contact with surviving blue helmeted forces on the Eastern seaboard. All of them which had survived the bombings of Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and Providence were in disarray and seeking evacuation. None could offer any orders or aid to Strosser. With his men near mutiny due to fears of another flight of missiles against the East Coast, they were unwilling to return East, and unwilling to remain in the city. In order to keep them together as their best bet for survival, the Major led them West, then turned South to avoid the suburban areas around Pittsburgh. That was how they had come to find a small town walled in steel named Prosperity, and helped to hold it against a wave of invaders.

Six months later, the surviving members of the Pennsylvania state legislature began meeting in Pittsburgh, as the city had eventually been secured by its White residents, with the aid of Major Strosser of the German Heer, and his reduced company of mobile armor formerly under United Nations command. Pittsburgh's position on the defensible peninsula and its industrial infrastructure made it the de facto state capital, as the Eastern side of the state was still an area of ethnic and racial conflict spilled over from the ruined cities of megalopolis. The state legislature selected a representative to attend the conference in St. Louis on their behalf. With the help of U.S. Army Reservists from the three bases in the southwestern quarter of the state, a militia was raised that began to push the nonWhites back. Eventually, Western Pennsylvania was admitted to the Republic of New America as a state, with its Eastern border being the Susquehanna River. As a politically nonaligned area, Lancaster County remained an outpost of peace and stability on the East bank of the river, just outside the borders of New America.

Head like a hole, black as your soul I'd rather die, than give you control Bow down before the one you serve, You're going to get

what you deserve…

It was an old adage that an army runs on its stomach, and a government runs on its taxes. The Republics of New America and Texas had been running on borrowed time for four years. Both had been using up amassed stores and ‘salvaging’ food, weapons, ammunition, and other necessities in little more than organized looting. These were nonrenewable resources, of course, and such a policy was not sustainable in the long term. Both nations were successful in resuming petroleum production and refinement for their domestic fuel needs, as a priority. Texas, indeed, had oil to sale in surplus, if they could regain control over their coastal shipping facilities. New America’s surplus was in agricultural products exclusively at first, but they did benefit from indirect access to Atlantic shipping. Wheat from Kansas and corn from Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana began to flow outward, in exchange for manufactured goods and pharmaceuticals returning. Over time the flow in both directions diversified. A secondary effect of their international trade with England, Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, France, and Germany was the tariffs they profited from through this exchange. Although not high enough to discourage their partners, the income from the tariffs became more than sufficient to fund all of the needs of the new national government. While National Socialist in many of its policies, the single body parliamentary form of leadership emerging in St. Louis as the Provisional Government operated on a tiny fraction of the budget required by its predecessor government in D.C.. Because of that, the only taxes in New America were local and state. Deseret, being a theocracy, enacted a much different approach to fundraising.

Josh frowned at the bill, trying to figure out how much to leave as the tip. “I grew up giving in church, but I can’t figure out whether the tithe here is a tax from the restaurant or the government total, the way they have it here. Is it both?” he asked Kelly.

She leaned over and looked at the b ill. “No, see, it’s a flat ten percent in Deseret Dollars over everything you buy in Deseret, to the church and the government. So, the tip is just a percentage of ninety percent of the bill.”

“If you say so. I reckon the waitress deserves a good one, and my steak was good, even by Texas standards. How was your salad?” he asked.
“Surprisingly fresh, really good. I guess they grew it on our farms down in Arizona. You still haven’t gotten used to being with somebody who’s practically a vegetarian, when I have the choice, have you?” she teased him.
“I AM from Texas, ma’am.” Josh returned, grinning. “We may not play the classical violin and recite Shakespeare all day long, but we know our steak, and love it.” They had been seeing each other regularly enough that their give and take was natural and easy.
Kelly had joined Josh at the Texas Embassy Christmas party where the few citizens of the Republic of Texas living in Salt Lake City gathered, mainly merchants and traders, along with the Embassy staff. She’d had to leave her own office Christmas party early, to make it to both without being obvious. It was hard to have a secret relationship in Deseret. With them being unmarried, the only way Kelly and Josh could be out together in public was if it was a part of her official duties. Weeks after the Ambassador had arrived, she was still ‘showing him around town’. Sometimes, she liked her job, a lot. But if it was known that she, a single woman, was dating unchaperoned, much less having extramarital relations, she would lose that job. And, Josh would be sent back to Texas in disgrace.
She had come to trust him so much. She had opened up to him about her ill-fated mission to Nebraska, and her arrest and incarceration in St. Louis, as well as her recent trip to Oregon. He had listened to her cry about Karen, her lost sister. Then about Emma, her dead best friend. Kelly had even told Josh about her secret inner thoughts and dreams. For example, she’d told him that she thought that déjà vu was the feeling caused by someone from some unknown time in the future, when time travel was

common, coming back and changing their past, and her present, to undo a mistake or change history. That meant that déjà vu was similar to a ghost vision bleed-through on a videocassette that had been recorded over. And, he hadn't laughed. Kelly didn't know how she was going to disengage from Josh. She didn't want to.

At the office, the Department of Internal Communications had been buried with encrypted messages back and forth insuring the reinforcement and resupply of Deseret Gull and Beehive units fighting the Mexican Army and Republica del Norte militia up and down the seventeen miles of coastline inside the former Camp Pendleton. At the same time, Nevada Militia under Deseret command had moved into position at Lake Isabella in the old Sequoia National Forest northeast of Bakersfield. They were ready to flank the Chinese city defenses when the Saint forces amassing in the Los Padres wilderness attacked from the south. Deseret had to stay on the offensive there, in order to avoid being crushed between their two enemies. The Mormons had established a two hundred mile wide corridor from the ocean to Las Vegas, and they had every intention to keep it.

Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste I've been around for a long, long year , Stole many a man's soul and faith….

It had really stunk having to say goodbye to Rick, after all the two of them had been through together, but Tommy had been reassigned to some top secret new intelligence gathering division for the New American government. It was rare for an order to come directly from Admiral Robert Woods to a lowly E-6, but his intermediate superiors in the Seventh Fleet had been made more curious than indignant by the leapfrogging of links in the chain. After all, they were supposed to be making an effort to show cooperation with the Unified Command in St. Louis. Here was their chance to prove their loyalty. Tommy was leaving Newport, where the dredging operation was almost complete, and taking a ride south to Sacramento with a Marine convoy. His new

assignment was to intercept and monitor Chinese radio transmissions in central California. It was time to brush up on his Mandarin.

Bullens was to be in direct communication with a Captain Rogers with Ferguson's legions, who were spending their New Year's holiday in the outskirts of Erzurum. His other contacts would be with a Marine Corporal in Pretoria, a Naval E-5 in Perth, an E-6 in Darwin, another on a destroyer in New Zealand, and two E-4s, one with the Fifth Fleet in the Mediterranean and one with the Sixth at Oahu. Of course, he also had to maintain direct communications with Admiral Wood's Petty Officer First Class communications officer in Seattle with the NAS Lincoln. They would all report to Marine Lt. Gen. Mark Smith, the Secretary of State, in the capital.

Tommy would be working with the Bear State Militia directly, too, passing on reports from their reconnaissance missions up to and behind enemy lines directly to St. Louis. Along with the new assignment came a promotion to Chief Petty Officer. That was the equivalent of a Gunnery Sergeant with the Marines, so he would be one of the big men on campus. He also would be the highest ranking field operative in the New American Unified Command's Intelligence Division. It was about time Tommy got some respect, and a little closer to the action. California had to be warmer, too, right?

Guess who just got back today ? Those wild-eyed boys that had been away Haven't changed, haven't much to say. But man, I still think those cats are great…

The Manitoba state line had been moved 500 kilometers east to just the other side of Thunder Bay when the other half of Ontario had been ceded to the Republic of Quebec. Or, about 300 miles, Paul reminded himself. They all used the American system of measurement, now. This line was drawn in St. Louis through an agreement co-signed by the Governors of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, and the Territorial Governor of

Whitehorse. The same agreement, called the ‘Canadian Division Accord’, extended the boundaries of the four Canadian states of New America straight up north to the Arctic Circle. The Territory of Whitehorse was defined as extending from the Alaskan and British Columbian borders to the Mackenzie River. The French Ambassador to New America, Monsieur Philipe de Monde of the Front Nationale, negotiated this accord, because the Republic of Quebec pledged to open their new territories to French homesteaders and immigrants from the mother country.

Paul Martin sat back in the saddle, changing the position of his sore back. The Second Lake Winnipeg Cavalry Company had plenty of fuel to transfer back over to motorized transport, with the shale oil fields down south in Dakota. They just didn’t have the heavy trucks needed for this kind of weather. Early January snowfall had been even heavier than usual, the first week of the new year. Paul was wrapped in a heavy parka against the wind. As his huffing horse high-stepped it from one knee-deep drift to another, he considered whether there were enough tracked vehicles left in the state to equip their forces…or even in all of the adjoining states, for that matter. The lanky Sergeant had been with the Second three years ago, when they had fought the second campaign against the Sioux, down across the old border. The First Nation Aboriginal Army had suffered greatly for their acts of terrorism in Dakota. At that time the Sioux Valley group west of Brandon had kept out of it. Four years without any government handouts, though, and the tribe was growing desperate. The 1500 of them that were left had started raiding, or at least a couple hundred of their braves had. They would raid Dauphin, then run and hide in the Riding Mountain wildlands. Then they would raid Minnedosa or Neepawa, and run back to their hideout. The citizens of Brandon, expecting to be next, demanded action. Well, they were going to get it.

Last fall Paul, as a Corporal, had participated in the reprisal raid that had burned the tribal town of Griswold. The Sioux had abandoned the place before the Cavalry had arrived, but at least

they had sent them a message, even if it was one that the warriors had ignored. The sixty-seven men riding through the snow and ice to confront them again were determined to make sure that they would be unambiguous, this time. They had been on the trail all day, and his cheeks were wind-burned by the cold. The night before had been spent in Gladstone, but tonight they would be camping in the open, which meant that they would have to stop soon.

Sergeant Martin's chestnut mount, the third horse he had ridden since they had left Winnipeg a week before, stared at him accusingly as he passed the flaming torch close to the gelding's mane. The ice lodged in its hair melted and ran off. Once Paul was finished with one side of the animal's body, he gave the same treatment to the other, before brushing the hair clean, and leading the horse around the fire, first in one direction and then the other, to warm and dry him. The other four men in his squad that shared the fire did the same thing, and around and around they went, in the bizarre dance of thawing. Once the horse was dry, Paul picked compacted snow and ice from his hooves, then doled out half a scoop of grain feed followed by an armload of hay they'd brought along for provisions. The animal ate as Paul poured the other half of the scoop of feed into the bucket of snow rapidly melting over the fire. By the time he'd changed into dry clothes and hung his socks near the flames to dry, the porridge was ready. The five men ate quickly, then melted another bucket of snow for their horses to drink. Then another. Then another. It took a lot of melted snow to satisfy a horse's thirst. At fifteen other fires within their perimeter, other squads all did the same chores.

When they woke, they repeated the routine from the night before, adding to it an inspection and cleaning of their rifles and saddlebags. They made good time that day, and the wind was slower, as they said it locally. The next night they camped again, at the edge of a frozen lake. One of the pack horses lay down as soon as they stopped, and wouldn't get up. The next morning it was dead, so they butchered the animal and enjoyed a meaty

soup before they set out northwards. That afternoon they spotted their first sign of the savages. It was a group of spent brass 30.06 casings in the snow. Someone had shot at something here, maybe a moose, judging by the tracks. They'd gone away hungry. The hunt continued.

It would have been a closer jump to have stayed in Minnedosa their last night. That would have cut a few days off their trip, and more importantly, a few nights in the cold. But Lieutenant Wilkins had felt that they stood a better chance of closing with the Sioux undetected if they stayed off the roads and away from the closest towns as they moved in on them. It took them six days and nights to reach Wasagaming, the only town in Riding Mountain's former park, on the shore of Clear Lake. The seasonal town showed signs of recent occupation. They were excited to find that the Sioux had been here recently. Since there were hundreds of tourist cabins and cottages empty, Wilkins decided that they would stay there and wait for the hunting or raiding party to return, then surprise them by having occupied their camp in their absence. The men were freezing and bone-tired, so they were grateful for the chance to sleep indoors.

The next day they killed three more packhorses and had a cookout, then broke up furniture in the unoccupied cabins to provide dry and seasoned firewood for the newly occupied ones. After tending to their horse and their guns out of habit, they explored the cabins and the theatre, where the Sioux had left behind grisly trophies. Among these were the snow preserved bodies of two young White girls who had been raped to death. The Lieutenant estimated them to be around eight or nine years old. They matched the descriptions of two girls missing from a farmstead south of there. It was a sobering moment. Paul and his buddy Vincent volunteered to help bury them in snow, since the ground was frozen too hard to dig. It would have to do, for now. The other cabins occupied by the Indians were full of war trophies such as jewelry and dresses, strangely, more than food or weapons. Only a few firearms and a few hundred rounds of

ammunition were found, much less than Paul had expected from the camp.

Their second night in Wasagaming, the Sioux attacked. Much less stealthy than their ancestors had been, they made so much noise knocking in the doors and shooting through the windows of the first few cabins they came to that all of the Second Lake Winnipeg Cavalry were awake and fighting back in mere minutes. A couple of the first hit cabins were set on fire from the fireplaces by the attackers, but the extra light made them easier targets for the defenders, who picked them off from their windowsills. Cavalrymen from the far side of the occupied cabins were able to saddle and mount their horses, then gallop through the playground and around the visitor's center to hit the Indians from behind right in the middle of the parking lot. Caught in a withering crossfire, the Sioux hesitated, then most rushed north towards the beach, while a smaller group threw down their weapons and begged for mercy, and some scattered. The Cavalrymen closest to the parking lot shot dead the Sioux attempting to surrender, while the rest dressed and gathered their horses to hunt down the scattered tribesmen. Those of the Second already mounted, led by Lieutenant Wilkins, pursued the Sioux down the hill and onto the beach. Some Indians died there at the frozen lake's edge. Others died in the enclosure for six tennis courts nearby. A few made it onto the pier and ran out to the marina. Some of these escaped over the ice, but how far they got before the cold claimed them, the conquerors never knew.

Paul had been in the second row of cabins attacked, as his bad luck would have it, so he'd barely had any time to wake up and start shooting. Really he had only seen shadows and silhouettes running every which-away in the night. Most of the shapes he'd been afraid to shoot at, in case they were his own troopers. He did get in on the shooting of the ones who surrendered, though. Vincent burned his arm trying to put out a burning cabin, after the shooting was over. Paul himself was unscathed.

The next morning, a few more Sioux were found hiding in the bottom of a drained swimming pool, and shot. All told, the bodies of forty-nine Indians were collected, all warriors. The rest had escaped. Fourteen Cavalrymen had died, and eight more were injured, mainly from burns. It would count as a victory. The fifty-three survivors burned the bodies of friend and foe alike, but not together. Lieutenant Wilkins decided they should stay there for another few nights, in case any of the Sioux returned. When none did, the Second spent two days burning every structure in the town, to deny the savages any shelter. It only took them four days to get back to Minnedosa, where they were hailed as heroes. Paul didn't really feel like much of a hero, but he'd never been one before, so who was he to judge?
And you may find yourself living in a shotgun shack
And you may find yourself in another part of the world
And you may find yourself behind the wheel of a large automobile…

Taneisha sat on the banks of the Pontchartrain, enjoying the cooler winter weather. It was nice to fish without sweating, and they were hungrier this time of year, too. Her fish market in Mandeville was doing well, and so long as she paid her taxes to the Chocolate City Crips, she could trade for all kinds of stuff she'd never had before. She already had a new Escalade in her yard and a surround sound audio system in her apartment over the fish market. They said that someday, if that nice honkey preacher had his way, they'd have electricity and gas again, too. That'd be fine, Taneisha was tired of having to go fishing every couple of days because the ones she caught kept getting ripe. Then her customers would start whining, and she'd have to threaten to stab somebody. Ain't nobody got time for that.

It was a two day walk into New Orleans from her place, so she only went once every couple of months when she needed to trade for things like salt and rice, but Taneisha had heard the Church of the New Dispensation missionaries herself, the last few times she'd pushed her wheelbarrow across the causeway. She hadn't

stayed to listen to them long the first time, because she was a good momma and wouldn't leave her babies alone for longer than a couple of days at the time. She had plenty of chances to think about what they were preaching on as she rolled the load of bags from Mexican and Cuban traders north, though.

She was able to remember how things were before all the White people left. Things like hospitals and air conditioners and t.v. would be nice to have again, some day. But she didn't want to get repressed or oppressed or depressed just to get them. About a year ago she had seen a one page, front and back, newspaper all the way from Atlanta, which people said was the capital city of New Africa. Taneisha had never seen anybody from Atlanta, herself, but she knew it was a real place, from before. She was a light skinned girl, her momma had been White and only left her with her Auntie when the neighbors beat her up too many times. That was way before the government had quit. Being light skinned meant that the boys all chased Taneisha and the women all hated her. She didn't know how things might be in Atlanta, but that's how it was, in Louisiana. The paper calling for black unity didn't change that.

The Chocolate City Crips had let the first Church of the New Dispensation missionaries come in out of curiosity. They'd let them stay and continue to preach unmolested because of the bribes they received in food and drugs from them. Now, it wasn't strange to see White folks dressed in their black church robes walking around everywhere. It used to be that you wouldn't see a White face in New Orleans. She didn't know what the world was coming to.

Her first baby daddy, Ray-Ray, had been a local boy who hit her up when she was fourteen. He got drafted into the New African Army when a group of tough looking black soldiers wearing camouflage uniforms and carrying all the same kind of guns had come through and picked up new recruits to help them fight the White folks refusing to give up Gulfport. She'd seen pictures of it

one time, and she thought she wouldn't just give that place up, if it was hers, either. Of course, it seemed to take a lot to get White folks to fight. As she remembered it, most of them just lit out and left their stuff behind. They didn't have much…what was the word that smart Nation of Islam professor had used in his speech when he stopped to campaign for governor? Oh, yeah, enough…'testicular fortitude'. Taneisha didn't know exactly what that meant. She hadn't had a lot of school before it closed down. The words sounded tough, though. She liked them.

Anyway, she finally got a letter from Ray-Ray. The man who came by fixing broken stuff and delivering mail along a circuit route gave it to her, about a year after Ray-Ray had left. Her Auntie helped her read it. It turns out that he had ended up getting put on a bus in Mississippi and being driven all the way to a place called Fort Benning in Georgia. She thought it must be close to Atlanta, since the capital was in Georgia, too. The letter had gone through three fixit man's circuits before it had made it to her. Imagine that! A bus ride! Of course, she was already pregnant again by then, he had been gone for so long. She hadn't tried to write back to him, and hadn't gotten another letter. She figured that he'd got himself killed in one of the big fights they'd had out East where there still some White folks at.

Taneisha's second baby daddy had been different, he was a real loser that got her drunk on some old vodka he'd looted from somewhere. He'd left as soon as she showed, saying he was going to the state capital in Baton Rouge to get a government job and make a lot of money for his boo. She never heard from his sorry self again. She wasn't sure exactly who her third baby daddy was, but her baby was so light skinned that he could almost pass. She bet the daddy was that White missionary she'd given a date in trade for telling her about his church. If what he'd told her was true, their territory where different kinds of people lived together would soon be spreading this way. Taneisha wasn't sure exactly how she felt about that. She sure knew that the New

African government wouldn't care for the idea. She didn't know where they were, these days, either, though.

Pulling out her line, she tightened up the string of catfish and drug them along behind her up the road to her wheelbarrow. They fell in with a wet plop. Taneisha felt good today. Not as good as she had when the missionary man had given her the stuff from the little bag he carried inside his robe, but as good as any sixteen year old had any right to be with three hungry kids and an Auntie at home to feed.

And the people bowed and prayed, to the neon god they'd made
And the sign flashed out its warning, in the words that it was forming…

Hope couldn't get a job without a passport and a visa in England, and without a job she couldn't eat, so finding a place among the large number of American refugees and expatriates living in the city became a higher priority for her than finding Nigel. For a couple of weeks the money she had left sustained her, but it soon ran out. She had placed ads in newspapers and hired posters to be put up, to find her love. None had panned out, so far. Without revealing her identity, she didn't know how to proceed. For the first time, she realized how much power and prestige and ease her family association had given her in life, over the last few years. She continued to use an alias and a cover story that had nothing to do with the most powerful man on another continent.

The multiple languages Gerta had taught her made it possible for Hope to get a position working for a group advocating for the rights of displaced Americans with the British parliament, called 'Americans Abroad'. Because they couldn't vote and didn't have much in the way of financial resources, the amount of influence the American expats carried was minimal. But, they did like to present themselves as a bonafide official organization, so Hope found herself becoming a spokesperson for the special interest to non-English speaking newspapers and other media from France, Greater Germany, Switzerland, and the North Italian Republic.

She discovered that most of the m embers of ‘Americans Abroad’ were from the East Coast of the United States, and had fled before the major cities there were destroyed. Now, they felt like they couldn’t go home, and weren’t accepted in England, either. Hope tried during one conversation to inquire about whether they had considered returning to North America and living in New America, where there was plenty of room for new citizens of the right ancestry. Invariably the response was that they would, if they could be assured of a future there. Only the three or four thousand blacks, Hispanics, and Asians among them were unenthusiastic about that option, of course. They knew they were ineligible for New American citizenship. Their primary goal was to convince European nations, England included, to renew their previous peacekeeping efforts in the Mid-Atlantic States.

France seemed to be doing a bang-up job of nailing down New England, but for their own and the Quebecois’ interests. As February began, shiny ships once again came to the new world from the old. French colonists landing in Portland, Maine, and coming ashore for the first time, were surprised at how normal the city looked. Electric power had been restored, at least for several hours a day, and many of the citizens who had left the city during its three years of near abandonment were returning. Unlike Boston to their south, Portland had been spared the worst of the ‘Da Trots’ superflu pandemic that had ravaged the East Coast killing millions even before Providence, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore had been nuked. And, as its name implied, it had a port going for it. Best of all, here they could escape the crowded cities and bad memories of France, where the long and bitter struggle to round up and drive out the Muslims had been exhausting, in every sense.

The former megalopolis strip from Boston to D.C. was a spottily radioactive, ruined, depopulated, savage wasteland. The East Coast south of D.C. was even worse, a pastiche of tribal territories ruled by gangs, warlords, chieftains, and neo-feudal black racists. Almost all of the Whites had either fled the

southeastern coastal states, or been killed. Not only was there not much worth reporting on in New Africa to draw the international media there, there wasn't much to salvage there, either, to draw in the U.N. for another risky mission. If they wanted to see flies crawling on the skinny faces of starving children, there were a score of places in the world where they could find that.

Virtually none of the 'Americans Abroad' expats were Mormons, so Deseret's theocracy held little appeal for them. A few, a relative very few, were attracted to the promise of a new egalitarian, multiracial lifestyle in Rev. Ike's Church of the New Dispensation territory, and arranged passage via private yacht and cruiser across the Atlantic to Houston. Half of the nonWhite Americans eventually chose that route. This went on for some time, until three months later, after making all of the inquiries she could to look for Nigel with no luck, Hope told the leader of the group her real name. From that moment on, the focus of 'Americans Abroad' changed.

Britain's North Sea platforms provided enough oil , and with their refinery production increased, enough petrol, for domestic consumption. Aside from the economic depression that they had suffered along with every other European nation with the collapse of the U.S. system, they had muddled through pretty well. Terrorist attacks and a multi-faceted global war had led to the British National Party winning a majority of the seats in Parliament, and appointing a nationalist Prime Minister. After the intifadas had led them to emulate Germany and France in deporting their significant Muslim population, they decided to do the same with the rest of the back-colonizers from India, Jamaica, and other former British possessions in the third world. Their Scottish neighbor was reluctant to do the same, but a few more months of protests and riots drove them over the edge, and they followed the British example.

With much of the dead weight off of the dole and unemployment lessened, Britain began to focus on rebuilding their manufacturing

base and improving their overall selfsufficiency. By the beginning of year two, an active intercontinental trade with the fledgling New America began, and England quickly became the new nation's largest trading partner, followed by Greater Germany and the Republic of Quebec. As Hope herself had discovered, there was regular transAtlantic traffic. If the 128,000 Americans (of White ancestry, who were eligible for New American citizenship) who had fled to England via boat and plane just before or after Cinco Day chose to return to their native land, Hope knew how to get them there. It was a fortunate thing, logistically, that the U.S. economy and the dollar had been in such decline in the months leading up to the collapse. There usually would have been a lot more American tourists stranded in Europe, otherwise.

In the meantime, however, a member of the 'Americans Abroad' group trying to curry favor with the New American leadership told a BBC reporter who Hope was, and within a week, the Speaker of the House had been informed. He responded by sending a letter to the New American Ambassador in England, a man who'd served with Gen. Smith on both sides of the pond. The letter apprised the Ambassador of the situation, and asked him to offer whatever assistance to Hope was at his disposal, as well as the assurance that she was sorely missed at home. Hope responded that she was well and would return, but with a surprise. Her stepdad decided to let her grow her wings and learn to fly a bit.

Six months later, the 'Americans Abroad' campaign to appeal directly to British voters to remove the 125,000 White American 'guests' from their soil, almost all of them on public assistance because they were not allowed to work, led to the 'Quantum of the Seas', 'Ovation of the Seas', and 'Anthem of the Seas' cruise ships being refurbished (at 'Americans Abroad' expense, collected from private donations and charities throughout England). The three ships, with a collective capacity to carry 13,000 passengers, were lent to 'Americans Abroad' by the owners of Royal Caribbean International Cruise lines, who wished to win a British government contract to purchase their smaller

ships as transports for the rapidly rebuilding Royal Navy. With the collapse of the United Nations peacekeeping mission to North America after the destruction of the U.N. headquarters, a large part of the former U.S. navy's Atlantic fleet had been placed under 'joint British command' by its surviving officers. A few hundred of those sailors and airmen chose to remain with the Royal navy and their ships in exchange for British citizenship. Several thousand wanted to go home, and were among the 'Americans Abroad' clients, however. Those ships, including a supercarrier and four destroyers, along with three submarines and several missile cruisers and support ships, even without their full crews, gave Britain back decisive control of the Atlantic for the first time in two centuries.

Following the pattern used so many previous times since Cinco Day when moving large numbers of people, the cruise ships were the answer. It had worked when evacuating U.S. servicemen from the Middle East and Europe, and when evacuating Jews making Aliyah. It worked again. The trip from England to Chicago took twelve days, each way. It took ten trips, using Royal Caribbean crews, to carry all of the 122,000 White American citizens who wanted to return, home. Three thousand of them, in the end, opted to stay in England. Some of them just couldn't embrace the idea of leaving the known, for the unknown. Another two thousand spouses and girlfriends and boyfriends and children they had accrued during their four years in Britain made the trips, as well. Inspired, Royal Caribbean began contracting with other European governments to return Americans who fit the criteria for New American citizenship. Over the next three years, shiploads would arrive from Ireland, Scotland, and the continent.

Hope had forewarned John that the repatriated Americans were coming, so preparations could be made. Many of them ended up staying in Chicago, making it the largest city by far in the young nation. Others eventually filtered out to other areas, or other cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, or St. Louis. Hundreds of the former sailors helped build up the New American

Navy on the Great Lakes, retrofitting civilian craft into military vessels. Hope remained in communication as she supervised the screening of the re-immigrants and the separation out of those with nonWhite ancestry or who were homosexuals. She had not forsaken her father's teachings. Sixteen months after she had left, Hope came back to Chicago on the last ship, an older and wiser woman. Before they had finished unloading and refueling for the return trip back, Kip was there to pick her up. He did, quite literally, and gave her a kiss right there on the dock that was decidedly unPlatonic. He had already asked for her dad's permission.

Chapter Seven

“ Most of you know what it means when a hundred corpses are lying side by side, or five hundred, or a thousand. To have stuck it out, and at the same time — apart from exceptions caused by human weakness — to have remained decent fellows, that is what has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history, which has never been written and is never to be written.... We had the moral right, we had the duty to our people, to destroy this people which wanted to destroy us.” –Heinrich Himmler

Well, I've been afraid of changing 'Cause I've built my life around you But time makes you bolder
Even children get older
And I'm getting older too…

General Scott Hampton knew when the President didn’t want to be disturbed, but this news that the Mexicans were withdrawing from San Antonio was worth risking his wrath to wake him up for. There seemed to have been another coup d’etat by the army in Mexico City, and this time the new bosses seemed to be waging war against the cartels. How this would affect their interests in terms of driving out Rev. Ike’s forces was still a mystery.

Perry rolled out of bed at the insistent knocking, knowing that only one person would dare wake him up before dawn unless the house was on fire or another assassination attempt was being made. He sure didn’t want Scott to wake up his wife, though. She wasn’t exactly a morning person, at best. The leader of the Republic of Texas slipped into his bathrobe and slippers and shuffled to the door to quieten the knocking. Ten minutes later he was dressed and headed downstairs to the situation room for a full briefing. She would just have to get over it. She was young enough to not need much sleep, anyway. One benefit to robbing the cradle, he thought to himself as he stepped into the meeting.

President Bellefont's ground forces nearly had the Mexican defenders of San Antonio encircled. General Hampton had advised him to leave one avenue of escape open to the reconquistadore fighters, so they could have the choice of retreating instead of standing and fighting to the death. Highways 37 and 35 had been left open to them, and from the flyover reports, they seemed to be taking 37. Not all the way back to the old borders, then, but to Corpus Christi. That jibed with Scott's theory that the new ruling junta in Mexico, D.F., was taking on the cartels and all of their coastal cities used for import and export. Traditionally the cartels had moved drugs and guns, but in recent years they had moved everything from canned food and liquor to tobacco and fresh produce. Whatever people wanted and would pay for, the cartels profited from. Of particular interest to Texas was the cartel's financing of Rev. Ike Huckeberry's gulf coast multiracial theocracy and his growing Church of the New Dispensation.

Having so many of the former Federal government come over with him when the Vice President left the refuge of the United Nations headquarters in New York shortly before it was bombed to declare the Republic of Texas was both a blessing as well as a curse. Sometimes they forgot that they weren't bureaucrats any more. Texas was a mighty big country. There was room enough for just about anything, except bureaucrats. In ten minutes, Perry had found important tasks for them all to do somewhere else and pared the meeting down to himself, General Hampton, and three junior officer couriers to carry orders once they'd decided what they were going to do.

That took a bit of thinking on. The situation was more complex that it first appeared. As their view, augmented by more overflights of the ground fighting and troop movements, cleared, the development became multifaceted. There was no quick fix, but rather the beginning of a grueling campaign. In order to avoid fighting on two fronts, Republic of Texas advances in New Mexico had to be called to a halt north of Alamogordo where they'd

bogged down fighting the Mescalero Apaches. Texican mounted infantry was designed for taking country, not holding it, so adapting to a defensive footing on the western front meant pulling back out of the mountains and establishing a line between Roswell and Artesia, on open ground where they could maneuver.

While the regular Mexican army and their Republica del Norte auxiliaries withdrew from San Antonio to Pleasanton and Victoria, Gen. Hampton sent his armor from Fort Hood forward to occupy the city where Travis had fallen before they could change their minds and return. The Mexican forces then seemed to redeploy to their coasts, obviously assaulting cartel positions. Heavy fighting was observed in Port Lavaca, Freeport, and Galveston. In a strange twist, Republic of Texas F-16s from Goodfellow and Dyess Air Force bases supported Mexican naval bombardments of cartel positions at Port Bolivar by dropping repressive fire on the MS-13 command and control center in Texas City. Fearing that the Mexican high command might not have the stomach for an extended fight against the cartel, or could even face a counter-coup, Texican mounted infantry were sent in a spearhead formation around the southern suburbs of Houston with orders to drive to the sea and secure R.O.T. control of that line. By the end of the week, Houston had been encircled.

As the Mexican navy and, in two cases, the Mexican marines, assaulted Bay Town and La Porte to weaken cartel units there, a life and death struggle was taking place in Mexico City, Monterrey, and Matamoros. At the Battle of La Playa Bagdad, Zeta cartel boats defeated the Mexican navy, sinking three patrol boats and badly crippling a frigate through the use of swarm tactics on jet skis armed with explosives and RPGs. This ensured the cartels would maintain control over Port Isabel. Port Aransas, the chokepoint for Corpus Christi, fell to the cartels three days later when the Mexican conscripts abandoned their positions and allowed enemy boats to enter the bay unopposed. The Mexican Capitan Segundo in charge of the defenses of Corpus Christi

turned over his arsenal to the leader of the Zetas the next day, after first negotiating for his life.

It became clear to President Bellefont that they needed to grab as much territory back as they could, as quickly as possible, before the cartels won. To that end, everything in Eastern Texas that the army had which rolled hit Southwest Houston in a blitzkrieg against the still huge city. Careful not to undertake any military actions from the north or west, they followed the successful tactic used in San Antonio, and left Rev. Ike an out. After token resistance, the officers of his Faithful units must have realized that Houston was too big and spread out to defend. The withdrawal of Church of the New Dispensation forces, followed by a horde of their civilians, began on a Saturday morning. They did not pause for church the next day, but Huckleberry came over the radio urging all true believers to fight the unGodly, and resist the temptation to surrender. ‘He that has no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one’, was the title of the message.

General Hampton suggested that, considering how massive the population of Houston was, and how many of them were Hispanic, every one they allowed to leave before advancing further into the city was one less they would have to fight or deport. Bellefont agreed. When bombers from Dyess began walking bombardments northwards from the south side towards the center of the city, most of the civilians took the hint. As tens of thousands clogged Highway 90 and I-10 walking north, word came that a cartel hit squad had successfully bombed the Presidential Palace in Mexico City. The President and his family, along with two top loyalist generals, had been hunted down and assassinated in Puebla, attempting to escape. The ripple effects of this act, for Texas at least, took days to reach the front lines of the far north. While local Mexican commanders were tentatively trying to feel out if their lives were forfeit if they surrendered to the cartels, Republic of Texas Abrams rolled into downtown Houston. The Mexican commander of the garrison in Laredo hesitated for too long, and was killed by a mutiny of his men, many of whom

were cartel affiliated gang members of the Mara Salvatrucha. Similar incidents within the region cemented the transfer of power locally to the gangs and cartels. With the sole exception of the provincial Governor of Arizona, whose Company in Phoenix remained loyal, most of the political leaders immediately fell in line and supported the change.

If it wasn't for Perry Bellefont and his romantic ideas of Texas, he would be happier than a pig in slop right now, Rev. Ike thought to himself as he personally oversaw the preparations for the defense of Beaumont. The cartels were winning, the Mexican army and navy would no longer be a thorn in his side, and his allies were going to end up on top. Just when he was losing his biggest donor base. The refugees from Houston continued to dribble in, two weeks after its evacuation. It had just been too big to hold, as all of these people demonstrated. Beaumont, though, was smaller and not so wide, and here, with his back to the water, he would stand and fight. It wasn't heroism which inspired the leader of the Church of the New Dispensation, or courage. He was a physical coward, and he knew it. What he calculated on was that with resupply by the sea from his allies, and a narrower front, his Faithful zealots could hold off the Texicans until the Mexican army realized what side their tortilla was buttered on and hit that old buzzard Hampton from behind. They'd make a sandwich out of them, and crush them like a grape between two millstones, he told his satellite tv and radio audience. Then, they'd find out who was the smartest.

Even with Houston being emptied of eighty percent of its population, there still were thousands of Hispanics to round up and herd south to the Mexican lines just north of Victoria. That operation took nearly a month, and during that time the Republica del Norte made the transition to cartel and Mara Salvatrucha rule. From San Diego through southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico, as well, local commanders who had been too eager in their arrests of drug runners or mules were placed in front of firing squads and shot. The holdout Arizona Governor was accused of

carrying out unauthorized negotiations with, and making illegal concessions to, the Mormons in the northern half of his province, and recalled to face trial. He never returned. In Mexico proper, virtually every officer above the rank of Teniente Coronel either fled their posts, or were arrested. This internal chaos caused a lull in action on every frontier.

In order to be conservative about his lines of resupply and minimize the advantage that their air and armor gave to his enemy, Rev. Ike aligned his defenses along Highways 82, 92, and 96. He gave up the western quarter of the city in order to deny Hampton's armor an open approach. It would be block by block, street by street, and not conducive to massed armor. He hoped that the antiaircraft guns promised by his allies would arrive before the Texicans were finished ethnically cleansing Houston, an operation he made great propaganda use of on his broadcasts. Rev. Ike labeled the Republic of Texas as a racist, bigoted force, but not only was no one on the opposing side shocked or appalled by that, it turned out that they embraced it. Perry went on the air mocking Ike and publicly accusing him of being tied to the cartels, and a traitor. They went back forth over the airwaves while the preparations for a climactic battle were made on both sides.

As it turned out, the battle never happened. At least, not in Beaumont. It had all been a waste of time and manpower. One morning, Rev. Ike blearily stood in the parking lot of a looted Target store, observing the northern end of his city's defenses as they went up along the Eastex Freeway. He was still hung over from the night of hard partying with the girls he'd picked out at dinner, and in no mood for any foolishness. While he crabbily chewed out a Deacon of the Faithful for taking too long getting his coat, he stomped both feet to warm them up. Ike leaned against his sedan and began to bend down, stretching. It was almost March, and should be warmer than it was. If he hadn't put back on a few pounds, he'd be colder than a…the thought flew out of his head, pushed by a 660 grain full metal jacket .50 caliber slug

that continued on through the other side of his BMW and into the store. It had travelled over 1600 feet, nearly 500 meters, at 1,900 miles per hour from the roof of the Parkdale Mall across the interchange. The Texas Ranger sniper and his spotter verified the hit as Huckleberry's entourage scattered and looked around to try to figure out where the shot had come from. Their extraction team in the Wal-Mart Supercenter to their west covered their withdrawal into the open fields beyond.

The Faithful had quite a job picking Rev. Ike up and clumsily stuffing him, bloody head first, into the back of his beamer. The Deacon got behind the wheel and hoped that the sniper wouldn't mistake him for his better and shoot him, next. With the Reverend's panicked Chief of Security next to him, he began to drive, and pray. Within minutes, the word went out on the radio, from post to post, that Rev. Ike had been shot by a sniper. Facing the Republic of Texas Army in front of them, and having spent the last four days looking up at jets flying overhead with the Texican star on their wings, their faith was shattered. By nightfall, most of their defensive positions had simply been abandoned. Some of them, the Whites who did not have any nonWhite offspring to be saddled with, slipped through the lines and tried to be good Texicans. Some with nonWhite dependents just left them behind and forgot about them. Most, though, could not get out that easily, and fell back to Port Arthur.

The Church of the New Dispensation's Board of Deacons had just been a rubber stamp for Rev. Ike before, but now they met in earnest. He was their figurehead, and they openly accepted that theirs was a cult of personality that would not survive his loss. Although he appeared to be mortally wounded, they had to do everything in their power to keep Huckleberry breathing, at least until they could reach a more defensible position. But, where would that be? After a brief debate, complete with much citing of scriptural verses and prayers for guidance, the obvious best choice was Lake Charles. The Louisiana port city was the nearest and largest Church of the New Dispensation held position left.

They would begin loading their essential personnel onboard their cartel ships immediately.

By the first week of April, Republic of Texas forces had completed the ethnic cleansing of Beaumont and Port Arthur. The news that Rev. Ike had been shot down by a sniper made that job easier. As had been the case with Galveston and Houston and their environs, the Mexican and black and Asian and mixed race persons, as well as the remaining Faithful who had nonWhite family members, were given a choice. They could either march south to the Mexican line at Victoria, or they could march north across the Red River into what had been southwestern Louisiana, but was now the border with the Church of the New Dispensation territory. Or, they could start swimming. What they could NOT do, was stay in Texas. Most of the Mexicans opted to head south, and the rest headed north.

On April 11th, the region was shocked when radio and satellite broadcasts for the Church of the New Dispensation resumed. Speculation that it was a bad double on screen ran rampant, but in fact, Rev. Ike Huckleberry had survived. On the camera he looked macabre. The poor makeup job could not mask the unhealed wound above his left ear, covered with a massive bandage painted flesh-tone to somewhat match his skin color. This gave his head a lop-sided appearance. His cheeks were gaunt and his eyes wild, more than half mad, as he frothed and screamed that God had saved him for a special purpose, and that the Church of the New Dispensation had ordained his survival a divine miracle. The camera never came too close, and his viewers were glad for that…even those who believed.

Across black southern Louisiana, those believers were the majority. Backed up by the best of his Faithful fighters and Deacons, as well as his cartel allies, Rev. Ike's crazed multiracial zealotry spread like wildfire through the bayous and the towns. Where it did not spread through the word, it spread through the sword. From their two strongholds of Lake Charles and Lafayette,

devout missionaries and Faithful took their message all along the Gulf Coast…and wherever they went, the cartel followed.

Although he was busy with the reopening of the ports of Texas and defending them against the cartels, President Bellefont did find time to go on the radio himself, and read aloud from the Bible's Book of Revelations, Chapter 13, verse 3:

"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast."…

Perry spent twenty minutes implying that Rev. Ike might be the AntiChrist and that the Church of the New Dispensation was the one world church foretold to mislead and deceive, and urging all true believers to reject Huckleberry and his false teachings. When he stepped outside the recording studio, Gen. Hampton and the First Lady stood waiting. Unable to judge their expressions, the President asked his wife "Well, darlin', did you buy it?"

"Not for a minute, but you sounded good." She replied, linking her arm through his as the three of them began to walk outside to enjoy the Spring day between government buildings.

Bellefont frowned. "What about you, Scott, do you think it'll sell?"
The General stopped and looked his Commander in Chief squarely in the eye. "People will believe what they want to, Perry, and truth has nothing much to do with it, one way or the other. That works both ways." They continued on to their next meeting, about their efforts to coordinate actions with the Emerald Coast, now a Territory of the Republic of New America, but their best potential ally because the Florida panhandle enclave was already fighting Church of New Dispensation troops in Mobile.
Further north in Atlanta, the largest city and the closest thing there was to a capital of New Africa, Emperor Malik Jamal Bling-Bling was enraged to hear that a White preacher was taking over more of his territory. The whole idea of peace and brotherhood and multiracialism was an insult to the Prophet, and to Malik. He

felt fronted. First those crackers down in Florida done took from him what the Cubans hadn't, and neither would give it back. Then up north a ways the New'Merican racist honkeys were coming down out of the mountains and pushing good black folks out of Asheville and Greenville and Dalton. Now this. Well, he was about to open up on this new Church of the Nude Decoration or whatever it was. No way was this going to go down like what happened in Virginia last winter when he had to give up Charlottesville. That's what he had all those hardheaded negroes in Fort Benning for, to use, wasn't it? He knew how to handle smart-mouthed crackers who insulted Allah. Emperor Malik called for Ray-Ray, his new General, and told him his plan to smash this honkey preacher like a bug.

Cast my memory back there Lord
Sometimes I'm overcome thinkin' 'bout it Makin' love in the green grass
Behind the stadium…

Having a toddler in the house was hectic enough . When that 'house' was a four story warehouse with armed guards and staff coming and going and leaving doors open all of the time, it was all Brenda could do to keep up with little Cindy. Now that Carolyn was more than halfway along, and still doing the Press Secretary job for Mr. John, it was her full time work, though. At least most of the phone calls and faxes came into his office at the Old Courthouse, these days. She was becoming more of a nanny than a secretary, but that was okay. Her husband and his brother had both gotten jobs working for Charles in his expanding grocery delivery business. There were still fewer functioning cars than there used to be, and fewer mega supermarkets where you could buy everything at one stop, and gas was more expensive than it used to be, so more people had their groceries delivered. At least, they did in the capital, where so many of them worked for the government and didn't have time to shop, anyway. They were gone a lot, at all hours, so watching over Cindy kept Brenda busy, now that her kids were old enough to look after themselves.

Brenda shooed Cindy away from the cracked door the little blonde girl had been peeking into, where her daddy was having an informal meeting. She shut the door quietly, and led her back to the front office/playroom by the hand. Soon, it would be time to have some dinner. She radioed Glenn and asked him what was on the menu that a fussy little girl might eat. Cindy loudly sang “Jesus Loves Me” in her ear, while he ran down the choices for her.

In the lounge, the meeting ranged over topics that were too theoretical to be discussed at the office, where Carolyn was still at work, typing up tomorrow’s press release about the mediation of the difficulties between the Wyoming Rancher’s Association and Deseret over grazing lands along the Continental Divide which formed the amorphous national border there. Such were the mundane dramas of governance. They worked through their agenda over dinner, as they often did, together.

The Secretary of Defense, Gen. Fred Grace, looking older after the recent passing of his wife, was asked by John to say grace over the simple meal. He did, then asked about the strength of N.A. Marine forces in northern California, where a line from Lake Tahoe to Vallejo marked the southern range of ‘Northern California’. A legislative body in Redding had petitioned the Republic of New America for admission as a Territory by that name. John chewed a bite of his cheeseburger thoughtfully, waiting for the answer. Mark thought that was a premature move to make, and said so. Secretary of State Smith added, in answer to Gen. Grace’s question, that they didn’t have enough boots on the ground to defend the territory, and wouldn’t until the 6th fleet arrived on the West Coast from Oahu. Not even with the 7th patrolling off Eureka as backup.

A more pressing issue for tonight was the internal squabbling within a current New American state. Things up in Alberta were headed towards a shooting scrape, if somebody didn’t get a handle on it, fast. Calgary and Edmonton had achieved a kind of

balance for leadership of the expanded state, of cattle interests and oil interests. Recently, that balance had been upset by the resumption of oil being pumped through the pipeline from Alaska, weakening the bargaining position of the oil faction. The Mayors of the two towns would both have to be called in, along with the Governor of the state, for a real old fashioned ‘Come To Jesus’ talk. John told Kip to summon them to be in the capital by no later than next week. All of them. At the same time. Petty factionalism and division couldn’t be tolerated, not when they had so many external enemies who would love to see them fall. Besides, the dust-up probably was more Albertan cabin fever after a long winter than anything else. It would do them good to come south and spend a weekend getting some vitamin D.

Speaking of internal fighting, the Attorney General gave them an update on the Klan and allied militia fighting the Creek Indian tribes along the banks of the Arkansas River in Oklahoma. Three weeks earlier, the Razorback Regiment of the 5th Arkansas had ambushed a band of First Nation braves at Fort Gibson Lake, killing several and capturing seventeen alive. The prisoners of war would be traded for Whites the Creek had taken during raids into the ethnically cleansed northeastern corner of the state. A stalemate position had been held at the Arkansas for a long time, but Jason’s nephew, who had recently taken command of the Knights Committee Crusaders army, had mounted an offensive into Indian territory that had driven as far as the suburbs of Tulsa.

Everyone at the table paused in eating to listen to the former lawyer from the state of North Arkansas recount how surprised the Crusaders had been that so many Whites had survived the years of occupation, and come out to welcome them as liberators. That gave them hope not only for the rest of Oklahoma, but other regions of the country, such as New Africa. The West Virginia Guard and Tennessee Volunteers pushing east and south from the Appalachians into the Carolinas and Virginia had experienced similar success, as well. They, too, had found isolated farmsteads, bands of White families, and even small enclaves

that had survived the last four years behind enemy lines. Some of their tales were amazing, harrowing, even horrific. Others seemed downright miraculous. They all were glad to see that red, white, and blue flag, even without any stars.

Some of the progress of the West Virginia Guard had been slowed by strikes of the coal miners in that state, protesting for higher wages even as coal prices fell in response to the influx of Alaskan crude through the pipeline. The Speaker half jokingly suggested that either they could send in troops to break the strike, or they could send in negotiators to mediate it, or they could draft them into the army and send them down to the Charlotte front into the Carolinas to fight the New Africans. He noticed that nobody laughed, and Kip was furiously taking notes. Sometimes the problem with being the Speaker was that everything he said got taken too seriously. Well, he would wait and see which of the three fates awaited the striking miners. That would amuse him, if nothing else.

General Harrison finished up his french fries and asked Jason whether the Arkansas River was still the southern border of North Arkansas. “Well, officially, yes. But on the west side of the state, we control the Ouachita Mountains and everything down to Texas, keeping I-30 open. We have Knights Committee garrisons in Texarkana, Hot Springs, and Arkadelphia. Little Rock is still in enemy hands, on both sides of the river, though, and so is everything south of I40, to be honest. Southeastern Arkansas’ population has decreased by about seventy percent since Cinco Day. The old Mississippi River delta area was populated by blacks who hadn’t done anything but sit there and breed since their ancestors had been slaves on cotton plantations there. It still is, only less so.” The Commander in Chief took a drink of his tea, and nodded in brusque response. It was a rare treat to have the brew, these days, and he was frankly more interested in it than the answer to his question.

For this meeting, Gerta was present, and not only because they had all learned over the past half decade to trust the Greater German Ambassador to New America. She had remained silent during their discussion of internal issues that didn't concern her. Or rather, she had been engrossed in a side debate with Congressman Balderson of South Michigan over the relative merits of German vs. Detroit automotive engineering, since he wasn't personally involved in the decision making process for state affairs, either. At least, not at the Cabinet level, as the rest of them were. But now, John posed a question for her.

"Gerta, normally I'd leave this to the Secretary of Agriculture, but she's busy overseeing the preparations for Spring planting in Iowa. And that's part of the problem, guys, Illinois' growers coop doesn't see us as being impartial." He added, looking around the table at the rulers of half the continent.

"Well, neither am I a neutral observer, I have the interests of my country to think about first. But whether the corn that is eaten in Hamburg and Munich comes from fields in Illinois or fields in Iowa, we cannot tell the difference in our stomachs," she said.

"No, but it matters to the Congressmen from Illinois and Iowa how much the tariffs are that their states have to pay to Greater Germany, especially when they get paid the same price per kilo for their corn." McNabb pointed out.

"I see this. All of Greater Germany buys and sells together and pays and is paid the same prices, whether Mercedes or BMW, this is so. " Gerta admitted, grudgingly.
"Or Bavaria or Austria, right. Exactly, so, what we'd like to ask is that the NPD treat Illinois and Iowa as if they were both a part of the same country…which they are…ours. And, place their tariffs accordingly. We don't want a foreign government, even a close friend, playing favorites between New American states and, inadvertently of course, stirring up discord between them." John locked eyes with his old ally, so there could be no misunderstanding his meaning.

“Of course. I will certainly discuss your position with the Chancellor, at my earliest convenience.” Gerta promised.
“Excellent”, John said. “And, we will go ahead and tell both Iowa and Illinois that, this fall when they make their harvests, they both can expect to get paid the same amount, and pay the same tariffs, in Germany.” He stood up and bowed. “Now, if ya’ll will excuse me, I think I need to go check on my daughter, or my wife is gonna kill me when she gets home. She’s pregnant and hormonal, and I made the mistake of teaching her how to shoot!”

That ain’t workin’, that’s the way you do it, Money for nothin’, and your chicks for free…

The ‘Azamara Journey’ was filled to double occupancy with former Marines, Airmen, and Infantry who were now all legionnaires. Two of her sister ships docked beside her at the port were rapidly approaching capacity, too, as the train cars pulled right up to the dockside were emptied. Gen. Ferguson looked out over the blue waters of the Black Sea at the Fifth Fleet resting at anchor. They had fought their way in, and might have to fight their back out.

When the American Foreign Legions had taken Erzurum with heavy Russian support, they had lost another three and a half centuries of good men, men who would never make it home, after coming so close and going so far. The Iranians had taken Batman to the east, caring much less about the cost. The two defeats had caused the Islamic State to withdraw their forces all the way to Elazig, like a trapped rook trying to cover the approach of two knights, cornered. The Iranian Shiites had stopped to consolidate their gains, and as soon as the Turkish Army committed to hitting back at them, Ferguson’s force withdrew in good order. The Russians redeployed with them, but only as far as the old Georgian and Armenian borders. They planned on keeping control over the mountains, as a buffer, from now on.

He had made the call to the fleet to come pick them up twelve days ago, and the legions had only pulled into Sevastopol the

night before last. Vice Admiral Davidson, who really ought to receive a promotion to full Admiral or demigod as far as Gen. Ferguson and his men were concerned, was there waiting for them at the docks, personally. The Eisenhower's air wing had caught the Turkish defenders asleep at Izmir, and paid them back handsomely for the betrayal nearly five years ago. Most of the base aircraft were destroyed on the ground, and the few which did get airborne, quickly came back down again in flames.

Lt. Matt Ball had led the third flight over the cratered and bombed field, to see if there was anything left worth strafing. The Eisenhower and her destroyer escorts continued north through the island-strewn Aegean, towards the strait of Gallipoli. So much of the former Turkish Air Force had been committed to their Eastern Front, and subsequently shot down by the Iranian and Russian Mig fighters giving air cover to the American Foreign Legions, that Islamic State Air Defenses were thin. As he turned north, seeing nothing in the air or on his radar, a blip appeared on Matt's screen, then another. His eyes grew wide as suddenly a dozen missile traces glowed in, all headed in his direction. Excited voices filled his comm frequency as the other birds in his flight saw them on their screens, as well. Before he could panic, he literally saw, with his naked eyes, the streaks go past them, to the north and east. Then another handful darted up in an arc, at a different target. The two Port Royal class guided missile cruisers accompanying the Eisenhower were doing their part.

Lapseki burned as the first destroyer in the Eisenhower battle group slid past it, and into the wider channel north of Gallipoli, where ship to shore cannon fire from it and the other of its class raked the defenses. Without air cover, the Turks could do little but fire battery shells back blindly. The fleet suffered only minor casualties during the first stage of their entry into the Black Sea. There were a few near misses, and two light strikes that were deflected by armor with only concussions and contusions as a result. In minutes, though, several smaller craft were on them, firing with heavy machine guns and small mounted cannon of

their own. The cuttersized ships danced around the Fifth fleet's lead destroyer, the Porter, but one by one were silenced by the hunter killer Kansas City submarine escort which had entered the waters ahead of the surface fleet. Seemingly out of nowhere one would shudder, then cough fire, and begin to list, or in one case, break into halves and sink with only the smallest of explosions visible from below deck. The three which got past the submarine's reach were bombed from above by the F-18s. Before they came into range of the Eisenhower's big guns, they were broken and beaten. The final two, heavily damaged, attempted to disengage, but were run down and sunk by the NAS Taylor frigate. The submarine torpedoes and aerial bombs filled the Sea of Marmara with injured and floundering Turkish sailors in minutes. Many of them were pulled under by the wake of the massive ships continuing their journey undeterred.

Their carrier air wing passed back over the Eisenhower and her destroyer escorts, Porter and Carney, to overfly Istanbul. The massive city showed no signs of further resistance. Lt. Ball couldn't believe their luck. No enemy aircraft engaged them. No anti- aircraft fire sprayed up like fireworks. It was a slow and tense hour piloting through, but the open waters spread before them without a further shot being fired.

Col. Feyderov, General Yurovsky, and even the Russian President, had all radioed Ferguson to thank them for their years of service to the Russian Federation when they had reached Vladikaykaz. The President had called again, personally, just as they began to board the speed rail train, boxcar after boxcar of them, stretching for three miles. Not exactly luxury accommodations, but not a one of them took the Russians up on their offer to stay and become legal citizens. All 8,764 survivors of the U.S. Afghan coalition forces packed in like sardines and hoped for the best. In the final boxcar was loaded pallet after pallet of over 10,000 Russian combat service medals, for them, as a going away present. They warmly shook hands with and hugged the fellow soldiers in Russian gray they had fought for

and beside for the last few years, but the Americans were determined to go. All of the doors closed. The engines hummed out in the darkness. Slowly at first, then accelerating, the train took them into the night.

On board his command ship, the NAS Mount Whitney, Vice Admiral Davidson had been alerted to the fact that fighting seemed to be going on in Ankara, the center of Turkish military power and the former capital. Two factions were struggling for control. He hoped that the string of defeats they had suffered had motivated the semi-autonomous military to attempt a coup against the radical Jihadists of the Islamic State. By the time the Fifth fleet sailed back through Istanbul with a tail of packed cruise ships and thousands of long stranded soldiers, it was obvious that the coup had failed. Half of the Turkish general staff was beheaded, along with their families, live on Al Jazeera. Still, the citizens of the ancient city hung white sheets out their windows and stayed far from the waterfront, and no military presence confronted them, on air or in the water, as they passed.

With the added muscle, there was no trouble at all getting back through the Suez. It really wasn't until the fleet stopped off in Durban to trade out the Company of Marine advisors who had been assisting the Orange Free State with their expansion, that the legionnaires began to realize that it was finally, really happening. They didn't mind at all when their surviving airworthy Cobras and Apaches were donated to the Orangers along with the fresh Company of jarheads from the Eisenhower. There were only eight of them, six Cobras and two Apaches, but they would help, since there wasn't anything comparable like them on the other side. After so long, it was a miracle that any of them still flew at all, despite regular maintenance and the best parts replacements the Russians could manage. Enroute they had been overhauled and tuned up by the flight crews from the carrier, three of whom would go with the gunships to help out the Boers, along with a half dozen pilots. The Orangers had plans to take

Port Shepstone and Margate next, and they would make it much easier.

Gen. Ferguson would later recount in his memoirs, published at the University of Calgary, that the weeks spent coming back were a blur. Certainly it seemed surreal to his legions at the time. Many of them were too far gone for counseling or re-acculturation, they just simply were hardened beyond return. While they wanted to stick together and get out of Russia, going home was a different thing. The Fifth fleet made two stops in Australia, the first in Perth where another four Companies of Marines were rotated out and refueling and re-provisioning ordered. The most difficult task in keeping the carrier battle group going wasn't finding fuel for the Eisenhower, which was powered by eight nuclear reactors and made its own fuel. It wasn't finding aviation fuel and parts for the air wing, or for the other nine ships which accompanied the carrier. Surprisingly, procuring food for the five thousand personnel on the Eisenhower and the twenty thousand, total, travelling with the group, was the biggest challenge. When the Fifth fleet had left the Red Sea, convoy deliveries of canned and dried foods from as far away as Port Augusta and Adelaide had begun loading up and moving towards Perth. Trucking it in, unloading it, and inventorying the nonperishable food items took several days, and came at a significant expense and sacrifice for the Australians.

While the necessary business of restocking their ships' stores was carried out, the nonessential onboard personnel were granted shore leave. There the legions got a chance to be surrounded once again by English speakers, if Aussies counted. Brisbane, Sidney, Melbourne, and Adelaide were still large cities, despite their loss of some population due to the deportation of all Asians, or because of it. In fact, they were thriving. But Perth and Darwin, strategically, were where the New American forces were needed to 'mind the gap'. It was here that the Indonesians or the Malaysians or the Emperor of Kolkata in what had been southeastern India might strike. Because of the protection the

New Americans offered, the Australians were more than willing to refuel and provision the fleet, as well as the garrisons.

Their week of shore leave was followed for most by a short cruise and another stop at Darwin, where the New American Marine regiment there was rotated out and replaced. In both Perth and Darwin, hundreds of legionary Infantry and Marines whose homes and families had been deep behind what were now enemy lines, or in areas leading them to believe that they were deceased, volunteered for duty in Australia. All of them who wished to stay had not received any letters from family members, or had any answered, during the last couple of years when sporadic mail service back to New America for the legions had been reconnected through their Russian hosts. Those who felt that they couldn't go home per se, or that their families and loved ones were gone, had little reason to return. In all, about ten percent of Ferguson's legions stated that they would rather remain legionnaires than go back to a place they hardly knew. As strange as that might sound to someone who hadn't been through what they had survived, and for as long as they had, Ferguson understood. The fresh regiments left to strengthen the defenses of Perth and Darwin were each four Centuries of the American Foreign Legion. Another Century of volunteers was shipped over via the New Zealand based destroyer for station duty in Auckland.

A decision was made jointly with the Royal Australian Navy and the New Zealand Prime Minister to maintain them there as permanent New American bases, at all three points, along with the New American naval assets previously left. With limited air power in Australia, the Eisenhower air wing made a show of force over Indonesia to impress the natives. This led to a confrontation in the Timor Sea where two Indonesian frigates were sunk and another badly damaged by the NAS Port Royal cruiser. As they headed up and into the Pacific, Davidson radioed St. Louis of their progress. General Harrison ordered Admiral Woods, who ordered Vice Admiral Bryant on the Ford and the Sixth fleet at Oahu, to start packing. It was time to bring it on home. The Sixth

left a regiment of Marines, a destroyer, and three support ships at Oahu, then headed into their new home port at Coos Bay, Oregon.

Two weeks later, the Eisenhower carrier air wing and the Kansas City hunter killer submarine sunk or disabled every Chinese ship in San Francisco Bay before the Sixth fleet was even in sight. The next wave of fighters scoured the Presidio with fire as a diversion while the fleet offloaded a full 6,000 man legion of Ferguson's men, including the General himself, at Half Moon Bay. The remaining twenty Centuries under the command of Colonel 'Fritz' Gibbons landed at Santa Cruz, and began fighting their way north to link up with Ferguson. The final campaign for California had begun, and it was going to be a four-way fight.

Chapter Eight

They (Jews) are our public enemies. They do not stop blaspheming our Lord Christ, calling the Virgin Mary a whore, Christ, a bastard, and us changelings or abortions (Mahlkälber: "meal calves"). If they could kill us all, they would gladly do it. They do it often, especially those who pose as physicians—though sometimes they help—for the devil helps to finish it in the end. They can also practice medicine as in French Switzerland. They administer poison to someone from which he could die in an hour, a month, a year, ten or twenty years. They are able to practice this art. –Martin Luther

At first flash of Eden, we race down to the sea. Standing there on freedom's shore…

Josh couldn't have been happier to hear that the Church of New Dispensation had been driven out of his beloved Republic of Texas. He was like a little boy, Kelly thought, getting a glimpse of what the cowboy must have been like as a carefree kid. He wanted to take her out dancing, but that wasn't allowed, so they celebrated quietly in his suite. He kept going on about how now Texas oil could go out overseas and manufactured goods could come in, and things would boom in the Lone Star Republic. She was happy for him, especially since it didn't seem possible that the development would harm Deseret. The two nations were allies against the Nortenos, after all.

In fact, the biggest fallout she expected from the events on the Gulf Coast would be from the change in governorships of the Mexican province of Arizona. The former governor they had reached an understanding with, after some hard-fought battles. He had become reasonable, even. This new guy would have something to prove. All Deseret armed forces in the southern region were on full alert. Of course, the New Americans landing a whole army in California changed the dynamic there, too. She

had better enjoy this weekend, she told herself, because after church Sunday she'd have to get geared up mentally for a very busy week in the Department of Internal Communications.

Monday morning, when she went into her office, Kelly found Jimmy there waiting for her. She was surprised to see him so early. This time, he was all business. He asked her to sit down. "I've got something I want to show you. It's not very pleasant, but I want you to stay calm and hear me out…." Jimmy sat down on the other side of her desk, placed a smart tablet on her desk, tapped the screen twice, and a video began to play. Kelly froze. It was Josh's back to the camera, and on the other side of him… Cold and hot anger and nausea coursed through her. "Seen enough?" Jimmy asked, quietly? Kelly nodded. He tapped the screen quiet. She closed her eyes and put her head in her hands, trying to fight back tears of rage and embarrassment.

"Really, you should have known that it's standard procedure to monitor the residences of our foreign guests of the Ambassadorial persuasion, as well as our own employees." He told her, folding his hands carefully in his lap.

Kelly looked up at him, her face red. "How long have you been watching us?" she asked. Jimmy pocketed the tablet in his suit jacket.
"Since you started taking your job too personally, Kelly girl." Jimmy gave her a sympathetic smile. "Hey, it could be worse. You could have turned out to be a lesbian, after all." It was a joke, but she was in no mood to laugh.
"So, what happens now? Trial for fornication? Prison? Deportation for Jimmy, what?" Kelly asked, resignedly. Jimmy leaned forward, patting her hand.
"Wow, so dramatic. No, it doesn't have to be that way. It doesn't have to be that way at all." Jimmy smiled at her, reassuringly.
"What, then?" Kelly asked, grasping for any hope.
"Well, no harm, no foul. You haven't revealed any state secrets they didn't already know, but his bedside talk has been very

informative.” Kelly realized just how much Jimmy must have watched, and seen. She felt like crawling under her chair. “All we need you to do, is just keep seeing him, just like you have been. And maybe, find the opportunity now and then to talk about Texican intentions towards New Mexico. Especially in his suite, or your car, or your apartment…”

Can you feel it
Now that Spring has come
That it's time to live in the scattered sun…

He had only been a Sophomore in High School, trying to pass Geometry so he could stay on the football team, when Cinco Day had changed Andy McDonald’s life. There wasn’t a lot for teenagers to do in Pueblo, even back then. Hang out at the River Walk. Play Call of Duty. Text. Look at the Mountains. Count the Mexicans.

Colorado had never officially seceded like Arizona and New Mexico had, but Andy and his family had been told to leave, just the same. School had only been ‘temporarily closed’ due to ethnic unrest and ‘bullying’ in light of the national emergency for a week, when the Mexican Army showed up. Just a few of them were seen driving around downtown at first. They were at the Courthouse doing stuff one day, and closing up the gun stores and service stations the next. Everybody was talking about it, but there was nothing on the news. A few of his friends had already left town with their families, going to stay with relatives up north or back east.

Andy’s dad had worked for Colorado St ate University, as an associate professor of Sociology, so his son’s academic ambivalence was a sore spot around the house. Mrs. McDonald sold scented wickless candles and agonized over her home décor. She had been really upset when they’d had to leave it all behind. First two dark green Humvees parked at the end of each cul-de-sac in their neighborhood. Andy had been trying to get a solid wi-fi connection in the front yard, since the internet had been

going up and down for the past few days. Just when he had a bar, he saw a squad of soldiers get out of the vehicles and head in each direction, down the street. His dad was still at work, they hadn't cancelled classes there, yet. His mom was flipping through the satellite channels trying to find something to watch on a channel that hadn't gone 'signal unavailable'. Andy thought about calling his dad, or calling out to his mom, but he didn't think either one of them would be any help. He watched the soldiers get closer.

They were three houses up the street, now. The pattern seemed to be to knock on a door, first. If somebody answered, they were handed a printed sheet of paper. If nobody answered, the paper was folded and stuck in their screen door or around the doorknob. The group of soldiers, who he could tell now weren't Americans, at least, they were all Hispanic, had started out evenly on both sides of the street. Now, though , the other side of the street had fallen behind. Old man Cooper, at 419, had slowed them down. Andy watched as he stood cursing at the soldiers, tearing up the piece of paper in the face of the one with sunglasses on, and waving for them to get off his lawn. The soldiers had M4s just like he used sometimes playing Black Ops, but Mr. Cooper didn't look scared. He threw the pieces of paper down. Andy couldn't understand that, why would he throw litter on his own lawn? Mrs. Guittierrez, next door to him, hadn't acted like that, she had just taken the paper, read it, and shook the soldier's hand. Heck, she had even looked happy about it. People sure were funny.

The group of soldiers on his side of the street stepped over the low shrubbery into the McDonald yard. Andy stood up straight and tried to smile. Then he remembered that he might not have a good connection, but the camera on his phone still worked. He raised it and started clicking as they came closer. Two of the soldiers suddenly ran forward and slapped the phone out of his hand, then pushed him. Andy almost fell down, then the rifle butt hit him right in the nose. Blood went everywhere. That was embarrassing. A soldier threw one of the papers at him, and then

continued on. Andy wiped his face off, but the blood still trickled. He thought that his nose was broken.

That night after he got home, Andy's father had read the p aper, first silently, then out loud, in disbelief. He had looked like he was going to cry. He never even asked Andy how his nose was. His mom had given him an ice pack, though, after getting flustered that he'd dripped blood on the white carpet. It felt better, but still throbbed. She hadn't understood what the paper was all about. Andy thought that he did. The Arizona and New Mexico secession votes and the Anglos fleeing Santa Fe and Albuquerque filling up all the hotels in town had been the topic of discussion the last few days of school, before their summer break had begun a month early. None of the teachers would talk about it except crazy Mr. Holt, who said that a second civil war was coming. He hadn't been there the last day of class. They'd probably fired him for getting the Hispanic students all worked up.

Now, nearly five years later, Corporal McDonald sat with his boots dangling in the reservoir, barely an hours' drive from his old house. He had eaten his MRE, and then walked off by himself a bit to think, and remember. A collage of memories filtered in past the sound of a hundred men setting up camp. His father on the phone, talking quietly with one of his professor friends to see if he had gotten the same note, and if it was legitimate. When he'd finished making more phone calls, his face was sad. It was true, he'd said. All non-Hispanic Caucasians, African Americans, and Asians were being instructed to leave the area within fortyeight hours, 'for their own safety'. The paper didn't state where they were supposed to go, just out of 'the area', presumably so the generic flier could be used as far north as the Mexican Army could reach. They would be contacted when the current crisis had passed, and it was safe to return.

Mr. McDonald felt that his presence was needed, as a Sociologist with published papers on Latino-Anglo relations, so he decided to stay and attempt to broker a peaceful transition of power. His wife

was too tearful at leaving behind her furniture and accents that she wasn't able to drive. Although Andy was just fifteen, and didn't yet have his driver's license, he did have his learner's permit. So, if they got pulled over, as long as his mom was with him, they wouldn't get a ticket, he thought. They should be okay. His dad would follow them up to Colorado Springs in a week, when things had calmed down.

Andy had just packed what he needed for a couple of days, sure that they would be back soon: his Iphone he'd found in the grass, a couple pair of jeans, his Chucks, and some t-shirts. His mom packed four suitcases of dresses and shoes. Her stuff filled the trunk and the backseat of the Toyota. They hugged his dad goodbye, then he and Andy shook hands awkwardly. Everything was going to be alright, this would all blow over soon, they'd see. He would call them every morning and evening. Let him know where they stopped for the night once they got to Colorado Springs.

The Jayhawker Militia Corporal spat at the memory of poor old Mr. Cooper sitting in his front yard in a lawn chair with a shotgun across his lap as they had driven past. He wondered if the old man had gone down hard, or given up, when they came? Maybe he'd been killed in his sleep by his neighbor, as had happened to so many.

When Andy had reached the I-25/87 onramp to head north, the line of traffic across all four lanes was at a standstill, and they all four were headed in the same direction. His mom had started to freak out. Andy tried to call his dad to ask what he should do. There was no service. Not far to the south, a single shot was heard, followed by several others, more rapidly. The teenager had made an instinctive decision, and done a U-turn off the shoulder, the Corolla bouncing down and back up. He drove until they reached the Highway 50 interchange, with his mom crying and trying to call his dad the whole time. When he turned left towards Kansas, she began yelling at him to turn the car around, that his

dad would never know where to find them, they were going to get lost. Andy started crying, too, but he kept on driving. Pueblo had been in his rear-view mirror, ever since.

They had never known if Mr. McDonald had been executed by the Republic del Norte regime, or by a random soldier. Maybe he had finally given up trying to be a peacemaker and had made it to Colorado Springs, and been killed there while looking for them, when the internecine battle between members of the Joint Chiefs had ended with Omaha nuking the control center at Cheyenne Mountain. Andy preferred not to consider that. It would be too much like thinking that his father's death was his fault. His mom certainly thought so, he knew, even though she never said it. Truthfully, Mrs. McDonald never said much of anything, any more. She just sat in her FEMA trailer outside Dodge City with the other White Colorado and New Mexico refugees, missing the old days. That's why joining the militia had been a nobrainer for Andy, as soon as he'd turned sixteen.

Now, here he was, looking out towards where his home was, or used to be. Over the last few weeks, it had become obvious that the Mexican cartels were turning on each other. MS-13 was trying to clean out the other gangs, but the Zetas and Sorenos were fighting back. The loss of their ports in Texas had hurt them all, and they were taking it out on each other, his Sergeant had told them. That meant a great deal of confusion on the part of their command and control structure. To take advantage, New American Unified Command forces were pushing the Mexican Army south from Denver, right into the hot zone where Colorado Springs used to be. Andy sure was glad that he wasn't in on that. If the advance didn't stop soon enough, they'd all get a lethal doze in a few days, up there. The plan was for that to be what happened to the Mexicans, instead, which was why Cpl. McDonald and the Jayhawkers were driving west towards his old home town, first thing in the morning. They would bottle the Nortenos up, and keep them from being able to go anywhere except back south, where they belonged.

Andy had heard scuttlebutt that the Mormons were supposed to be hitting the reconquistadores in Canon City from the west at the same time, and even that the Texicans had promised to resume pressure on Tucumcari down south out of Amarillo, but he'd believe that when he saw it. All three of the White countries working together at something would be hard to imagine.

This was hard country to live in, especially without irrigation. He looked around at the sparse greenery. That's what made little things, such as controlling the reservoir they'd camped at, so important for the campaign. Like the majority of the fifty-eight million Americans who had died since Cinco Day, most of the casualties around here had starved or died of thirst, or contracted a fatal stomach virus or dysentery from drinking contaminated food or water out of desperation. Only a quarter of the victims nationwide had died as a direct result of the ethnic cleansing and still-ongoing racial civil war. Another ten percent had perished from the direct and indirect effects of the eight or nine nuclear-tipped missiles that had blown out chunks of real estate in three waves of fighting within the first twelve months. Colorado Springs, Omaha, New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Providence, the airburst over D.C., the Toronto tsunamimaker… Hundreds of thousands more, of course, would eventually develop cancers and long-range terminal after-effects from the fallout and their exposure to hot zones. But more people had died on the East Coast from the 'Da Trots' superflu epidemic of the first winter, than from the bombs. Of course, it was all interrelated, Andy mused. These days, you got a cut on your toe, and without antibiotics it could go septic and you could die from infection and blood poisoning. In much of the country, basic sanitation was medieval at best. Soap was a rare commodity, even. And clean water was as precious as ammunition, out here. They both were worth more than their weight in gold.

He wondered if his old Geometry teacher would like the pie chart he had drawn in his head with all of the acute little angles of slices for those dead because their pacemakers had given up or their

blood pressure medicine or insulin ran out or their dialysis wasn't happening, any more. Probably not, the Cpl. bet he was dead, or among the hundred million homeless refugees still displaced after five years of chaos. He tried to imagine Mr. Felan working for his soup in a displaced person's camp like the one he'd spent a year in, and laughed. A covey of quails startled up out of a low thicket, scared by the noise. Andy had just gotten the promotion to Corporal a couple of months ago, after he happened to be the guy to help capture a ragged group of Indians up from Oklahoma. They'd been trying to hijack a tractor-trailer rig of wheat headed for Wichita to be somebody's sandwich bread, when his patrol had happened by. It was all luck, but he'd take it.

After he'd sat there thinking long enough to be sure that his squad would have his tent up and their own done, too, Andy wandered back over the low rise and reported to the Sergeant that everything was clear on the other side, just like he'd been on an important self-appointed mission. The Sergeant paused in struggling with his sleeping bag to stand up and pop his back. "Good work, Corporal, seeing to the defensive perimeter before your own comfort. That's the kind of attitude we need more of in this army! Did you hear that, men?" he looked at the privates around them. They grumbled their assent, sweaty from the work.

Andy rewarded his squad for doing a good job with his tent by letting them all go for a swim in the reservoir before it got dark. Running water, consistently, was another thing he really missed, though he heard they had it back full-time in Wichita, now. And of course, in Topeka. He used his swim time as a chance to scrub some trail dust out of his crevices. Marching behind the officer's horses was dirtier than crawling under them would have been. That's why he planned on being 'Lt. McDonald', some day. Maybe even 'Captain McDonald'. That had a nice sound to it.

Now I, hear you've got somebody new, And that I never meant that much to you To hear that tears me up inside…

The ten foot tall lead statue, cast of the bullets from abandoned U.N. peacekeeper's ordinance of odd European calibers, swung on its hoist as the crane moved it into position. The new Kentucky state capital building, the former Lexington History Center, used to be the Fayette County Courthouse, but it would make a fine Executive office building. At least, that's how Governor Richard Cotton felt. The legislature, if there was ever need for them to meet again, and he wasn't sure why there would be, could meet at the University in an auditorium here. Or, they could stay in Frankfort. It's not like they needed a regular place of their own, or anything.

He was glad that the expanded security around the nation's gold reserve at Fort Knox had created the Kentucky Capital District, and moved the seat of government east. With the New American Dollar being backed up by that gold, their economy depended on it being secure. Everybody remembered what had happened the last time the dollar had crashed. They had all crashed, with it. Lexington suited him better, anyway. And, the move would allow him to delay holding general elections for, oh, at least another year. Maybe two. So what if Lt. Col. Martin had the final say on any matters that impacted security within a hundred mile radius of Fort Knox? The governor was allowed to run domestic affairs as he saw fit. Even the Mayor of Louisville couldn't claim that, that yuppie had the City Council to contend with.

The statue had been cast and molded and polished all the way up in Pittsburgh, and made from the donated weapons of a German unit that had defected over from the U.N. and become good honest Americans. Gov. Cotton had traded four traincar loads of locally produced coal to the foundry for it. Looking up at the forever smiling face of Dr. William L. Pierce on the statue, he figured it was an even swap. Down in Nashville, they thought they were fancy, switching gears from being a music city to the home of the Richard Butler Memorial Seminary, and becoming some kind of new Vatican. Sending out Christian Identity missionaries up and down and even over the Appalachians, like that. As far as

the governor was concerned, he didn't know much what was left east of those mountains, and he didn't want to know. He was happy in Bluegrass Country where there were still horses to race and music to listen to. And as far as taking back the East, well, that's what West Virginia was for.

Mother, Tell your children not to walk my way Tell your children not to hear my words What they mean, What they say…

Scott and Perry stood together at the dock, looking out across the huge port facilities of Houston. The rotor kept turning as they took it all in. Crude from Republic of Texas oil fields out west was being refined in Republic of Texas refineries, and the fuel loaded into tankers preparing to carry it first to their nearest allies, the Emerald Coast enclave in the Florida panhandle. Even if they were a New American Territory now, they could help keep the heat on the Church of the New Dispensation from one end while the Texicans held them at the Red River, on this one. The dribble of gas and aviation grade that the New Americans had been able to fly into Pensacola had barely kept them in the air. Just like with a drug dealer, Perry thought, the first taste of jet fuel is free.

Of course, the next step was to buy, bluff, or blast their way past the Cuban stranglehold over the Caribbean, and open a new market for the black stuff in southern Europe. The President figured they could undercut the British by 10% and still make a pretty profit, even counting their transport costs across the Atlantic. Hampton advocated taking the fight to the Cubans, right away. His top General was chomping at the bit to take on the world. First things first, though.

The R.O.T. Air Force had been retasked from harassing Rev. Ike in Lake Charles to providing air cover for Ranger units at Conchas Lake near I-40 in New Mexico. The Nortenos were in a grudging retreat, there, fighting on three fronts and hating life. The infighting between the cartels had stopped the Mexican navy's weak attempts to recapture his gulf ports, too, so they were

feeling pretty good about things. They climbed back on board the helicopter to return to the capital.

This morning's situation room briefing had been positive, overall, too. Deseret was apparently attacking Mexican Army positions north of San Diego, and the New American army they'd landed up by San Francisco was pouring it onto the Chinese there. His Ambassador in Salt Lake, that spoiled rich kid Walker punk, had told him that he was on top of things with the cultists' secret plans there. Claimed to have an inside source in the government, or something. His intel had been good, so far, at least.

The New Americans had recognized the Republic of Quebec's claim to New England all the way down to the New York/Pennsylvania and the New York/New Jersey lines. Thank God for the goofy French, mediating that and colonizing the empty quarter. That's seven more states they'll never get back, thought Bellefont, with satisfaction. He didn't care that most of that area was depopulated from the Superflu and spotted with radioactive hot zones, south of Maine. All he cared about was that a rival was weakened. Maybe Quebec needed some oil at a discount? It would be closer than the Republic of Catalonia, and the enemy of his enemy could be his friend.

Now in darkness world stops turning Ashes where the bodies burning No more war pigs have the power Hand of God has struck the hour…

The rough terrain reminded him of the Stans, except with more trees. And, it was never this cool over there, the first day of May. All the way over, he had been thinking about fighting house to house through built up rolling hills where queers used to roam free. Instead, here was, laying on his belly ears deep in pine needles as long as his knife blade, wishing he could twist around to pee on his machine gun's barrel to cool it off before it turned red again. But, even though he needed the relief, the rising steam would give away his position. He knew better than to expose himself like that. Sergeant Vinyard had just been a private when

his unit had missed the last bird out before they got stranded in the north sandbox. He had been short, too, just a couple weeks from the end of his rotation, when it all shut down. Now he was in charge of the eleven men spread out to his right at the top of this ravine. They trusted him, he saw it in their old beyond their years eyes when he gave them an order. They were the best in the Cohort.

On their way up from downtown Santa Cruz, it had looked like this was going to be a cakewalk. Gen. Harrison and the main body was up there with a whole legion somewhere north of them, exactly where was above his pay grade, but they had to meet up with him, most ricky-tick. They met their first resistance at the beach, just a few guards they took out quietly with their knives. They all made it out of the waterfront before the first gunfire was exchanged. Some guards hanging out at the Boardwalk. That got things hopping. At first, the Chinese they met seemed caught off guard. They would fire off a magazine, then run, not even covering each other's retreat. Very amateur hour. It reminded him of Tblisi. Like shooting fish in a barrel. It was so easy, Major Woodrow had only peeled off five Centuries to clear the city, two in either direction and one to hold the beach in case things got hairy. There seemed to be a concentration of enemy at the U.C. Santa Cruz, and one of them was headed there to see what was up. Live Oak and Capitola downstream would get some special attention, too. It looked like just a few hundred people lived in the whole city, all Chinese by the look of them. Most of them spoke English with no accent when they surrendered. He figured they must be American born Chinese, and that irked the Sergeant to no end.

For the most part, it was a ghost town. Fifteen Centuries were assigned to move out. They made it through the built up area and up into suburbia with only a couple injured. They were walking wounded, and didn't slow them down. The third of a legion had hit the beach at midnight, and by daybreak they were skulking into the open ground of the Pasatiempo Golf Course. Another group

of sour-faced Marines were already there, circled around a group of prisoners on the overgrown fairway. As Vinyard got closer, he was that the prisoners were all White, and all women. They were the first Whites he'd seen since he landed. The Sergeant was curious about their appearance, though.

"What'd you do, find a sorority house at the college?" he asked the first jarhead he came to as they walked up. The kid looked younger even than the girls he was guarding, and slightly embarrassed by the way they were dressed…or weren't.

"No, Sergeant, they were being held prisoner by the Chinese. There were twice as many as the eight or nine we were able to rescue, but the damn guards just started shooting them as soon as we told them to surrender. It was awful, Sergeant." The young soldier had probably killed more men than he had lived months, but he was near tears over the treatment of the women crouched at his feet.

The girls ranged in age from sixteen or seventeen to their early thirties. They had obviously been kept to entertain Chinese officers. Berry Vinyard was disgusted. He thought about the little sister he had left back home in South Carolina when he had joined up, and hoped that nothing like this had happened to her. The only reason why he hadn't volunteered for duty in Australia, like others had, was so that some day he might be able to find out. He had pictured himself being the hero, and saving her… well, now was his chance, for somebody else's sister. He motioned for his squad to stay back.

Kneeling down, he asked the girls what had happened. As the sun rose, it became more obvious how thin and weak they looked. They had been purposefully underfed and malnourished. Most of them were jittery, too. This was going to take a while, so he told his men to stop and take ten. They broke out their canteens and a couple chowed on MRE's while they could. Others talked quietly with grunts from the other unit about what

they had found at the University. The lack of Chinese prisoners told him all he needed to know about how it had ended.

It seemed that one of the dormitories had been turned into a brothel, and another a barracks for the guards. The fight outside the latter had been brief, but instead of surrendering the former, the guards had started killing their hostages. Berry learned this from one of the older women, since the younger ones seemed either to be in shock, or catatonic. One of them, barely sixteen by the look of her, just sat and repeated Chinese phrases that none of the soldiers could understand. Maybe she had forgotten how to speak English, the Sergeant thought.

Most of them were silent, but the one, who looked to be in her mid-thirties but was probably a decade younger than that, wouldn't shut up. Her name was Karen, she said, and she and another one of the prisoners had been students at UCLA, of all things, when Cinco Day happened. If her tale could be believed, a group of about twenty White students had banded together and headed north when the Mexican Army arrived on campus and demanded that everyone assemble at the stadium. They had barely made it out of the city before the group had begun to split up. One car had run out gas, and another carload had headed off towards Palmdale. Two carloads, including these two, had headed up the 101. They were ahead of the Mexican Army, but it was like Mad Max on the road, as she described it, five years later. Berry guessed that she had told the story over and over again to the other prisoners, so that it had become kind of a performance.

She said that they had seen a jet try to take off from Vandenberg Air Force Base, then crash back down again and blow up, as they had driven past. They'd hid out in the back of a library in Santa Maria for a week, sneaking out at night to scavenge and loot for food. When one of the guys didn't come back, taking them down to three guys and four girls, they had moved on. One of their cars ran out of gas at San Luis Obispo, so they all piled into the

remaining truck and made it into Moro Bay. The roads were crowded with other refugees heading north, so they didn't stand out in the wealthy beachside community. The electricity was out, but they camped in a ten million dollar beachhouse until the food ran out, then they'd ran out of gas for the last time in Paso Robles. The Sergeant tried to pretend to be interested, but he had a war to fight. He hoped she would end her story soon. It was nearly full light.

Over the next month they had hiked over the mountains, on foot. The Mexicans they met didn't bother them because they had nothing worth taking and there were easier and better pickings elsewhere. That had changed when they had come down into the valley. They were too tired and too weak from hunger to even try to avoid the roadblock the Nortenos had set up. The three men went forward to ask for help, and were shot dead in the middle of the highway before they got within twenty feet of the barricade. Then the MS-13 members came and got the four girls, and carried them back to their hideout.

One of them they had cut up and let bleed to death just for fun, because she was the least pretty, they had said. The other three they kept, and passed around for several weeks. Karen's voice didn't falter when she spoke of it, she just looked right at him. Vinyard guessed she had told the story so often that it didn't hurt her to tell it, now. Or, maybe the years had dulled her pain. After a couple of months they had gotten bored with them and tired of having to feed them. Karen and the two others were traded to the Chinese in Fresno for a couple of Mexican families from up north of the treaty line. Two of the girls were pregnant from their Mexican captivity, but they were beaten by the Chinese until they miscarried. One of them died from the beatings, the next year, when the same thing happened again. Karen considered herself lucky, since she seemed to be barren.

For the last three years, they'd been moved around from one place to the next, always serving only the officers, except for

when they did what they had to do to get enough food to survive from the guards. They had seen a lot of other girls come and go. Some had tried to escape, but most of them had been either shot or caught and brought back to be made examples of through torture. A few had committed suicide, by cutting their wrists or hanging themselves. Most, though, just died from being beaten too roughly, or from drug overdoses, since their captors kept them strung out all of the time.

Sgt. Vinyard knew the survivors would have a hard time of it as they went through withdrawals, but he was glad that he and his men had stopped to hear Karen's story. It had shown them exactly what kind of enemy they were dealing with. They would never offer to allow them to surrender, again.

The rest of the line had moved up without them, but they caught up in Scotts Valley, where a pocket of resistance was holding out at a big, strangely shaped complex of buildings anchored by a swimming pool. That gave him a chance to report in to Major Woodrow about the White prisoners they had liberated at the University. The Major told him that as soon as they were able to link up with Gen. Ferguson, they, along with any other White survivors, would be transferred to a secure area. Woodrow had made radio contact with the legion up north, which was bogged down in Mountain View, just north of San Jose, where they were headed. The next objective was to reach Los Gatos before dark.

Tree-lined canyons were a lot nicer to trudge through than the desert and rock they had gotten used to for the last half decade, but you also couldn't see as far, Berry considered. They reminded him a lot of the pine woods of South Carolina where he'd grown up. It was in woods like these that older boys had begun calling him "Berry", because of his last name, instead of "Barry", his given name, since they both sounded pretty much the same, where he was from. So, he'd just stayed 'Berry' when he grew up and joined the Marines to prove how tough he was. His family name was what mattered the most.

So, here they lay, with the Santa Cruz highway to their right and downhill, crossing the tip of a lake or reservoir, and them hunkered down at the top of this ravine, with the other tip of the lake, or a runoff pond, behind them. Things had begun to go bad when they'd started downhill and seen the figures scurrying around the big round water tank. There looked to be a few hundred of them, at least, with more coming up the road and fanning out on both sides of the highway. The Centuries got off the road in case anybody down there had a long range capability, but as they got closer, it became obvious that they were almost all Chinese civilians. At least, they weren't in any kind of uniform, and very few of them were armed with anything except for shovels and hoes. They had lots and lots of hoes. A few dozen actual uniforms waved at the farmers furiously, directing them where to stand and how to get there.

Major Woodrow radioed them forwards. Their Lieutenant emphasized the order, with expletives, as did twenty other junior officers, for their Cohorts at the front. Even though they were already tired, they humped it double-time down the canyon so that they could get the lake on their right flank and protect that front. Their experienced swing maneuver where the woods widened out at an overpass was what allowed Sgt. Vinyard's squad the pleasure of ending up in the vanguard of the legionnaires.

As luck would have it, the Chinese had started slipping and sliding down the muddy parts of this very bank less than a half hour ago, just as Berry saw them coming and ordered his men down. It was kind of tragic, if you didn't think about the fact that they were in the wrong country, the way they scrambled to the edge of the pond, then waded right in, holding their hoes up like they thought they were about to chop a snake they'd found in the rows. Alongside his unit, over a hundred other heavy machine guns had been braced in the dirt and leveled across the shallow, muddy water. Within seconds, Major Woodrow gave a single word, and that water turned red with blood.

For several long minutes, hundreds of eerily silent Chinese dressed in thrift store castoffs stumbled into the water like a zombie horde, row after row of them going down. Some of them tried to scramble up the steep shoulder of the highway's bank on one side, or across the mud flats around the pond on the other, but none of them could outflank the reach of the heavy machine guns. The Sergeant and his crew, along with several other units, had jogged across the mud flats instead of through the water, too, when the order came to advance, a couple of minutes later. Half of the forward units stayed down to provide covering fire, while the other half leapfrogged them and crossed the flats to the other bank. When they poked their heads up under the shade of the pine trees, they saw hundreds of pairs of legs running at them from the cluster of houses directly ahead. Without having to be ordered to, they'd opened fire, again. When their belts ran dry, they fought the instinct to stand up and go at it hand to hand with the hoe choppers. The machine guns behind them on the far bank continued to pour death at waist level across the pond, in solid sheets.

As far as they could tell, none of the Chinese laborers retreated, and none surrendered. A wall of bodies four or five deep and equally high towered over the legionnaires, when the machine guns finally fell silent. A few stragglers still tried to crawl over the pile of their own dead to get at them, and had to be put down with sidearms. Only by remembering Karen's story could Berry keep from feeling sorry for them. Over eight hundred Chinese died in their human wave attack at the Battle of Lyndon Canyon, only fifty or so in uniform. There were eleven New American casualties, two fatal, from hoe chops. Sgt. Vinyard and his men moved up the road a ways, just to get away from the stench, and camped on top of the dam, that night. The next morning they came down from the mountains, and into Hell.

Heaven can wait, and all I've got is time, until the end of time, But I won't look back, I won't look back…

Premier Ming tried to remain dignified scrunched over in the back seat of the crewcab pickup truck, but it was impossible. If he lost much more face, he wouldn't have to commit suicide, his men would take care of that, for him. The sole consolation was that Harry Lee was right now grimacing in equal discomfort. The Chinese-American former businessman and politician was stuck in San Jose, organizing his thousands of farm laborers being brought in by the busload from the Valley into human wave shock troops. If anything justified using their limited gas supply up, this was it. His job was to hold back the round-eyed devils coming up from Santa Cruz, while Ming rallied the 5,000 Chinese regular troops to counterattack. The sudden attacks from the air against his ships had shocked Ming, he hadn't expected the Americans to move against them from the Seventh fleet's air wing so quickly… unless they hadn't. Ming considered that the invasion might represent the arrival of the Fifth fleet with Ferguson's legions. It certainly must be the Fifth, since the Sixth fleet had just arrived in Coos Bay. If so, he would soon see how welldeserved their reputations were. It really didn't matter who had sunk his ships, the result was that they were at the bottom of the San Francisco Bay, along with a few hundred good men whom he couldn't afford to lose, any more than the surviving naval contingent.

While Lee tried to slow down the southern advance of the invaders using the ChineseAmerican peasants, Lee gathered his forces from the northern end of the San Francisco Bay. When the first reports that thousands of New American troops were charging up Half Moon Bay into the mountains had reached his headquarters, Ming had disbelieved it. Not until they reached San Mateo was he forced to accept what was happening. He first radioed Chairman Jiang's command in northern China, but the leader was in Seoul accepting the surrender of the last Korean forces there. The Captain whom he spoke with smugly wished him luck and promised to tell the Chairman as soon as he spoke with him. Just as Ming and Lee had discussed and anticipated, they were on their own. His next call was to Lee, telling him to put his pawns into play, immediately. The knights had landed.

The next surprise for the Premier had been when Ferguson turned right and drove south, rather than north towards the Presidio. Instead of Ming taking the brunt of the blow, it looked like Harry Lee would. That gave Ming a chance, if he moved quickly enough, to counterattack the legion from behind once they had passed. He radioed Lee again, telling him to send his largest force north to block the largest group of invaders, whom he now knew due to radio intercepts to be the legion and commanded by Ferguson. The next group he could gather should head towards Santa Cruz, where another force had landed during the night.

The regular Chinese troops caught in Redwood City and Palo Alto stood their ground, but Ferguson had rolled right over them. Ming could only hope that Lee's farm laborers could slow them enough in San Jose to let him catch up before they took the Valley, then circled back around to block him in with his back to the sea. At least Ferguson's decision to attack San Jose first in a pincer movement and take the Bay Area piecemeal had bought him some time. The way it was playing out, he was the one who had circled around. As Ming rode through Fremont toward Milpitas, he gathered his best and most loyal men behind him. All of them knew that with their fleet destroyed, there was no retreat possible, and no surrender. This would be a fight to the death.

Chapter Nine

“ I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, [applause]-that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.” –Abraham Lincoln

Yes, there are two paths you can go by, but in the long run
There's still time to change the road you're on
And it makes me wonder…

The regimental flag of the Bluefield ‘Deerhunter’ militia, with its distinctive Griffin emblem, flew above garrisons throughout western Virginia, these days, Commander Burkesson considered. The old highway map taped to the dashboard of his Humvee showed red dots where his forces held territory wrested from New Africa: Lynchburg, Forest, Bedford, and Roanoke. His big fingers traced the lines. The West Virginia Guard garrison towns of Christiansburg, Cave Spring, Pulaski, Wytheville, and Moneta were indicated with blue dots, and the Rebel Brigade Knights claimed Martinsville, Danville, and Rocky Mount in green. But most importantly, the strategic border towns of Bland and Bluefield were red.

Ornstolt, called ‘The Big O’ by his men because of his size, considered the East River Mountain Tunnel at Bluefield to be the key to controlling the area. The underground fortress, controlled by the fierce blonde giant Earl Warren, was a long tunnel passage

for I-77, right through the mountain. On the south side was Virginia, and on the north side was West Virginia. Both ends were barricaded, and nothing came in or out of New America without Earl Warren's permission. The maintenance subtunnels, storage rooms, and offices and control rooms alongside the tunnel had been turned into a stronghold for Warren and his men. Even though the front lines may have moved on, East River Mountain remained the redoubt that the Deerhunters depended on. The old National Guard armory in Bluefield had been stripped bare by Warren to armor and fortify his underground castle, making it nearly impregnable. If an overwhelming force approached from either end, he was even prepared to blow that end. He had enough supplies stored to outlast his enemies, if he was ever placed under siege. Best of all, there was room for almost all of the Deerhunters and their families inside the nearly mile long twin tunnels, if they had to hole up there.

The East River Mountain checkpoint aside, Burkesson and Warren were partners in controlling the surrounding small towns of Princeton and Rocky Gap, on either end. They, like the West Virginia Guard and the Rebel Brigade Knights, were a part of the Unified Command of New America, but they also held their private fiefdoms like neofeudal warlords. That was the only way that the larger cities of Lynchburg and Roanoke had been ethnically cleansed of their New African citizens and tribal warriors, just by sheer force of arms. Every White family that was liberated from the yoke of New African oppression in Virginia became eternally grateful, and indebted to the Deerhunters. For now, The Big O held Highway 29 as the North-South boundary of the cleansed New American domain. When they pushed further towards Richmond and the huge numbers of blacks which starvation and inter-tribal warfare had not killed off, there, Burkesson knew that they would need more fighters. That was why he was recruiting young men as warriors from the farms and villages under his control. Earl had set up a basic training school in the tunnels for them, and every few weeks a new class of

twenty or thirty was ready to join the ranks of the Deerhunters, and carry the Griffin forward.

Burkesson's dream was to be the first New American commander to liberate an Atlantic port, and so break the nation's dependence on the St. Lawrence Seaway route. It would sure be good not to have to play so nice with those frogs up in Quebec. The large red-bearded Viking had his eye on Norfolk. It might take a while, but if Earl Warren kept training the troops for him, Burkesson knew it was just a matter of time until he did on this end of the continent what the Mormons had done on the other end, and driven all the way to sea.

Sistine smile, you'll never know the trap it's set and if you did you'll never look into its eyes…

It was on a hot Tuesday afternoon, just after the fifth anniversary of Cinco Day, when Ben overheard two of his students talking about a 'final solution to the Muslim problem'. The tone and the phrasing sent chills up his spine. Rosenfeldt didn't consider them to be the brightest kids in his class, but they probably didn't care as much about his business course as they did biology and chemistry, based on their schedules. They had lingered after class was over, and were either too enthralled with the notes they were making, adding to a diagram of protein bonds, or they just didn't care if he overheard them.

The former New Yorker knew that a few thousand Russian Jews, booted out by the ultra-nationalists after they had called for the New American mercenary legions to be arrested rather than allowed to leave, had arrived in Haifa over the last couple of months. They were still squawking about how Ferguson took orders from anti-Semites long after the point became moot, so they were deported to what was left of Israel. A handful of them had begun doing genetic research there at Haifa University, so he assumed they had done similar work in Russia. "Hit zikh, du host zikh shoyn eyn mol opgebrit!" he said to the two young men, but with a smile to take the sting off of it.

“This time we have the three most brilliant minds in the Russian Academy of Science on our side.” Yitzak answered him, in Hebrew. “The stupid Slavs didn’t know what gems they were throwing away!”

“They could have taken care of their border problems themselves if they would only have let Dr. Azarov and Dr. Magen have a free rein,” the second one, Moshe, added. “ Especially with Professor Rabinovich’s membrane sheath for the stability of the cell nuclei…” Ben nodded as if he understood, but science was really not his thing. Besides, if he missed his bus, he would have to wait an hour before the next one ran south to Atlit. He told the boys ‘Shalom!’ and gathered up his books.

The next day as he pulled weeds in the communal garden and watered the compost piles of recycled waste, Ben thought about what they had said. When he got back to the Chateau Pelerin where he shared the tower with a cat to keep the mice down, and few others, he searched the castle until he found an old book he had remembered seeing among his eclectic collection. It was a banned book here, but ‘The Other Side of Deception’, when he finally found it, did have a passage about the Nes Tsiona biological warfare laboratory. The head of the science department had told him openly over lunch one day that he used to work there, but it hadn’t clicked. They had used captured Palestinians and Iraqis to isolate Arab genetic sequences so that a virus could be designed specifically to target that population group. He tried to understand what he was reading, but he learned just enough to be able to talk about it intelligently.

As his Thursday business class ended, he casually walked up to Moshe and asked him, “So, let me guess… glycoprotein gp120?” The cryptic sounding question elicited a grin and nod from the student.

“Yes, and a ‘stealth’ antigenic determinant to enable the biological agent to breach the host immune defenses.” Moshe said, proudly.

Ben whistled appreciatively, but nearly threw up, a little bit, in his mouth.

Rosenfeldt couldn't think of anyone he could trust who would listen to him. After what the rump state of Israel had been through, most of the remaining Jews would consider what the virologists were planning a great idea, he imagined. They had only stopped slinging nukes because they had run out of them, after all. What was going to happen next could make what had happened to Beirut, Damascus, Cairo, Tripoli, and Amman look kind. He felt a great weight of dread. This was the kind of thing he wished he didn't know. It was something, though, that couldn't be forgotten or unlearned.

As the days passed and turned into weeks, he began to think that maybe the biological warfare work had simply been theoretical, or wish-fulfillment fantasy. Perhaps cooler heads had prevailed. Then one day a 'smog alert' was announced for the strip of coast still in Jewish hands. That was a first. Citizens were advised to remain indoors until a low pressure inversion moved off into the Mediterranean. The clear blue sky, looking like it always did in this part of the world, gave the lie to the government's warning.

The bad thing about having such a small country was that it was impossible to hide it when your guided missile cruisers launched their racks northeast and southeast in great plume-trailing arcs. Dozens of them. Ben knew what they meant. He could only pray against his own people, that their plan failed, that the bioweapons didn't work. The wait for confirmation was brief. In days, the BBC reported a virulent influenza strain was ravaging Baghdad, and had sickened thousands. Before the Islamic State could enact a regional quarantine, it had jumped to Basrah. Within days it showed up almost simultaneously in Homs, Aleppo, and Adana. Down-sized Israel, with its ten mile wide no man's land buffer zone at the fringe of their borders in every direction, sat back and watched. The disease destroyed the immune system like latter-stage HIV, and hit the respiratory system like an enterovirus, but

affected the internal organs of victims like Ebola. By the time it manifested in Mosul and Arbil, it was clear that this was an airborne pathogen, and had a 90% mortality rate.

Russia shut down its new borders, as did Iran, but ten thousand were dead in Tehran in a week. Greece and Bulgaria put tanks on their frontiers with the Islamic State, and all European airports shut down. Travel restrictions went into place across Eurasia. Somehow the genetic indicator for the specific Arab genome mutated in the slums of Karachi, and became more generalized, less specific and recessive in its targeting. Any genetic haploid group X hosts, suddenly, would do. That meant that anyone in the world with any Asiatic ancestry was susceptible…including East Indians, Chinese…and Ashkenazi Jews. Vi me bet zikh ois, azoi darf men shlofen.

And in the streets the children screamed The lovers cried and the poets dreamed But not a word was spoken
The church bells all were broken…

The Russian Ambassador knocked hesitantly on John's outer office door. Sergei Sergeivich Krispov had been up for nearly three days and nights, monitoring reports from home. All of the best doctors from St. Petersburg to Kazan were compiling their field research and statistics from the outbreaks in Saratov and Omsk. He welcomed being summoned to a conference with the New American Speaker on the situation as a break from the grim numerical horror.

The newest strain of the Turkish Flu which was virulent in the southern and far eastern reaches of the Russian Federation seemed to only be affecting those with Haplogroup M, an East Eurasian admixture, representing another mutation of the virus. Of the Eastern Slavs, this only meant that 2.2% of the population was susceptible to infection. The original virus only affected 9/1228 samples (0.7% of the nation's population) which fell into haplogroups C, Q, and R2 that were specific to East and South

Asian populations. By his calculations, that collectively amounted to almost 3% of the Federation population.

The other East Slavs in Belorussia and the Ukraine were reporting similar infection rates, but without the higher East Eurasian and Asian population groups that Russia had in the Stans and other border countries under their control or influence. They were working fast in Kiev, too. Sergei Sergeivich was not concerned with their problems, right now. According to the State Health Ministry in Moscow, at the current Turkish Flu mortality rate of 70-80% with modern medical treatment, Russia anticipated losing 3,432,000 of its citizens. Nothing compared to what North America or even China or India had suffered over the last decade, but devastating, nonetheless. 'Well,' he thought wryly as Kip buzzed him in, at least we will finally solve the controversy of how many Russians, and how many Slavs, for that matter, have a Mongol in his family tree'.

As John told the Russian Ambassador, the growing global health crisis had forced him to make nominating a Surgeon General to a Cabinet level position in his administration a priority. With five years left to go under the Provisional Government, it was nearly certain that the Turkish Flu would find its way to the continent before a new government would be elected. Seeing to it that everything that could be done was done in way of preparation for the inevitable was clearly his responsibility. According to Sergei, right now that meant developing nonantibiotic prophylaxis, anticipating mutant disease factors, and stockpiling oral electrolyte replacements, bronchodilators, and asthma medications such as albuterol. He mentioned that some success had been achieved with good old fashioned tetracycline, depending on how badly the host's immune system had been degraded by the virus.

"Here, we only anticipate having to worry about those of our citizens who do have a real, rather than imagined or mythical, Native American admixture," McNabb told the Russian

Ambassador. “Realistically, that’s maybe two percent of our population, or less. We’ve begun mandatory D.N.A. testing of all of our national and state leaders and military officers, just to be safe.”

“So that none of your command and control is compromised when the Turkish Flu arrives, da?” Sergei asked. Kip had joined them for the discussion, a glass of water in hand.

“Exactly. They’ll be removed from their position, as a safeguard, if the D.N.A. test results warrant it. We will call it ‘proactive triage’. Anyone who starts coughing and has a fever is a carrier, but only to those who aren’t of wholly European ancestry. In fact, if the future vectors of mutation follow the current progressions, potentially the entire Mexican population with an Asiatic admixture would be affected. That’d be upwards of ninety percent of their people.” John commented, not sounding very concerned.

“And,” Kip added, “not just in Aztlan’s territory, but throughout Central and South America, too.”

Both of the other men nodded thoughtfully. “We know what it will do to our remaining American Indians, they’ll practically be extinct,” John said. “And the Eskimos, Inuit, whatever, too. But does your government’s research predict anything about any effect of the virus on Mediterranean populations?”

“Nyet, this has not been a priority for us,” Sergei answered. “But the North Italian Republic is undertaking some highly motivated research into that potentiality as we speak.”

“I bet they are,” Kip remarked. “What are the casualty rates looking like this morning?”
“Massive. The London Times and Le Temp give current losses at over twenty million in Iran, thirty million in the Islamic State, and ten million each in Pakistan and China and India…all climbing by the hour. Tens of thousands dead in the Stans, and thousands already in Russia, itself.” John quoted. Sergei cursed bitterly in

Russian, shaking his head in a way that made his long moustache flop.
“What we’d like to know, if you know, is whether it’s true that this…Turkish Flu…looks to have been created in a lab.” Kip asked Sergei. The younger man ran his hand through his shortcropped hair in frustration at the idea. “Was it militarized?”
“From what our virologists can determine, da, this is so. If we could find the original strain before the mutations, the patient zero, they call this, then we could know for sure. But, our best people believe it,” the tired Ambassador confirmed.
“So, the next question must be, who could and would do such a thing?” Kip asked.
John took off his glasses and raised them up to the light, before pulling a white handkerchief from his pocket and wiping the lenses free of dust. “Quo Vadis?, always. Who benefits? Who had motive?”
Kip and Sergei looked at each other. They were both were thinking the same thing. Neither of them wanted to be the first to say it out loud. “If you can prove this thing, what would you do?” Sergei asked.
“I don’t know,” the Speaker replied, putting his glasses back over his ears. “Probably send them a thank-younote. On the tip of an ICBM.” Sergei nodded, seriously.

And you run and you run to catch up with the sun but it's sinking. Racing around to come up behind you again.
The sun is the same in a relative way but you're older. Shorter of breath and one day closer to death…

In anticipation of the arrival of the Turkish Flu, Deseret began finishing up the deportation of the last of their American Indian subjects from their territories. The Utes and Paiutes had been moved out, one way or the other, the first year after Cinco Day, to make room for newly arriving Saints from all corners of North America. The Navajo and Shoshone hadn’t been far behind. But now that the Mexicans had retreated from west- central Arizona,

Kelly had to help coordinate the relocation of the Apaches, who were not as domesticated as she might have preferred.

Part of her job (in addition to spying on her boyfriend and betraying his trust, her brain screamed at her constantly) was forwarding intercepted communications by and to other factions and nations to the appropriate internal LDS governmental division. Usually, that meant the Department of Public Safety, but an item channeled to the Bureau of Displaced and Missing Persons caught her eye. As Kelly read the transcripts, her breath got short and her eyes began to water. She had almost stopped thinking about her sister. It had seemed stupid to keep Karen in her mind. Kelly had thought that she'd moved on. But if this was true, the odds were almost too certain. Karen was alive. Somehow, she had made it. Kelly almost gave thanks in prayer, but stopped self-consciously, then chided herself in annoyance and went ahead and did it, anyway. She had good reason.

Kelly felt like she had to tell somebody. As she went from office to office, she ended up telling everybody. In the aftermath of Cinco Day and the breakup, or the starving times which followed, they had all lost track of a friend or family member. The whole building shared in her celebration. She called Jimmy and told him, interrupting a meeting, but she didn't care, and neither did he, once he heard what it was about. The New American Ambassador to Deseret was the next to be called. Although he was cautious about making any promises, he said that he would do his best to get word to the legion in California that one of the rescued prisoners had a surviving family member willing to sponsor her return. Kelly then phoned her liaison with the Department of Public Safety, a woman she had trained to fill her old position. She asked her to have the local Deseret Gull commander in L.A. get in touch with the legion as soon as was feasible, to arrange Karen's transfer to LDS territory.

She couldn't wait to tell Josh. He would be so happy for her, too. Thinking of him and his sincere love for her (there, she had said

it, the “L” word!) made her feel guilty for a second. It wasn’t enough to overshadow her hope and joy, though. Not even close.

Come on baby, light my fire Try to set the night on fire…

Just a couple of years ago, slaving had been a dangerous but profitable occupation. His father had proven that it was an honorable way to make a living. Even losing a crew to the savage Hawaiian cannibals had only cut into the corporation’s profit margin temporarily. That was why, as the eldest son, Hoji Kiramitsu was chosen to be trained in the family business. The Chinese occupation had dwindled away from the home islands as their power faded, then surged again. As the Spring had brought the blossoms back to the trees, so did the ships bring more Chinese from the mainland back to Japan. They were flush with victory from their conquest of Korea, and eager to reestablish themselves on Hokkaido. So many of the village had died from hunger since their first invasion years ago that there was little left to take. Only two businesses survived, a fishing company and his family’s import/export venture. Even so, they had diversified into human cargo early on.

The returning Chinese took over the fishing off the coast, to feed themselves, which ruined the other family owned business attempting that. The invaders travelled back and forth from the mainland to the islands, buying the slaves Hoji’s father provided them from his crew’s voyages and taking them back to use as entertainment or novelty servants. On their last visit, one of them had been rudely coughing during the negotiations. After the slaves were loaded, his father complained of feeling ill, and went to lie down. By the next morning, he was very sick, and choking. Hoji ordered a slave to make him some food, then went to select a crew from his father’s sailors. It was time for him to show that he could lead the family business.

The slaves the hated Chinese paid the most for were the pale round eyed ones, especially females, especially if they had different colored hair or eyes. All of the small pockets of such

people scattered in and near the home islands had been scooped up long ago. The nearest place he or any of the sailors knew of where they could be found was halfway across the ocean, in Hawaii. It was a strange, wild place, which they rarely visited. The trip was long each way, and it wasn't easy to catch the White slaves alive. When they could be caught, though, they sold for a nice sum. With one boatload, he could become rich, and make his father proud. Hoji took two.

The trip to Hawaii, the older sailors who had been there and knew the way told him, could be sailed in two weeks, so they packed enough food and water for the trip, and set off eastwards. On the first day out, two of the deckhands on the other converted fishing boat became sick. It began with a wracking cough. One said he was too weak to row, and had trouble breathing. Hoji thought they must have caught the same cold that his father had gotten, probably from the Chinese traders. When he pulled alongside them the next day to ask why they were falling behind, half the crew was down with it. One of the men had died. His body was thrown overboard, into the sea.

By the end of the first week, all but four of the ten man crew in the other ship had died, after bleeding from all of their body openings. One of the sailors in his own complained of a fever, too. Two days later, only two were left in the second boat. Hoji had to make a choice, to either abandon it, or tow it. They were over halfway there, now, and towing it would slow them down too much, so he had his men load the supplies onto their ship, and set the other one adrift. The two men left from the other boat, and three from his own, began to worsen.

When they had been out for eleven days, one of the sick man had begun to regain some strength after drinking more water. Hoji ordered all of the sick to be given as much water as they could drink, to replace what they were messily losing from both ends. They certainly had more than enough to spare, now. Still, three more became sick, and two had died during the night. Another

died the next day, leaving Hoji and six others alive, two of them too sick to help sail the ship. This voyage was going so wrong. It was a catastrophe. The gods had frowned on him, because of his arrogance, Hoji told his shrinking crew, and now they would all die because of him. His father would be dishonored, and his family ashamed. The next morning, his face felt hot, and he sweated even before the sun rose over the horizon in front of them. Before it set behind them, though, they could see low islands ahead, with palms. A volcano stood out in the distance.

It took all of the next day for them to sail to where the oldest among them said the best slaves had come from, the White ones. But when they found the right island with its big harbor and city, there were large ships everywhere. Hoji thought that he was hallucinating at first. His mind had been wandering all day. His body shook with the bad cough that all of them but two fought, now. But they all saw it, so it must be true. They were something none of them had seen for what seemed like half a lifetime: American warships! The navy which had died had risen again. Hoji's crew cried out in despair, thinking that these were ghost ships come to punish them for seeking their people as slaves. The smaller boats buzzing around the harbor were close enough to be real, though. One of them turned toward Hoji's fishing boat. Grabbing the rudder handle, he steered the boat back eastwards, the only direction not blocked by floating steel monsters. He knew that they could only outrun the patrol boat if they lost interest and turned away. In a few minutes, not hearing the engine grow louder and closer, he dared to look back. Either they hadn't really seen them, or they had gotten bored and gone elsewhere. There was no pursuit.

As the short crew chased the dawn over the next few days, three more of them died, but the rest seemed to recover. The four survivors gradually stopped losing control of their bodies, then were able to eat and hold some rice down. They pushed their dead friends overboard. The sails had remained tacked in an easterly setting, even as they had lain half-dead. Another night

and dawn and they were able to clean the boat. Along with their supplies, they caught some fish to eat, and refilled their water barrels partway during a couple of rainstorms that caught them from behind and drove them on, faster. Many times Hoji thought to turn around, but his shame at having lost one of the family's ships and letting his father down would not allow him to go back. He would keep going until he made his fortune, and return in triumph, to make his father proud and honor his family's name. He had no idea that his father and nearly everyone in their village was already dead from their version of the Turkish Flu. The three sailors with him cast glances, but they had no choice. They must obey.

They avoided the little islands that told them they were close to land again. He didn't want just any land, Hoji wanted a land of riches, a land to conquer. All four were still were fighting a wet cough as an aftereffect of their sickness when they came to the beach. There were no lights in the town above, but plenty of people, even darker than them, came out to see the wondrous site. Food was brought to the four mysterious strangers, and clean water, and clean clothes, because they looked and smelled like demons. A priest came out in black robes and crossed himself, questioning them in Spanish. Hoji sat quietly until a policeman of some kind arrived. He could speak and understand a few words of English, which the sick men haltingly remembered. Just enough to let the village know that they were lost Japanese fishermen.

The policeman was suspicious, and kept asking Hoji if they were from China. The Chinese didn't seem to be well liked, here. It was decided that he would let them sleep in the city jail for tonight, until the 'jefe' of the town could decide what to do with them. The townspeople herded along behind the four men excitedly jabbering as they were walked to the jail. The name 'Ensenada' was stenciled on a sign outside the main gate. Inside, they were allowed to use the toilet, then given more water, before being left alone. The four discussed their situation briefly, but decided in the

end that they would have to accept whatever tomorrow brought. Hoji was so exhausted that he was almost asleep already when the first guard began coughing, later that night.

I won't forget you baby
Memories slowly fade
I won't forget you baby
And all the plans we made…

The jagged peak of a broken pyramid blocked out the rising moon, casting the sullen river into darkness. Close to the bank, the NAS Nebraska rose to the surface, and poked its head out of the Mississippi. Minutes later a small group of men emerged to inflate a raft topside. Their assignment was to scout the city for hostiles ahead of the Razorback Regiment which would be crossing from West Memphis just before daylight.

Since they had come down out of the hills, the New American militia and the Knights Committee Crusaders who would be carrying out the principle entry over the I-40 bridge had been on high alert. The flat farmland forming the edge of the fertile delta was rich enough to grow crops to feed millions, but most of the blacks in this area had starved over the last five years. Some had migrated south to areas of denser population in New Africa, and been caught up in the tribal warfare there. Even so, they weren't taking any chances. The first wave of Razorback Regiment volunteers tasked with crossing the river on a barge and holding the far side of the bridge had gone through the nearly empty town of Batesville a week earlier, on horseback. They saw only a few people, all White, in the town, mainly shopkeepers. Still, they were welcomed and cheered as they rode through without stopping. The Crusaders who stopped to meet with the Chief of Police and Mayor two days later in a convoy of trucks weren't as big of a surprise to the residents, then.

The goal of 'Operation Graceland' was to lance the last festering sore in the upper south. The long-awaited E.C.O. (Ethnic Cleansing Operation) of Memphis would not only make

Tennessee whole again, it would give New America control of the vital upper Mississippi River. The waterway was crucial for transport from the upper south to and from the midwest. Connecting to the navigable Illinois, Ohio, and Missouri Rivers, it would further unite the young nation.

Speaker McNabb had visited the New American Coast Guard office which had expanded to take up the sixth and seventh floors of the former Federal building in St. Louis, personally. As a department of the Unified Command, it was technically under General Harrison's direction, but the Commander-inChief's failing health over the last few months had required John to devote more and more time to defense matters. The doctors had diagnosed Harrison with prostate cancer, and were running tests to determine how far it had spread. The General was such a hero to the country he had helped to create that in every school classroom in New America, children began their day by saying the new pledge of allegiance, singing the new anthem 'America The Beautiful', and praying for General Harrison. It was in the hands of God, and the doctors.

That new pledge, written by Carolyn and introduced by her to the Old Courthouse press corps during the second year of the Provisional Government, stated: "I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the Republic of New America, and to the White nation for which it stands, united, under God, of free will, for the future of our people above all."

The Speaker's official meeting at the Coast Guard office had been brief and perfunctory. This was a courtesy, him going to them rather than summoning the Nebraska's Commander to his office at the O.C.. It showed that the man who headed up the department consisting of his submarine, four large pre-collapse Coast Guard Cutters that had made their way upriver from the Gulf past New African ports, five motor life boats, and eight Defender class response boats was more than just a subordinate, and they were more than just river patrollers. The NACG were an

equal partner in the Unified Command, where rivalries between the former branches still caused resentment, from time to time. Even though the remainder of their fleet patrolling from Minneapolis as well as Pittsburgh and Cincinnati (through the Ohio) all the way to the capital consisted of commandeered and converted river yachts and cruisers, they kept the inland waterways safe. The Coast Guard's involvement in 'Operation Graceland' was crucial, and involved a motor life boat crew escorting a tug boat downriver with a barge that would land on the west bank, load fifty mounted infantry and their mounts, and ferry them across to the east bank and offload them, as quickly and quietly as possible. In the dark, without their running lights. If that weren't enough, the Nebraska would be inserting a forward recon team to precede the primary mission, then withdrawing them after the city was secured. Piece of cake.

Jonesboro had been a more diverse town before Cinco Day, and when the wheels started to fly off of multiracial democracy, the city fathers had attempted to promote tolerance and diversity with a peace vigil. While much of Memphis demonstrated further south and the surviving Whites fled their former neighbors, much smaller flames had been struck in Jonesboro for a candlelit march. They had even carried a coffin labeled 'racism' downtown to a city lot, and ceremonially buried it, with much prayer and music and shucking and jiving. That had been a half decade ago. When the Razorback Regiment's horses clomped through the debris-filled streets of the small city, the dismembered townspeople's skeletons from the race riots which had followed were still intermingled with the trash in the gutters. Several of the militiamen took off their hats out of respect, while others solemnly spit in disgust. They all rode on.

Barely far enough behind them not to spook the horses, the Crusaders turned south onto I-55, only slowing when they neared the rendezvous point. They had spotted their first blacks in Marked Tree, just a few dark scarecrows in rags who had ran from the sound of their engines. When they entered West

Memphis, on the Arkansas side of the river, more of them could be seen, peering in amazement as they passed. Sitting in the back of a pickup slowly swinging his AK variant to cover the gaping blacks, Squire Wilson Haynes thought that it was like that cargo cult movie, about the gods being crazy. He doubted that these people, to use a generous term, had seen a running car, or a White person, in years. Most of them hadn't seen a shower in that time, either, by the look and smell of things.

There were three companies of Crusaders in the convoy of fifty vehicles, which included pickup trucks, National Guard troop carriers, a few APCs, and many SUVs, as well as New American Humvees. The 278 men were hardened from fighting the rampaging Indians in Oklahoma, and ready for new sport. Once the opposite end of the bridge was secured, they would go across I-40 on foot. It would have been nice to just cruise in, but every bridge out of the city was still clogged with the dead cars from the fatal traffic jam that had been caused by fleeing Whites attempting to get out of town at the last minute.

While the Razorback Regiment coaxed their skittish horses onto the barge moored under the Henando De Soto bridge, the Crusaders left their vehicles with a platoon to guard them at Dacus Lake, and continued on foot. For over two miles, they walked single-file, in between and sometimes crawling over cars that were, in many cases, the tombs for the refugees who had been trapped when the black rioters had blocked the offramps at the end of the bridge and begun throwing gasoline bombs into the roadway. Wilson was glad that the smell was long gone, but it still was spooky. As he had first started scraping by between the burnt out wrecks, he had determined to pay respect to the dead by counting the remains he could see as he passed. In his lifetime in the Ozarks, he had never seen such a sight. In some places the fire had made it hard to tell, or whole families were jumbled and melted together in a tangle. There were windows kicked out when the concrete walls had been too close, and doors cracked open where they hadn't been. Piles of shoes and old cell phones

showed where a number of the refugees had decided to jump from the bridge, instead of burning alive. The Squire doubted many had survived the fall or the swim a half mile to shore, or what awaited them on the bank, if they did.

A tug boat, covered by the machine gun crew and spotters on board the nearby Coast Guard motor life boat, pulled the barge away from the concrete bank below. The Crusaders could hear the thrum of the straining engine and the splash of water not quite masking the nervous whinnies of frightened horses. The Forward Recon Team from the Nebraska, just upriver, established sniper positions amid the broken glass sheets of the pyramid, which a crashing plane had plowed into during the collapse. Haynes finally lost count of the bodies he passed in their scorched sepulchers. He had been at 314, last he noticed. He couldn't understand why so many had waited so long to get out of the majority nonWhite city. Hadn't they seen the news? Didn't they know what was coming? Why were they so apathetic, so complacent? Because they hadn't listened, and waited too long, it had cost them their lives, and the lives of their families, along with them. They had woken up after the break up, and found themselves on the wrong side of the front lines, and it had been their own damn fault.

Even without any lights onboard the barge or the tug, Wilson could faintly see it heading diagonally across the river in the moonlight. It would land, according to plan, at the park on Mud Island. The sound of its passing faded. Suddenly, a silent hand gesture command was passed down the line from Andrew, the Crusaders' young commander in the front. Apparently they had run into something which hadn't been included in the detailed aerial photographs and reports from Lambert's flyovers. Wilson waited, pushing his longish brown hair back under his cap. After a few moments, the line began snaking forward again, around and in between and over the wreckage, like a bloated chicken snake, he thought. Halfway across, after he had passed the Tennessee state line marker in the middle of the bridge, the fire damage

petered out. Here, all of the doors were open, and all of the cars empty. The Squire was relieved by this until he came downhill to the east side of the bridge, and found what had caused the delay. Massed along the two onramps on either side and from N. Front Street to N. Second, the asphalt was scattered with bleached bones, many of them still in rags. It had been a massacre.

Once they had gotten off the barge at Mud Island and calmed their horses, the Razorback Regiment had experienced the same problem getting off the island up its narrow access walk. The mounts spooked at the sounds of skulls and ribcages crushing underneath their hooves, and the men did, too. Before the Crusaders' point had reached the city, though, the mounted infantry fanned out past the Crowne Plaza and checked out the St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, where they had seen fires burning on some lower floors. By the time they arrived, however, the inhabitants had scattered, leaving their miserable possessions behind. There were clear indications of cannibalism around the cookfires.

Despite the obvious signs of recent occupation, no hostiles were encountered throughout the entire following day. Wilson seemed to have been right, there did seem to be cargo cults which had piled heaps of jewelry and stacks of flatscreen tvs into alters on various street corners. Now, though, those corners were the territory of packs of wild dogs which watched the advance of the mounted infantry with hungry eyes. It was simply too large a city for a force their size to sweep completely, but at the end of the first full day in Memphis encampments were established in Morris, Greenlaw, and Winchester Parks, and all of the city west of those areas declared clear zones.

Over the next two days, the Forward Recon Team established an overwatch position on the roof of a luxury hotel downtown which used to feature ducks coming down on the elevator to swim in a fountain in the thoroughly looted lobby. The ducks had probably been eaten long ago. 'Operation Graceland's first casualty came

on day three, just a few blocks away. A large herd of blacks moving north from Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue ambushed a Razorback Regiment patrol liberating historical artifacts from the Sun Records Studio museum. These were the first encountered face to face, since the E.C.O. had begun. The attack by three dozen or so was broken up by a magnificent mounted charge which drove the blacks back down to Beale Street, but not before one trooper was struck in the left hip by a metal spear thrown from behind the hulk of a Cadillac in the intersection. His injury wasn't immediately life threatening, and roughly half the attacking force were put down before they vanished into the alleyways and side streets beyond further pursuit. The same unit of Razorbacks secured the iconic statue of Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest just down Union Ave. that same day, but it had been toppled and defaced.

The tigers which had escaped from the adjoining zoo ruled the Overton Park golf course, living off the packs of feral dogs which they hunted in turn after the big dogs ate the little dogs. "That's how the world works," Squire Haynes said to Jim, as the two hunted the big cats from the roof of the Brooks Museum of Art. He stretched his long legs out behind him. The collection below had been left unvandalized because of the feline predators patrolling the area, but they had to be killed before the park could be added to the cleared zone list. The younger, dark-haired Page acted as Wilson's spotter as he tracked a female in the tall grass. His BAR 30.06 dispatched her quickly and mercifully through the scope. Both of them agreed that they regretted shooting the big cats a lot more than their usual targets. Haynes didn't even like having to shoot the dogs, but most of them were second generation, and had never been anybody's pet.

On the sixth day of the E.C.O., the Tennessee Volunteers militia entered the city from the east, occupying Bartlett, Germantown, and Cordova with a force of over 1,300 mechanized infantry under the Unified Command. The mass of this body of troops, led by Colonel Brian Owens, encountered only fleeting resistance as

they drove the few hundred remaining blacks from both north and south into the massive Shelby Farms park, and established pickets around its perimeter. Hardly a dozen Volunteers, Crusaders, and Razorbacks had been killed in the fighting, all in hand to hand combat, for the whole city. The Razorback Regiment and Crusaders concentrated on continuing to clear the area inside the I-40 loop, as previously planned. The day after the Crusaders linked up with the Volunteers at the Fogleman Expressway, the Forward Recon Team redeployed back to the Nebraska, which returned to its home port in St. Louis.

After the interior loop had been declared clear and the airport was secured, the remaining surviving natives were herded into Shelby Farms with the rest. Overall, just over 2,000 were concentrated there, with standing orders to shoot any who tried to leave. The rest had vacated the city or starved or been killed in intertribal warfare over the years. In time, they would be liquidated, or moved south past the Mississippi line by the Tennessee troops. It wasn't Squire Haynes' problem, either way. Standing in front of the graffiti-covered white columns, Wilson reflected on how much had been lost. The tall, thin hillbilly wished he'd made it here sooner. He and Jim led a team through the surprisingly small rooms, to the cramped basement bar, then back upstairs and past the fallen velvet ropes to the second story. They would salvage what they could. Then they would hand over the final cleanup and reoccupation of their city to the Volunteers. By the end of the summer the Crusaders and Razorbacks would be back home, the TVA hydroelectric dams they had back online now would bring power back to the city, and it would probably grow as big as St. Louis or even Chicago, after a while. The Squire took a final walk around to the grave out by the empty swimming pool, before loading up the duffel bag full of souvenirs he had gathered and climbing back into the truck. 'Operation Graceland' was a success.

Chapter Ten

“My feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them and who, God's truth! was greatest not as a sufferer but as a fighter. In boundless love as a Christian and as a man I read through the passage which tells us how the Lord at last rose in His might and seized the scourge to drive out of the Temple the brood of vipers and adders. How terrific was his fight against the Jewish poison. Today, after two thousand years, with deepest emotion I recognize more profoundly than ever before the fact that it was for this that He had to shed his blood upon the Cross.” -Adolf Hitler

There were days when the sun was so cruel
That all the tears turned to dust and I just knew my eyes were drying up forever…

In St. Louis, the roll call of the Executive and his cabinet came first: “Speaker of the House Lt. Gen. John Wayne McNabb, present. Secretary of State Lt. Gen. Mark Smith, present. Secretary of Defense Major General Fred Grace, absent. Attorney General Jason McAllister Roberts, present. Commander in Chief Brigadier General Nathaniel Harrison, present…” the Sergeant - At-Arms boomed out over the public address system of the Old Courthouse’s largest courtroom, now converted to legislative purposes. The opening of the new session was being broadcast live around the country on Post Dispatch TV, and around the world on BBC North America and RTV from Moscow.

Each of the representatives from the 32 New American states stood in turn as the name of their constituency was announced. “Alaska, …Whitehorse, …British Columbia, …Washington, … Oregon, …North California, …Alberta, …Montana, …North Idaho, …Saskatchewan, …Manitoba, …Wyoming, …Dakota, …

Nebraska, …Kansas, …Minnesota, …Iowa, …Missouri, …North Arkansas, …Wisconsin, …North Michigan, …Illinois, …South Michigan, …Indiana, …Ohio, …Kentucky, …West Virginia, … Tennessee, …West Pennsylvania, …Oahu, …Emerald Coast… and nonrepresentative observers from the territories of East Colorado, Virginia, and Northeast Oklahoma were present, as well. One of the first scheduled topics for discussion on the itinerary was whether the liberated areas of Virginia would remain an independent territory under expansion, or be annexed to West Virginia.

Speaker McNabb opened the session with his beginning comments. .. “Welcome to you all, my fellow New Americans. The work of our Provisional Government is now half done, but the work of each of us, and of our nation, is just beginning. Over the last five years since the redefinition of the nature of our mutual association, we have created a new nation on the firm foundations of the old, its founding people. That nation continues to grow, not only in population numbers and in geographic boundaries, but in terms of our sharpening and lengthening teeth and claws. One of the most important figures in building the defense of our nation, the last surviving member of the former Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Fred Grace, is gravely ill, as many of you know. Our prayers are with Fred tonight, as they have been for some time. But the greatness of our nation is that none of us are larger than the nation, and none of us can be irreplaceable. We are all expendable. That being said, it’s hard to imagine anyone ever being able to fill Fred’s boots. Over the last week, I have been discussing his health and our needs as a nation with Gen. Grace. I have also discussed the potential need with my chosen nominee for the position. We have agreed that, pending the approval of this body by a majority vote, upon the successful cessation of his current mission in California, I will ask Major General Gerald “Ferocious” Ferguson to join our team, and my cabinet, as the next Secretary of Defense. Commensurate with that position, and in
acknowledgement of his heroic leadership of the American

Foreign Legions under the most difficult circumstances since the end of the former government, Gen. Harrison has granted Gen. Ferguson a promotion to Lieutenant General. So, we're going to be top heavy with those." Polite chuckles answered him. "But, for those of you counting stars, in order to do that, technically, we have to combine the civilian and military authority of the Executive. If that additional measure is approved by a majority vote of this body, then I would like to announce the promotion of Brigadier General Nathaniel Harrison to General of the Army. That's all five stars, Nathaniel."

Gen. Harrison and Gen. Smith looked at each other. They had known it was coming, but there was a moment of indecision about how the Congress would react to John's bold move. Attorney General Roberts' legal opinion was that, with the entrenchment of a unicameral legislative body selecting from among their own a Speaker with all of the powers of a Chief Executive, the only way to ward off an eventual conflict between the civilian and military authorities was to combine them. As the 35 men and women unanimously stood and applauded, chanting his name, McNabb knew that he had won them over.

When they finally set back down and allowed him to continue, John adjusted his glasses on his face and waxed philosophical. "You all know, too, that we face unknown challenges in the future. As we sit here tonight, what appears to be a strain of the Turkish Flu is ravaging across Mexico and into southern California. Thus far, we are not certain that our population will remain safe from this disease, so health care provisions are being made, just in case. Now, I don't want non-Whites in my country in any form or fashion, or any status. None of us do, we've made that clear, and enacted legislation to ensure that remains the codified law of the land, just as our Founding Fathers did in 1790 with the Naturalization Act, their own original definition of the qualifications for citizenship. Let's hope we stick to it better than they did, this time around, right?"

Three dozen heads nodded in agreement. "But, we still need to be prepared, just in case the virus mutates and jumps across genetic lines again. I know that all of you will join with me in

praying that does not happen. In the meantime, we can rely on the Turkish Flu to remove these minor-league amateur races out of the game, and refine the playoff brackets a bit, if you get my meaning, just like the Cardinals are doing this year!" the Speaker continued. Several of the other representatives, loyal to their own home teams in the reinvigorated national pastime, booed his last comment good-naturedly. John may not have won their hearts and minds, but with the promise of the power of Commander-in-Chief whenever he got tired of talking and called for a vote, he had them by the throats, and their hearts and minds would follow.
McNabb closed his speech with a prayer for the continued blessings of God over His covenant people, then asked for a voice vote on both resolutions. Ferguson's nomination for Secretary of Defense, and the combination of the civilian and military powers within the Executive, were both passed without dissent or abstention. As the new Executive proviso was being codified by a gaggle of lawyers-turned Congressmen supervised by the Attorney General, a courier came running into the room, right into the black clad arms of John's ubiquitous S.S. bodyguards. He was waving excitedly at the Speaker. John paused looking over the lawyers' shoulders and walked over to see what all the excitement was about. A few words were exchanged, then the Speaker ran back to the microphone at the podium, the same podium that had saved his life during the assassination attempt five years before and still bore the scars of that bomb, as he did. McNabb tapped on the microphone rapidly, to get everyone's attention. As they looked up in consternation, he yelled out quickly, "Hey, sorry, guys, I gotta get to the hospital, my wife just went into labor, we're having another baby!" Louder applause than before filled the room as the most powerful man on the continent ran for his car, while his security team tried to keep up.

As I walked out on the streets of Laredo. As I walked out on Laredo one day,
I spied a poor cowboy wrapped in white linen, Wrapped in white linen as cold as the clay…

Most folks didn't realize it, but Juarez was five times the size of El Paso. Cpl. Brown and his squad looked like desperadoes with their bandanas over their mouths and noses, but they weren't here to rob a train. The stench of thousands of rotting corpses was still overwhelming, even after two or three weeks of drying out in the west Texas summer sun. Nancy and their other horses were skittish from the reek, as they trotted across the International Bridge, past the empty customs posts. The lanes were blocked in both directions by a mass of cars left when the sick and dying had begun driving in any direction at all. There had been no escape to the north or the south for those of even distant Asian heritage. That included Hispanics with Native American ancestors. Mike figured that the White casts of those Mexican soap operas might still be kicking, but they wouldn't have much of an audience left, these days.

A fter news of the spreading contagion in Mexico had reached President Bellefont's desk in Austin, he had first called a meeting with the best doctors the Republic of Texas had to offer. They had confirmed that as far as the reports they were getting indicated, the virus did not attack the immune systems or respiratory systems of people of wholly European ancestry, but there were some indications that all humans could be carriers of the disease. Perry then ordered Gen. Hampton, who was managing the recolonization of Houston, to mobilize all of their armed forces in the southern and western quadrants. If there was one thing the old politician could recognize, it was an opportunity.

Company B had been harassing the Republica del Norte supply lines into Santa Fe when the order came over, travelling faster west than the virus could surge north. The 23rd's Captain figured they had passed it heading up, as they went south. It was kind of a shame, he'd said, but taking back all of Texas if God's hand reached out offering it to them through the provenance of the Turkish Flu was their first priority. Of course, they hadn't been the only unit involved. Three other Republic of Texas Mounted Infantry companies had joined them outside of Las Cruces, as

they watched the funeral pyres for the dead there smoke up the sky. By the time they all got to El Paso, there was no more smoke, because there weren't enough Mexes left alive to dispose of the dead. Some squads peeled off the main body to investigate and secure specific points, as they spread out to cover as much ground as possible. Mike's platoon was going all the way to the end of the Republic's claim.

The border had been moot for five years, anyway, since it had been that long since it was a part of America, or seen by a White man. He had visited here when he was a kid, with his folks, but the 23rd Mounted Infantry soldier didn't remember it looking this run- down. Brown wished that he was with the Lieutenant checking out what military hardware might still be at Fort Bliss or Biggs Army Airfield back behind them, but he had his orders. Judging by the fact that all of the serviceable planes the reconquistadores had at Biggs and at the civilian airport next door they'd tried to take off to who-knows where in when the Turkish Flu burned its way across Sonora and Chihuahua, he doubted there was much left there, though. The Republic of Texas Air Force F-16s from Dyess that had shot them all out of the skies had done a good deed, Mike thought. They couldn't have those things falling out of the clouds onto innocent God-fearing White folks when the pilots started bleeding out their eyes, could they?

So far, there were only a handful of survivors in the city. They had all run from them, since that last idiot Norteno soldier who'd been standing guard all by himself at the New Mexico/Texas border. He had survived the Turkish Flu, just to die of lead poisoning. None of the immunes stuck around to ask for help, or to tell them to go to hell, or anything. The streets were pretty empty, just a few cats and a bunch of hungry dogs and a lot of dead bodies making the dogs less hungry. Cpl. Brown wondered if the disease or the rotted meat would make the animals sick. Juarez had always smelled like sewage in the summertime, the way most neighborhoods just swept their waste out into the streets to let it flow down the gutters. He did remember that smell. The ammonia

of it would almost be better than the too-sweet odor filling the streets, now. Once they got past the main highways, it looked like most people had shut up their houses and tried to avoid the virus. It had been airborne, but they probably hadn't known or understood that. Windows and doors were boarded up, and there were some signs of rioting. Spent shell casings, overturned barricades, a smashed up policia truck. All the tourist shops were trashed and looted, up and down the strip. Randy and Jared dismounted and checked a couple of closed doors at the front of the police station, and found them unlocked. The inside looked like a tornado had come through. Mike bet there were plenty of good medical supplies in all of the pharmacies, though. The ones that hadn't been looted. Those would be useful. He made a mental note to mention that to the Lieutenant.

As a Corporal, he had no way of knowing, but young soldiers similar to Mike were busy that week, and in the weeks and months to come, seizing control of places like Victoria, Corpus Christi, and McAllen. General Scott Hampton himself led the column repatriating all of the immune Hispanics from Texas who had survived the Turkish Flu to Monterrey. After they were all rounded up, the Latino survivors in the Republic about half filled the Mexican city, which had boasted a population of over a million before Cinco Day. By the end of the next year, it was discovered that only about ten percent of the children born to immunes inherited the resistance to the disease which their parents still carried. That meant that with each new generation, the Hispanic population would decrease by 90%. ¿Le gusta a usted aquí?

O when the Saints go marching in When the Saints go marching in O Lord I want to be in that number When the Saints go marching in…

The Aztlan defenders in San Diego had gone first, being closer to the primary continental disease vector. Nortenos there hadn't had much time to react, they'd just gotten sick and died. Gull and Beehive Brigades in Los Angeles had been able to ethnically

cleanse the survivors days later, extending LDS territory to Imperial Beach and claiming the port of San Diego in anticipation that Ferguson's legions would grab it up, if they didn't, first. Deseret's primary concern was making sure that the Church didn't get outmaneuvered by the New Americans on the west coast. That kept them from overextending themselves too thinly on the ground, or taking more territory than they could hold. It would take a lot of big families to fill the area, so their polygamy would be an asset, there. Eventually they worked their way down to Ensenada, where Saints found a half-crazed Japanese man living on the beach. He told them a bizarre story of being lost at sea and starving until he was so thin that he could slip between the bars of a jail cell, but they put him down as hopelessly insane and relocated him to Puerto Penasco with the rest.

The few days' warning that the Republica del Norte authorities in Arizona had received of the Turkish Flu's advance only served to throw them into a panic. The cartel administration was overthrown by a mob demanding vaccinations or immunization shots against the virus, treatments which noone could provide, not in Tucson, and not in Shenyang, where Premier Jiang fell ill from it and succumbed. The next stage of panic led to an intensive assault on Deseret forward positions throughout the state. Human wave attacks pushed LDS troops back to the edge of the Tonto National Forest, before the virus began to take its' toll on the reconquistadores from behind. Kelly was deeply immersed in the conflict as Salt Lake ordered their militia to fall back for ten miles along the Arizona front, to give the Nortenos room to die in. They obliged. The Mormon advance was resumed when the virus ran its course. One cartel leader had holed up in Davis-Monthan Air Force base with a few dozen of his most loyal men before the disease arrived, and remained quarantined from it. He held out against the Gull unit sent to eradicate him for a week, until the LDS forces used helicopters to drop infected Latinos onto the base, leading to his surrender. Because they had resisted, the Church did not bother to relocate the Latino immunes in Arizona, they simply euthanized them.

While Kelly had been busy doing her part to help the Saints expand Deseret southwards on all fronts, Josh had been busy keeping up with his own nation's conquests in the Republic of Texas. As the Ambassador, he had a lot of irons in the fire, too. They hadn't had much time together since the virus had hit the continent. She had missed their days and nights alone, but just keeping all of the different Church bureaucracies in line with the Council of Fifty's approval of the Treaty of Denver had taken all of her strength and energy. Even with Prophet Rammell himself meeting with the New American Secretary of State, Mark Smith, and shaking his hand at the agreement that Colorado east of the Rockies would be New American and west of them would be Deseret was not enough to keep some of the more militant missionary expansionists from grumbling that the territorial concessions were too generous. Some people just were never satisfied.

Then, at Jimmy's suggestion, Kelly was included in the diplomatic negotiations with Austin over the division of their two nation's spheres of influence, which eventually came to be understood as roughly the former Arizona/New Mexico state lines. It was fun for her to sit opposite Josh at the negotiating table and argue over water rights to Silver City and who had responsibility for disposing of the surviving Apaches during the day, and carrying on like a teenager with him to seal the deals, later at night.

She had just rolled out of bed to go pee when a knock came at her apartment door, early one morning. It was a uniformed Gull Sergeant, looking officious. Kelly thought for a moment that maybe they had decided to crack down on them, if they didn't need her any more. She'd probably be given a choice of marrying an elder and being a third or fourth sister wife, or being branded. Josh's diplomatic car was parked out front, for all of the world to see. She guessed they had been getting sloppy lately. Kelly was hopping from one foot to the other in her bare feet and nightie, trying to decide whether to yell to Josh to wake up and hide, or run and hide herself, when she saw a smaller figure standing

behind the broad-shouldered soldier on her steps. It was a woman, a woman who looked like her mother, a thinner and much older version of herself…suddenly Kelly threw the door open, recognizing her sister. Karen had come home.

I been all around this great big world
And I seen all kinds of girls
Yeah, but I couldn't wait to get back in the states Back to the cutest girls in the world…

The top eight floors of the TransAmerica Pyramid were still his. Ming's men were fighting like devils to slow the American Foreign Legion dogs clawing their way up the stairs. He could have made it. He could have won. He just hadn't had enough time. Harry Lee was somewhere above, camped out in an office suite sleeping what little remained of his life away. He had been so deep in depression that Ming had ordered two of the men to carry Lee up all 48 flights of stairs. Probably, that had been a foolish waste of time, on his part, he should have left him to die far below, along with the rest of his sell-out Chinese-Americans. Ming had always called Lee and his type of expatriates traitors, or twinkies: 'yellow on the outside, but White on the inside'.

Well, it wasn't the worst mistake he had made, Ming though despairingly. There had been a few. Sacrificing the mass of their human wave peasants on the legionary Centuries coming north from Santa Cruz would have been better than pulling them back to Milpitas, where the farmers had all dropped like flies once the virus spread up the coast, anyway. That had been a waste. Of course, Ming had already selected the best of his regular army units, the original People's Republic of China Humanitarian Expedition to North America Peacekeeping Forces, to fall back across the Dumbarton bridge with him while the other 4,000 held Ferguson in San Jose. The New American legion had been tricked into thinking that he was still there with the main body of his troops until the Turkish Flu had killed most of them. The Premier of a realm that had shrunk to this tower wished that he

could have seen Ferguson's face when he realized that Ming wasn't among the dead and dying.

It had been two weeks since he had been able to contact Jiang, and had no idea what was happening there, but the radio news reports broadcast in Chinese had ceased on the government frequency, too. Ming feared the worst. He had sacrificed another hundred men slowing Ferguson down at Millbare two nights ago, but the Americans had broken through that chokehold, too. The one thing he had going for him was that none of Ming's remaining 800 troops were infected. Aside from some isolated Pacific islands here and there, he might be the leader of the largest remaining uninfected Asian population group in the world. The thought made Ming proud, but sad at the same time.

Firing slacked off below. Reports from downstairs indicated that the legions were pulling back. Maybe they intended to starve him out, instead of wasting more men on a frontal assault upstairs, flight by flight. That was smart of them, Ming thought. A noise from the distance chilled his hope. As the high pitched roar of airborne jet engines screeched closer, Ming realized why the Americans had pulled back.

The first pattern of F-18s separated onto individual trajectories and launched their missiles at Lt. Matt Ball's order. The flight leader had waited until he could see that the nearest legionnaires were a block away from the base of the largest building in the city. As he called the shot, his own jet lurched from the launch, then was beyond the highest skyscrapers. Other plumes followed his in. He turned around over the Bay and made another pass.

The thick black smoke rose from above as the building shook under his feet with each impact. Ming had lost count of the floors as he made his way to the roof. The stairwells acted as natural chimneys, carrying the burning plastics and fumes upwards in a hot blast that worked inwards from each corner of the building. His eyes and lungs burned, and the men in front of him didn't move fast enough, while the men behind him were crushing what

little breath he had left right out of him. So much for Chinese discipline and orderliness, he thought. A narrow rectangle of light could be seen above, filling and emptying with men as they squeezed through in clumps to the deceptive freedom of the open air.

On his third pass, Matt saw that numerous impact points had crushed in the walls of the TransAmerica building at roughly the tenth and twelfth floors, below where forward legion units had reported the remaining enemy resistance to be concentrated. There was heavy structural damage on two sides, and gray and brown plumes obscured the top few floors. Out of the edge of that dark cloud, Lt. Ball glimpsed falling figures emerge. “Jumpers!” he said aloud to himself, like a curse.

Long ago, when he was a boy, he had been allowed to go to a park and play. The sun had been warm and there were green trees and soft grass and a pretty lady with a kind smile. At first when he had ran, he had fallen. Then, he tried again. That made the pretty lady smile. He had ran and ran until the wind had made his eyes tear up and it hurt to breathe. This time Ming knew better, and he would not stop running in the open air until he could make the pretty lady smile at him again, no matter how scared he was of falling.

“Take a sad song, and make it better…”

As an interview for a Cabinet level position, it wasn’t so f ormal as the post-collapse Senate hearings. In a laid-back style, the confident brunette told her life story since Cinco Day to the full session of Congress. At the Speaker’s request after his introduction of her, she began at the end.

From 140 miles away, the ground burst at Offutt had mirrored a new sun rising on the wrong side of the Earth. Dr. Tina Edwards still remembered how the tinted windows of her small family clinic in Des Moines had lit up like the extended flash of an oldfashioned camera. With no Medicaid or Medicare of

Obamacare working, her patients had started bringing in items to barter for medical care. It was surprising how few people got sick, sick enough to go to the doctor, when nobody else was paying for it. She had known that she was lucky to not be working in most cities, where the hospitals and clinics were overwhelmed not only with gunshot and stab wounds, but burns and shrapnel injuries, as they devolved into war zones. Still, she got enough business to get bartered fuel for her generator and eggs and meat for her supper.

She had just been starting the local anesthesia for a left thumb amputation on a farmer who had been trying to work on his tractor with a hammer when the long flash came. She looked up, and with a sinking feeling, knew immediately what it was. Ever since D.C. and Colorado Springs, Tina had expected other shoes to fall. She began to count down from the flash to the sound, which should follow in about four, three, two…the low rumbling thunder confirmed it. Omaha was gone. Some of her patients wandered out of the front lobby to gawk at the flattening fireball, despite Trish's telling them to stay inside. Her receptionist liked to be bossy, she even tried to act like she ran the clinic, sometimes, but this time, she was right. Limiting exposure was best, long-term. Once you reached a certain lifetime dose, over a hundred years or twenty, the odds of cancers spiked.

As she calmed the patient in her chair down and quickly finished the procedure, Tina's mind drug up medical school textbook sidebars. Let's see…R.E.M. meant "Roentgen Equivalent Man", and more than a couple hundred could be fatal short-term. Symptoms of radiation poisoning: sunburn, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy…sounded like a typical post-divorce weekend, for her. The smashed thumb came free with a twist and a snip. Discretely wrapped and into the biohazard marked baggie for medical waste. What were the treatment options before exposure? Avoid exposure. Okay, smartie-pants, failing that, she chided herself? Potassium Iodide, it blocked the thyroid from absorbing the harmful radiation. The stump bled weakly as she

began placing stitches into the flesh she'd left an inch above the bone joint. Okay, after exposure? Hydration, antibiotics to fight systemic infections, and a nice long shower. Didn't that count as hydration?

With her patient stitched and bandaged and sent on his way with a strip of her dwindling supply of percosets, Tina announced that the clinic was going to close for the day. At this point, her two remaining patients didn't care. Their psoriasis and diabetic edema were all but forgotten in the excitement of a nuclear bomb going off within sight. That didn't happen every day, around these here parts, she thought brattily. She sent Trish home, too, telling her that she would call her to let her know if they would be open tomorrow. The overweight woman hesitated, until Dr. Edwards told her to take the two gallons of milk and five pounds of bacon they'd taken in payment today with her. That got her moving. Tina gathered up the nonperishable barter items, including the ten 00 Buck 12 gauge shells. They were for her Remington. She turned off the lights and locked the front door, even though the black population of Polk County had been relocated over the last couple of months to the State Fairgrounds if they wouldn't agree to the Voluntary Relocation Ordinace. After the riots in Chicago and Detroit caused the Mayor to panic, he'd used the police department to force the City Council into an emergency session to pass the law requiring all members of "disloyal population groups" to register for temporary rehousing. Those that wanted to protest about that had been put into beds in the Fort Des Moines Correctional Facility after all of the non-violent convicts were summarily released. There wasn't much call for locks, these days.

She thought about E.M.P. as her car engine turned over, but the bomb hadn't been high enough. The five miles to her home was just outside of her comfortable daily walking range, and just inside the radius of gas she could gather from patients. On the way, the thirty-three year old doctor turned on the local news radio station, but they knew no more about what had happened than she did. She turned it back off as she pulled into the driveway of the three

bedroom ranch she used to share with her husband, but now live in alone.

What had worried Tina most, since it looked to her like Offutt had taken a ground burst, was fallout. It all depended on the winds. She had no way of knowing that it had been an American submarine which had launched the strike destroying Omaha and killing over a hundred thousand in an instant. But she did know her meteorology. The prevailing winds had carried the deadly dirt and ash clouds south, rather than east, causing Kansas City to button down just as the black riots there were hitting their stride. The thick rain came down on the protesters in buckets, leading to the majority of them dying after two weeks of hard suffering. Des Moines, however, was spared.

Dr. Edwards had headed to Mercy Hospital the next day instead of reopening her clinic, just in case they had any burn victims or worse from Omaha. They hadn't. Iowa Lutheran hadn't, either, but they were assembling a team of doctors and nurses willing to join an expedition with half of the Des Moines Air National Guard 132nd Fighter Wing escorting them. Tina had signed on. Her husband and she had never been able to have kids, and now he had left her for a floozy who could, so she didn't have many people who would miss her, if she caught a dose. Fortunately for her, after the first few returning pilots became sick from flying over the blast site, they had suspended overflights, so she didn't.

After a break for lunch during which she sat with John and talked to him about the best ways to soothe his new baby boy's colic, the nominee described how the Iowa Relief Field Hospital had been established in Council Bluffs, just outside the blast damage area, but within walking distance for the ambulatory wounded. She told them about the first few days of triage, as horrible burns and broken limbs and apparent dosages decided whether a victim was deemed too far gone to waste time and resources on, or if they were likely to survive without care, or fell into the sweet spot

in the middle where medical help would make a difference. Playing Goldilocks with people's lives, she called it.

Often, the difference between the living and the dead simply depended on how quickly they could baptize them in the Missouri River to wash the fallout off, since there was no running water in the area from broken mains. The first victims they encountered were from the furthest away from the blast zone, so they had the fewest traumatic injuries. As word spread among the survivors of the Field Hospital, though, the wounds they were presented with became more severe. Those combining radiation poisoning with physical injuries were the most complicated. Small things stuck with her, like teaching a young boy how to make a crude radiation detector from a metal coffee can and two sheets of aluminum foil strung on strings inside that would move whenever gamma rays passed through them, so long as some crushed drywall was kept in the bottom. His parents were too sick to absorb the lesson, so she taught it to the eight year old.

Several of the doctors who actively went out looking for victims came back ill, as did their Air Force guards. Some of them never came back, at all. Fights between patients over who would receive care first, or angry over their triage assessment, resulted in some fatalities. After the first week, Major Hardwick, in charge of the expedition, gave an order that no more trips would be made across the river until they had received more NBC decontamination kits and suits. A few thousand civilians might have died because of that order, but it made sure that the twenty-one physicians in the I.R.F.H. survived. For six months, as it was resupplied and expanded as a material aid center and soup kitchen, then as a permanent encampment, the Field Hospital became the focus of migration for survivors from Omaha and its intact suburbs. Just before the second anniversary of Cinco Day, Omaha was designated a cleared zone, open for supervised salvage operations. Council Bluffs had nearly tripled in size, to 150,000.

Over the next year on staff there, Dr. Edwards had specialized more and more in the study of the mid-term health effects of acute to moderate radiation poisoning. She also ticked off the myriad communicable diseases she had dealt with in a tent city of 100,000 immune-deficient refugees living with minimal sanitary facilities. Since then, she had been focusing her research less on the long-term cancers of the bone and organs and blood, and more on the effects of radiation on the mutation rates of viruses. This field of specialization was what had made her John's nominee for Surgeon General.

In taking questions from the Representatives, Tina was asked by the Congressman from the Emerald Coast, where the Turkish Flu had decimated the Cuban Army to their south, what the likelihood was of a further mutation allowing the virus to attack the White population. She responded that without a clearer understanding of the disease's origin, she couldn't guess at its stability, or the direction that it might mutate towards. "Think of the precursors to a genetically modified virus, such as this one, as being a multicellular organism, just like you or me. We have recessive traits within us which aren't obvious by looking at us now, but if you knew our family trees, you might get a better idea of what those recessive traits are. It's the same with the Turkish Flu. Without knowing what they made it out of, it's hard to guess what direction it might take next, if any," she explained.

North of the empty Château Pèlerin, a door to a medical laboratory in the University of Haifa creaked open, nudged by the ocean breeze. On the debris-strewn lab table, a bank of glass vials rattled, sprinkling their dried specimens onto a sheaf of stained printouts. Over in the corner, a bespectacled skull rested on the tiles between a yarmaluke and a white labcoat. As the door creaked back on its hinges, it seemed to smile with a hidden secret. Otherwise, all was quiet in Israel.

But wherever I have gone, oh you're sure to find yourself there,
You can run all your life, but not go anywhere…

A civil war battlefield was a crazy place to fight a war, General Ray-Ray Destrehan told his fanners as they struggled to keep him cool in the Mississippi heat. It had never been this hot in Hotlanta. Why'd Emperor Bling-Bling have to send him back down here, of all the niggahs he coulda sent? Well, the Emperor couldn't say he hadn't done what he'd asked. Ray-Ray would probably have compared his forced march across Georgia and Alabama and Mississippi to Sherman's march to the sea, if he had ever heard about it. The eight thousand New African Speshul Foahsus soldiers had torn through a twenty mile wide path of rape and pillage, smearing feces and smegma as they went, through all three states, to end up on the bluffs of Vicksburg. Bluffs where his victorious warriors were throwing the cracker preachers in the big river, now that the battle was over.

He had laughed at the group of honkeys with a couple of token Uncle Toms who had met them at the beginning of the fields with all the old cannons in them, in front of the statues of old dead White folks, and tried to talk some smack about brotherhood and diversity and love. Something or other. He told them that they were in New Africa, not in Heaven, but he was gonna put them there. The one preacher out front was sure an ugly mo-fo. His big old head all swollen on one side and his skin yellow instead of White over half of his face. Looked like somebody had done taken half his head clean off. He tried to do a bunch more talking about how they all should just get along and work together and Jesus loved Ray-Ray, too. General Butt-Naked behind him started to laugh at that, and General Rambo was nudging General Shark Tooth in the ribs. He couldn't have no honkey frontin him in front of his men. That's how a nigguh got kilt and de-posed. The Emperor had just tolt him to come and kill these Church people, not talk trash with them.

Rev. Ike could see that things weren't going well. The grinding pain behind his eye and the heat from his ear inwards flamed again, blindingly. Caught between the Republic of Texas at the Red River and the Emerald Coast at Mobile Bay, the Church of

the New Dispensation had really had no choice but to evangelize northwards. Their missionaries had blazed a trail through New Orleans already, so they followed it through Baton Rouge and Alexandria and Natchez as they went, converting with the cross and the sword. Huckleberry picked up new believers by the hundreds along the way, and many of them became Faithful, making his mixed race mobile congregation predominantly black. The former governor didn't care, he knew that Jesus loved them all. That's what he was trying to tell this poor ignorant wretch, General Ray-Ray. That was why Rev. Ike had crossed the Mississippi to meet the approaching New African Army here, of all places, on this ancient battlefield. Here, brother had fought with brother, over whether all men were equal and should be equally free.

Their holy host numbered over ten thousand, now, and it had been hard to feed them all as they gleaned the last manna from Louisiana. God had led them here, to spread his word and advance his kingdom of love and multiracial brotherhood, and the Church of the New Dispensation would not be stopped by any army of man. Rev. Ike saw the grins and shifting stances on the other side, and sensed the nervousness of his flock behind him. 'Oh ye of little faith', he thought. "Brothers!" he called out through the pain. "Brothers, I beseech ye, God is not mocked! Join us in Christian love and peace! Help us to spread the word of the Lord, the truth of equality and diversity and light! Come and shake my hand in brotherhood, as equals, before God…." Ike moved forward, beaming a smile despite his throbbing head, and thrust out his hand. General Ray-Ray drew his machete, and with one swipe, cut it off.

Oh, how the crazy crackers in their black robes had started screaming then! Some had fallen on their knees and started praying to their God for deliverance or to the New African warriors for mercy. They, along with Ike, were immediately hacked to pieces. A few others swung rifles up from under their black robes and started blasting away as they backed up among the

monuments. Ray-Ray wished that he had been sent down to Florida, where the Cuban Army had melted away from their sickness that only brown people seemed to get. New Africa was going to take the whole thing back. As he swung his machete down into the crying face of an old White woman, the New African General imagined lying on a beach down there, with lots of cold beer and blunts and slave girls…he had no idea where the cold beer would come from, it was good to have dreams. “I have a dream!” Ray-Ray shouted, as he caught up with a bleeding White man trying to crawl behind a big bronze horse. His soldiers looked at him strangely as he brought his machete down, again and again.

After the first few hundred of them panicked and ran and were butchered, clumps of the Faithful rallied to stand and fight. All through the bright afternoon, the two sides tangled. Down the slopes of the military park, and into the town, over two thousand New African warriors fell before the New Dispensation rifles, but they took twice that many of the congregation down with them. By the end of the day, the thousand Faithful who were able to, retreated back across the I-20 bridge. The Church of the New Dispensation would live to fight another day, barely. Rev. Ike Huckleberry, martyred, would be declared a Saint.

For today, though, General Ray-Ray had the surrendering congregation herded into the Convention Center by the river. The White ones he just had thrown into the Mississippi and gave orders to only waste bullets on them if they tried to swim back. Most all of them drowned, of course. His men’s arms were tired from the hours of machete work, and they were angry that a quarter of their army had been killed by the Faithful before they had surrendered. He was more curious about the black Church members, though. Most of them had surrendered without a fight, but Ray-Ray still wanted to know why they had joined up with the crazy White people, in the first place.

Taneisha kneeled on the dirty convention center floor with her wrists and ankles tied together behind her back. The smell of cookfires came through the open doors as the victorious army butchered the dead for a barbecue feast tonight. She hoped that she wouldn't be on the menu. In one way, she regretted joining the Church of the New Dispensation, and leaving her babies with her Auntie to come north with them as a missionary. She didn't regret doing God's work, though. When the scattering of Latinos among them had grown sick and died, but the blacks and Whites had been spared the wrath of God, that had been a sign from Heaven. The Reverend had said so, and she believed him. In the confusion of the fight, she had heard that Rev. Ike had been called home to be with Jesus. Taneisha hoped it wasn't true, but if it was, she was ready to join him in Glory with the Lord. She just didn't want no brothuh eating her on the way. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a group of elaborately dressed New Africans moving among the black captives, asking them questions, then moving on. When it came to be her turn, Ray Ray recognized her. He called her name, and ordered her to be freed. Taneisha stretched her arms experimentally before wrapping them around his neck. "Where you been, RayRay?" she demanded. "Your chile been hungry!".

Chapter Eleven

This trendy, new crowd, which likes to do everything with committees, really believes that all it takes to make anything legal and OK is a majority. I guess they call that democracy. When the majority is what it has become in the United States today, a better name is mobocracy. But really, it's much worse than mob rule. It is rule by a self-appointed elite of utterly evil and destructive people who have in their hands the tools for controlling and guiding the mob. They're pretty cocky now -- so cocky, in fact, that they're making statements of the sort I've quoted today. They're cocky because they believe that no one can take away from them their tools for controlling the mob, and that as time passes and America becomes darker and more degenerate, their grip on the mob will only become firmer. Our job is to prove them wrong. It's a big job, and we'd better get started. –Dr. William L. Pierce

You're one in a million, yeah that's what you are, You're one in a million, baby, you're a shooting star…

The heavy environmental suit was difficult to move in, and even harder to practice injections with, but Dr. Sur Moerdani had done this many times. Behind the plexiglass face mask, his eyes watched the monitor as the subject's pulse and heart rate quickened. The artificial coagulant seemed to be keeping him from bleeding out satisfactorily, but the blood vessels and capillaries were still weakened enough to have cast a faint blue tint to his skin. At this stage in the viral progression, the restraints were more to keep the prisoner from falling off of the 45 degree angled bed, rather than to keep him from resisting. Salbutamol and terbutaline as a beta-2 agonist made the best cocktail of albuterol to keep the lungs flush with oxygen, but the steroids had a debilitating effect on the circulatory system. He had lost most of his recent test subjects to seizures and heart attacks. He sighed as number one-thirty-two flatlined into a monotone. Oh well, Jakarta's millions would not miss another such as this.

Sur and his foreign correspondent colleagues had discussed whether their work was righteous according to the Prophet. He personally felt that it fell under the same blessed authority as that allowed for space travel: “O assembly of Jinns and men, if you can penetrate the regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate them! You will not penetrate them except with authority.” To Dr. Moerdani, this meant that if Allah willed it to be known, the secret to this virus would be revealed to him.

The Indonesian Health Authority took a somewhat more conservative view of medical science, which is why they had isolated his research facility on this little island called Sangiang, in the Sunda Strait between dead Sumatra and living Java. Borneo, Sulawesi, and Timor had likewise gone silent, but no one was allowed to go look and see what they would find there. Royal Australian and New American ships had probed all around them, but left them alone, so far. They had plenty of places to plunder where nobody would fight back.

The doctor did not ask where his victims came from. He assumed that they were refugees caught trying to cross the Java Sea. The naval quarantine was as tight as the Javanese could make it. They were immunes, having survived the Turkish Flu, but they still carried the deadly virus. Just one of them getting through, just one, and the last Islamic state carrying the word of Allah and the Prophet would fall, like the rest. His task was to trigger the latent virus in remission within them into active status so it would attack the hosts. Then he tried to stop the viral load progression he had triggered. If he could understand how to trigger the viral load, he might come to understand how to stop it. That was his hope.

He was halfway there, now, and could trigger an remissive into an active case, by artificially tricking their autoimmune systems into thinking that the threat had passed. So far, he couldn’t stop what he started, though. If he failed to learn how to stop the viral load progression, his only other option, an idea borrowed from Dr. Sayanora in the Osaka Labs, was to load the host with a

counteracting virus that would be introduced while the autoimmune system was shut off. That would have to be a genetically engineered retrovirus that would do the opposite of what the Turkish Flu did, and in matching measure and reverse sequence, so as not to kill the host by overcorrecting and going symptomatically overboard. It would be like fighting fire with fire, or to be more exact, like starting a flood of water as a backfire against an oncoming wall of flames. That would take a lot more time, and many more test subjects, to perfect.

His Imam taught that this was a test to see who among the faithful was the most worthy, and all had been measured and found wanting, save the Javanese. How they planned on feeding the 140 million faithful crammed into such a small space, if they were afraid to go out and re-colonize new land for farming, Sur had no idea. All of the coffee plantations and mangrove and tropical rain forests were being converted to wet rice farming as quickly as the people could clear and plant, but they looked hungrily towards the vast openness of their neighbor to the south.

For weeks, he had been combining different drugs in different doses on captured infected, searching for a cure. Moerdani had been working with other specialists around the world, at first. A week into his research, the Indian scientist leading the research team in Kolkata had reported a containment breach in their isolation chamber. The Iranian complex he had been talking with at Mashhad was taken over by the Russians as they moved south, and they were still continuing the research there and in Kiev and Krasnodar, but they had come no closer to a cure than he had. The Osaka Labs had not responded to his last question two weeks ago, and Shenyang had gone off of the air after announcing that they had found a cure, which Sur seriously doubted. Sur radioed the guards to suit up and bring him another test subject from the pens. With the heavy elbowlength gloves, he wiped the chalkboard clear and clumsily scrawled 1-3-3.

And I knew if I had my chance, that I could make those people dance And maybe they'd be happy for a while…

The team put together by Dr. Edwards as soon as her nomination as Surgeon General was confirmed began work on hypothetical origins for the Turkish Flu feverishly. One train of thought was that persons of European heritage whose ancestors had survived the Bubonic plague which swept through Europe in the 14th century had inherited a resistance to the disease now killing 70% of the world's population. A contending view was that the Turkish Flu was genetically more similar to the virus that had swept through northern Europe in the 1650's, which seemed not to have been the same as the Bubonic plague. This second theory was based on the fact that the mass graves of the dead in London and elsewhere from that pandemic were not buried with rats, the primary carriers of the Bubonic plague's flea inducers. The 14th century grave's victims had been. In addition, the 1650 plague also hit Scandinavia hard, where the climate precluded the flea infestation which was believed to have ridden on the backs of the rats to transfer the Bubonic plague from victim to victim. Northern Europeans, then, might have inherited a genetic resistance to a virus very similar to the airborne pestilence from that later pandemic.

If the Turkish Flu virus had occurred naturally, either of these theories might have been a reasonable explanation of why Whites were proving resistant to the disease. It quickly became obvious, however, that the way blacks and Whites were both unaffected by the virus was not accidental. With no Jewish population left in St. Louis, and few left in New America, the former Barnes-Jewish Hospital in the capital city was taken over by Dr. Edwards and her team, and research staff from around the nation brought in. The massive building, renamed Margaret Sanger Memorial Hospital, began to buzz with activity. Ethnic and racially specific diseases such as Tay-Sachs and Sickle Cell Anemia were the early focus of the research there.

Get up, come on get down with the sickness Get up, come on get down with the sickness Get up, come on get down with the sickness…

Sickle Cell Anemia was also the focus of intensive medical research being carried out elsewhere in the world, albeit with a somewhat different goal in mind. The Center for Medical Research in Johannesburg had entered into negotiations with the British Royal Navy to develop regional alliances between themselves and, now that the Argentines and British were ironically allied, the government in Buenos Aires. The diplomatic overture, coming from a health facility rather than a military government, was quickly reciprocated.

Ostensibly, the unusual request from the Center was for the Commander of the British Forces South Atlantic Islands to authorize the HMS Dauntless Type 54 Guided Missile Destroyer on duty in the Falklands to transport twenty immune Argentine survivor volunteers to the Orange Free State to participate in medical tests in pursuit of a cure for the Turkish Flu. The volunteers, from the surviving Mestizo segment of Argentina's population, were eager to escape what was, due to the virus, a 97% White nation. The Dauntless made port in Durban a month after the specific request was made, and thus began a period of growing alliance between the Orange Free State, the re-expanding British Empire, and Argentina. However, the Center for Medical Research's attempts to isolate the Turkish Flu virus from the infected volunteer's blood samples and attach the virulent immune-suppressant trait to the genetic marker for Sickle Cell took several more shiploads of volunteers to reach fruition.

In the meantime, several of the test subject 'accidentally' escaped from their supervised medical care, and found themselves transported to the northern border and released. There were still hundreds of thousands of East Indians and Chinese in SubSaharan Africa who had been shielded from the pandemic by a buffer of nonsusceptible black populations. Up until then.

In South America, the much more diverse Brazilian population was affected more by the Turkish Flu than Argentina, whose almost wholly European military forces took the opportunity to drive north and east into the region called Triângulo Mineiro, one of the richest agricultural regions of Brazil, between the Paranaíba and Grande rivers. After the Argentine nuclear attack on Brazil with New American collusion to end the latter's invasion, much of southern Brazil's German population had moved away from the coasts, and further inland.

The area around the former Universidade Federal de Uberlândia campus became a vast dead zone, ruled for the most part by packs of immune children and teens. Most of the Whites had fled the chaos of the city as the final straw when the Turkish Flu swept down the Atlantic Coast of Brazil and inland like the impending doom of nightfall. Professor Oscar Neiman had remained. The library, his library, could not be abandoned to the elements, or to the sadly ignorant savages of the streets. His family had been hunters, and so he had not found himself defenseless when the students who had not left their dormitories began to die in them or come looting. He had a rifle, with a scope, and he had twenty boxes of ammunition for it. Classes were cancelled, but he refused to let this spark of civilization go out.

Dr. Neiman, a professor of classical literature, was particularly fond of walks by the lake at Sabia park, but the gangs fought over the water there as order receded. One by one, his colleagues left, as well. They urged him to give it up and leave the city with them. Classes would not resume, they declared. The chubby German scholar refused. Very few students remained, either. From time to time he would see one, or two, out during the day, or the light of small fires across campus at night. Soon he had become confined to the squat three storied rectangle of the biblioteca itself. The advantage this gave him was a panoramic view of the open grassy area of campus, and a command of the high ground.

His immediate problem was food and water. The most dangerous part of his life consisted of dragging a metal book cart down two flights of stairs after the electricity and water failed, then across to the cafeteria to load up on the canned food and beverages there, then to drag it back to the library and back up the stairs. Aside from that, he took the chance to catch up on his reading during the daytime, like the character in the old 'Twilight Zone' episode about time stopping that he had watched overdubbed into Portuguese as a child. At night he sat and listened for the feared breaking of glass or footsteps on the stairs. He had blocked all of the stairwells but one with microfiche readers and computer monitors and romance novels and other trash. That idea had come from another overdubbed memory, a movie about Zombies in London. He only had to guard the one entryway, now. Sometime during the third week of his solitary watch, he saw a group of urchins watching him 'grocery shop' in the cafeteria's storeroom. He adjusted his rifle on its sling so they could see it. None of them appeared to be armed. They went their way without coming close to him.

It surprised him when, a week later, one of them stepped out from between two buildings in front of him on his way to dump his latrine bucket. 'That's what I get for establishing a schedule', he thought in dismay. Before he could swing his rifle around to fire, the teenaged Mestizo boy in filthy soccer shorts stepped forward, to nearly within reach. Dr. Neiman threw the bucket full of waste directly into the boy's face, before turning and running as fast as he could waddle back up the stairs.

The next morning, the half-Indian teenager and three others were outside the front entrance yelling up at him in English, then in German. They were educated, then, not street orphans, he noted. Oscar answered them back from the window in Portuguese, their native language. They wanted to talk.

That was how the gang of teens became his personal butlers, as he thought of them, bringing him food and water from the

cafeteria and further afield when the stores there ran out. In exchange, he kept watch over that area of the University campus with his rifle, and made sure that no other gang took the supplies they had stashed there while they were out foraging. It was a good symbiotic relationship, and worked well for him until the Argentinian Republic's Nuevo Granaderos cavalry unit rode into the city, a month later. In the meantime, he had been tutoring the boys at night in Homer and Herodotus and Plato. The boy he had soaked, Jaime, endured the jokes and jibes of his peers over the dousing incident and became his star pupil. They all disappeared when the Argentines arrived, though, scattering into the city. It was kind of a bittersweet day for the Professor. The Granaderos made him leave his beloved books behind and go with them. He cried as they led him away.

Almost 4,400 miles northwest of Dr. Neiman's mildewing book hoard, the megalopolis of Mexico City had been reduced from 14 million to 1,150,000 by the virus, then further by violence as society fell apart. The millions of unburied dead and the lack of any health services or sanitation had brought on dysentery, cholera, and e.coli, killing thousands. Such a large number of rotting corpses produced decompositional gases alone which rendered the air in the city toxic from the ground to two or three stories in height. There had been roughly 200,000 Mexicans of wholly European ancestry in the city when the first cases of the Turkish Flu were diagnosed there. As elsewhere, half of them fled into the countryside before the road and rail systems became overwhelmed and the city shut in on itself. A month later, after the riots and attacks by the barrios of hungry frightened Mestizos and the fewer Indios who were immune to the virus, a quarter of them remained. In time they retook the city, buried the dead, and created a new society based on salvage and plunder of the dead zones. The surviving immunes were slaughtered wholesale. Quetzalcoatl had finally returned, and he was not happy.

Halfway around the world, the boots of the Golden Dawn's Spartan Brigade rang on the cool marble steps of the Hagia

Sophia. The Greek armored column had pushed the surviving Turks out of Istanbul, and begun securing historical sites and museums. This place was at the top of their list. The ancient former Orthodox Cathedral, like many public buildings and mosques, had been filled with the sick and the dying as stricken virus victims prayed for salvation. In this region, fewer than three in ten had been granted it. The Greek population, like that of Italy and other Mediterranean European populations, was largely unaffected by the virus. That had answered the question in so many minds for so long. However, here where it had been named, the bodies of Turkish Flu casualties had taken weeks to desiccate, before entry into the cities was possible. The cleanup would take years.

Sweet dreams are made of these Who am I to disagree?

The New American Ambassador to Deseret could only fit one secretary and a couple of guards in the remodeled café a block off the capitol's main drag. Generally, that was all he ever needed, of either. The black uniformed secret service looked menacing, but never saw any action, and the only action his secretary saw was in his suite after hours. Still, Hugh Jorgan was a pragmatic man. He knew when to be serious. The sealed envelope delivered by secret service courier directly to him as soon as the diplomatic package arrive on the inbound flight from St. Louis practically exuded seriousness. It was real cloak and dagger stuff, the kind of excitement he'd never seen at the Old Courthouse. Inside the envelope was another, and inside it was a microcassette tape player with a recorded microcassette tape inside, and a brief note. The letter was for him, and it was signed by the Speaker himself.

Kelly had spent three days off of work, plus the weekend, helping Karen get settled into her apartment. She had thought it best that they stay together for a while. Josh knew that meant less couple time, but he understood. Besides, he was busy helping the Republic of Texas absorb the areas formerly held by the

Nortenos, and establish repopulation colonies there. He was flying back and forth from Salt Lake to Brownsville and El Paso three times a week, here a minute then gone again. There was a major bone of contention emerging between the Church and Texas over Albuquerque and its salvageable infrastructure. Both nations wanted it. Officially, both nations claimed it. Republic of Texas mounted infantry had occupied it first, but Prophet Rammell had not rescinded Deseret's claim. Tensions were running high. To defuse things diplomatically, President Bellefont had offered to come to Salt Lake to discuss the future of the ghost city with the Council of Fifty.

The impending high level visit made things even more stressful for the Department of Public Safety, which served as both a state department and internal security division, for the LDS. Jimmy was worried about Mormon Fundamentalists who had already begun settling in New Mexico attempting to disrupt the negotiations. Kelly had acquired several piles of dossier files on her desk while she had been out, to assign investigators to. But at least Karen was rested and had begun to emerge a bit from her nervous, brittle shell. She even had run down on the constant chatter she had nearly driven Kelly crazy with, the first couple of days after she'd made it back.

Dividing up the dossiers into two stacks, mentally marked 'nutjob' and 'fruitcake', Kelly sighed out loud as the phone buzzed. Her secretary told her that Ambassador Jorgan was there to see her. Great. Had he made an appointment while she was out, or was this a drop-in, unannounced, kind of informal visit? Probably St. Louis wanted to make sure they weren't left out of the loop as two of the three largest nations they shared the continent with made nice. She told Steffie "Okay, I can give him five minutes. Send him in."

Hugh Jorgan walked in like a guilty kid being sent to the principal's office for any one of several unnamed offenses. Kelly was a shrewd reader of body language, and the Ambassador

definitely didn't look like he knew what he was doing there. He did have a mission, though, that was clear. "How can I help you, today, Ambassador? Kelly asked politely, smiling.

The tall, ruggedly handsome man looked like he was trying to put on a brave front. "Ms. Johansen, I have been directed to play a recording for you. I am told that it is a top secret message from the highest levels of my government, intended directly, specifically, and solely for you."

"Wow, that sounds pretty mysterious. Do I need my secret decoder ring to decipher it?" she joked.

"All I know is that my orders were clear. I'm to play the recording once, then leave with it…then to destroy all traces of it." He didn't look like he was joking. Hugh Jorgan, according to their monitoring of him, wasn't smart enough to carry off a prank.

Kelly walked to the door and closed it, sha king her head at Steffie's gaze of disapproval. "Okay, Mr. Ambassador, you'd better let me hear it," she said.
The microcassette recorder clicked and whirred, then emitted three beeps and a longer tone. The voice which followed the tone was instantly familiar from five years earlier, when she had heard it every day for months as her interrogation progressed, then peaked, and subsided. For a while it had been her only human contact, a voice she had craved when it was absent and yearned for after it left her. The voice of Speaker John McNabb was calming, soothing, quietening, even as it just spoke her name, over and over, she lost count of how many times. Jorgan stood and stared at her changing facial expressions as he extended the microcassette recorder towards her as instructed. Kelly's face had relaxed, the lines of worry and suspicion erasing, and the corners of her mouth drooped out of that perpetual sarcastic smirk. A long tone sounded again, three of them, in a sequence, lasting three seconds each. The New American leader's voice continued: "Kelly, the time has come to complete the circle. Sink back into your memory of our time together. Remember what was forgotten.

Sink back into your memory of our time together. Remember what was forgotten. Complete the circle, Kelly. Complete the circle." Three series of three beeps followed. Then the tape shut off.

The Head of the Deseret Department of Public Safety took a step backwards until the heels of her shoes hit the wall, then turned to her right and sat heavily in her chair. Hugh searched for something to say, then waited for her to say something, but she just sat as mute as stone, with silent tears running down her cheeks. Remembering his orders, the Ambassador pocketed the player, then turned and opened the door and left. He had no idea what THAT was about, but it sure had been weird. All he knew was, there were some things he was better off not knowing. Ignorance was bliss.

Steffie was equally unsure of what had happened behind the closed doors, or why her boss was crying, but she had been an emotional wreck since her sister had shown up. That was understandable. Since the New Americans had been the ones who found her, maybe the Ambassador had come to tell Kelly something personal about Karen's time in captivity. That would explain the crying, and now the feverish work as the Director dug through the persons of interest dossiers as if looking for the perfect one.

'A patsy, that's what's needed, an obvious, easy pick, a Lee Harvey Oswald for the 21st century..or a bunch of them, harder to pinpoint', Kelly thought. Too bad the meeting with the Texican President wasn't going to happen in Dallas.

Perry Bellefont had decided that rather than take a risk and having all of their eggs in one basket, General Scott Hampton would stay behind and supervise the reactivation of both bases in El Paso to defend the colony there. Instead of his usual tag-team partner, the President would take his Secretary of State, Kenny Wiggins, with him to count the wives in Salt Lake. Wiggins was a hard-nosed bruiser who would show the Mormon cultists who was the big dog. The normal retinue of F-16 escorts for his Presidential Lear should impress the polygamists, too, Perry thought.

On the night before they were to leave, his wife couldn't sleep.

She had suffered from bad dreams for a week, and warned him to be careful on his trip. When he got back, he'd have to make a point to spend more time with her, she obviously was feeling lonely and neglected. He kissed her forehead and gave her a hug as he climbed aboard the jet for the weeklong conference to decide the fate of Albuquerque.

Bellefont couldn't care less about the wretched ghost city, personally. The Mormons wanted it worse than he did. But, it was the principle of the thing that mattered. Nobody dictated terms to the Republic of Texas. Not anybody. Besides, it would set a bad precedent. Next, the New Americans would be wanting Oklahoma City, or something. Anyway, Texas had gotten there first, and that was all there was to it.

For three days after the welcome ceremony and state dinner and performance by the Tabernacle Choir in his honor, closing with "The Eyes of Texas", the negotiations went back and forth. They remained barely cordial, but the hostility was more subdued when Kenny Wiggins was out of the room. Perry let the Secretary of State play bad cop to his good cop, a role he preferred. He was glad Kenny smoked a lot when he was nervous and had to go hide outside from the anti-tobacco Mormons. It gave him a chance to smooth over some ruffled feathers.

The protesters lining the Farnsworth Promenade circle around the capitol building were getting unruly. Why they were there at all was a mystery to Jimmy. Things had been going so well for Deseret on all fronts, that all Saints should be rejoicing. This bunch, though, was fired up. Holding signs that said "Open The East" and "Missions to Moriarty", they sang hymns and ranted and chanted, all day long. He had his best D.P.S. plainclothes officers sprinkled among them, to keep an eye out for any violent malcontents among the bearded fundamentalists. "What do we want?" "Albuquerque!" "When do we want it?" "Now!" went back and forth at the top of their lungs.

Kelly had barely spoken with Josh since the negotiation had begun, leaving him wondering what he had done wrong. Maybe it was Karen being back, making Kelly hate all men after what had happened to her sister. Or maybe she was acting professional for

her boss during the dignitaries' visit. They had sat across from each other, but since the opening ceremony neither of them had been asked a question. The negotiations had taken place between Prophet Rammell himself and President Bellefont. The big Secretary of State from his nation had done a lot of the hardball negotiating, but right now he was out on his umpteenth smoke break of the day. A dozen diplomats and secretaries bunched around the conference table and carried on without him. In addition to President Bellefont and Prophet Rammell and himself as the Ambassador of the Republic of Texas to Deseret, there was Kelly as Director of the D.P.S. and, when he was in the room, Secretary of State Kenny Wiggins. Then, the Ambassador from New America to Deseret was included as a diplomatic courtesy. He had spent the last two days ogling Kelly in a way that made Josh want to punch him in the nose, especially given his reputation and Kelly's silent treatment of the Texican, lately. Each side had a secretary here in the conference room off of what used to be the Governor's office, before that job became superfluous, to record everything that was said for posterity and their own records.

The media hadn't been allowed into the meetings, but two tv crews, one from the BBC North America and the other from Post Dispatch TV, elbowed the still photographers and old fashioned reporters from a dozen newspapers aside for more panning room to film the crowd on the Promenade. Here and there, the mob was working itself into a frenzy, surging forward into the blue-clad regular police forming a concentric ring between them and the capitol building. They looked like a flood of water lapping against the brim of a dam, about to go over. Suddenly, from the far side, an even louder roar erupted. A new cry echoed down the line. The TV cameras clearly picked up screams of "There's one of them now!" and "Look, Look, he's smoking! On the capitol grounds, he's smoking!" Sinner! Sinner" and most chilling of all, "Gitim! Gitim!". Back and forth the protesters surged against the police.

This was just what Jimmy needed. Some Texican cowboy had stuck his head out flaunting a cigarette, and that was all the

provocation this bunch had required to go rabid. They were making Deseret look bad, like the LDS were a bunch of Muslims or something, ready to stone people to death for having a smoke. Worse, they were making Jimmy look bad. When this was all over, he was going to have to launch a full investigation into who had organized this rally, and how, considering the degree of controls in place designed specifically to keep this kind of thing from happening. Right now, he was trying to locate his people, to calm the protesters down. It was too loud to use his radio, and he couldn't see any of them. Suddenly the crowd surged forward again, and this time it didn't stop and recede. Jimmy was being carried along with it. If he stopped, he would be trampled. He couldn't see what was going on, ahead of them, but obviously the police line hadn't held. The mob carried him over the body of a trampled cop trying to cover his face, and Jimmy purposefully fell on top of him. Kicking his legs out, he covered the cops' body with his own and cleared a small space around them. Together, they were able to stand. Holding each other up, they began trying to shoulder their way out of the mass of enraged humanity. Pushing their way to the edge and free of the stampede, Jimmy and the bleeding deputy watched in disbelief as the vanguard of the protesters pushed aside the last line of blue at the top of the steps, bulldozing them back through the doors and into the capitol building, out of sight. He hoped that Kelly was safe, in there! If anything happened to her…or to the Prophet, of course…

Josh heard the crowd outside above the hum of the air conditioners fighting the early fall warmth. They had been a background noise since the negotiations had begun, sometimes louder and sometimes quieter. Prophet Rammell had twice went out and asked them to go home and cease their disturbance, and some of them had. But more, and angrier, fundamentalists had come to take their place, from somewhere. He was trying to make eye contact with Kelly to show her a heart he had drawn on his meeting itinerary sheet when the dull roar became a sharper buzz, shifting gears and growing louder. Everyone at the table looked towards the doors with alarm as several security personnel, two of the black uniformed New American S.S. and a

Texas Ranger and the rest from the D.P.S., piled through with no dignity whatsoever. “Excuse me, gentlemen, lady, but we have a potential security threat. The meeting may have to be suspended until we can resume it at another location,” one of the D.P.S. guards said. Kelly rose to go confer with him. Everyone else began muttering excitedly.

Secretary of State Kenny Wiggins was just a few steps ahead of the crowd when they came through the doors. The bottleneck bought him a few ungraceful steps, but his lead time was shortened by his weight and three pack a day habit. His penchant for the black market cigarettes had nearly cost him his job with the Bellefont administration when the cartels had attacked, but he had always been able to get his smokes somewhere. Perry had asked him to quit smoking, as a sign of solidarity with the anti-smuggling movement against the cartels. That had been stifling enough, he had thought. But now, this was a real anti-smoking crowd, though! At least they had no idea where the meeting was, as some of them flooded up the broad stone staircase to branch out onto the second floor behind and above him. Wiggins turned left, towards the former Governor’s office, and saw a cluster of nervous looking Deseret Department of Public Safety uniforms, with their weapons drawn. They recognized him and waved him forward, urging him on.

Prophet Rammell had just authoritatively suggested that they adjourn the meeting to his private office, and opened the door leading to it at the far end of the conference room, when the other doors burst open again. The out of shape Texican smoker half fell inside, then leaned over with his hands on his knees, gasping. “They’re…in…building!” he choked out. Indeed, Josh could hear the echoes now, as the disorganized mob yelled for blood through the halls. Kelly was speaking quietly with the senior D.P.S. officer, and the two New American and the Texas Ranger security people were clustered around their charges protectively. As if a sudden silent agreement had been reached, they started herding them towards the Prophet’s inner sanctum.

Outside, the white noise reached a crescendo and individualized back into separate voices as the tide approached the front door. A

command to stop was followed by the staccato crackle of small arms fire, more screams and the sounds of struggle, followed by another flurry of shots. The doors flew open, almost hitting Wiggins, who was still trying to catch his breath. The Texican Secretary of State turned towards the mob who had chased him down, anger on his face, and immediately was shot two, then three times. About to go through the door, being pulled along by the Texas Ranger, President Bellefont paused to watch his Secretary of State fall. “Oh my God, you killed Kenny! You bastards!” Perry yelled in fury, pulling loose from the riot-rattled Ranger and charging at the crowd surging into the room. The D.P.S. guards opened fire, concentrating on the three or four protesters in front who were armed with weapons taken from the security personnel they’d overwhelmed outside the doors. Josh noticed that Kelly had drawn her sidearm, as well, but seemed to be looking around to choose a target. He pulled his pistol at the same time as his boss, the Republic of Texas President, did the same.

The room became a jostling cacophony of bodies colliding and gunshots at point blank range. Prophet Rammell and his secretary successfully vacated the melee through the rear door, and two D.P.S. guards followed, closing and barricading it behind them. Everyone on the other side of that door was on their own. Josh tried to move forward to protect Kelly, and to protect the President, in one order or the other, whichever he could get to first. He caught a glimpse of her hair, then one of the New American S.S. guards stepped in front of him, blocking his view. The guard fired again. Screams and very un-Mormonlike curses. Time seemed to slow down as he watched Kelly from behind, firing into the tangle of bodies on the floor. She emptied her weapon. Finally, the room faded into silence except for lingering screams outside, and a whispered, whining prayer from one of the wounded. Then a squad of D.P.S. guards arrived, late to the party, and Kelly took charge of sorting things out.

That evening, the top story on the BBC North America broadcast covered the tragedy. With footage of the crowd crawling over and past the police lines to surge into the capitol building like a scene

from an old Zombie Apocalypse movie, a somber voiceover reported that the death toll of civilians had passed thirty confirmed, with many more injured. At the bottom of the screen scrolled the more shocking news, in terms of potential ramifications, however: President Perry Bellefont of the Republic of Texas, dead. Secretary of State Kenny Wiggins of the Republic of Texas, dead. Ambassador Hugh Jorgan of New America to Deseret, dead. One Republic of Texas Ranger, and eight Deseret Department of Public Safety personnel, dead. A member of the New American diplomatic corps, dead, as well. Several more personnel injured.

Three flags flew at half staff in three different nations, the next day. The Post Dispatch TV story focused on the life and service of Ambassador Jorgan, with a human interest story about his deceased secretary. Speaker McNabb condemned the fanaticism and religious intolerance which had led to the violence, but praised the two New American Secret Service officers whose brave actions in the room had prevented further tragedy from occurring. The Dallas Morning News headline pictured a smiling President Bellefont and the blurb: “Who Is To Blame? Texas Demands Justice!”.

General Scott Hampton flew back to Austin, where he held a press conference in which he paid tribute to his mentor and friend. “My fellow Texicans, not only the eyes of Texas, but indeed the eyes of the whole world are upon us, this day. They are watching to see if we will fold or call. They are watching to see if we will pull together under a united leadership, or squabble amongst ourselves over whose job it is to take the reins. I am honored to announce to you that, upon the urging of the legislature and with the popular support of the people of the Republic of Texas, I accept the responsibility of the leadership of our nation. I have some mighty big boots to fill, and I will need all of your help to do the job. Together, as a team, we can find out what happened to my friend and yours, Perry Bellefont. We can figure out who is responsible, and we can make them pay. We may not like what we find out, but we will get to the bottom of it. And when we do…we will get even! Now, who’s with me?!” The

Texican press corps responded, with more than polite enthusiasm.
Two days later, after standing with Perry's black-clad young widow at the state funeral for the father of their country, Scott officially took the oath of office and was sworn in as the second President of the Republic of Texas. The press corps reported that he had asked the widowed former first lady to maintain her residence in the old Governor's mansion in perpetuity, and Mrs. Bellefont had accepted.
Until clarification of what had happened could be offered, the Republic of Texas Ambassador would be recalled, immediately, Josh found out that same day. He tried to find Kelly to tell her goodbye, but she was busy moving her personal effects from her old office to her new one. Jimmy had been placed on administrative suspension pending a full investigation of the breakdown in security outside the capitol, and someone had to do his job, Josh understood. The look in her eyes as the bodies were untangled on the floor in the aftermath of the shootings had seemed so distant. She had clearly been in shock. But her expression had seemed vacuous, almost robotic, emotionless. He hated to have to leave her now, this way, when it was obvious that she needed him the most. The plane was waiting to take him and the full embassy staff back to meet with the new President, though. Josh promised himself he would come back for her, as soon as things smoothed over between their nations.
The 23rd Mounted Infantry, Company B, was moved into Albuquerque to reinforce the three already in the city. Texican claims to the area were strengthened further by an armored column from Amarillo which rolled in a week later. All along the Rio Grande, defenses were prepared and units redeployed. This time, they were facing west. Deseret Gull and Beehive units marched in from Arizona to occupy the other bank. The two sides eyed one another warily, as in Austin, sabers rattled.
"I don't know what went on, all I know is, if somebody doesn't tell me soon, somebody's gonna get hurt!" President Hampton growled from his chair, as Josh told the story of that day for what seemed like the thousandth time. "Now, whose fault was it, Mr.

Walker?”
“Mr. President, Sir, in my opinion they were completely unprepared for the number of protesters who showed up, or for how violent they got. Nobody expected it.” Josh repeated.
“Are you sure your involvement with this Johansen woman isn’t clouding your memory, or maybe your judgement, son?” Hampton insinuated.
“No, Sir…I mean, yes, Sir, I’m sure. I didn’t even speak to her before I left.” That was true enough. “My involvement with her was under the orders of President Bellefont, Sir, for the security of our Republic.”
The new President sat back at that. “It was, was it? Well, that old fox!” Scott laughed in sad amusement. “Remind me sometime, and I’ll tell you about the time…well, anyway, okay. So, that matter, of the nature of your association with the lady and the reason for the dalliance, there’s no need for anyone to hear about it, am I right, son?”
“Yes, Sir, absolutely. The less said about it, the better.” Josh tasted bitter acid in his mouth, as he lied.
“Fair enough, fair enough. Well, if you’ll excuse me, I have the unwelcome task of attempting to console a grieving widow.”
“How is Mrs. Bellefont holding up, if you don’t mind my asking, Sir,” Josh inquired.
“She’s all torn up. You know, he was twenty years older than her, so she kind of depended on him, like a father figure, really. The poor thing is lost.” Josh nodded in sympathy.
Back in Salt Lake, Kelly’s post-hypnotic suggestions began to unravel. Once the programmed task was done, the repeated compulsion to do it was distracting, since it could no more be satisfied than scratching an itch after the nerve cells were all clawed away and the wound torn down to the bone would make you feel any better, she thought. Jimmy was disgraced, and she was supposed to take his place as the LDS spy chief. Josh had left town abruptly without even saying goodbye. Karen was frantic that Deseret and Texas were about to go to war. And she wasn’t sure how much of what she felt and thought was real, and how much had been inserted by McNabb, as he’d pushed her buttons.

At least most of the loose ends, she'd been able to tie up into one neat little package during the chaos of the moment. The Texican President, her primary target, had gone down first, before he even got a shot off at the protesters. She put one right in his face. The Texas Ranger by his side had seen her take aim and reacted, too quickly, almost. She'd had to take him out next. Then the two groups had collided and were rolling around wrestling, and she could just stand there to shoot Jorgan and his floozy secretary, in case he'd leaked some pillow-talk about his visit to her, like fish in a barrel. The senior D.P.S. guy had seen that, and turned to look towards her, eyes wide, so she'd had to take him down with her last couple of shots. That had been a shame, he was a good man. Efficient. After nodding at the New American S.S. guard who had stepped in front of Josh to block his view of what she had done and therefore saved his life, Kelly looked around the room to see if any of the survivors were reacting strangely. You know, like somebody might just after witnessing a well-covered assassination. None had been.

Chapter Twelve

It is part of the Jews to be sneaky and sly. The genius of our people has ever been joyous strength, robust forcefulness, directness, manly courage, and flaming heroism. When the Jews, with their economic terrorism, jails, bullies and hangmen, scare the White man into laying down his cudgel and goad him into trying to out-sneak Jewish tyranny, the Jews have completely emasculated the once-strong White man, and doomed him to dishonor and defeat. The White man can NEVER win by sneaking!
-George Lincoln Rockwell

If I could see you
If only I could see you
To see if you are laughing or crying When the night winds softly blow…

John was surprised at how well his long-range fall back plan had worked out. It had been one of many schemes, one of a multitude of options he had created for himself to deal with a number of potential future contingencies. He had considered employing others, including other sleeper agents, even closer to the late President of the Republic of Texas. That would have been a more direct action. As it happened, though, calling up the latent subconscious of his former prisoner's imbedded suggestion had worked just fine. He was glad that he'd kept her in solitary confinement for those months after she was arrested for espionage. Kelly had been posing as a Sister Missionary in a largely Mormon community in Nebraska, while transmitting intelligence via shortwave code to her minders in Deseret. Since she had a female partner, it had been convenient locally to charge her with homosexuality, especially after her partner was killed while resisting arrest. McNabb had brought her to St. Louis and made her one of several pet projects he had taken on that year,

as experiments in implanting subconscious suggestions through sensory deprivation and hypnosis.

Based on the only partial success of a similar exercise the year before, he had been concerned that the amount of time a suggestion was stored in the subconscious might affect the degree to which it was obeyed. Time might lead to a progressive decay of probability. In Kelly's case, however, her borderline schizophrenic lack of deep empathy allowed for a preservation of the suggestion to such a degree that she had embraced the suggestion as if it were a construct of her own conscious will. She had pursued the internal compulsion with such gusto that the mission had achieved a waking life in which she improvised to cover the triggering, and the programming itself. Kelly had covered her tracks well. That had been too bad for the Ambassador and his secretary, but wonderful for the Speaker and his mission.

That mission, simply enough, was to sow discord between two of the three most powerful nations on the continent. He had other contingency plans in line for dealing with the Quebecois, if that had presented itself. But for now, he had Deseret and the Republic of Texas at each other's throats, had removed the last legitimate potential heir to the old national line of succession, and had a rising power in Deseret directly in his pocket. Because now, with the programming unravelling, Kelly would realize what she had done, and why. And short of suicide, she would have no recourse, no refuge, no one she could tell without facing imprisonment, or worse. It was too late for her to apologize, too late to come clean. That bell couldn't be unrung. What would she do now? She would hide from her sin, wallow in guilt over it, and either commit herself fully to her new identity, or break up into psychosis. He best bet was to join the winning team. The Speaker was sure that she would, but either way, Kelly had done her job beautifully.

John picked up his phone and placed a call to Lambert Field. Gen. Harrison sent a courier over to take down an encrypted message to be radioed in the clear to Tommy in North California where he was spearheading the nation's counterintelligence network. It was to be bounced to his counterpart in Austin. John and Scott needed to have a sit-down.

The Speaker travelled by motorcade rather than by plane, just to add another level of discretion to this trip. As a rare treat, he took Carolyn and Cindy and John Jr. with him, so they could play with the other kids he planned on stopping to visit, and see some pretty fall foliage in the countryside, instead of being cooped up in the city, all of the time. The first night they stopped and had a late dinner with his Attorney General's organization in the Ozark town at the heart of the eight county area they controlled as their own semi-autonomous region within New America. The Knights Committee greeted him warmly, as always, and made him feel at home. He asked if his family could stay there at their property for a couple of days. The Pastor agreed, on the condition that they would all stay and attend church services on Sunday. John happily agreed to the bargain. The next morning, they provided him an escort to the official border of the nation. He and his platoon of S.S. guards crossed the Arkansas River and into territory patrolled by his troops, but not formally included in the Census or in Congress. Not yet, anyway.

Crossing into the small town of Dardanelle on Highway 7, it was hard to tell where the nation he was the leader of actually ended. The Arkansas Nuclear One power plant provided electricity to this part of the state, including a couple of counties south of the border. All of the Hispanics from this area had been ethnically cleansed years ago. The 'Starless Stripes', as the N.A. flag had begun to be called, hung from the County Courthouse as the five armored personnel carriers drove by. Even the people who stopped and stared were all White, and all looked like they were ready to be citizens. He'd have to speak to Jason's sister, who had replaced his Attorney General as the Congressional

representative for North Arkansas, about annexing at least some of the western Counties…even if that would make the name of the state a bit anachronistic. Before long, they would clear out Little Rock, just like they had Memphis, and then the whole Arkansas River, all the way to the border of Indian country well into Oklahoma, was navigable, from here to the Mississippi and up into the rest of the nation. Designing New America's future occupied his mind while he looked out the narrow ob slits at the green forested mountains and valleys going by.

Even as they pulled into Texarkana, it was obvious that New America had a thumb over the region. A squad of Marines in spit and polish met them at the city limits, and nearly broke their arms saluting when they saw who was onboard the unscheduled convoy. He made the commander proud by conducting an impromptu inspection of the barracks, and the mess hall, where he ate with the troops, and their armory. At the end of it, he shook the commander's hand in front of the border guards, and gave them a brief speech in which he praised their continued diligence, and promised that as a reward, a Troop Morale show featuring Kelley Meghan speaking and Keith Toby performing to show them how much their nation was grateful for their service would be making the rounds within a month. John made a mental note to himself to make that call when he got back. Not having Kip around to be his memory was hard to get used to.

That evening he met with President Hampton symbolically at the border. John got out of his APC, walked across the dark highway by himself, and climbed into the back seat of the Republic of Texas leader's Cadillac, to sit beside him. Scott smiled agreeably at the forwardness, and said "Ya know, the last time somebody in my position came to a meeting with a foreign leader, he got himself killed."

McNabb frowned seriously. "I know, Mr. President, we lost a couple of good people that day, too. We're as determined as you are to find the people involved, and make them pay."

“Good, good, I’m very glad to hear y ou say that, Mr. Speaker, because I think we both know pretty much what happened there.” He looked as if he was testing the waters.
“And, it’s safe to say that you don’t think it was simple negligence, that they dropped the ball?” John asked. He wanted to see how much Hampton knew.
“No, as a matter of fact, our sources there tell us that the exact date and time and location of the negotiations was leaked to a network of FLDS radical groups a week before Perry got there.” Scott confided.
“By Prophet Rammell? But why?” the Speaker asked.
“By somebody in their Department of Public Safety, at least, we’re not sure how high the conspiracy goes, or more precisely, how far down it flowed.” the Texican replied.
“Okay, I’ll take your word for it. You know I’m no big fan of theirs, it’s all I can do to keep one wife happy half the time,” John joked.
Hampton relaxed somewhat and smiled. “So, if there should be hostilities between Deseret and the Republic of Texas….?”
“Well, you have a larger army, and both sides are about equal in air power. You have more armor, but they do have their nuclear option. That’s a hard bear to overcome, if it came right down to it.”
“The Republic of Texas is not without….” Scott began. McNabb stopped him with a gently raised hand.
“Come on, don’t kid a kidder, Scott, if we’re gonna be friends, let’s play it straight. Nukes are about the only thing that Texas doesn’t have. And, that’s why it’s important for you to have a friend who does.”
The President regarded The Speaker the way a farmer might look at a snake he’d just discovered in his garden. “Okay, fair enough. So, let’s get down to brass tacks, son. What do you want?”
“Well, there’s an answer to that, too, Scott. First, we want Colorado. All of it, including the high ground they’ve taken in the Rockies where they sit peeking down at our people there. You get all of New Mexico, like you want, no question there. Secondly, we want the corner of Wyoming they’ve carved off. Thirdly, we want the southern third of Idaho, below the Snake River, back. But that’s between us and them. As far as you’re concerned, our

nuclear deterrent counterbalances theirs. We'll move on them in Colorado to draw resources away from their defense when you hit them in New Mexico. But also, we want your help in wiping out the Church of the New Dispensation, once the Mormons have been taught a little Biblical humility."
President Hampton smiled like a wolf. "Why, John McNabb, are you sure you ain't from Texas?"

Who let the dogs out? Who-who-who-who?.....

A smaller percentage of the Chinese, both U.S. born and first generation, survived the effects of the Turkish Flu than did Hispanics, it seemed. As Gene Ferguson's legion mopped up the last holdouts of the People's Republic of China Humanitarian Peacekeeping Expedition in the alleyways of ChinaTown where they had hid out, New American Marines were already in transit from Sacramento to secure the Bay. Over 1,500 legionnaires had died or been severely wounded in the California campaign, most before the flu had swept in and done 90% of their job for them. As the commanding officer, "Ferocious" couldn't help but wish he'd delayed landing another two weeks, until the virus had destroyed the enemy for them…but they just hadn't known how it would play out, and in war…in war, that's just how it played out, sometimes. Of the 1,500 casualties, six hundred would survive, and half of those were walking wounded who could become combat ready, eventually. He left them to guard the nonambulatory wounded and the medics until the Marines secured the peninsula, then collected his intact troops and marched south again, to make sure he hadn't missed any straggling Chink immunes. They found a few in the Valley who had survived, and hadn't been called up in the desperate human wave attacks they had encountered on the southern edge of their pincer. These were ethnically cleansed as they were encountered.

Camped in the Kern National Wildlife Refuge, the General who was in line to become the Secretary of Defense took another head count, and found that he had 6,300 battle ready veterans

under his command, whom he once again reorganized into a Legion of sixty Centuries, with three Centuries left over. Their forward scouts met up with the northernmost Deseret patrols just outside of Bakersfield, and the meetings were cordial. The New American Marines, though, reported that they were woefully understaffed to secure northern California, even with the nationalization of the various militia, partisan, and guerrilla groups of the resistance under the Unified Command. Gen. Ferguson knew what his men had been through over the last half decade. Now, they had made it back. He decided to do something completely unprecedented. He allowed his entire command to vote, simultaneously, on their enlistment status. They were given three options: the legionnaires could vote to receive an honorable discharge and return to civilian life, either to try to return to wherever their homes had been as best they could, or to go anywhere they wished in New America with a universal 90 day rail pass, or stay in California as a civilian colonist to resettle the depopulated area. As a second option, they could vote to transfer their enlistment to the Unified Command in California, and stay there under arms. Or thirdly, they could remain with the legion. They had one day to decide, before the decision had to be communicated to their senior officers.

In the end, around 1,400 former legionnaires voted to study war no more, and muster out. A third stayed in California to recolonize it, and the other two-thirds attempted to find their way homes. About eight hundred transferred their enlistment over to the New American Unified Command in Northern California, giving them eight full companies to patrol the border and insure law and order in the frontier. They were happy to have them. The remaining 4,100, either out of personal loyalty to Ferguson or because they had no idea what else to do, voted to remain in the Legion.

Because most of the east-west rail lines ran through Deseret controlled territory, the trip to St. Louis by circuitous train tracks up through Oregon and Washington, across northern Idaho, and through Montana, Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa was a macabre

tour. It educated them all, over a week and half, of what had really happened here, as they rolled through one burned out city after another, and came to welcome the few small settlements and secure towns along the line which were still alive. Each day they stopped to refuel the train, take on or drop off commercial freight, produce, or finished products, and to allow the returning legionnaires to get a decent meal and, every other day, a shower or bath in a frigid creek. Sometimes they had to break the early November ice in Montana streams to wash up from the dirty sweating masses they had become after hours of riding in metal boxcars heated by wood stoves.

The people crowded around them. In awe, they asked them not what they had seen, or what things were like over there. Instead, they wanted to know where they were from in New America, did they have any folks waiting on them, and if they were interested in settling down. The word was passed that any soldiers who wanted to jump train and become a farmer or a guard for farmers and marry some cornfed rancher's daughter could hop out with no bad feelings. A few did, along the way.

When the streamlined American Foreign Legion arrived in St. Louis, the high school marching band met them playing "America The Beautiful". The Speaker met Gen. Ferguson on the platform to accept his salute and shake his hand and welcome him home. Every member of Congress rose and applauded when Ferguson spoke before them to give his report of their actions since Cinco Day. He then accepted the nomination for the office of Secretary of Defense. John drove him out to meet with Harrison for a few weeks of transitional training, to being Ferguson up to speed on their force of arms and deployments. In the meantime, the 4,000 lost warriors enjoyed a week of rest and relaxation in the capital city, with free food, drinks, and lodging anywhere they wanted in the capitol. The loss in property damage and revenue was worth it. A parade was held in their honor every day, for that week.

At the end of that week, John asked Gen. Ferguson to personally select and endorse a successor to the command of the legion. Gene chose Col. Victor Brown, the highest ranked Marine officer in the legion, as his surprise successor. Brown had actually been a J.A.G. lawyer in Kabul before the collapse, but he had earned his red wings since then. After conferring with the Colonel, Ferguson called the legion into barracks, and transferred authority to Victor. The next week was spent issuing new weapons, uniforms, and equipment to the legion, because it took that long to gather than much new gear and make sure they were familiar with the weapons systems and equipment. Logistics and quartermastering weren't what they used to be, before Cinco Day.

The now well rested and newly armed and equipped legion reboarded another train the day after Speaker McNabb and his entire family joined them in their mess hall to bless their Thanksgiving dinner and share in it with them. That had meant a lot to the hardbitten vets. The railcars took them in the opposite direction the next time, across Missouri, through the bustling Columbia, and around the trainyards of Kansas City, where they stopped for the night. Within two days they had crossed the bare plains awaiting the next year's wheat, and come to Dodge City, where they switched to a northern spur to Fort Morgan, Colorado. It was the last stop on the line.

While the New American legion was detraining in Fort Morgan and making camp outside of town, open disagreement had broken out down south. Republic of Texas mounted infantry had probed west of Santa Fe to claim the Los Alamos laboratories, long a target for the Texican government due to their atomic problem. When Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints militia ambushed them out at dawn the next morning, the Republic of Texas Air Force from Dyess was called in to soften up the F.L.D.S. positions. The F.L.D.S. called on the local Deseret Gulls unit commander to intervene, but while he waffled in indecision, the Texicans reinforced, and took Los Alamos.

President Hampton waited impatiently for Speaker McNabb to fulfill his end of their bargain. After calling a press conference to complain bitterly about “Mormon radicals and terrorists, of the same kind responsible for the recent tragedy in Salt Lake City” stealing cattle from New American colonist’s homesteads, he made his move. That day the legion force-marched to Greeley. The next evening they camped in Loveland, and John sent a radio message to Prophet Rammell requesting clarification on why LDS troops were assisting FLDS terrorists in raiding New American territory. The next sunrise, the question was above the fold in all of the morning papers. Deseret troops attempted to retake Los Alamos even as Prophet Rammell asked for a cease fire to discuss the territorial disputes with both nations. Hampton interpreted that as a sign of weakness, and ordered a general advance on Gallup.

The New American legion approached Estes Park, to find it occupied by Deseret artillery units which made their presence known with a general area bombardment. The 37th Helicopter Squadron from Warren Air Force Base near Cheyenne aided elements of the legion by deploying them in the huge expanse of the national park southwest of the LDS positions, to flank them. Estes Park was surrounded.

Josh was torn. He was heartbroken that his nation and Kelly’s were, without declaring it as such, at war with one another. How would he be able to return to her, now? He didn’t know what he could do, without being disloyal, or downright treasonous. He thought about returning to active duty with the Air Force and flying a few missions to prove his patriotism, before asking to be reinstated in Salt Lake. He considered suggesting that now, more than ever, an Ambassador for Texas was needed in the Mormon capitol, to negotiate their surrender when they inevitably called for a cease fire. It really didn’t sound plausible, though, even to him. There was no way that Hampton would go for it.

Kelly's new position as Jimmy's replacement required her to meet with Prophet Rammell every day, to give him his formal intelligence briefing. At first it was a bit daunting, sitting in front of the man who was both the religious and political leader of Deseret, but she soon saw that he was just a guy. Not only was he just a guy, he was an old, crotchety, lecherous guy. He might be a Saint, but he sure was a sinner, too. Kelly soon saw that the Council of Fifty, squabbling amongst themselves as they constantly did behind the scenes, held the real top-level power in the LDS Church. Rammell, whatever he had intended to be or started out being, was just a figurehead. The only thing he could decide on was what Sister Missionary to take back to his quarters with him at the end of his day at the office. Sometimes, when even that was too hard a decision to make, he took two or three. Knowing and understanding this, after a few days Kelly began to use her natural feminine charms as well as her b.s. skills to spin a web for the Prophet.

The FLDS faction would never approve of a female being in such a position of influence, no matter how conservatively she dressed or how demurely she acted at the office. Prophet Rammell loved it, though. And, after the debacle at the capitol, and the war it had led them into, the Council of Fifty was eager to do anything to weaken the Fundamentalist's influence and power. That's why she had been promoted, and that's why she laid it on thick, every day, about the FLDS stirring up conflict in Colorado. Because she lay the responsibility for the alleged raids on New American property at the feet of the FLDS, the Council was reluctant to commit to a fight against the legion in Estes Park. They didn't want to be seen as siding with terrorists, even their own terrorists, and they wanted to punish the extremists. When Prophet Rammell himself ordered the young Lieutenant in charge of the artillery units in Estes Park to ask for a cease fire from the legion, he did, and was almost relieved that they accepted.

Col. Brown met with the Deseret lieutenant, and told him that LDS troops and colonists would be allowed one week to withdraw from

Estes Park, during which time the cease fire would be honored. That message was conveyed to the Council, which entered into a brief debate, showing fracture lines deepening between the fundamentalist and Community of Christ factions. The more liberal wing, emboldened by the disfavor the FLDS was in, won. Estes Park and the immediate vicinity were evacuated by all of the Mormons there, and the legion moved in to occupy the town.

FLDS adherents in Rock Springs, Wyoming, reacted with anger at the capitulation, and burned down the homes of several non-Mormons in the town. With winter coming soon, that was a real threat to their survival. Wyoming National Guard forces in Laramie under the Unified Command were mobilized and placed on high alert, in response. The extremists began not only verbally harassing, but physically assaulting, women on the street who were not dressed modestly or conservatively enough to suit their tastes, even in the middle of a Wyoming December.

Having secured Los Alamos and the Abiquiu Reservoir, the Republic of Texas forces in northern New Mexico seemed content to allow the large dead zone of the former Apache reservations serve as a buffer between themselves and the disheartened LDS forces in that sector. They would hold their positions through the New Year. In the south, however, Texican troops from El Paso, supported by F-16s flying out of Biggs, engaged Gull units defending Silver City.

The name tag still read “Lt. Walker” on his Texas Air National Guard uniform. It even still fit. As he walked right past the Rangers at the security kiosk and out onto the tarmac, his back itched. Nobody questioned him, and nobody followed him. Apparently his face being in the news as an Ambassador and as a hero of Salt Lake’s massacre hadn’t made him recognizable, either, at least not when he was in a uniform. It was something he had learned in the military: people have ranks, not faces. Of course, President Hampton was a military man, to, but he wouldn’t understand what Josh was doing. To him and to all of his

comrades, he would be a traitor. He might even be called Texas's own version of Benedict Arnold, if it went bad. But if it went good, well…if it went good, he could stop this stupid, senseless war, and end the men on both sides dying over desert sand and ghost towns and bleached bones.

As he looked over the aircraft on the flightline, ready to be fired up, he wondered if Kelly would understand. First, he'd have to explain to her why he hadn't told her that he was a Republic of Texas Air Force officer. That would require explaining to her that he had been on a mission to infiltrate Deseret intelligence, specifically through her, but that was before he had really fallen in love with her, and now he was back, and they could make things right, for them, and for their two countries. He would just have to see, he couldn't live without her, no matter what happened.

The old flight plan he'd do ctored to look current satisfied the warrant officer on the hoses, especially when he saw the names on it. The famous Ambassador and the President, both so-signing a top secret mission? Wait until the guys heard about this at the poker game tonight!

Fifteen minutes later, Josh took off, headed to Kelly, who was at that moment discussing the situation in Wyoming with two Council members, both men in their late fifties and bearded. One, she knew, was more fundamentalist than the other, whom she focused on as being the most open-minded. The Council meeting always struck her as being anticlimactic and small, considering how much power emanated from the room. This situation with the New Americans, she told them, could blow up in their face. Tensions were high in California, where Bakersfield was under contention between the two nations. The cease-fire in Colorado still held, but shakily. And now, this situation in Wyoming, they needed to put a lid on these extremists before there was another nuclear war, and this time they would be in it…her measured responses to their questions were reassuring and feminine, but firm. Just in the middle of an excellent point she was making

about the need to not fight two foes at once, the internal intercom buzzed raucously. “Yes?” one of the Council members, the one who liked her, asked, in obvious irritation.

“Umm, Sir, we have an intru..um, an un, unauthorized visitor, here, Sir, requesting admittance. His access code is valid but outdated, Sir.” the D.P.S. security officer stated.
“Oh, for…who is it?” the Councilman asked. His counterpart, the fundy, had nodded off during the discussion of relative troop strengths in Wyoming, and was blinking rapidly to try to wake himself up.
“It’s….”IT’S JIMMY AND I HAVE PROOF THAT SHE IS A TRAITOR!” the guard was interrupted by a voice screaming over the intercom. Kelly’s blood ran cold, but she kept her face very still.
“Well. How very interesting.” The FLDS inclined Councilman said, now fully awake. I think we should see what he has to say. Don’t you, Edgar?”
Jimmy stood there, still trembling and stammering, looking like he hadn’t shaved in a week and had slept in his clothes. He had spent the last five minutes since the guard had escorted him in accusing Kelly of being a whore and an adulterer and disloyal to the Church because she was in love with the Texican Ambassador. Only after that, as if it was secondary, did he discuss her lack of religious faith, her disregard for civil and religious laws, and her past criminal activity. “Oh, poor Jimmy, is that all you’ve got? Really?” Kelly said, before a warning glance from the friendly Councilman silenced her.
“We…appreciate your patriotism and your concern, Jimmy. Of course, your suspension has not been rescinded, so your presence here is not lawful or advisable. And, considering this display today, I think we’ll have to make the suspension a more permanent separation.”
“What…that…why….?” Jimmy began. He looked at Kelly like a whipped puppy. She felt sorry for him, for a moment.
“Of course the Council knows about Miss Johansen’s relationship with Mr. Walker. After all, it was you who ordered her to run

around with him, wasn't it? In service to the Church, for which all is allowed for the greater Glory of God?" the Councilman nodded reassuringly at Kelly, who made herself look embarrassed and meek.
Jimmy shrank visibly. "Oh, but I never told her to..she really…and she isn't even a believer!" she whined pitifully.
The other Councilman leaned forward. "This is childish, you're acting like a jealous boyfriend. Who among us has not, from time to time, had a crisis of belief? Miss Johansen's actions, though those of a frail and imperfect woman, speak more of her loyalties to the Church than any meaningless professions of faith." His disgust for Jimmy was palpable. He saw him as weakened by a woman, and that was intolerable.
Jimmy said nothing. Kelly moved in for the killing blow. "Jimmy." Hearing her say his name, softly, he flinched, and looked at her, expecting the worst. "Jimmy, it's okay. I understand. Maybe in a different world…but we had to be professionals, and not get involved that way, I hope you understand, now. But it's okay, Jimmy. I understand, and I forgive you."
The guard led him out to spare the former director further embarrassment. The two Councilmen shook their heads in sadness at the interruption. Inside, Kelly felt victorious. Any further accusations of disloyalty or treason, by Jimmy or anybody else, could be discounted as jealousy and resentment at her being a woman in a high position of trust. She was shielded.
After that, they both listened to her next half hour of weighing the pros of having the secured Mormon communities in Wyoming with the cons of having an enemy at every corner, and paid attention. Just as she was winding down, emotionally exhausted by the day, the intercom buzzed again. "Yes?" the elder Councilman asked it again, almost in amusement, as he winked at Kelly in a conspiratorial 'What Now?' gesture.
An audible sigh. "Sir, I apologize for the interruption, again, but I thought you might want to know. A fighter het from Texas came into our radar fields in Tucson and was pinged by surface to air defenses. When they locked on, the pilot hailed them and identified himself. He asked for permission to land and was

denied…so he ejected."
"He ejected!? Over southern Arizona?" Kelly blurted out. Neither of the Councilmen seemed to care.
"Uhm, yes, err, Ma'am. His chute deployed and a team was sent out to recover him." The confused guard responded.
"Wait, you said he identified himself? Well, who is the maniac?" Edgar asked.
"That's the thing, Sir, it's…it's the Ambassador from Texas."
Both Councilmen looked straight at Kelly. "Okay, young lady. It looks like you're going to Arizona." Edgar informed her.

Wise men say, only fools rush in
But I can't help falling in love with you….

Gerta had been calling twice a day, asking if the Greater German government could help negotiate a peace settlement between all of the parties concerned. John understood her position, but he also understood that the N.P.D.'s interests lay more with fluffing the Republic of Texas to gain tariff-free access to their ports, than anything to do with Deseret or New America. The same was true of the British Ambassador's daily courier notes of advice. The Australians, Argentines, New Zealanders, and South Africans weren't in the game. The French, with their close alliance with New America through Quebec, didn't have divided allegiances favoring Texas, but they weren't in much of a position to intervene anywhere west of the Mississippi, where it was needed, either. They were in this one alone.

President Hampton cursed softly under his breath. "Look, John, it just ain't that simple. I can't have my boys cross the Red River and fight their way all the way across the continent through a million jungle bunnies, not when there's a thousand miles of open territory over the Rio Bravo just waitin' to be had."

"Ignoring for a second that we're comparing apples and oranges, some of the best farmland in the world with desert, and comparing part of America with part of Mexico…there is the little fact that we had a deal. You might recall that detail, Scott," the

Speaker growled into the radio. The encryption only caused a couple of seconds delay, as did the digital decryption on either end.

“No, no, I ain’t forgot what I said, but that was before my flippin’ Ambassador pulled a Rudolf Hess on me. I’ve got to make a separate peace now, it’s all over the BBC.”
McNabb couldn’t argue with that. The evening broadcast had featured a hospital bedside interview with Josh Walker, laying there nursing a broken ankle from a bad parachute landing, with Kelly Johansen beaming by his side. She’d held his hand throughout the interviews. “Star Crossed Lovers”, the London Daily Mail said. “Modern Romeo and Juliet”, the Chicago Tribune, even, trumpeted. He had made sure that editor was fired the same day, but the edition had still gone out. “My God. What kind of deal did they offer you, to get to you like that?” he asked.
“They made me an offer I couldn’t refuse, ha ha…they give up their territorial claim to New Mexico, in exchange for me pushing two bills through the legislature,” Scott answered, dryly.
“What legislature?” John spat. The rubber-stamping Texican Congress was a joke.
“Sure, exactly, so that makes it easy enough. The Republic of Texas agrees to let the Mormon cultists already in New Mexico stay there unmolested, and we make polygamy legal. Consensual polygamy, was my stipulation, that is.” The President clarified. “Not that it’s any of yours or New America’s business.”
“Did that come from Prophet Rammell, or the Council?” John pushed. He needed to know how much power and influence Kelly was wielding.
“Heck, I don’t know, my loverboy told he’d negotiated it with them personally after that Director of their Department of Public Safety broad he’d been laying up with came and got him. He said he didn’t intend to bail out an a multi-million dollar jet we can’t replace, but their radar locked on him and they threatened to shoot him down.” “So, you’re not sure?” McNabb asked.
“All I know is, the peace treaty I’m about to sign, after calling you as a courtesy to let you know, is signed by the Prophet Rammell

and a half dozen Council members, so it looks official." Hampton said.
"Probably Kelly got them in the same position that Josh got you in, making the deal public before it was actually made. That could be a dangerous play for her. Scott, this is just you and me talking, here. Did you send him to do it?" John was curious.
"Me? No way. I'd have ordered him shot out of the sky myself first if I'd known ahead of time, losing the plane or not. But now that it's done and they made sure it was public, I have to go with it, or look like I'm not in charge down here…since it's just you and me talking, son." Through the bitter sarcasm, The Speaker heard the sincerity of Hampton's words.
"I bet that's how they wanted it, too. But that doesn't affect our deal about the Church of the New Dispensation, man. With Ike dead, they're on the ropes, all it would take is a push…."
"I'm sorry, son, but with the way things are, I'm going to need every cowboy that can ride on this roundup. If Josh Walker and Kelly Johansen are trying to play both their countries like puppets, I'll have to kick tail in the west just to make sure I don't end up wearing their brand," the President admitted.
"Well, the F.L.D.S. won't be the only ones happy about you decriminalizing polygamy. A lot of the dual seedline Christian Identity folks will prefer it, too. How many first ladies you plan on having?" John lightened the subject to air away some of the animosity between them.
"I can barely stand the one I got most of the time, son. Why do you think I stay on the trail so much?" Scott joked back. "Look, I'm sorry about this, but I hope it doesn't come between us, long term."
McNabb hesitated a second, and chose his words carefully. "Mr. President, if you would ask any my enemies, they'd tell you that I'm the best friend or the worst enemy that anybody can ever have. Of course, they're hard to find, these days, because I'm ruthless and relentless and never forgive or forget. Once I turn cold on somebody…out is out. The fact that I tell you that, means that I still consider you In the 'friend' category. I'm disappointed. But I've gotten used to being disappointed by people. Even my

friends."
"I guess I get that. So, what about the Ambassadorial situation down here? My guy up there doing okay? He hasn't fallen in love with any of your spies or anything?" Hampton joked.
"No, he's doing fine. And I hope that our Ambassador is staying healthy, and will continue to, as well. If he should have an accident, or a heart attack…" John left the thought hanging, unfinished.
"That makes me ashamed of myself, because I reckon I'd feel the same way, in your boots. Our herds might not be at the same watering hole on this ride, but we'll round 'em up next time, partner." Scott drawled in his affected cowboy accent. He was becoming a true Texican politician.

I saw the light, I saw the light
No more in darkness, no more in night….

The way back from the Battle of Vicksburg for the defeated and dejected Church of the New Dispensation army was long and chilly and exhausting. Out of the 1,000 or more who made it back across the river, a couple hundred fell by the wayside before they staggered back into New Orleans to lick their wounds. In that dark hour, one man stepped forward to rally the believers.

Joe Bob Clearly had at times been a Klansmen and a professional wrestler. Years before Cinco Day, he had become a Fundamentalist pastor on a religious satellite tv channel, playing second fiddle to more established figures, but building a name around his soupbowl haircut and flapping jowl. His actual church was in Baton Rouge. At the time of the collapse his congregation had been about 70% black. By the time the White migrations and ethnic cleansings had wound down, it was over 90% black. Clearly, a consummate opportunist and career confidence man, had quickly moved to work out a deal with the New Black Panther Party which took over the state capitol. In exchange for their protection from other blacks, Clearly would give them 90% of his income from tithes and offerings, off the top.

That kind of deal was the only way he could stay in operation, and probably the only way that he could stay in one piece. Fortunately for Rev. Clearly, the N.B.P.P. accepted, after cutting the Nation Of Islam in for twenty percent of the take. With few other legally sanctioned churches still operating in the city, Clearly's congregation actually grew after the secession of Louisiana became official. He found that, even just keeping 10% and skimming a bit here and there, he and his girlfriends could live comfortably. Especially if he switched them out every few weeks so they didn't get too demanding.

When Rev. Ike had moved his base of operations to Lake Charles, Joe Bob had seen an opportunity to combine forces with someone who shared his vision of a multiracial church. Unlike Huckleberry, Clearly had maintained a more closed attitude towards homosexuality, which Ike demanded he moderate before they joined their congregations. A divine revelation opened Joe Bob's heart to different kinds of love, and he shared that new acceptance with his congregation. He lost a few church members that way, but when Rev. Ike's Faithful made their way north through Baton Rouge, Clearly was ready to contribute four-hundred active supporters, a third of them able to march and fight, to the C.N.D. .

Because Clearly's group was huddled around him at the rear of the New Dispensation army, over 100 of them survived, giving Joe Bob a larger share in the army's factions than before. With no real successor having been named, it surprised few when, a week after their reentry into New Orleans, purple smoke poured out of the Smoothie King Center, indicating that a new leader had been chosen by the Board of Deacons. Joe Bob Clearly was named the next Messianic Reverend of the Church of the New Dispensation.

In his acceptance speech, the Messianic Reverend called upon God to bless the Church, and to bless their black brothers who had misunderstood their message of love. He also began speaking in tongues and declared Ike Huckleberry to be a Saint in

Heaven. Joe Bob said a prayer for guidance to Saint Ike. The Battle of Vicksburg had been the best thing to happen to him, ever. Now, he had to keep his new flock fed through the winter, which was wet and cold even in New Orleans, these days.

Without Texas 's help, McNabb briefly considered nuking New Orleans to excise the shrunken cancer that was the Church of the New Dispensation. He knew, however, that eventually New America would need the southernmost terminus of the Mississippi to move goods up and down from the gulf to the midwest. He couldn't make it unusable for generations just to solve a temporary problem.

Instead, New America began transferring the Sixth fleet and the NAS Ford carrier group from Oregon to the gulf, to support the Emerald Coast's campaign to drive the C.N.D. out of Mobile. With Panama depopulated by the Turkish Flu, in time the canal and its locks could be brought back into operation, but for now, they would have to take the long way around. The Ford churned towards South America with plans to stop over and visit their Argentine allies as a diplomatic gesture before rounding Tierra del Fuego. In the meantime, five Centuries of legionnaires from the Colorado line were transported to Pensacola on C-130s from McConnell Air Force base in Wichita. Their mission was to retake Mobile so that the Sixth could make their new home port in Mobile Bay…giving New America fleets on two coasts. Emerald Coast troops would focus on reinforcing their line just east of Tallahassee. Gov. Strawn would maintain direct command over them, but they were still within the jurisdiction of the Unified Command.

He supposed that it was inevitable that he have some kind of communication again with Kelly, even indirectly. He sent Mark Smith, in his official capacity as Secretary of State, to meet with her at the Maverick Center on the Colorado Mesa University campus in Grand Junction, a Deseret held town. The Rocky Mountain roads further north weren't safe to travel without regular

maintenance during the winter months. He wanted to show strength, and confidence, so he sent an entire company of spiffy S.S. troops along with Mark. He also sent Kip and Hope. If the deal was made, then his former Chief of Staff and his adopted daughter would continue on with half of the company of S.S. guards to Salt Lake, where Kip would serve as the new Ambassador from New America to Deseret. It was a gamble, and put two of the people he cared most about in the world at risk, but it also was the last thing that Kelly would expect, and he needed people out there whom he could trust, implicitly. If the deal was made.

It was. Mark was authorized to speak for the Speaker, and he responded to Kelly's veiled references to Deseret's nuclear bombs at Hill by stating bluntly that New America could absorb everything the Mormons could throw at them and still make sure that Joseph Smith's name wouldn't be remembered by anyone alive. And, in typical Mark fashion, he said it with a smile on his face. Kelly asked if he was descended from the Mormon founder with same last name, himself. She knew when she'd been outmaneuvered. When everything was said and done, more ended up being said, than done. The same deal that the Council agreed to with the Texicans, they agreed to with the former Marine Colonel Smith. The rest of Colorado would become a New American territory, but the Mormons living there would be allowed to stay, and polygamy would be legalized throughout New America. Likewise, southern Idaho and southwestern Wyoming would revert back to their pre-Cinco boundaries, and be ruled from St. Louis, but the Mormons could stay and keep as many wives as they could feed. McNabb confirmed via radio that the Treaty of Grand Junction was acceptable. He promised to push approval of it through the Congress, along with a proviso guaranteeing religious freedom for all White citizens. As Kip and Mark conferred, and Hope prepared herself for a new life in LDS country, Kelly interrupted the two men by asking Mark to take a personal message back to John. Afraid of a last minute crawfish on the deal, Mark straightened and looked at her intently. Instead

Kelly smiled sardonically. “Tell him…that everything comes full circle.”

Will the circle, be unbroken By and by, Lord, by and by…

The Speaker thought about the cryptic meaning of Kelly’s words as he rode through the streets of the booming capitol, on the way to the port. The last of late winter’s snow was melting away from the side streets. An important shipment, the harbor master insisted, had arrived for him personally, from halfway around the world. They were really eager to get it offloaded, too, for some reason.

The crowd of military police and S.S. guards clustered around the barge holding containers from Chicago, and before that, from ocean-going container ships, were wearing face masks. That couldn’t be good. The curious onlookers, some distance away, all held their noses. McNabb’s curiosity was peaked. The deck crew foreman handed over a manifest as if it was contaminated, too. All of the workers looked disgusted, and he couldn’t blame them. Reading over the shipment history: Durban to Perth to Oahu to Pensacola to Chicago, John realized that whatever was in there, it come a long way. Looking at the dates, he saw that it was shipped seven weeks ago. Before Christmas, then, he thought, Oh goodie, maybe somebody sent me Santa Claus, and he died along the way. What are those crazy South Africans up to?’

On the standard rust brown shipping container were stenciled instructions: “This Side Up. Feed normal crew rations, six servings, twice per day. Provide six liters water, bottled, per day. Hose out from top access vent once per week.”

Now he was really intrigued. Holding his handkerchief over his nose, he climbed up the access ladder and onto the top of the container. He couldn’t see anything down through the vents . John asked for and was handed up a flashlight, or ‘torch’, as the British crewman called it. When he shone the light just right, he could see the tops of some burry heads. They moved around and

bumped into the walls when the light penetrated their world. That stirred up the knee deep sludge they stood in, apparently late for its weekly hosing out. Then the smell hit him, stronger than before. McNabb leaned over the vents, and threw up on top of them.

After he'd ordered the container flushed out from the top vents to empty out the bottom vents, he opened the sealed cargo manifest from the port of departure. Inside was a handwritten letter addressed to him. The enclosed cargo, it announced, was "a gesture of friendship and gratitude from the people of the Orange Free State, in thanks for New America's aid in regaining control over their destiny as a people, blah blah blah"…there, at the bottom, "from the Johannesburg Center for Medical Research, Drs. Venter, Beale, De Pontes, Gottlich. Six live specimens, virus positive immune carriers. Negroid genotype selected. HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS.

He confirmed with Pretoria what the manifest meant. The Orangers hoped he liked his present and would use it as they were using theirs, they said. They simply suggested that the cargo be set free at an appropriate place and time to serve as vectors. As it turned out, only four of the live specimens had survived the trip, They had apparently killed the other two smaller ones, either over food or water or a couple of square feet of space…or just because they were animals, more likely, McNabb corrected himself.

The four Africans left alive were in poor health, even aside from carrying a deadly virus. They had ulcerated, infected sores from their toes to their thighs from the human waste they had lived in, and were extremely malnourished and light-sensitive. Over the next month they were housed in the city workhouse, in an empty wing, and given plenty of food and fresh air and exercise. As February turned to March, their general health improved dramatically. The virus they carried was studied by Dr. Edwards' team through blood samples taken from them, and found to be a

mutation of the Turkish Flu bonded with the genetic aberration for Sickle Cell Anemia, making it only aggressive towards potential hosts of African ancestry…although unlike the original, non-Africans could be non-infected carriers of the virus. With this representing a new strain of viral contagion, Dr. Edwards named it the T.S.U. Flu, for “This Side Up”, the label on the container it had arrived in. John thought that was brilliantly clever, and funny.

After that month, during which none of them exhibited any ability to read or write English or any other Western language, the test subjects each were given a new set of clothes, new shoes, and a backpack full of food and water. Finally, they were released back into the wild: one in northern Mississippi just south of Memphis, one in northern Georgia, one in western South Carolina, and the final one in central Virginia. The warming early Spring should make fine walking weather for them, the Speaker reasoned.

Chapter Thirteen:

It is becoming self-evident that the powers which now sit at the controls of this government have destroyed the Republic. It is no longer trustworthy and the American people for different reasons want the Republic back in the hands of Americans. Racial aliens are not Americans and cannot be made into Americans simply because they cross an invisible border. –Pastor Thomas Robb

Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose. Nothing ain't nothing, but it's free.

They had followed the retreating enemy all the way back to the edge of the water. General Ray-Ray and his Queen Taneisha had watched forlornly as the Bible-thumping honkies and their Uncle Toms tore the pylons out from under the causeway and collapsed section after section with dredging barges and cables and cranes. Then, distracted by their empty stomachs, they had turned back north and raided the villages along the lake's edge, where Taneisha had spent so much of her life catching fish and selling fish. Her Auntie and her three babies joined the army, along with a couple hundred other broke negroes with nothing else to do.

Ray Ray led them east, back over the big river and a bit north of the coastline, where the honkies flew their planes around Mobile and farther on. The poor and starving with no future were enraptured by the New African General's stories of golden beaches and palm trees and shrimp for the asking. The army grew as it continued eastwards like a snowball rolling downhill, expanding with every particle of flake attaching to it. By the time Ray-Ray decided to for reals turn right at Jacksonville instead of heading back to Atlanta to report to Emperor Bling-Bling, he had nearly ten thousand neo-Zulu, New Black Panther, Nation of Islam, Crips, Bloods, and straight up country niggas following him around like a puppy looking for a treat. He'd give them one.

The defecting general was smart enough to stay well clear of the Emerald Coast perimeter lines as he led the horde deeper into Florida. The Cuban Army soldiers who had survived the Turkish Flu were a remnant, fifteen percent of their original strength, which had already been stretched thin enough, even before the sickness hit. They retreated before the black mob, regrouped in Orlando, and withdrew again to West Palm Beach. Still, Ray Ray's force kept coming, only briefly distracted here and there for a few days at the time by the isolated White enclaves who had survived several years of postApocalyptic horrors, only to be crushed now by what still called itself a New African Army.

Inevitably, the two forces faced off in Palm Beach. If the Cubans, who were outnumbered ten to one, had only known that Ray-Ray had changed his plans as he had wandered south and found nothing in Florida that matched his dreams, they might have just withdrawn further and left them alone. As it was, only a couple hundred of them survived the slaughter which ensued and made it back to Miami. But Ray-Ray had seen a tourist brochure Taneisha had found in an old souvenir shop. It looked just like his dreams. The map on the back of it looked so easy, and so close. He ordered his people to find every boat that would float. By the time the T.S.U. flu passed into Florida, Ray Ray had led his new tribe to Freeport, and saved them from the virus.

Oh you're where you should be all of the time, and when you're not, you're with Some underworld spy, or the wife of a close friend, the wife of a close friend…

The new German immigrants getting off the ship at Houston for the first time were coming for more than just wide open spaces and big steaks, Scott knew. They were coming for economic opportunity. Many of them were here to manage the corporate export operations shipping crude oil and refined gasoline and aviation fuel and different mixtures and petroleum derivatives in direct-to-vendor special shipments, since all of the processing could be done here, prior to shipment. That difference alone in

production time and cost made Texas oil competitive with North Sea crude. But they had brought their families along with them, too, the President observed, as he watched three or four blonde-haired children piling down the gangway for every adult. That meant that many of them were putting down roots, buying property, and would stay for the long term. With a lot of re-colonization to do, Texas could use them.

As for the British, they might not like having a dent taken out of their petroleum export market to continental Europe, but they were taking it in good cheer, because Texas beef was reducing British beef prices, being closer and therefore cheaper to import than their Argentine competitors who had monopolized the market in South America. It was still hard for him to tell the difference at first between the accents of the British beef brokers, who tended to remain in the larger cities like Houston and Dallas and Corpus Christi, and the Australian, New Zealand, and South African cowboys who wrangled herds both here as well as up in Montana and Wyoming and the Dakotas. Right now, Texas beef was cheaper on the hoof than New American beef…at least until the Marines and militia cleaning out Norfolk got it running again. Scott lost sleep at nights worrying about the economic consequences of New America being able to ship exports right down through the Mississippi to the gulf, or worst, right through an Atlantic port, instead of having to go through the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway, any more. At least that would take the starch out of the Frenchies and their Quebecois allies. Well, one thing about Cinco Day, it had taught people how to love one day at a time. He tried to tell himself not to worry about things that were still months away. Hampton nagged at himself for being a worrier, and that gave him one more thing to worry about.

On that note, the Russian scientists Texas had been loaned to work on getting things going again out at Los Alamos had a list of special industrial equipment and supplies they had given him. All of it was stuff they needed for the enrichment process of the Uranium from the four Commanche Creek reactors. They had

really sped up the research that the nuclear science center team from A & M had started. He was going to speak to the German ambassador about it, but decided instead that he would skip some bureaucratic red tape and go to a private shipping and procurement firm, directly. It wasn't like the old days, there were salvage crews all over Asia and the Middle East who could find all the things they needed that the Russians themselves weren't shipping over from their new acquisitions in Iran and Turkey. Scott looked out across the ocean water, sparkling in the summer sun. In a couple of years, the Republic of Texas wouldn't regret shipping all of their nukes north out of the path of the Reconquista when the Nortenos had eaten up half the country. They'd have their very own.

He told his girlfriend to wait in the car. There might be some media around, and getting a picture of the President of The Republic of Texas walking dockside alone was one thing. Catching him here with his predecessor's widow, well, that might be another rodeo, entirely. After all he had done and risked to get her, he didn't want to lose her, now. So long as Josh stayed on task in his infiltration of the top levels of Deseret, everything should be alright.

Some people never come clean, I think you know what I mean.
You're walking a wire between pain and desire, and looking for love inbetween…

Kelly would rather have died, or at least taken a good buttwhippin', than have Hope save her. Now she owed her one. Well maybe now they were even, if the sins of the father were visited on the daughter. Stupid Josh had been late getting out of his LDS History classes with his Counselor, and they had been waiting because there was a sale on of the new Russian watches that would perfectly match her earrings, and had a cell phone embedded in it, too. Hope had asked to come along because Kip was busy moving into the larger embassy building, and she

wanted to get out of their bungalow. Well, at least they didn't have to stay in a suite, she thought. 'You, too, can be a star!'.

Out of nowhere, right there on the sidewalk, they had come at her, the three bearded men in long coats that should have been a giveaway in the full Spring warmth. One of them had yelled "Here comes the White Horse!", their stupid White Horse prophecy. Then he had swung a short shotgun up from under his jacket, and the other two were reaching for theirs at the same time. Where Hope had pulled that big hand cannon from, Kelly had no idea. Before she could even reach behind her back to draw, five blasts boomed out, then two more. None of the three fundys got off a shot.

To give credit where it was due, Josh was right there five seconds later, with his own handgun drawn, a revolver, Texican cowboy style, of course. And the D.P.S. tards were right behind him. Unfortunately, a Deseret News tv crew was across the street filming a fluff piece about the new cell watches, and got it all on tape. There were too many witnesses around for her to take their footage without causing a scene, so she'd just went with it and turned on the waterworks. Poor helpless victim of hateful attack time.

The Council might not like that it had happened right downtown in a crowd, but she would spin it so they would see the benefit of the propaganda message. More importantly, they would see that the lines were clearly drawn, now. A few of the more rigid fundamentalist members might have to be removed. Only the Council could revise the Council and remove members. Even if he had been more than just a figurehead, Rammell couldn't do that. So, she would have to convince them that the Council of Fifty should be more like the Council of Forty-two, by her count. Otherwise, the rebels would know everything the government planned against them, before it even got past the planning stages…unless she just took the reins and did it herself, without

consulting them. Kelly had been having to do that more and more, lately. It was the only way to get anything done.

When the cameras left, she stopped crying and sent Josh across the street to get her one of the new cell watches. Watching Hope watching her, apparently still kind of upset by the shooting, she whistled at Josh. When he turned around, she gestured at Hope, smiled, and held up two fingers. Josh, nodded, understanding. Well, it was the least she could do. The very least. Things came full circle, again.

There are places I remember all my life, though some have changed. Some forever, not for better, some have gone and some remain…

“I thought you were a pretty cool guy, until I found out you had swastika tattoos all over,” she had said, raising her arms to pull her shirt back over her head.
“Yeah, I thought you were a pretty cool girl, until I found out you don’t shave under your arms,” he had told the hippie chick, so long ago. How long ago had it been, exactly? Ten years ago? In college, anyway, before Cinco Day. Now, here he was with silver Sergeant’s stripes on his back sleeves, Dave thought. Chauffeuring the top dog in the country. The memory of that conversation came back to him as he drove towards The Warehouse with the marble arch in his rear-view mirror.
“Hey, Dave, would you mind turning the news up a bit? I want to hear this,” Speaker John McNabb said. Without responding, because that would have drowned out more of what the announcer was saying, the driver just reached down and turned the old style radio volume knob to the right by degrees. It was funny how the new Ford Renaissance sedans had retro classic features like that. Everything hand-cranked instead of electric, too, like an old Cadillac.
“…And for more on this story, let’s you take you to the Post-Dispatch’s own Misty Chandler in Flagstaff. Misty?”
“Yes, Bobby, the Deseret government isn’t releasing any new

information to the foreign press corps, but sources on the ground here do report that tensions are running high following the attempted assault on their Department of Public Safety director outside a church where her fiance', the Republic of Texas ambassador, was taking classes to convert. Now, that director, a woman, has in the past been criticized by extremist Mormons associated with the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints who do not approve of the highest law enforcement official in their country being a female. So far we have no word on the condition of her surviving attackers, who were reportedly shot, according to a brief press release from the New American embassy, by the wife of the New American Ambassador. Back to you, Bobby."

"So, am I hearing correctly, Misty, that for once all three nations worked together on something besides higher border fences? That's amazing! But seriously, what is the government's next expected move there?"

"The truth is that no one is sure what will happen next, Bobby. Early this morning, Prophet Rammell called an emergency session of the Council of Fifty, which unanimously issued a proclamation condemning the F.L.D.S. as a terrorist organization, even before they had claimed responsibility for the attack. But here in Flagstaff, public sentiment towards the more conservative wing of Mormonism seems to be divided. Many people I spoke with feel that the LDS has gone too far with their reforms, Bobby."

"Thank you, Misty, and stay safe. Well, as the potential for more bloodshed between anti-government extremists and the Salt Lake administration increases, radical fundamentalist militias have tightened their control over towns across northern Arizona, where their support runs deepest. And while the New American Speaker was unavailable for comment this morning, his Press Secretary, Carolyn McNabb, did have this to say," Carolyn's clipped and precise professional voice came on:

"All freedom loving people across this continent we share join in giving thanks to God that the Deseret official targeted by this hateful attack was not injured, and that the persons directly responsible for the cowardly act were detained and arrested, with the assistance of New American citizens who were present at the

time…”
John chuckled quietly. Hope had called him right after it had happened, on her new cell phone, she’d said. She was quite proud of it, and of herself. Her voice was still shaky from the nerves. It was her first time to shoot anybody in years, she’d admitted, almost embarrassed. Her dad had chided her that she should learn her lesson about going shopping with Kelly Johansen, to which Hope had responded saying that was the best way to keep an eye on her. He had taught her well.
The Speaker hadn’t been available to comment on the story himself because he’d been busy over at Forest Park where the ceremonial ground-breaking was held for an expansion of the St. Louis Zoo. The new Charles Darwin Memorial Hominid Endangered Subspecies Park would house exhibits featuring small herds of Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics roaming free in natural habitat enclosures. By this time next year, he and Carolyn would be able to take Cindy and John Jr. to see what real live nonWhites looked like. They had only seen them on t.v. and in movies, their whole lives.
Flyovers from the new Air Force base in Memphis showed very little human activity in northern Mississippi and Southern Arkansas, which he had plans to reclaim as farmland, soon. The new John Deere factory in Moline was turning out tractors as fast as the assembly lines could go, in anticipation of the need. They would still have to do something about those crazies down in New Orleans, though. When the T.S.U. flu began to spread like wildfire, Rev. Clearly had ordered the Church of the New Dispensation to destroy all three of the bridges across Lake Pontchartrain and kill off five mile wide buffers from La Place to Kenner and from Raceland to Boutte. They would be hard to dig out. John had some plans in the works involving Bayou Cajuns and reverse gator hunts, though, that might work.
So, New Orleans might not be available as a port for a while, yet, but Norfolk would be, in a few months, and the Sixth Fleet in Pensacola would be moved up there, then, while the Seventh would take the long trip over to Emerald Coast duty and the Fifth remained on the West Coast. Coos Bay was fine for now, and the

Third was at home in Anchorage, but they'd need to build a couple more carrier fleets down the road, one for the San Francisco Bay to keep the Mormons quiet out west, and one for Pearl, to protect Oahu and their allies down under. It all seemed daunting, until he realized how far they'd come since Cinco Day. And how far they were going. As his car pulled into the fenced perimeter of The Warehouse, The Speaker looked out the window at the blue sky, and wondered how long it would take to get there.

‘Wasting The Dawn’

Hasten The Day, Part III By Billy Roper

This, the third and final installment in the ‘Hasten The Day’ trilogy, is dedicated to my childhood imaginary friend, Pardoo. If anything is amiss in this book, don’t blame me. Pardoo did it. Pardoo says that any similarity between any person or institutions in this book, living or dead, is completely a figment of YOUR imagination.

Also in the ‘Hasten The Day’ series, by the same author:

‘Hasten The Day’
and
‘Waiting For The Sun: Hasten The Day, Part II’

“I tell you this, no eternal reward will forgive us now for wasting the dawn…”
-Jim Morrison

Chapter One

“Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.”
-Thomas Jefferson

“O Beautiful for patriot dream That sees beyond the years Thine alabaster cities gleam, Undimmed by human tears!”

The long and lanky young man lying prone in the grass paused his firing to curse and complain bitterly, “One more that close and I’m going home!”. John Jr. adjusted his aim to make his next shot a bit more than six inches above the complainer’s ear, this time. Maybe the plastic wadding wouldn’t ruffle his longish hair as much. BOOM! Both kids in front of him flinched again. He tried to stifle a malicious laugh. This was fun. For him, at least. The grizzled and scarred veterans teaching the gray uniformed young men how to fire shotguns in volleys raised their eyebrows at each other, and hoped for the best. They knew they had to keep their eye on the youngster in back, especially. Most of the boys in the class were younger sons of first generation New American nobility. He, on the other hand, was the only son and heir apparent of the Speaker, so he was used to the world getting out of his way in a hurry.

Barely standing, the target for the teenaged boys’ practice today w as the broadside of a barn, literally. The fire-scorched edifice on the outskirts of the capitol city was chosen for demolition because it had been one of the last places of refuge for the Hispanic migrant workers in the area, before they had been ethnically cleansed. “That was a real ‘Harold’!” one of the younger boys cried in frustration, as his shotgun stovepiped the ejecting shell. The others chuckled at the slang reference to anything that fouled

up and blocked progress. A black-shirted instructor with one eye and a long scar on his cheek shouted “Cold Range!” and took the shotgun from him to clear the obstruction, before the group resumed firing.

The Political History class that afternoon was a warm refuge from the cold and damp winter’s morning shooting lesson. An elderly man with a hunched back and a gravelly voice, Mr. Ness had refused an honorary doctorate and Capitol University lecturing tenure in order to teach at the Unified Command Military Academy. Only John Jr. was from St. Louis, the other boys in the class were all out-of-towners from the ruling families of Emerald Coast, Dakota, Alberta, or other New American states. Ranging in age from ten to fifteen, the six class years of students took all of their lessons together, but tested separately. The younger students, just fostered up from their parents, learned from the upper classmen, as much as they did from the instructors… except when it came to Mr. Ness’s class. Even Pastor Reed’s ‘Fundamentals of Christian Identity Doctrine’ class was less strict, at least until he began the chapter with the lesson plan on ‘dual seedline’, which still confused John Jr. a bit.

Following the class standing and giving straightarmed ‘Bellamy’ salutes while reciting the revised Pledge of Allegiance to the Starless Stripes, Mr. Hess began with a review of the last discussion.

“Matthew Hale Erickson! How long has the Unified Command been the fist of our body politic?” Ness asked, pacing the front of the room. He often paced with his head down and his hands behind his back, spewing forth trivia and facts about the last century as if he was oblivious to them all…until one of them stopped paying attention. The straw- blonde twelve year old had been caught watching the muted plasma screen in the corner of the ceiling broadcasting images of supply shuttles taking off to carry habitat construction material to the lunar colony. He blushed a deep red before answering. “Twenty years, Sir.”

“Correct. But we do not eliminate distractions here. Why is that, Mr. Alexander?” the teacher spun to confront a larger teen who had been making faces at Matt.
“Because our job is not to be free of distractions, but to be above them, Sir…,” the pale scion from Northern California began. “And what is discipline, Mr. Alexander?” Mr. Ness probed.
“Discipline means remembering what it is we really want, Sir.” George Rockwell Alexander recited from memory.
“And what do you really want, Mr. Alexander, to spend the rest of your ever- dwindling life making faces at Mr. Erickson?” his teacher demanded, looming over him.
“Uh, No Sir, Mr. Ness, Sir, that is, I don’t, uhm…” George stammered, his green eyes wide in panic.
“What about you, Senior Classman?” Ness asked the fifteen year old John Jr. smirking at George’s distress. “What do you really want?”
“I just want to be the last person to see the last nonWhite, Sir.” The Speaker’s son replied. He sat tall in his chair, expecting the praise he was accustomed to receiving from all quarters.
“And, by the three Kennedys, how many nonWhites have you ever seen, in fact, oh so brave warrior?”, the bent-backed old man asked. John Jr. felt his face grow hot, but an answer, and a truthful one, was required.
“A dozen or more, Sir. At the Darwin Hominid Endangered Subspecies exhibit in the Zoo crosstown. None in the wild, yet.”
Mr. Ness’s face softened somewhat at the realization that this new generation lived in a completely different world than the Old Detroit native had grown up in.
The other boys were too intimidated by the young McNabb to giggle at him, but it was obvious they wanted to. “Well, maybe you will, before they’re all gone, Senior Classman. Maybe you will.”
Their assignment for the day was to draw an accurate map of North America, including major cities and political boundaries. John Jr.’s greatest artistic competition in the class came from W.P. Wickey, another fifteen year old. He quickly sketched the eastern seaboard, then drew in the border between Nouvelle-France and

New America along the Potomac. W.P. was being different on purpose, starting on the other side, shading in the Mormon territory from Deseret to the Pacific. Matthew struggled, as always, with where to place the boundaries where the four major nations met, and was showing frustration by kicking the leg of his desk. George had just started laboriously marking the Republic of Texas controlled areas of New Mexico and Oklahoma when the two older boys both raised their hands at the same time to show that they had finished. Most of the other students had barely begun to label in the capitol cities.
Due to the tie, W.P. and John Jr. shared leadership of the P.T. that evening after auto repair and welding class. They both beamed with pride as they led the younger boys through a grueling ten mile run with full backpacks. Six of the thirty-four cadets in New America's most prestigious officer training school fell out in exhaustion before they made it back to barracks, and had to be carried by their classmates. Only one of them rang the bell to drop out. They were a tough bunch of boys. They had to be, this was a tough world they were going to inherit, full of ghosts. It was no place for the meek.

"We three kings, of orient are. Bearing gifts, we traveled so far…"

Less than twenty miles away, John Jr.'s dad was peering at a pile of printouts forecasting the costs of the new atmospheric domes being built in place on the moon. For the last ten years, human technology had matched and then surpassed scientific advancements leading up to 'The Balk', the paradigm-shifting breakup of the former United States. The fact that he rubbed his eyes now out of habit instead of tiredness was another example of that. His laser corrective surgery had given him better than twentytwenty vision last year, despite the Speaker now being in his sixties. He could read the Bible in church, when it came his turn to stand, without even squinting.

Granted, Deseret had lagged behind, focusing on recreating a more pastoral and agriculture based society, but that was by their

own choice. There were just as many silver lines launching up from Houston to the Republic of Texas's orbital station as headed to the moon from Chicago, these days. The two European superpowers' programs were even larger, if less refined. McNabb thought his and Gen. Ball's was the best approach, at any rate.

His intercom buzzed. McNabb's secretaries kept getting younger and younger, he thought. This one sounded like she should be in Sunday School learning which nations descended from which Israelite tribes, still. The German Chancellor, formerly the ambassador to New America, was on line two. He'd let the military attaché planning General Ferguson's retirement party stew a bit longer on line one, while he took Gerta's call. Affairs of state must take precedence over affairs of state, after all.

Just as he tapped a code for a secure satlink, the most powerful man in North America heard a low warbling siren go off in the outer office. Putting the phone back down, he met the black-uniformed secret service guards at the door as they came in. The look on their faces told him that it was serious.

"Mr. Speaker, the airjet carrying the first lady has apparently been hijacked between Oahu and Sidney, over the Pacific. We don't know who's responsible yet, but unauthorized inbound flights have been intercepted just west…" the veteran S.S. officer was interrupted by someone in his earpiece. Holding a finger up to pause, he listened intently for a few moments. John Sr. knew better than to try to talk over the data feed. The younger guard, Grueder, was also listening to his own earpiece, and began unholstering his sidearm. 'Well, that doesn't look like good news,' their boss thought.

Whatever it was going on, he hoped that his wife was safe. Carolyn was half his world. After their daughter Cindy had died in a tragic automobile accident that had killed his driver and injured both of them nine years earlier, his wife had been unable to have any more children, and sunk into periodic depressions. Their worlds had centered on John Jr., and maybe they had been guilty

of spoiling the boy a bit too much. But he was all they had, except for each other and their grown adoptive daughter, Hope. Carolyn had bloomed again in the last few years, after Hope had given them grandchildren. Founding a nation from the chaos of civil war and rising to its unquestioned top meant nothing to John Sr., without his family.

His quick and silent prayer for Carolyn ended just as another group of S.S. guards entered the room, then closed and locked the doors behind them. “Okay, what’s going on?” the Speaker asked.

Fontel, the grizzled older guard, summed it up: “Sir, three aircraft have been shot down, of unknown origin, entering N.A. airspace from the Pacific side, over Northern California. They appeared to be Chinese jets, but they wouldn’t have the range, even if they still had the tech. I don’t know. Maybe from Java. But more urgent is the call we just got that the perimeter has been breached.”

He hadn’t heard anything at all. It’s not as if the Old Courthouse’s grounds were that expansive, even with the added security. “What do you mean? An assault?”
“No, Sir,” Fontel replied, holding his earpiece again. “Secretary of State Smith was found dead in his office a few minutes ago, Sir. He’s been murdered.”
“Mark? Dead? How? Shot, stabbed, poisoned?” John Sr.’s first thought, macabrely, had gone to how his old friend and co-ruler had gone out.
Grueder looked at him strangely, but Fontel had served in the Capitol’s honor guard long enough to not be wierded out by how his leader’s mind worked. He waved the other guards to cover the windows as he answered, “Shot, Sir. With a suppressed weapon. His secretary and one guard, as well.”
The North American leader spotted a problem instantly. “One guard, Major?” Fontel frowned, looked at Grueder, at the other guards, and then back at the Speaker.
“Yes, Sir, Mr. Speaker. The other guard is…currently missing, Sir.

Away from his post. Several called in sick, today."
Grueder spoke, then, saying "Sir, the rest of the cabinet has been advised, and their security teams on high alert status. The Secretary of Defense cannot be located, Sir."
"Did you try his ranch? Oh, of course you did, never mind. Are we looking at something internal, then?" John didn't want to say the word 'Coup'. Not yet. Not until he was sure.
Fontel looked uncertain, and nervous. "I believe we should relocate to a more secure location, Sir."
"More secure than the Capitol building?" the Speaker drew his customary Glock .45, slipped back the slide to check that the chamber was loaded, and was just releasing, checking, and reseating the magazine when the stuttered coughs of suppressed fire came from outside the door, where the external guards were posted. He was about to say 'I see your point', when Fontel's face tightened up and his eyes looked over John's shoulder. Grueder launched himself at the New American Speaker, tackling him to the floor. "What the!?!"….the air went out of him. The Glock was up and sweeping towards Grueder's side when the top of the guard's head sprayed blood all over both of them, and he slumped like a marionette whose strings had been snipped.
Fontel got off two shots as he fell backwards over the low table between the overstuffed chairs, struck multiple times. Some of the guards at the windows were yelling in surprise and anger. Some of them were quiet, firing calmly, into his back, as he lay on the floor on his left side. 'Try to roll over to face them, at least.' It felt like he was getting kicked in the kidneys. Hard. Couldn't breathe in. Couldn't breathe out. He barely had time to register understanding that his own S.S. had been infiltrated and betrayed him, before the last loyal guard fell. John W. McNabb was so angry at being unable to move or fight back that he didn't have time for any more noble last words than "You stupid pieces of…" before the last bullet answered the last question anyone ever learns the answer to.
The assassins slipped out in the chaos. Noone seized control of the government. Not right away. That wasn't the point. The point had been to create a vacuum. Then to fill that vacuum. The

attempt was obviously blunted though, by a lack of commitment on the part of some of the conspirators. Three bombs were found on the capitol grounds which, together, could have leveled it. They had never been armed. And half the missing guards appeared to have just called in sick to work, that morning. Loyal Secret Service and Unified Command troops patrolled the streets of St. Louis after scouring the Old Courthouse for any living witnesses or enemies. Without telling him why, a squad of military police awoke the Academy administration and escorted John Jr. back to the Warehouse, his family's compound in the city. There, under the watchful eye of his father's most trusted friends and personal guards, he would be safe.

General Gene Ferguson, nearly seventy, positioned a whole company of hand-picked men around the block, before coming in to give the Speaker's sole surviving heir a silent hug. The seasoned warrior's eyes were wet with tears. The teenager was told the news of his father's death, and his mother's plane hijacking, by a dour-faced senior guard named Glenn, whom he had known all of his life. He didn't react verbally, he just nodded his understanding. When Congressman Randy Balderson and his wife arrived, John Jr. gravely accepted their condolences and promises to do anything that needed to be done. As close friends of the late Speaker's, they too feared assassination, and accepted his offer that they stay at the Warehouse, where a dozen other close associates were camping out for the rest of the night. The Representative from South Michigan's left arm was in a sling, bandaged. The assassins had come close to getting him, too. One of them had lost their will at the last minute, and thwarted the plot. The traitor was now cooperating with the investigation.

In the morning, perhaps they would know more what was going on. In the morning, there might be word from or about his mom. None of the adults seemed to know what to say to him. He didn't know how to act, either. John Jr. took the elevator to the top floor, to his parent's room, and stood by the door for a while, before going to the armory down the hall. He sat up until dawn, loading magazines, and squeezing his hands into fists alone, where

noone could see. In his mind's eye, the teen kept picturing his dad, laying on his office floor, covered in a bloody flag with thirteen alternating red and white stripes, and a solid blue field in the corner.
General Ferguson looked like he had aged a century overnight, when the young man came down a few hours later to see if there was any news. A large vidscreen showed a reporter from Post Dispatch TV standing outside, talking about tensions running high in the streets, as lines of mourners dropped off flowers in front of the Warehouse. Below it, another vidscreen carried BBC coverage of Balderson addressing the New American Congress in an emergency session. "Ferocious" Ferguson, the hero who had brought the surviving Afghan contingent home and formed the New American Legion, left the officer he had been talking to in hushed tones and walked over to the teen.
"Did you get any sleep, John Jr.?" he asked. It was obvious that he hadn't himself.
"I'm fine, Sir, but with all due respect, my dad is dead. I guess that just makes me plain John, now." He responded. "Not 'junior', any more."
The General smiled sadly. "I reckon you're right, son. Okay, John, have you had breakfast, yet? You need to eat."
"I will, Sir. But first, I'd like to see my father's body. He would want to lie in state and allow people to pay their respects before he's buried, and it looks like they need that, now, too," John gestured to images of crying women holding their children up to look at the building they were standing in, as the morning fog burned off. "I'd like Pastor Reed from the Academy to perform the ceremony. Something traditional, Identity wise. Dad would like that."
"Are you sure you want to, son? It's…pretty bad." Ferguson cautioned him.
"Yes, take me to him, please. And have your people been able to get ahold of my sister, yet?"
"We notified the Orangers of what happened, along with our other allies, but the safari camp Hope and her family are at is off the grid, north of the official boundary with the dead zone." The General said. "It might take a while to raise her or Kip."

John sighed and rubbed his eyes in a gesture that reminded the old man of his father. “Okay, well, keep trying, please. Any word on my mom?”
“Our fleet carrier wing and the Aussies and Kiwis have boats and planes out, still, but no sign of any crash or demands from the terrorists, so far.” His heavily lined face ventured a reassuring smile. “No news is good news, right?”
John didn’t feel like smiling at anyone. He had no idea who might have daggers behind their eyes, wet with his father’s blood. He also knew that eliminating him would make things neater for the conspirators, too.
“Absolutely, we have to just take things minute by minute. So, can we go take care of my dad, now?” The frosty smile he eased into, he had learned from the best.

“I am just a cowboy, lonesome on the trail. And I’m just thinking about that certain female…”

Kelly drummed her fingers impatiently as the Council dithered. This might, based on her experience, go on for hours, as the older and more stodgy ones pretended to buck any idea that the first female Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints proposed. In the end, it would be very simple: An offer of condolences for the loss of the longtime New American leader and arguably its’ Founder, combined with an offer to help apprehend the fugitive terrorists, whomever and wherever they might be. Kelly and the late Speaker had a lot of history, to be sure. As a matter of fact, in a weird way, she might not even be the leader of Deseret, from the Rockies to the Pacific, if it hadn’t been for him. Once again, things had come full circle.

After they approved her original state proclamation with meaningless rewording just to make themselves feel more important, the Council moved on. The desalinization plants were ramping up to full production in Brigham Beach, and should provide adequate irrigation for the Four Canyons Agricultural Region project to feed the growing Mormon population of Angels

City. The Jefe of Hermosillo pledged his support in the search for two LDS Bishops instructing missions there who had gone missing. Nominally autonomous, the town of ten thousand boasted a Deseret Gull garrison, anyway, so that was under control. Like everywhere else where Deseret ruled, polygamy had become the rule of law there. Units patrolling the border with New America on the western slopes of the Rockies were to be placed on high alert due to the unstable situation out East. And the Australian government was echoing the New Zealand complaint about LDS Missionaries sneaking aboard Pacific bound ships in Moroni Bay. Nothing new there.

At the end of the morning session, Kelly left the Council Assembly Hall feeling drained and ready to kick off her shoes. Her feet hurt, and the warm late Spring day made the mountains above Salt Lake look more inviting than confining. She still didn't know what to think about what was going on in St. Louis. Her Deseret Department of Public Safety agents there had confirmed that the icon, John McNabb, was dead. His wife, whom Kelly had never really liked, was missing, presumed dead or kidnapped. Hope, his daughter, who Kelly did like, and had been close to for years, was north of the Orange Free State controlled area in central Africa on safari, since her husband Kip was the New American ambassador to Orange. They and their six kids, four boys and two girls, were safe enough there.

Aside from John, his longtime Secretary of State, Mark Smith, had also been assassinated. His calm voice of reason in working through the inevitable conflicts between the four largest nations on the continent would be missed, she knew. Ever since General Fred Grace, the last legitimate vestige of the old U.S. government, had died from a heart attack five years ago, Gen. Harrison had been shifted over to serve as John's Secretary of Defense, the post the only surviving member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had held for so long.

Kelly reviewed the printed chain of command briefing as her driver took her west towards the Salt Lake and the Sisters School where her two daughters, Julia and Abby, were expecting her to join them for lunch, as she normally did. The thirteen and ten year olds were on that fragile cusp of womanhood which makes a mom want to hang onto every second of little girl they had left in them.

The New American Continuity of Command structure was a bit vague on whom the successor to the Speaker, who had ruled like a Constitutional Monarch for nearly two decades, would be. Her people on the ground pointed to Congressman Randall Balderson as the heir apparent, absent a military coup. Since Gen. Harrison had been killed by his driver even before the attack occurred inside the Old Courthouse capitol building, a coup by the armed forces seemed unlikely.

The Sisters who ran the girl's school smiled at the familiar site of Kelly's armored sedan, a Ford Firmament imported from New Detroit, pulling up to the guardhouse. Some of the older ones, who were still getting used to the idea of a female Prophet, had to force their smiles, a bit, still. She looked at her driver's noncommittal expression staring back at her in the rear view mirror, and thought about Harrison's last moments. Well, it did no good to live in fear, Josh had always told her. Her Texican cowboy husband was usually right about the vague things in life, and left the details up to her, or to chance. Kelly swore that if it wasn't for having her sister Karen as a full time live in nanny, the girls might never take baths or have clean clothes, but Josh would have them out of sight of their security and down at the lake or fishing in some creek or hiking in the desert. She should have given him boys instead of girls, but it hadn't exactly been a multiple choice selection process, and now as she neared her mid-forties, it was too late for any more rolls of the dice.

Abby absent-mindedly munched her sandwich while her sister dominated the conversation, as usual. Kelly listened gravely as

her eldest complained about the daughter of the English ambassador, a tall blonde girl named Evelyn, whom Julia appeared to be envious of. At least with a gender segregated school, there was less potential for boy drama, the Prophet thought to herself. Which was, after all, precisely the point. For the daughters of working class and most middle class families, no school beyond the homemaking apprenticeships at their mother's sides were considered appropriate, anyway. They would all grow up to be some Elder's sister wife. Hopefully a first or second, if they were pretty enough. Her daughters were being groomed for the oligarchy of Church leadership. Especially with the ground she had broken for women, within it. Of course, it had taken the Reichstag fire of a Fundamentalist attack that caused a war which nearly destroyed their nation before her rise to power had been possible. That hadn't been a coincidence, either. Kelly wondered if the cooling brain of the Speaker had ever thought his hypnotic suggestion would lead to all this.

After giving each of the girls a pastry from the cafeteria in her office lobby for dessert, she kissed them both on the forehead, waved at the Sisters, and clicked the button on her comm for her driver to pick her back up. He was there in less than a minute, looking innocent enough.

With Josh in Sacramento negotiating water rights from Lake Tahoe as her Foreign Secretary, the well-maintained brunette knew that she could easily read over this paperwork at home tonight, once Karen had put the girls to sleep. She felt driven, though, to get a handle on how things might play out in the next few weeks, back East.

Balderson had given a speech before Congress where he had most of the Cabinet standing beside him in unity. It had been noticeably less religious in tone than McNabb had become in his latter years. Jason Roberts, the New American Attorney General, and his much younger nephew, Andrew Pender, the Congressman from the recolonized state of Arkansas, had been

present, just behind Randall. Dr. Tina Edwards, the venerable Surgeon General, and Paul Martin, the Governor of Manitoba, had physically lent their support. Balderson had been wounded himself in a failed attempt to remove him from the equation the night of the assassinations, and gave an angry, vengeful polemic in his trademark rockabilly style. Lots of rhyming, from all reports.

After he wound down a bit, Randall had invoked martial law as the Speaker Pro Tempore, and under his authority as acting Commander in Chief of the Unified Command, promoted Major General Victor Brown, the former commander of the Legion, to General of the Army, and asked Gen. Gene Ferguson to delay his planned retirement in order to serve as Secretary of Defense. Both men agreed. The Congressional delegates favored the coalition of civilian and military leadership onstage with a standing ovation, then a benediction by the Congressional Chaplain. It looked like the transition would be smooth, all things considered.

Kelly's D.P.S. agents had compiled a list of suspects in the assassinations. Internally, they had suggested Lt. Gen. Matthew Ball, the officer in charge of the New American space program, whom they suggested might have been frustrated by McNabb's reluctance to militarize their lunar base. She looked at his file. A former U.S. fighter pilot and naval aviator, who'd seen action in Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific, as well as in North America. Maybe Ball was a stereotypical war hero gone ambitious? It had happened before. Did he want to be Caesar?

The next page was a dossier on Thomas Bullens, the reclusive Secretary of Intelligence for New America. Few people besides the Speaker ever even talked to him, so he was something of an unknown quantity, politically. If he wasn't responsible, and didn't know who was, he would be one person highly motived by personal pride to find out. The file suggested that he might be socially awkward and corruptible through a female agent. Kelly would hold off on that order, until she eliminated the possibility of an external actor.

One of her D.P.S. agents had red flagged a Captain Andrew McDonald, a paperpusher in the New American Unified Command's Kansas sector who had already been corrupted, and served as a confidential informant for Deseret. McDonald was stationed in southern Colorado. He would serve as a go-between for any large scale infiltrations required while things were a bit loose at the border.

It was doubtful that any of the current Cabinet, or McNabb's administration, had been involved, or her agents would have known about it. She had that much confidence in the network she herself had built up, over the years. As a former spy herself, Kelly knew the business.

Of course, the leader of New America had made plenty of external enemies, inevitably. There were pages in the report on Sur Moerdani, the Caliph of Java. After successfully creating a vaccine for the Turkish Flu virus which had been genetically engineered to target Asiatic populations before mutating, the immunologist had brokered his way into power over the Indonesian population, and as their savior, had become an absolute dictator. They had never gotten over their embarrassing losses in a couple of engagements with New America's combined naval fleets. As radical fundamentalist Muslims, they hardly really needed that excuse, though. Moerdani's nation of nearly one hundred million was, in terms of population, the third largest in the world, after the Russian Empire and Greater Germany.

Dr. Neiman, the creaky old literature professor who had tottered to the position of President of Argentina, which had swallowed up most of South America? Kelly highly doubted it. Nor did she think the Presidente of Mexico, controlling Mexico City and Monterrey and the strip of land in between, had any ambitions further north, aside from trade. If anything, the slowly growing European population of Mexico depended on the stability of New America to protect them from French and Catalonian pirates and 'salvage' teams…just like they had in centuries past. Mexico City's

population was right at 90,000, and Monterrey's half that, for a total national population of less than a quarter million left.

A European power? Maybe because of some entangling alliances? The French were the obvious suspects from that corner, with their possessions in the NorthEast bordering New America…but the surviving Turks East of Constantinople's Greek-held suburbs had an old axe to grind, too. Against Ferguson, and Brown, but also against all of them. Was Russia wanting Alaska back, and more? That seemed a stretch. St. Louis and Paris had been at odds not so long ago, so the Gallic sphere might have made an underhanded move, maybe.

As the office buildings rolled past, the Prophet considered the red flagged reports of a couple of suicides among the New American Secret Service guards they had been gathering intelligence on, over the last few weeks. And the case of the fiance' of one who had placed a call to his commanding officer, before being found dead of a drug overdose the next day. Interesting.

Kelly's head hurt from running the contingencies. Right now, she just didn't have enough information to go on. Stepping out of her car as soon as it eased next to the curb, she made sure her dark brown dress was modestly low around her calves before striding through the bullet-proof glass doors into the outer offices where her secretaries all tried to look busy. This would take some more thinking. Later tonight. Maybe over a bottle of contraband tequila seized from their southern neighbors. She'd dismiss her guards, lock the doors, have Karen put the girls to bed, and get illegally drunk. She might even cast some runes to help her decide whom to blame for the death of her oldest enemy, after drinking a blot to him.

"Oh that'll be the day, when you say goodbye, yeah, that'll be the day, when you make me cry…"

The good thing about a Stetson was that people couldn't tell, in the shadow of that brim, just what you were thinking. That was

good, Scott Hampton thought, because right now, he didn't know what to think. The President of the Republic of Texas (and New Mexico and Southern Oklahoma and the 'Eyes of Texas' orbital station), he reminded himself, as well as a big chunk of what used to be Mexico, was going to miss having John McNabb to follow around. He had been, well, not a friend, though they'd been friendly enough, over the years. He had been a worthy adversary. No, that wasn't true, if he was honest. It hadn't quite been the other way around. And, it sure had made it a lot easier for Scott to ease into becoming President-for-Life, with his neighbor to the North doing the same thing. But, more than anything, he chafed from spending half his lifetime, it seemed like, under McNabb's shadow. When he hadn't been treated like a little brother by the German Chancellor, it was the New American Speaker being condescending to him. Well, that was over.

Having McNabb dead meant having one fewer person alive who knew about how Hampton had come to be President, in the first place, and that eased his mind a bit. After this long, it hardly mattered any more, though. Him and his wife. Ole Kip and a couple others, maybe. That pagan witch playing cult leader up in Utah had her own reasons for keeping her mouth shut, that was for sure. After all, she was the one who had pulled the trigger, not him. Heck, he hadn't even ordered the thing done, he'd just kind of, kept hush. That's all. Leaders kept quiet about the way their predecessors get 'decessed, and Presidential groupies kept quiet about the way they got undressed, the way he saw it.

These days, President Hampton was a bit more worried about the news that the Church of the New Dispensation's 'Kingdom of the Lord' in New Orleans had linked up with the Bahaman pirate empire of King Ray Ray and his consort, Queen Taneisha. They and the core of their pirate tribe were refugees from New Africa, from before the genetically targeted virus tweaked from the Turkish Flu had swept through the SouthEastern states. Ninety-four percent of the African-American population on the mainland of North and South America, just as on their continent of origin,

had succumbed to the disease. Ray-Ray and Taneisha had hopped boats from Florida one step ahead of the virus, and two in front of the vengeful Emerald Coast army which conducted ethnic cleansing operations in that part of the peninsula.

Jointly, the duo ruled a fleet of black looters on water who scavenged the coasts of Florida and Cuba, and had done so for years. Now, if they were working with that crazy Rev. Joe Bob Clearly, the leader of the C.N.D., they not only threatened the Emerald Coast, which was New America's problem, they threatened shipping from Houston and Galveston to England and Scotland and Ireland, which was his problem. If the oil stopped flowing out, the mechanical and technical assistance to continue the expansion of the orbital station would evaporate, too, and that would become a serious problem, indeed. Scott was determined that Texas would win the space race. Even if it meant helping the Brits with their own station platform research, by proxy. Heck, the Russians already had a space habitat twice as big, and the Germans, too, so why not let everybody into the pool, the way he figured. Right now, Texas needed some friends to keep them from getting too dependent on the Germans.

President Hampton kicked back in his chair and propped his ostrich skin boots up on the scarred oak desk. He nearly kicked over a picture of his wife, who had once been Perry's wife, taken a decade ago, before the flower of her beauty had faded into early middle aged spread. His predecessor, the last Vice President of the formerly United States, had once sat right here and told him that he could never trust John McNabb. But then, ole Perry had been a little confused about who he could trust, and who he shouldn't, hadn't he? Starting with his wife and his best friend.

The dead Speaker had always shot straight with him, at least, on a personal level, and Scott hoped that they caught whoever had done him in. He had said so at a press conference up in Dallas that very morning. What he didn't say, was that he was too

paranoid to be sure whether or not any of his own people had a hand in it, and he wasn't about to ask. He wouldn't get a straight answer, any way. Maybe that was what an oldtimey psychiatrist would have called 'reflection', but practicing psychiatry was illegal in the Republic of Texas, these days, along with Sodomy and vegetarian hamburgers. Just as the good Lord intended.

Scott thought about the ambiguities of trust and the perks of power as he watched his personal secretary come through the door between her office and his, and shut it firmly behind her.

On the other side of the world, a massive torchlit procession through the streets of Berlin honored the fallen global hero of all European peoples. The Chancellor of Greater Germany described McNabb as 'a man against time, who helped to release the shackled spirit of the German people once more'. Gerta openly wept, but quietly, quietly, her shoulders shook as the honor guard carried the starless flag of New America past her podium.

Chapter Two

“We deceive ourselves if we believe that the people want to be governed by majorities. No, you do not know the people. This people does not wish to lose itself in "majorities." It does not wish to be involved in great plans. It wants a leadership in which it can believe, nothing more.”
-Adolf Hitler

“When you’re old, when you’re old, nobody will know…that you were a beauty, a sweet sweet beauty, a sweet sweet beauty, but oh so cold…”

The sweat dripped into her eyes and stung. There was no movement visible at the lakeshore. That wasn’t surprising, really. The noise of the motors would have frightened away most of the animals, and this region had been depopulated of people for a generation. Hope knew that they had driven more or less East, towards the rising sun, out of what used to be the Kalahari Game Preserve. They’d been travelling half the day, without seeing more than a few dried up bundles of rags on the edge of the neglected trail to show that there had ever been anyone here. She wasn’t sure how far that put her from the nearest Orange Free State Expeditionary Force outpost at Hainaveld. Kip had always been the one good at directions. He had been called back to ‘Joeys’ from their family safari on urgent business, and that worried her. Especially when she woke up just before dawn to find that their camp was under attack.

More precisely, the two O.F.S. Rangers assigned to their security had heard something, they thought, and were firing up the scrub brush with 5.56. What a Harold of a situation! It was easy enough for even the toughest guys to get spooked, if they thought for too long about how many people had died in the space of a few weeks this far north, and farther. Then Kip radioed that everything was alright. The Australians were fussing about the Javan

Caliphate patrolling the Indian Ocean, and he had to fly to Perth to talk to the N.A. ambassador there. He couldn't continue their vacation, right now, and apologized to the kids. Once things calmed down and it became clear than neither Hope nor any of her six kids, ranging in age from fourteen down to three, were going to be doing any hunting, there was no point in staying at the camp. Not when there was air conditioning at the Hainaveld barracks where they could wait and see if Kip was going to be able to come back soon, or if they should all just go home. Or, if that was unsafe, to one of the large German-ran mining towns or English oil production stations further North, in central Africa…not that she expected any problems from the Orangers.

As the two Mercedes Einzelganger 4x4 SUVs bumped through the high grass, her younger kids began to whine. Mary, her oldest, tried to shush them by getting them to count how many different species of antelope they could see. That only lasted for so long. They were thirsty or they had to pee. They were hot and tired. They missed their dad. They were mad at their dad for ruining the trip. The next two hours until they arrived at the military post gave her a throbbing, blinding headache.

The base commanding officer, a chubby Lieutenant named Van der Buss, acted courteous to them all, but had a weird expression on his face. He told the two guards to hit the showers, then report for debriefing. Then, he directed Hope and the kids to the cafeteria. After she'd gotten the kids settled in and jumping onto their bunk beds in the barracks for sport, he asked to speak to her in his office.

Hope tried very hard not to fall apart at the news that her adoptive parents were dead and missing. She had been little older than Mary when John and Carolyn McNabb had taken her in, as a feral refugee from ethnic cleansing. She was a different woman now, with children of her own, but every day of her life she strived to be as good a mom as she could be, because of the couple who had

given her their love and their names. And, what should she tell her kids about grandma and grandpa?

For now, she had to ban them from watching the base t.v., since that was the top story on all of the channels in the satellite feed. And from the internet, because it was the headline news online. She would tell Mary, and Hess, her two oldest, so they could help her watch the others and keep them from finding out until more was known. Hess was just twelve, but he was a solemn and serious boy. He gave Hope a hug, and held his sister, while she cried softly. Then they radioed Kip, hating to bother him as he scrambled to make his flight, but wanting to make sure that he knew. He did. Hope guessed that he had kept the news of the man he had known longer than anyone else still alive being killed from his family, for the same reason that she was. She forgave him for that. At least he was caring enough to ask for it.

It was hard for Hope to be angry with her husband for long. She understood. After all, she might have been John McNabb's adopted daughter, but Kip had served with him during the Balk, before he was the Speaker, before they were anything more than a couple of tired and scared Indiana National Guardsmen fighting a genocidal three-way war in the blasted ruins of Chicago. He was hurting, too. Once he got to Perth, he would get in contact with the members of the Cabinet whom he knew he could trust from his years as the Speaker's Chief of Staff, before the N.A. embassy in Joburg had needed a firm hand. The real reason he was going to Australia, was to oversee the search for Carolyn's plane. He'd call as soon as he could.

Hope had nothing to do to keep herself from being able to reach out to St. Louis right now, so she didn't wait. She got Randall's wife on the satellite phone first, after leaving messages with three Cabinet member's secretaries. She filled in some blanks, such as the news of who was still standing. Then her call was interrupted by an incoming line beeping in. It was her little brother, sounding so grown up, telling her that he was taking care of the funeral

arrangements, and it was probably safer for her and his nieces and nephews if they stayed where they were, until he could figure out who to trust. Hope told the fifteen year old young man to stay safe and watch his back, then put the phone down. She could never remember feeling so helpless, so out of touch, or so weak. She went to her children, and prayed for strength.

A week later, the skyjacked plane still had not been found. There was no sign of any wreckage, or a fuel slick, either. The Aussies would continue to sweep, with the help of the New American 7th fleet, but it was like looking for a needle in a haystack. Kip flew back to Orange, and Hope and the kids met him there. The next day, they held their own memorial for both of the McNabbs, in the flower garden in the back of the embassy. Each of the children, as best they were able, got to talk about their best memories of their grandparents. Hope talked about the first time she had met them, after travelling to the capitol from the Knights Committee headquarters in Arkansas, by plane. She told how bumpy the flight was, and how scared she had been that the new leader of New America wouldn't want her to stay.

"Why didn't you just take the direct flight on a bigger plane, Mommie?" she was interrupted by Rachel, her nine year old named after the woman who helped get her off the street, asking.

"I bet that was before Uncle Jason's folks had their own airport, wasn't it?" Hess guessed, correctly. He was her smart one, that kid.
"Yes, that was back at the beginning, during the Balk, before we won the peace." Hope replied.
"Let Momma finish her turn, now, you had yours," Mary admonished Rachel. Hope wrapped it up, as quickly and cleanly as possible, for the young ones.
Kip spoke last. He began by saying that if it hadn't been for John McNabb, he wouldn't have his family. Then he surprised her by saying that if it hadn't been for John McNabb, he wouldn't be alive. The story which followed, of a skinny black girl with a

Molotov cocktail and an ambush outside a church was one that Hope had never heard before, and she understood why. She held her husband close for a good long time. The starless flag out front remained at half mast. So did the Orange Free State flag at the government building down the street.

“If some day, suddenly, I have to take my leave…would you still be fighting, for things that we believe…?”

Matt Ball and Tommy Bullens stood together on the windy pier jutting into Lake Michigan, watching the contrails separate as the external fuel tanks were shed from the shuttle just before it broke atmosphere. The New American Space Authority General was glad that he’d been able to talk the Secretary of Intelligence into getting outside with him for some fresh air and a private talk. He pulled the collars of his overcoat tighter. Each of them had their own S.S. security, at a respectful distance.

“Tommy, just look at that. What is it, number eighty -four? Eightyfive?” He shaded his eyes with his hand, until the streak disappeared.
“I lose count,” the most informed man on the continent replied. “Almost as many as the Russians have put up. We’ll catch them.”
“It’s kind of like the women I’ve loved and the men I’ve killed, I remember the first and the last, but those in the middle tend to blur. It’s hard to keep track.” Matt grinned. Like most former naval aviators, he still swaggered like he was Tom Cruise in ‘Top Gun’. All the time.
As the nation’s ubernerd, Tommy couldn’t relate to that problem, even though he had power. It wasn’t the kind of power that brought girl trouble with it. He had left his lair, his headquarters, his mad scientist lab of information gathering devices and network interfaces downtown, to meet Matt, because they were old friends. They both had served in the Navy together, and afterwards, during the Balk. Plus, Matt sent over a science groupie girl from time to time, to get his autograph. All the James Bond, cloak and dagger stuff got old, but it was how he stayed on

top.
“Walk with me, Tommy…” Gen. Ball had said, and he had fallen into place by his side, like always. Ever since his buddy Rick had died from a radiation dose he’d picked up patrolling the South China Sea, Tommy had become more and more misanthropic. He’d flown down to St. Louis to meet with the Speaker once a week, for the general intelligence briefing and cabinet meeting, every Monday morning. That was as long as he could stand the withdrawal of being disconnected from the constant data feed from hundreds of listening posts, agents, and hackers, all over the world…and above it.
Secretary Bullens was in direct contact with three reliable New American assets who had infiltrated the Russian ‘Zavtra Dva’ space habitat, after their first station had lost structural integrity and been abandoned a decade earlier. Even though Greater Germany was a closer ally than the Russian Empire, he maintained a few on the German station, too. And, when the next rotation of twenty technicians currently flaring overhead arrived on the lunar surface, a couple of them would already be in his pocket, too. Better to have them and not need them, than to need them and not have them.
He knew what this clandestine, unofficial meeting was about, of course. It wasn’t one old buddy checking up on another. For the last week, everyone in the higher echelons of the New American government had been on high alert, waiting for the other shoe to fall. For their enemies, whoever they were, to not reveal themselves and strike when they were weakened, was counter-intuitive. Tommy and Matt had discussed the contingencies and probability matrices twice, over the last six days, through e-mail. Bullens hated talking on the phone as much as Matt did.
A New American Legion Unit had almost opened fire on a Deseret Gull squad which had crossed the gray zone between the two frontiers in Colorado. A Republic of Texas passenger jet was ‘escorted’ out of New American air space over northern Louisiana. Things had really gotten hairy yesterday, when the French crew of a Scottish-flagged container ship was stopped and searched coming into the St. Lawrence Seaway, in what was

technically Quebecois waters, by the New American Coast Guard. Everybody was at hair trigger. But what Tommy dreaded telling Matt was that he didn't have any answers for him. None of his resources, not in the internal agencies of the Czar, or in Salt Lake, or Berlin, or even in Austin, had any more clue about who had been responsible for the assassinations, than they did.

As they walked along, shadowed by their security, Tommy let all of this out in a rush. Matt listened patiently, before responding. "Well, as you know, this is you and me talking, not an official cabinet submeeting. The truth is, man, I don't know who to trust, either, not even…not even here at home. It's all Harolded up. And both of us being based here, instead of the capitol, makes me feel even more out of the loop. That's why I ask. I'm in the dark, here. I don't even know who the enemy is."

"Our true enemy hasn't revealed themselves. Not yet." Bullens replied, after thinking for a minute. "But we do know that the First Lady's plane was not authentically taken control of by someone onboard; that it took evasive action, then it disappeared from radar, and all the transponders ceased functioning."

"Do we know where? Or where the old Chinese incoming flights took off from?" Matt stopped to ask. Tommy stopped with him, and gave a slight smile.

"No to the first, but yes to the second. Her plane is still missing, but considering the theater it went down in, it all makes sense. Now, we don't know how much internal collusion there was, there had to be some, to turn or infiltrate so many S.S. guards to do the assassinations. Several who were supposed to be involved chickened out, and didn't show up for work. Some of them are still on the run, and some we have in custody and are working on. Remember the suicide cases? We think they were related, too. And, we haven't made this public, but there were attempted acts of sabotage at four of our radar stations and two data centers on the West Coast, the day before the assassinations. But the planes took off from an aircraft carrier one of our subs had been shadowing from a distance. All the way from the Timor Sea."

Matt's face tightened as he hissed "The Caliphate, huh? What are they doing? Trying to get turned to ash and glow in the dark for

Allah? Why didn't they sink it?"
"Well, with Israel gone and no known surviving Jews left in the world, a belief system like that has to have some external enemy. And, they're the largest, the only, really, nonWhite nation left standing." Tommy pointed out. "But the Captain of the sub was ordered to continue to follow the carrier quietly until further orders. We knew we could shoot down anything they launched at us…we just didn't expect them to go after a civilian plane in the other direction, until it was too late. We think that's what happened to the First Lady."
"At the rate they're going, they won't be around to see the 22nd century. But the key is, who's working with them? At least here in N.A.?"
Both men shrugged. Tommy didn't know. And he knew enough to be sure that Matt didn't, either. The rest of the people around them, he couldn't be so sure of. Especially since all of the missing S.S. guards except four had been captured and endured long and very unpleasant interrogation at Tommy's personal direction. There had been twelve of them at first. Three had survived the first day of questioning. They had broken the next day. Two of them survived it, and admitted being recruited by one of the four who had escaped. They had both been targeted for recruitment because their mandatory D.N.A. tests performed upon application for citizenship on their eighteenth birthdays had come back with slight AmerIndian admixtures. Less than two percent in each, not enough to have made them susceptible to any strains of the Turkish Flu still circulating through the carrier but immune White population…but enough to disqualify them for reproduction rights, or for government service.
When he had first e-mailed that to Matt, the day before yesterday, Gen. Ball had requested this face to face meeting. Even a virtual meeting in a secure cloud wouldn't do. Tommy was about to find out why. "Look, I need to tell you, I brought Vic Brown in on this. I've known him since we brought the Legion home from Russia. He was with Ferguson all the way through Afghanistan, too. He's vouched for. We need both of them with us on this."
Tommy's eyes widened. It wasn't what he would have done, but

to complain about it now, since it was already too late, would just isolate himself further. “Okay, then, let’s decide who we want to limit this to, and how. The Attorney General and Surgeon General, yes. The Secretary of Agriculture, no, he’s rock stupid about anything except corn, anyway.”

“I agree,” Matt said, as they reached their cars, parked side by side under a waterfront hotel awning, just in case there was overwatch neither had access to. “And the Secretary of Treasury or Transportation…it’ll be easier to list who we will include, than who we won’t: me, you, Gene, Jason, Victor, but not Tina…I think Kip…but what about Randall?”

Secretary Bullens grimaced. “If we don’t, it’ll look like WE are the ones planning a coup.”

Two days later, after everyone had been caught up to speed, five of the six counterconspirators met with a surprised Speaker Pro Tempore in his office, not the Speaker’s. Kip had been informed by secure satlink, but it was decided that he needed to go to Darwin, to prepare the New American assets there in case a direct move was needed against Java. Randall wasn’t dumb, but it took a while for everything they had told him to sink in.

“So, what you’re saying is, for over ten years somebody has been catching the failed D.N.A. tests, and using them to recruit spies, even assassins?” he asked in wonderment.

Jason and Tommy looked at each other. “Yes, Sir,” the Attorney General said. “We think they sort through them, fail the ones they think are least likely to be recruitable into the military, and change the results to pass the rest, the ones they want to make sleepers out of.”

“Okay, but then how did they activate them, or recruit them, years later?” Randall questioned.

“They kept an eye on them, guided them by recruiting them into the armed forces, in a couple of cases directly.” Tommy interjected.

“And then, when they had risen through the ranks and could apply for S.S. training, their handlers showed them their real D.N.A. test results. Some of them already had kids. They would have lost their security clearances, their citizenship, even their families,”

Matt added. “The ones that refused to blackmailed, were assassinated. They made it look like suicides, or drug overdoses, or accidents. We’re looking at a half dozen cases where they had to clean up one of their targets not going along…and one case where a fiance’ didn’t, maybe.”
The new leader of New America swore softly, then turned to look for a moment out his window at the busy city street outside the Old Courthouse. A large red, white, and blue banner hung limply at half mast. The old flag had been stripped of its stars. Now, he had been stripped of his mentor. “So, how many of them are out there? Any ideas?”
Gen. Ferguson nodded. “We’ve found that nine out of ten pre-Balk Americans who claimed to have some AmerIndian ancestry had NONE. The ‘Indian outlaw’ and ‘noble red man’ myths, Sir. All family legend and undocumented, and mainly B.S.. As a rough estimate, Sir, 66% of our S.S. are ex-military or law enforcement from before the Balk. The D.N.A. tests have been in effect nationwide for eleven years. We can easily determine how many of our people were subjected to the test, since then.”
“Then, place them all on supervised suspension of duty while they are re-tested, and declared fit for duty, just to make sure that there aren’t any more unactivated sleeper agents left among them.” Victor added.”
“That sounds good,” Balderson responded, turning back to face the grim-faced group. “But how long will it take to re-vet all of them and get them back on duty? We need them all, now, more than ever!”
“We began mandatory re-testing yesterday, Sir.” Gen. Brown confirmed. We’re cycling through a Company each day. We’ll have the results of all of them by the end of the week. “
“Just how far up does this thing go, that’s what we’ve got to find out. How did they know each other and interact, once they were recruited, and how many other recruiters might there be, or cells?” emphasized Matt.
“And, we’re tracing the webs between them, to see who was pulling the strings of the S.S. Captain who did the recruiting. A Captain Stephen Susanna. All of the strings lead DOWN from

him," Tommy said.
"You're sure he was the organizer of this thing, or at least this branch of it?" Randall asked.
"Yes, Sir. He used a series of girlfriends in the National Genetics Assessment Office to cherry-pick failed testtakers for recruitment. We have three in custody, now. They've confessed." Victor offered.
"Okay. So. Three things. One, finish the re-testing and return those who pass to active duty, detain any who fail. Two, research all of Cpt. Susanna's connections, up and sideways, for any other cells or for any handlers of him. And find him, ASAP. Third, Gen. Ferguson, I want the 7th and 5th fleets prepared to move on Java as soon as we get any more confirmation that they were involved, externally or internally. And I'm sure we'll find that they were."
"Yes, Sir!" Gen Ferguson responded, standing and saluting. At Randall's nod and returned Bellamy salute, the rest of the group stiffly got up and stretched, then began to file out of the room to start to work. Jason Roberts lingered behind.
"Mr. Attorney General?" Balderson asked him, expectantly. His arm was out of the sling, but it still ached where his personal guard had shot him, underestimating the former rock singer's reaction speed.
"I just wanted to say that I discussed the Constitutionality of the issue with the Supreme Court, and there's no issue with you going ahead and dropping the 'Pro Tempore' from your title, Sir." Jason grinned.
Randall tapped his arm, then looked pointedly at the ceiling above them, where the Speaker's office had been racked by a fatal shootout. "Don't do me any favors." He quipped.

"I'll fly away, Oh Glory, I'll fly away…when I die, Hallelujah, by and by, I'll fly away…"

Stephen Susanna had been born Stephen Susan, but the Sephardic Jewish surname and his swarthy looks both passed for Italian when he had a close haircut and an added 'a' vowel ending to his name. He'd adopted both of them when he recovered from

the Turkish Flu and found that most of the Jews who hadn't made Aliyah to fight in the radioactive ruins of Israel as it was overrun by the I.S. had died. Even those who, like him, were just a quarter Jewish, on their paternal side. The U.S. Army private had intended to go into the J.A.G. and have the military pay for law school, before the economy had tanked and the riots started. A couple of years as a combat medic, his secondary M.O.S. once there was no need for lawyers, had earned him his third stripe, before he'd gotten sick. He'd been able to hide his symptoms and self-medicate, but he knew what it was. Still, he'd been spared.

Growing up, he'd never really felt a strong sense of identity as a Jew. Stephen grew up the third of four children in a secular New Jersey Jewish family that barely acknowledged Hannukah, much less went to Temple. Not that there was one, in their Sicilian neighborhood. His dad was half Jewish, his grandpa Jewish, but both of them had married Gentile women, and Stephen could hardly blame them. He wasn't attracted to whiny, big-nosed Jewish girls, either. Not Sephardic, and not Ashkenazi. The only time that he felt like a Jew was when the Italian boys called him a 'yid' and beat him up on the playground in school. Maybe turning 'Italian' was his ultimate revenge against them. Maybe it was just a latent survival instinct. Either way, he had spent the next five years changing his paperwork until the 'a' never showed up, any more.

His unit being put on active duty and shipped out to the great plains to guard missile silos in Wyoming had saved him from the bombings of New York and Philadelphia, either of which might have been the cause of his death, if he'd been home. His whole family had, so far as Stephen knew. After the Unified Command had combined all the branches and units of the armed forces, he still felt different, even as an 'Italian'.

It wasn't so much that as far as he knew he might be one of the last Jews left anywhere, he didn't care about that. Or Israel getting nuked, and invaded, and finally dying from the very virus

they had created and weaponized. It wasn't his family dying in a hail of Chinese missiles. Or the Nazi racist haters coming to power and Harolding everything up. What really made Stephen resent this new world, more than anything, was that the best girls went for the stereotypical Nordic guys. The blonde guys. The blue eyed ones. He had worked on becoming as suave and silky smooth as he could be, and how to target the chubby girls, the girls with acne, the girls who were shy, and had low self esteem. They were easy pickings for an exotic looking officer, once he'd been promoted to Lieutenant.

It was as a Second Lieutenant that Stephen had come up with his plan to help out others, like himself, who didn't quite fit the exact genetic definition of 'Aryan'. The best way he could do that, was by gaining influence in the National Genetics Assessment Office, where they hired the smartest…but not necessarily the prettiest… girls. He applied for a transfer to the Secret Service, which after his training would put him at the Capitol, near the N.G.A.O.. The rest had been easy.

The first email that he had received, a year into his passing of certain 'fails', he blew off as a joke. Some kind of scam. Maybe a honeytrap run by Intelligence. He was a 1st Lieutenant in the S.S., then. They were always checking on people. The second one made him nervous. The third one, more personalized, had attached a picture of his father, and his grandfather. The fourth had a copy of his grandfather's birth certificate. Someone wanted him to keep on doing exactly what he had been doing, only more so. If he didn't, they would expose him, both for a nonWhite, and well as for treason in the faking of the test results. That was when he had developed his first ulcer.

Each time a new girl took over the data assessment and certification position, Stephen had to dump her predecessor and start all over again. Twice he had been forced to tell the heartbroken girls that if they turned on him, they would go to prison, too. Their families would be embarrassed, humiliated,

ruined. Without having to be told, the third one also just moved on with her life. Only one of them committed suicide, the fourth he had wooed, before he shut down the operation and waited for his crop to grow to fruition, as ordered.

He was only six weeks away from his scheduled promotion from Captain to Major, and had groomed twenty S.S. guards and nearly fifty other members of the armed services into position, when the order came to activate them. He nearly rebelled. Stephen considered leaving the country and going to Argentina, where his looks would fit in with the Spanish and Italian population there. He even considered suicide. He knew, however, that if he didn't follow the orders, then someone else would. Someone who wouldn't be able to control the mess, as he could. If he confessed and turned himself in, he would be dead or in prison, and he was no hero. He had no higher cause than himself to believe in or be loyal to. He had to see this through. It was far too late to back out. He gave the specific orders to the S.S. guards whom he had been able to transfer onto the Capitol and administrative security details. The die was cast.

Now, here was, three weeks later, huddled in a smelly sweatshirt in the corner of an internet café, checking his e-mail again to see if there was any answer to his request for followup orders…or congratulations…or anything at all. Nothing. No response at all. There was nothing about the conspiracy in the news, but that didn't necessarily mean anything, either. Logging off, he mentally calculated how far it was to his nearest cache. He needed a shower and a hot meal and warmer clothes. It was too bad that even after all these years he had no idea who had been pulling his strings, so he could track them down and choke the life out of them. Or at least get some payment for services rendered.

As Stephen left the grimy little shop in Kansas City where the electrons flickered for the working class, he felt the slush soak through his shoes again from the half melted snow. Distracted by the discomfort, he didn't see the man stumbling along beside him

until their shoulders touched and he was violently pushed against the cold brick wall, face first. The lancing pain tore into his side, then out, as his throat clamped up and he couldn't scream or speak. That was the idea, he remembered from training. First the kidneys, then the….the right side of his throat burned, then warmth spread down his shoulder and chest. Released, he half turned to face one of his young recruits. Stephen tried to apply pressure to his neck, but the lights were going out, and he knew it. Somebody hadn't followed orders…or had they? He thought about saying "Hey-Yah" to mock his killer, but he didn't have time. It was way too late.

Chapter Three

“We talk about spreading democracy an d freedom all over the world, but they are to us words rather than conditions. We haven't even got them here in America, and the farther we get into this war the farther we get away from democracy and freedom. Where is it leading us to, and when will it end? The war might stop this winter, but that is improbable. It may go on for fifty years or more. That also is improbable. The elements are too conflicting and confused to form any accurate judgment of its length. There may be a series of wars, one after another, going on indefinitely.

Possibly the world will come to its senses sooner than I expect. But, as I have often said, the environment of human life has changed more rapidly and more extensively in recent years than it has ever changed before. When environment changes, there must be a corresponding change in life. That change must be so great that it is not likely to be completed in a decade or in a generation.”
-Charles Lindbergh

“I see you standing, standing all alone. It’s such a lonely pla ce for you, for you to be. But if you need a shoulder. Yeah, if you need a friend…I’ll be here standing, until, the bitter end..”

His father had worked long hours as would be expected of the leader of a large nation, and his mother did her own work with charities for White families even after she stopped working as dad’s Press Secretary, so he was used to being alone. Even when he was surrounded by guards and staff. He had been more alone since Cindy had died, and his mom withdrew inwards, and Hope had moved out of the country with his nieces and nephews. John didn’t mind not having anyone to talk to. He did mind being left out of the loop.

In the end, once the worldwide-broadcast memorial service was over, he made himself such a nuisance trying to send his bodyguards on fact-finding missions or calling the Cabinet members' offices every day that they had to get rid of him, just to get any work done. So, Gen. Ferguson asked John if he thought he was ready to return to the Academy, and John had agreed. He could catch up on the academic work he had missed, and would graduate with the rest of his class in three months, by late Spring. He buried himself into his make-up work with a single-minded obsession, ignoring the condolences of his teachers and fellow classmates, who were more in awe of him than ever before. His status with them had changed, but not lessened. It was if they had just suddenly realized who he was…or had been…or might become.

On the unarmed and armed combat ranges, his training surpassed his classmates, and his ferocity overwhelmed his coaches. Their only concern was that he seemed to be coiled too tight. He was. Sometimes he would explode with fury at his classmates with little or no provocation. He might have wanted to be called "John", but behind his back, at least, his friends began to call him 'Jack in the Box', half in awe, half in amused fear, because they never knew when he might pop out at the world.

The only way he could quieten his mind was to work out or study until he was so exhausted physically and mentally that he could fall asleep as soon as became still. Once, when he had picked up a larger boy and thrown him into a tree after a hand to hand combat match was technically over, W.P. had accidentally said "Man, J.B, that was a triple dose!". Everybody grew quiet, waiting for John to inquire about the 'J.B.' term, but he laughed it off. Later, he asked his friend what it meant, but instead of getting angry, he actually liked it. From then on, even Mr. Ness and Pastor Reed, and finally the instructors began calling him "J.B.". It stuck. 'John Wayne McNabb, Jr.' became 'J.B. McNabb', to all who knew him personally.

During the last two months of the Academy, he got his anger issues under control, for the most part, exhibiting leadership of the class and even helping some of the underclassmen along. When Post Dispatch TV was given an exclusive interview with Speaker Balderson about the findings of the investigation into the assassinations, the students watched it together, in Assembly. Somehow, learning how the sleeper agents had been recruited and turned was less emotional for J.B. than the Assembly the week before, when they had watched Randall being sworn in by the Chief Justice before the entire Congress.

Following the revelation that domestic terrorists possibly under the direction or influence of a foreign government had falsified the test results of nearly a hundred young men over the last decade, virtually an entire generation volunteered for D.N.A. reassessment, as a matter of honor. The system was nearly overwhelmed, but by the time Sur Moerdani announced that Carolyn McNabb had been arrested and was going to be put on trial for espionage a week before graduation, all of the results were in, and less than one percent had failed.

"…A long, long time ago, but I can still remember, how the music used to make me smile…"

For Hope, the news that her mom was alive was both a shock and a cause for celebration. Her joy quickly dissolved into anger at the thought that the Indonesians had dared to hijack her plane, force it down, and take her hostage. God only knew what she had been going through, for weeks on end. And that also meant that they certainly were involved in, if not solely responsible for, her dad's death, and the deaths of Gen. Harrison and Gen. Smith… along with so many other good men, and who knew what else!?! It was so Harolded. Knowing that Kip was organizing the political coalition that would unite New American, the Russian Empire, Australia, and New Zealand, all of the Pacific powers, against the Javan Caliphate, made it worthwhile for him to be away from her and the kids. Hess wanted to go help his dad kick some raghead

butt, for his grandpa. She was so proud that they were going to DO something, and hoped that it came soon enough to help Carolyn.

Mary came yelling for her to look at the satlink one morning, to hear the news. Hope turned off the water in the sink where she had been washing the breakfast dishes and dried her hands on the towel by the stove before grabbing the remote and tapping on the plasma screen in the corner of the ceiling. Czar Vladimir II was giving a speech to the Russian parliament, while a corner of the screen showed a map of Russian Empire territory in the Pacific, from the Chaobai River at the edge of the Beijing dead zone, over to the Sea of Japan. The kids were fighting over whose turn it was to walk the dog, so Hope had to tap the volume up to hear what the elaborately costumed ruler was saying. The auto-translator was a bit slow this far below the equator, where the satellite feed originated, but what she got was that he had been in consultation with the New American 'Diktator', ironic that the app used the German translation for 'Speaker', Hope thought.

Czar Vladimir II said that Balderson had asked for help from the great Russian Empire and the powerful Russian people, and the Patriarch of Moscow, the Primus Inter Pares, had given the blessing of the Holy Church to strike against the anti-Christ infidel Muslim devils in their last remaining den of evil. Therefore, as Czar and ruler of all the Russias, Vladimir II was announcing a Holy Crusade against the Javan Caliphate, beginning with an expedition to secure forward naval bases on the Japanese archipelago…

Wow. Hope had to admire the way Randall had worked this out. Without a Secretary of State, he had done a pretty good job of dangling Japan in front of the Russians as a prize they could keep in exchange, with no competing claims from anyone else, for providing the top half of a vise to crush Moerdani in. Well, it wasn't like the three or four thousand Japanese farmers and fishermen left on Hokkaido were doing much with it, any ways.

Raised in the world of geopolitics, she could see the dilemma. New America COULD just sit back and use a few of their remaining SSBMs fired from submarine platforms to turn the whole island of Java into black glass and lava. Of course, that would defeat the purpose of trying to rescue Carolyn alive, as well as annoy the heck out of their Australian allies with a lot of lethal fallout, once the clouds and rain rolled south. So, it would be a conventional conflict, it looked like. She understood that.

From what Kip had told her, the New Zealand Navy was just powerful enough to patrol its own coasts and little more. They had gotten used to relying on Australian and New American protection. The two N.A. carrier based fleets, with their air wings and support ships, would be supplemented by a dozen battle ships and destroyers flying the Royal Australian Cross. If the Caliph's naval forces tried to outflank them, another carrier group from Oahu would be coming West from Pearl. It looked neat enough. But what many might overlook was that the Russians had a long ways to come South, to be in the game. Doubtless they would swallow up as much strategic territory, particularly ports, as they could, along the way. It might be months before the trap closed. Clearly, her mom couldn't wait that long. Something had to happen, fast.

Hope tapped down the volume as the BBC commentators prattled on about the ramifications of this Crusade on Europe, would rising oil prices due to increased demand with a war on increase English reliance on Republic of Texas imports to supplement North Sea production…she had his number somewhere, in the little black notebook she always kept somewhere easy to find. Now, where was it?

Josh was pretty surprised to hear Hope on the phone, especially at 11:45 p.m., and on a school night, when the girls loved any excuse to stay up, or wake up. He handed the receiver to Kelly and rolled out of bed to tell them to go back to sleep, because yes, they DID hear the phone, actually, thank you.

Kelly sat up when she heard who was on the other end. Yes, it was awful, so Harolding awful, well, she was glad she'd gotten the flowers, how were the kids holding up?....it took a good ten minutes before Hope got to the meat of the issue. It took twice that long to convince Kelly that was no way she could get around the request, without seeming unreasonable. As Josh went to the bathroom and came back into the bedroom and tapped on the wallscreen just in time to catch the rebroadcast of the Czar's speech, the two girls came to an understanding.

Later that morning , Prophet Walker requested a live interview on Salt Lake City's only legal morning news program, LDSTV's 'Saints Alive!'. Long used to starting her day without the benefit of coffee, she seemed chipper enough as she announced, without bothering to consult the Council, that the mission fields of Africa would once again be opened to Mormon Brothers and Sisters who were called to witness to the Gentiles there, beginning in the Orange Free State and then working their way into the less populous regions of the continent.

As Kelly left the studio, her phone was ringing. A Senior member of the Council from the faction which was less than excited about having a female Prophet, Sorenson was nearly in tears that she had made such an announcement without a full discussion and consideration of the expense and potential liabilities…she let him work himself up into a lather and then down into a breathless gasping rattle as she got into her car and nodded for her driver to go ahead.

"Very well, Councilman Sorenson. I 'm not going to call the Orange Free State President and tell him that his offer to allow LDS missions into his nation, under his protection, has been rejected. You can do that." Sorenson sputtered and dialed it back. Kelly listened for a minute more, as she neared her office. "Of course, I'm sure that you can take the lead in influencing our Brothers on the Council to understand that such a glorious opportunity for the Church simply could not wait, and I knew they

would be as joyous as I am at this opportunity to expand our missions." Sorenson muttered that he would do his best, and let her go. None of them would want to publicly call her bluff on this. The Council would go along because to not do so would be against the best interests of the Church. The Orangers would go along because Hope and by extension the New American ambassador would convince them that their big brother really wanted them to, and because it had already been announced that they would. When the time came that everyone realized that the planes carrying LDS missionaries would be flying through Indonesian claimed airspace to get there, and need fighter escorts, well, by then it would be too late to do anything but go ahead and do it. Sometimes she wished that Hope had been born a man. She would have made one heck of a leader.

Lt. Col. Jerry Harbin of the LDS Air Force had never spoken to the Prophet directly before, but he recognized her voice when it came over his encrypted satlink to his command center just north of Angels City. The commander of all Deseret air defenses on the generous strip of coast the Church held normally had his hands full, but he waved off his adjutant and gave Kelly his full attention. He quietly listened as he was told to assemble two companies of the specially equipped Gull division they had trained as paratroopers for the practice drop on the Channel Islands last year. Prophet Walker advised him that they were going to be called on to commit themselves to a top secret mission, an air assault on a heavily populated hostile urban area with the objective being a hostage rescue. He did not flinch when she told him the target. When the line closed, he turned to his adjutant. "Better go kiss your wives goodbye, Zeke. We've got some water to cross."

"When ends life's transient dream,
When death's cold sullen stream over me roll…"

The distress call from the inbound English tanker came just as it was being surrounded by the pursuing pirates. Unlike most of the

smaller vessels they had boarded and taken, the NeoBahamans couldn't get a grappling hook up and over the side of the higher ship's railings. It was kind of pathetic, in retrospect. The eighteen man crew was armed, so they kept the three old pleasure craft at a distance, while they circled like toothless sharks. Finally, the pirates left in frustration before the flight of refurbished F-16s from the mostly antique Republic of Texas Air Force arrived on the scene. The two fighter planes circled higher, saw their prey, and hammered them to bits with their 30 mm gatling guns before they could get to a protected bay. Then they circled back to the tanker and wagged their wings as it followed them into Houston to fill up with Texas's biggest export, that light sweet crude.

The newer F-22s were assigned to combat-ready roles, while the older pre-Balk fighter models were relegated to this kind of coastal defense, 1st Lieutenant Charles Morris understood. That still didn't make it any easier to be pulling this scut duty in these scrap piles, just because some cocky German officer in charge of updating their plutonium pile weaponization program's latest software wanted to make disparaging remarks about Texican women. And get his front teeth knocked out, for it. Besides, everybody knew that dangling the nuclear carrot in front of Texas in exchange for cheap oil had been a constant German game since he was in Cub Scouts. Back when he could remember singing 'The Star Spangled Banner' instead of 'The Eyes of Texas'. That memory grew fainter every year, though, as did his chances of making Captain, if he couldn't rein in his temper, or find a way to avoid the idiots who pushed his buttons.

Still, he wasn't the only one who noticed that every year the Greater German scientists and military attache's and diplomats kept saying that they were closer and closer to helping the Republic of Texas achieve a 'parity of deterrent' with her two nuclear neighbors on the continent. The Germans had nukes, that they could give them if they wanted to, or they could sure buy some from Russia or salvage some from the Middle East's ghost towns…heck, Texas had nukes, unofficially, but using them would

kind of give the game away. They needed people to know that they had them, officially, without using them…then they could feel free to use them. That's the way Charles understood it. Just two small low-yield blasts, one each over New Orleans and Freeport, would sure make transAtlantic shipping a lot safer, both ways.

Truth be told, it seemed to him like the new regime in St. Louis could kick butt and take names on the Church of the New Dispensation, if they wanted to, badly enough. After all, they had mopped up the last pathetic black resistance within a couple of years after New Africa had imploded in mass viral pandemic. Then they had salvaged the cities and reclaimed huge swaths of fertile agricultural areas in the SouthEast for farming, and even colonized new settlements in strategic areas with displaced White war refugees from other parts of the continent where ethnic cleansing had occurred in the other direction. Towns such as New Peoria in southern Arkansas, Matthews City in Alabama, and Butlerville in Mississippi had grown into busy cities of agricultural production, trade, and commerce. The New American front lines were right up to the edge of the water at Lake Pontchartrain. If they had Rev. Clearly bottled up so tight, why didn't they just finish him off?

The Lieutenant felt confident that he knew why. The C.N.D. and their Neo-Bahaman allies choked down Texican foreign trade, and helped keep his Republic from achieving its' true destiny as a great nation. Keeping Texas weaker made New America stronger. He knew how things worked at the top. It was all about money. Just the bottom line. Some days he was tempted to simply commandeer one of the not too secretly hidden tactical sized atomic devices the Republic of Texas Air Force kept in their ordnance facilities at the R.O.T. Armed Forces H.Q. at Fort Hood, and taking a flight out himself, just to get things done. That's what was needed, a man of action to take charge and quit all of the pussyfooting around. It was high time to stop dancing with these evolutionary throwbacks and their supporters and finish this b.s.. One of these days, he just might do it, too.

Charles had grumbled more than once, over a beer in the junior officer's corner of the base bar, about how weak the politicians were, letting St. Louis push them around all the time. Always Harolding them when they should be letting them do their jobs. A couple of other guys had started sitting next to him. When he talked, people listened. The onearmed veteran of the fighting to take back Austin back during the Balk, the Quartermaster Sergeant with all of the keys, had connections, too, and so did his other buddies on the second-string flight line. They all were less than content with their career paths and trajectories, and found it easy to blame the weak politicians and their New American bosses. The Sergeant ran the local 'surplus' black market, too.

That n ight, after he'd finished the after-flight paperwork and accounted for the ammunition expenditure and made a post-combat report to his half asleep Captain, Lt. Morris began making a list of the people he could count on, and how they could help make his dreams of a truly free and strong and proud Republic of Texas come true.

"…Bow down before the one you serve, you're going to get what you deserve…"

Ray Ray was tired of losing boats because his stupid boys couldn't hit a lick and jump back before they got caught out in the open, or were just too stupid to understand that a small boat coming out of a port is a better prize than a big boat going into one. He missed the old days, when things seemed simpler. Of course, back then he had gone from a high school dropout to a wannabe gangster, then been drafted by the New African army. These young kids these days, born since the EBT quit, they didn't know what real thug life was all about.

As he waited for the bearers to bring his Queen in on her chair, the former General who had defeated Ike Huckleberry and led his tribe to salvation eyed the serving girls. That one light-skinned girl looked like she might have some White in her. Ray Ray had travelled from Louisiana to Georgia to Florida to the Bahamas,

and seen the world. He had never seen enough girls, though. Not yet.

Taneisha caught him looking when they carried her in, but she didn't say anything. These days, she was content to have plenty to eat. And she ate plenty. The spread tonight included fish as always, but also imported roast pig from Cuba and jerked chicken from Jamaica. Ray Ray's boys kept their queen fat and happy.

As he dug into the communal bowl in front of him, Ray Ray remembered the hungry times, when they'd first gotten here from Florida after whipping the Cubans and found almost no food left in Freeport. As tired as they had been, they had been forced by their bellies to use the same boats that had gotten them here to take Abaco and Nassau. Eventually, using the bigger and better yachts and ocean cruisers they took as loot, they had spread out to conquer and raid from Haiti to the Mexican coast. They'd probably have been stuck in the Bahamas years ago if it hadn't been for the fuel and repairs provided by those crazy rainbow church folks in The Big Easy, Ray Ray grudgingly admitted. He slathered a piece of fish in some pig grease.

It had helped that by the time they got to Nassau, the brothers there had already killed all the White devils that hadn't sailed away when the throat-cutting started, and just needed some leadership. All the action, the trade and imports of salvage and loot, happened there, but Ray Ray stayed at Freeport, where he could keep a closer eye on people. He kept a place on Paradise Island for the weekly trips he had to take across to stay in charge. Even though he was showing some gray, he still was always hustling. That was the only way to keep these young bucks in line.

When they had first been approached by a black Deacon from the Church of the New Dispensation, shortly after they had finished taking control of Nassau, he had seen an opportunity. First, the Bible thumpers had offered them gasoline and diesel for their boats, in trade for fresh fruit and any other food they could spare

and bring to New Orleans. Then they had given him a few radios and generators so they could keep in touch and have some electricity for his royal use. His and Taneisha's, that is. She kept music playing all the time to prove she was in charge. After a while they had started being given lists of other stuff the lilly-White cracker Preacher Clearly wanted. Havana and Miami had a lot of the engine parts and tools and such he'd asked for. In exchange the church fixed the boats when they broke down and set up a doctor's office in Nassau, then a hospital, for free.

Of course, the last few years he had lost one ship in five coming in or out of New Orleans to bombings by the Emerald Coast based New American Air Force, or torpedoes by those sneaky submarines of theirs. So, they couldn't go too close to the coast to the North, and they couldn't go too close to the Texican coast without risking the same mistreatment from those cowboy honkies. He kept telling Rev. Clearly that stuck his people in a narrow path the New Americans could patrol with their planes and spot more of his shipments, even at night. The fat cracker just wouldn't listen. He just wanted more, more, more. Ray Ray was running out of places to loot boats from and incentives to offer his men to get them to do convoy work. There were only so many girls you could throw at them before they…

Taneisha interrupted his thoughts by throwing a chicken bone at him. She'd already sucked it clean of meat and sauce, so it didn't leave any more stains on his already smeared gold satin shirt.

"Ray Ray, what you lookin' so glum for? You still fretting over that oil tanker?" she asked, in between and during bites of pineapple.
"Nah, just the three boats and the eleven soldiers it took. Ain't nobody gonna want to go after the big prizes any more, before long." He replied. Taneisha shook another chicken leg at him, flinging sauce on the lesser nobles of the tribe around her.
"What you need to do is to get them Texas and Florida crackers to fight one another. Harold that shees up! You tell that Revrund Clearly that's what he need to do!" the plus- sized Queen advised.

“I shore will, big mama, I shore will.” Ray Ray assured her, grabbing the lightskinned girl by the arm as she passed by and giving her the look. If only everything was that easy.

The next morning, after a breakfast of sliced fruit eaten outside as usual to clear up the headache from his hangover, King Ray Ray looked across his debris-strewn beach and got angry, as he often did these days, without warning. He started kicking some of the servants lying around asleep on their filthy blankets, startling them awake.

“Get yore lazy sorry selves up and start cleaning this place. Get that trash picked up and burnt in a pile. What if Rev. Clearly came to visit? What would he think? You want them White folk to be lookin’ down on us? Move, you fools!”

Rev. Joe Bob Clearly had never come to Freeport, and it was unlikely that he ever would. In fact, the fat old honkey preacher only left his compound in New Orleans to come over to Nassau and spend a few days at the time partying with Ray Ray. Or, more accurately, partying with the locally made rum and the locally raised girls Ray Ray provided. The pasty preacher liked them dark and he liked them young.

That’s where Ray Ray was headed this morning, once he had woken everybody up and gotten them started picking up trash and piling it in a fallen in cabana hut. Others he ordered to haul the cooking pans and serving dishes from the night before down to the ocean to rinse out. That should keep them busy. Taneisha woke up and leveraged herself onto one elbow to watch Ray Ray blearily as he strapped on his prized 9mm Beretta and arranged his two extra magazines in their pouches. He hadn’t made it back to their royal chamber at the beachfront club the night before. Usually that didn’t bother her. This morning, though, she was worried. She couldn’t put her finger on why, exactly.

Two of his personal guards, dressed in the royal gold satin he had ordered made from swanky drapes, wrestled their generator out of its’ shed out back and onto Ray Ray’s 34 foot yacht at the end of the marina dock. It had quit chugging away two nights ago, and he hadn’t been able to get the jenny started back, since. Not having his X-Box to play or to be able to watch WWE DVDs had

made him irritable. He hoped that Clearly could take it back and get his people in New Orleans to repair it. Taneisha frowned as Ray Ray took the light-skinned servant girl onboard the boat with him without saying goodbye to her.

Even with the engines running close to their top speed, it still took Ray Ray over four hours to get to Paradise Island. Standing up that long on the vibrating deck with the roar and wind tired him out, but he didn't trust anyone else to do it. He was the Captain! Besides, he let the guards share the light-skinned girl below while they passed the time. The yacht was really too small for a King, and was beginning to make shuddering noises whenever it first started up. He would need to trade up to a bigger one, soon. Maybe he could Clearly to handle that for him, too.

The population of Nassau was nearly twelve thousand, over half of them the New African refugees Ray Ray had brought over, and most of the remainder consisting of immune survivors who had made it through the viral rampage and the die-off from starvation and violence that had followed the Balk. There had been another round of deaths when the immune carriers arrived among those who had remained isolated from the virus during its first wave, but no cases had been seen in over a decade.

Survivors from all over the Caribbean had flocked to the city, once Ray Ray had set it up as a trading center, and especially once the free clinic and hospital had been set up by the Church of the New Dispensation. Generators provided periodic electricity to public buildings and to the pump stations for the water system that the church's engineers kept running, too, making it a real paradise, comparatively.

Mooring the small yacht at the end of the dock, they left the servant girl asleep or unconscious in her berth and strode past the swimming trunk uniformed black pirates who stood up and bowed as Ray Ray strode past. One of them slapped the girl holding a tray of warm beer cans to the sand when she didn't bow low enough. Ray Ray wondered where they had been looted from, and how old they were.

The steady thumping of generators could be heard above the squeals and crying mingling from Rev. Clearly's suite, as Ray Ray

and his guards approached the hotel. Some of the White tourists had taken refuge in the top floors of the two castle-like buildings with the connecting floor high above, when the Balk had been in full swing. The locals had burned them out, causing the connecting wing to collapse and fall. The first few floors were spared from the fire, though, and had been reclaimed as luxury accommodations for the wealthiest merchants and slave traders, as well as V.I.P.'s. Rev. Clearly kept the whole third floor of the right hand building reserved for himself and his special 'guests'.

Sickeningly sweet smoke drifted down the stairwell, giving Ray Ray a contact high before he even reached the top of the steps. He smoked his share of ganja, it was the biggest tribute offered from their bases in Jamaica. But even he couldn't keep up with this cat.

Two elementary aged brown-skin girls were discarded in the hallway, one of them looking like she wasn't going to be moving again, under her own power, at least. The other still cried softly and twitched her legs every time she breathed. One of the Church of the New Dispensation's brown-robed Faithful, who acted as Rev. Clearly's security, was dragging her towards the broken out window at the end of the landing, to join the growing pile below. Ray Ray and his guards looked at each other. It wasn't as if they hadn't done worse, themselves, but some people never seemed to take a nap. After his grisly task was finished and the hallway cleared, the Faithful Deacon clasped his hands in a prayerful gesture and half-bowed to Ray Ray. The King of the Caribbean tried not to show hesitation as he stepped over a puddle of vomit and blood and knocked on the door. It swung open on its' creaky hinges, corroded by the years of exposure to salt air. The stench of several different human bodily fluids and solids mixed with burnt hair and worse hit them like a fetid wall as they walked in, overlaying the marijuana smoke.

"Merry Christmas, brothers!" the drunken and stoned preacher slurred. He was wearing his white papal robe, or at least the top half of it, and laying on top of another girl who was bleeding from her nose and mouth. She didn't move when he got up to greet them.

“Is it really Christmas, Reverend?” Ray Ray asked coolly, ignoring the mess. His guards stayed just inside the doorway, without being told.
“Yes it is, Brother Ray Ray, yes it is. But during this extended time of tribulation drawn out by mankind’s hatred for his neighbors, nobody makes calendars any more, do they? No, I guess not.” Another brown-robed Faithful stood in the shadows behind Clearly, holding a girl with her arms behind her back. Her head was hung low in resignation. “Yes, it’s baby Jesus’s birthday, almost. Let’s sing him ‘Happy Birthday’. Blow out your candle, and make a wish, baby Jesus” Clearly shrieked.
“Maybe we should string up some Christmas lights on the palm trees, like the old commercials had, huh, Ray Ray? Well, maybe not. So, what do you want from Santa this year, little boy?” the florid-faced Reverend continued, oblivious to being pantless. Ray Ray had to steel himself to not show anger at the word ‘boy’ from this cracker priest.
“Well, my generator is loaded in my boat, it needs fixin’, and the boat motor is knockin’, too, Reverend. Them getting’ fixed would be nice. Also, if it wouldn’t be too much to ask, could we start doin’ the trade convoys into N’Orlins at night, so to avoid the evil raciss and theys search planes? My men, theys…uh…theys faith is being tested, Reverend.”
“Hmm, well, we’ll see about that, Ray Ray. We’ll see. But if they come in over night, they’ll have to stay on board their ships the next day, before they leave again. I can’t have a bunch of wild, uh, unregistered guests romping around the city, you understand.” Joe Bob Clearly sighed deeply. “But, I guess so, nighttime is the right time.”
“That will make it a lot easier for me to convince them to keep the convoys going, Reverend. And the generator?” Ray Ray ventured.
Rev. Clearly waved his fat and liverspotted hand dismissively. “Yes, yes, we’ll get you a new generator and fix your boat. There’s loads of extras at the hospital, just go get one. Get two, who cares?”
“Thank you, Reverend, Sir. And thank you for the fuel delivery last

week, too. If I get a bigger boat, do you want mine?”
“What? Wheew, no, brother, it would take me weeks to air it out. No, I like my floatplane just fine, it’s faster and less likely to sink.” Joe Bob laughed at his own joke. But you know, it is customary to exchange gifts this time of year, so I have something to ask of you, too.”
Ray Ray braced himself. The famous teacher of diversity of and multiracialism never ceased to surprise him with his demands veiled as requests. “Of course, Reverend, what do you need?”
Clearly stood up straight and jerked his thumb at the last girl in line. “I need more vestal virgins, Ray Ray. These are almost used up.”
Princess Margaret Hospital had been overwhelmed by the sick and dying during the viral contagion, when a cruise ship of infected refugees had docked in Nassau, but the New Dispensation doctors and nurses had cleared it out with the help of conscripted local ‘volunteers’. The Doctor’s hospital next door had been stripped down to the walls to restock some of the equipment, and the rest had been salvaged from Havana and Miami by Ray Ray’s pirates. It was the cleanest, most constantly lit, and best supplied building on the island. While his guards loaded four new generators into the pickup truck he’d borrowed from the hospital staff garage, the King relaxed for a few minutes in the lobby waiting room, enjoying some live t.v.. It was a rare treat for him, these days. The station they kept on, a New American satellite channel out of Talahassee, was the closest thing to local news there was.
The weather system it showed bringing snow and freezing rain to the top of the screen wouldn’t come close to affecting them here, so he took the time to study the map displayed during the forecast in awe. In the middle, the New American state of Emerald Coast stretched from Mobile to Jacksonville, straddling both coasts. Above it, the recolonized area around Savannah and its’ coastal suburbs was a populated island in the charnal house of southern Georgia, which was still pretty empty up to the northern quarter of the state, just off screen, where the Whites had held on throughout the Balk. Ray Ray remembered what it had been like

during the high times when Atlanta had been the capitol of New Africa, and he himself had commanded the best of its' national army at Fort Benning. That was a long time gone, now.

South of the Emerald Coast, a few remnants of the Cuban Army that had occupied the peninsula still ruled pockets, but colonizing White enclaves were pushing them out, the hard way. It was a polka-dotted blur of borders, on the screen. Dr. Chen, the oriental physician with a White wife, came over to talk to Ray Ray and ask him how his shoulder was feeling. Every few weeks he had to come in to have a cortisone shot in the joint, to fight the rheumatism. Then he asked him if he had given more thought to surrendering his life to Christ, so Ray Ray got up and walked out to check on the loading of the generators.

On the way back to the dock they stopped off to pick up some groceries, including more of the chicken Taneisha liked, and fill up ten five gallon cans with gasoline for the generators. After the boats' tanks were topped off, one of his guards discovered that the light-skinned girl had disappeared, so they started up and turned North for home. He would get the motor looked at another time. Ray Ray had had a long day.

Chapter Four

"When we get through with the Jews in America, they'll think the treatment they received in Germany was nothing."
-Father Charles Edward Coughlin

“Don’t you worry, about a thing…’cause every little thing, is gonna be alright…”

The Crescent flags of the Caliphate of Java flew not just from the home island, but from mosque domes and minarets in Kuala Lumpur, Makassar, and Singapore. Under Dr. Moerdani’s leadership, the abandoned military equipment of a half dozen Asian nations had been salvaged and repaired or cannibalized over the last decade and a half into a significant force, the largest in the region. The Javan Navy carried out salvage operations from Ho Chi Minh City to Manila, and patrolled from Taiwan to Hong Kong. His Air Force, with bases in Jakarta and Surabaya, claimed sovereign airspace from Vietnam to Australia. Colonists from Java had, under his direction, repopulated areas from Singapore and Malaysia, to the Philippines, to cement his claim to those land areas, too. The resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Muhammed’s followers had worked out well for their salvage efforts, as well as eased their overcrowding and the strains it placed on local food production.

Still, it had been quite a feat for them to repair, refurbish, fuel, and man the Chinese aircraft carrier they had recovered from the Paracel Islands. This had been their secret project for a year, before it had been relaunched as the ‘Scimitar of Allah’ and made its’ way East to launch three suicide fighters as a distraction against the New American West Coast. Granted, Moerdani had hoped that their sabotage efforts against the radar stations and the data centers for their air defenses, accomplished by paratroopers dropped in two man teams off the coast to motor in in zodiacs, would have gone better. They might have, if most of

the paratroopers hadn't drowned in the rough seas on their way in. As it was, not enough radar stations were disabled. The flights were detected, and had been picked off before they could deliver their bombloads to their targets. Now, there were three nuclear bombs resting on the bottom of the ocean floor off of California, and Sacramento and Coos Bay and Portland were still there, along with the New American 7th and 3rd fleets.

It was not a total failure, though. Not by any means. The rest of the Scimitar's carrier wing had shot down the New American Speaker's wife's plane over the open Pacific in spectacular fireworks. They had even managed to fake a transmission declaring that the plane had been hijacked, to muddy the waters. Then he had followed that up with an announcement, after a while, that Carolyn McNabb was alive and under detention there to ward off any retaliatory nuclear strikes by the New American infidels, if they felt vengeful.

Sur Moerdani now faced the combined hostility of the world, with no allies left standing. In his mind, though, he had outmaneuvered the unbelievers, typical of his brilliance. His, after all, was the mind which had found the cure for the Turkish Flu which had killed eightyfive percent of the world's population, directly or indirectly. He was the savior of his nation. He was the right hand of the Prophet on Earth. He could not be beaten.

The Imperial Russian sabre-rattling didn't worry him. Sur knew that the Czar was just using this international crisis as an excuse to take Japan without the New Americans complaining. If he dared come further south than Okinawa, Vladimir would be dealt with. The combined fleets gathering off Darwin and Cairns were a more immediate problem.

Unfortunately, he had used up all of his pawns in the New American Secret Service in one move that had nearly, but not quite, decapitated the infidel government. He was still tying up loose ends there, but all of his pieces had been removed from that chess board, sacrificed in a gambit to put his opponent in

check. On the bright side, before he outlived his usefulness and became a liability, Stephen Susanna had put in place four dozen military officers still awaiting activation. A few had been used in the ill-fated attempt to disable the coastal radar stations, and been casualties of the skirmishes there. He had made sure none of them had been left alive to confess, like the captured S.S. had. The New Americans might know that he had assets in the Unified Command, but they couldn't know who they were, yet. Or where.

That was crucial, because he knew that they would begin re-testing all of their junior officers who had enlisted within the last decade, or even go back two decades, as soon as they could begin. His time-frame for action was a brief window, then, before his assets there would all rot on the vine, like fruit left unplucked when ripe, as Allah commands.

This time, though, he wouldn't make an obvious move. He needed to draw the attention of the infidels away from Java, and back to their own adder's nest. He would use his remaining New American agents in the Unified Command military structure to create another front, and give them more enemies to fight.

"…every rose has it's thorns, just like every night has its' dawn, just like every cowboy, sings a sad, sad song…"

Christmastime was always grim in these kind of honky-tonks, but things were looking up. Lt. Charles Morris couldn't believe what he was seeing on the t.v. at the end of the bar. New American fighter planes were swooping in from Mobile to plaster the Church of the New Dispensation defenses on the outskirts of Kenner. The ground forces hadn't yet moved from their positions on the edge of Lake Maurepas, but he figured they would, soon. Why the attack seemed to be so disorganized, the Republic of Texas fighter pilot didn't know. He did know that it was about time they did something, however halfhearted. He also knew that he wasn't going to be left out of it. He threw two Texas silver dollars onto the tinsel-strewn bar top, and bellied away from his second home.

Gathering three of the flyers in his clique as he left the bar, he quickly dialed the number of the Quartermaster Sergeant who had helped them hide the tactical nukes in with a pallet of conventional ordinance, after they had been ‘accidentally’ transferred from Fort Hood to Ellington Field. Within a half hour they were being loaded onto his squadron’s F-16s, which were fueled and primed to fly. The other two pilots were at the tarmac, waiting for them. Three of them would carry the tactical nukes. One would have a load of air to air missiles, just in case anybody tried to get in their way. The other two would fly escort, just to see the show.

Charles ignored the queries from his own control tower at takeoff, then ignored the demands from the New American flights buzzing around them as the perimeter defenses of New Orleans were pounded from above. He hummed ‘Silent Night’ out loud as his plane hopped the short miles to the combat area. Lacking the distance of a cruise missile, the comparatively crude tactical nukes would have to be manually armed and dropped from the bomb bays with live timer triggers. Even at high altitude, they could only set them for twenty to twenty-five seconds. It was going to be close. He made the mental calculations as they came in, and relayed the orders to the other two nuke carriers. Climbing together to their top ceiling, the targets he had selected for maximum effect were almost immediately in sight. One-handed, he armed the detonating device and placed the bomb for release. The mental song playlist switched, gratefully, to ‘O Holy Night’, and he sang it nervously, to bolster his courage. Charles authorized individual release as he punched his own button, then turned hard to the left as he felt the bird lighten. “Ho, Ho, Ho! Here comes Santy Clause, losers!” he muttered under his breath. His wingman did the same turn, moments later. Then the third, a few seconds after. He was driving North hard and fast when the three overlapping thunders struck behind him.

The first bomb, from Lt. Morris’s F -16, had been close to its target, wrecking the main outlet canal where it fed into the

Mississippi and making it impossible to move any shipping in or out of New Orleans. Since it was nearly a ground burst, the damage was maximized. The second bomb took out the Industrial Canal further North, but was an airburst that also destroyed the three lower-flying planes in the operation, knocking them out of the air like a flyswatter batting flies. Two New American bombers were also damaged by the blasts as they delivered their much tamer payloads. The third and final bomb, dropped a few moments too late, detonated after it had splashed into Lake Pontchartrain, sending a large and highly radioactive cloud of steam up that immediately cooled and fell back as deadly rain into the stricken city. The Church of the New Dispensation had still been struck a fatal blow.

In St. Louis and Austin, Scott Hampton and Randall Balderson were both screaming for someone to tell them what had happened. Who had given the orders to attack? Where had those nukes come from? Who was responsible? A near panic of scrambling and confirming orders and counter-orders ensued. It took hours for both sides to stand down, and assess the situation rationally. In the meantime, Sur Moerdani monitored the satellite radio transmissions, hoping that one side would attack the other in the confusion. He was disappointed. Still, he had his diversion, and more infidels were dead. Allah would be pleased.

“…hush little baby, don’t say a word, momma’s gonna buy you a mocking bird…”

The girls understood that Santa Claus, like the angels Joseph Smith had allegedly talked to, were a myth. They didn’t mind not having a traditional family Christmas, even though it was a big event in Salt Lake. Their mom was busy. Kelly had the Imperial Russian ambassador to Deseret by the short hairs, and she liked to watch him squirm. Diplomats hated being asked direct questions, and he must know why she had come calling without an appointment or an official invitation. Ever since the Chinese bombing of New York had forced the final evacuation of the U.N.

headquarters there, international diplomacy had been a game of brinksmanship. Even though a rump United Nations continued in Brussels, using that name, they functioned more as an emasculated E.U. government, than as a truly international body. When several new European nations seceded and balkanized, the old Union had become moot. With only a handful of nonEuropean nations remaining in the field of international actors, the focus of the international diplomatic and peacekeeping agency naturally became focused more on European affairs.

These days, the Republic of Texas, along with the Orange Free State and Argentina and Mexico, had less of a voice in the U.N. than the Republic of Quebec did, simply because the latter nation was attached to the French delegation. The Australians and New Zealanders barely even bothered with their ‘observer’ status. Now, though, that would all change, because the Texicans had publicly joined the elite club of nuclear powers, with Deseret, New America, The Russian Empire, Greater Germany, England, and France.

She couldn’t help but shake her head at such a turn of events. So Harolding cr azy. Three Republic of Texas Air Force pilots were undergoing a public trial for treason, even though most Texicans polled considered them heroes for stealing tactical nukes and laying waste to New Orleans. With Rev. Clearly trying to reconsolidate the Church of the New Dispensation in the Bahamas, Gulf shipping was free from piracy, for the time being. And three dozen New American officers, following the arrest of a coterie responsible for ordering the unapproved conventional attack which began the battle, had defected to Clealry.

From the vantage point of the Council, this was none of their business. From Kelly’s, since they shared a border with the Republic of Texas, anything as big as their neighbor becoming an acknowledged nuclear power needed to be addressed. That’s why she sat here in the small strip mall embassy office, sipping strong tea. She suggested, half jokingly, that Ambassador Gregori

Stetzmenov must have really ruffled some feathers back home to get assigned this position, in a country where alcohol and tobacco were illegal, and the moral compass of the nation was just a bit to the right of the Taliban…back when there had been a Taliban.

His hands shook with the tremors of a secret drunk trying to drink something other than vodka as he rattled his cup down into his saucer.
“Yes. This is so. You see, Madame Prophet Walker, His Holiness, the Patriarch, also feels that more discipline is needed in Russian culture. A generation spent swallowing up central Asia and northern China has made us a bit like your American wild west, da? Everybody is a cowboy, doing his own thing.”
“I take it you weren’t the best team player at home?” Kelly teased. The hooded eyes of the graying man blinked, as his mind translated the phrase.
“The Czar of All Russias had already filled the embassies to the Han tribes in the Yangzi Valley, although I was afraid that I would end up there, since I found myself part of an army unit removing Chinese nuclear weapons from their bases, just after the Turkish Flu.” Stetzmenov smiled bleakly at her. “Salt Lake City is not the worst place.”
“So, you understand how important it is that the civilized nations of the world keep an eye on newer nations acquiring this destructive power,” Kelly verbally lunged. “The Germans, for their own reasons which I cannot understand, have helped the Texicans acquire this power. As a rational counter-balance to Greater German spheres of influence, I hope that the world can count on The Czar to take action to limit the further proliferation…”
“Madame Prophet, forgive me, but I must be blunt and interrupt. It is true that in Europe, the Russian Empire and Greater Germany do not always agree on how, for example, the Ukraine or Poland or the Baltics should be governed, even though these are all obviously historically regions of the Slavic peoples, and so also of the Russian Empire.”
“Obviously.” Kelly deadpanned, leaning back in her little wooden

chair carefully.
“What I mean is, though not all of Eastern Europe has yet formally acknowledged the sovereignty of the Czar, as have the more progressive states such as Bulgaria and Serbia, Germany does not interfere with our, as you said, ‘sphere of influence’. Just as we do not meddle with their affairs, in what was Austria, or Croatia…or Texas.”
Kelly’s eyes narrowed. “Just to be clear, for us, The Republic of Texas publicly having nuclear weapons is a problem. Now, what I want to know, is, is this my problem, or Russia’s problem, too?”
“Here,” Gregori said resignedly, “have some more tea. I know that it is illegal for you Mormons, too. But in this room, you are on foreign soil, so let us share our diplomatic immunity and our tea for a moment together. You see, Madame Prophet, for Russians, there are not so many problems.”
Two days later, Josh Walker was bringing the girls home from the park when he noticed a delivery truck parked in front of their house. Karen was out front, arguing with one of their security people over whether it should be opened and checked for explosives, before it was taken in the house. Josh asked the guard if it had been x-rayed yet, and the brown-bearded man confirmed that it had been, immediately, with a hand held unit which also detected no chemical explosives in the narrow box. Reassured, the former Texican ambassador asked the guard to park the car in the garage while he took the car inside. Karen rolled her eyes at the excess of security and smiled at John as he shrugged and took the package, addressed to him, into his study while the girls all had a snack.
As he sat at the computer desk fishing through drawers for a letter opener, he could hear them laughing about their day in the kitchen. Karen had them making a list of New Year’s Resolutions. Finally, even though he hated to ruin the edge, Josh used his folding tanto blade to slit open the box flaps. The story of how the ducks in the park had eaten all their bread and followed them around for more faded into insignificance as he read the old ballistics report, buried and marked ‘Top Secret’ for fifteen years, which matched his wife’s sidearm to the bullets which had killed

President Bellefont.
On another continent, an identical package had arrived at the New American embassy in Johannesburg, addressed to Hope. In addition to the ballistics report, it contained a letter, unsigned, claiming that Kip in his capacity as Chief of Staff had helped John McNabb in his plot to use a hypnotic-suggestion induced assassin to kill the founder of the Republic of Texas. The letter listed the motivations of the conspirators as being to replace the independent Bellefont with the more malleable Hampton, and to subvert the Executive branches of both Deseret and the Republic of Texas to the influence of New America, namely her dad. Hope blinked away tears as she read the vile slander. Then she read it again. The third time, something sunk in.

“O beautiful for pilgrim feet, Whose stern impassion'd stress A thoroughfare for freedom beat Across the wilderness!”

Mrs. Bellefont-Hampton wished that her kids would call more often. Especially with a New Year starting. She hadn’t even heard from them over Christmas. Just lousy cards, like always. She understood that they had their own lives, now. Her oldest son was the frontrunner to be the next Mayor of Dallas, following in the political tradition of his father, the former Senator and Vice President. The girls were active in the Republic’s cultural and social circles for the elite, practicing politics of their own. Meeting the polished young men they brought home to meet her as if they were being given an audience with the Queen reminded her of how she had first met Perry, when he was working on his second Congressional campaign and she was a naïve socialite from a wealthy Houston oil family. Well, maybe she had never been quite as naïve as people expected her to be, but that was the role she had played for him.

Standing in front of the mirror, the pile of clothes gave silent testimony that nothing looked sexy on her, any more. Wasn’t this supposed to be the most depressing time of year? Every gown in the former governor’s mansion was too tight. What was it Marilyn

Monroe had said about diamonds not losing their shape? Well, she was finally losing the war against gravity, and even the best cosmetic surgeons in St. Louis had told her that any more visits would do her more harm than good. It was enough to make a girl have a mid-life crisis, but she was about ten years too late for that.

Menopause hadn't bothered her, in fact it had kind of been more of a relief than anything else, so much less trouble and less to worry about, every twenty-eight days. Empty-nest syndrome likewise, had just been a slight pang followed by the realization that she finally had more time to shop and travel, at least within the confines of Texas, where Scott trusted his Rangers to keep an eye on her. She wished that she could travel to Europe. All of the wealthy German ladies who accompanied their husbands and boyfriends on trips to Houston looked like they were on top of the world, in every sense of the world. Texas, by contrast, was a decidedly second rate power. It was embarrassing.

All of her life, she had been second best. The second prettiest daughter in her family. The second in her class, at the prestigious girls' finishing school she had graduated from. Wife of the Vice President, instead of the President. And now, the First Lady of a Second World country. Her life had been Harolded to hell.

She knew that if Perry had been President, he could have stopped the hyperinflation, saved the dollar from collapsing, and somehow kept America united. He could have saved the United States, if he had just been given the chance. If he had just taken her advice and declared the President unfit and taken power, he could have pulled it out, right up until the end. But he had been too weak, too afraid, too hesitant. That was so long ago, and so far gone, now. She knew she should forgive him, and let it go. But she felt that she had been robbed of her destiny. It was a hurt she could never heal. He had died before she could make it right.

For many years, she had hated John McNabb, and even though she had known, right from the start, once she had heard the

details of what he had known and when, she had hated Scott, too. She thought of herself as Hamlet's mother, marrying her dead husband's killer brother, or as Elvira Hancock, Tony Montana's wife, leaving with him after he'd killed Frank. But no, she misremembered the movie. Tony Montana hadn't killed Frank, just like he'd promised not to. Scott hadn't killed Perry. But it had happened. She was sure of that. It had happened.

She m ade a New Year's resolution of her own. It was quite funny the kind of actual power that a wife has. The access to her husband's files, where some men hoarded the most incriminating things as if they were nostalgic war trophies, was all she needed, along with some international postage stamps. Mrs. Bellefont-Hampton wanted the woman who had killed her Perry to pay, even if the revenge was served cold. She hadn't implicated Scott, directly, but anybody else who fell by the wayside was just collateral damage. Including herself.

The private doctor who had prescribed her the sleeping pills she overdosed on was given a public execution, by firing squad. To quell the public mourning over his wife's death and the rumors surrounding the details of her passing, a sincerely grief-stricken President Hampton had the sentences of the three renegade pilots commuted, and granted them pardons. The damages done by her trips to the post office elsewhere wouldn't be so easy to gloss over.

"In the days of my youth, I was told what it means to be a man. Now, I've reached that age, I try to do all those things the best I can…"

The first Deseret flight bouncing from Brigham Beach to Oahu to Brisbane to Pretoria for the resumption of LDS missionary work in southern Africa was intercepted by Javan fighter/bombers who demanded they land in Surabaya. After a flurry of discussion up and down the chain of command, the fresh-scrubbed and smiling young men in their starched white shirts and black ties were quickly sent on their way with their cargo hold full of copies of the

Book of Mormon, before the infidels could contaminate any of the faithful with their cultish Jesus worship. Thereafter, the rules were that LDS flights could cross Javan airspace, so long as they didn't land, for any reason. Ever.
The fourth and fifth flights, the next weekend, didn't land there, but they did release one hundred and eighty of Harbin's paratroopers onto the island. The nighttime passages meant that Caliphate air defenses didn't see the chutes blossoming until the first reports of gunfire were received, from the area around the Caliph's palace and the prison. Both were attacked by storm before the garrison could be mobilized.

The sound of running boots on marble jarred Dr. Moerdani awake from a dream of virus-infected zombies climbing out of the water, to face a more real threat. Excited voices called his name in Javanese, and answering orders from his officers came back in Bahasa. He unrolled from the silk sheets and dressed quickly, leaving the lights off to save his night vision. In the distance the steady drum of automatic rifle fire was punctuated by single shots which silenced the machine gun as he pulled on his boots to see what was going on.

Corporal Timmons waved the rest of the squad forward past the taken out machine gun post while he changed magazines and radioed Captain Howell to report that the SouthEastern side gate of the prison had been taken. A few guards continued to return fire from the towers, but the block buildings were being overrun by LDS troops. After his Lieutenant and Sergeant had went down in front of the heavy bullets, Timmons had face planted and belly crawled to the side where he could snipe the gunners and render the machine gun useless.

Two of the five remaining men he had motioned across the prison yard went down to fire from the towers, so the Corporal grabbed the hot gun and lifted it out of its brackets and out of the emplacement. He swung it level with his hips, at waist height, towards the enemy. Bracing himself against the low concrete wall,

he pressed the trigger and let the slugs chew chunks of concrete up the wall of the nearest tower until the windows blew out the other side at the top, and the firing stopped. Searching every cell of the prison would take longer than the primary assault group could afford right now, so taking and holding the prison was their first priority. The secondary assault group was facing tougher resistance at the palace.

The defensive firing positions in the parapets held the attackers away from the front courtyard, where Sur was wishing he had gone for a more Spartan topiary plan, to provide less cover to whoever was out there. His elite guards reported that they were White, and he guessed they were New American. What was tickling the back of his mind was the thought that a suicide attack wasn't the style of the infidels, so either this was a diversion for a larger attack, or they were expecting reinforcements sometime soon. He sent a runner to check with the communications room to see if there was any sign of other forces, on land or sea or air.

Kip stood on board the hangar deck of the NAS Ruby Ridge, watching the elevators raise the last of a dozen FB 29 stealth fighter/bombers into position, ready to take its place in the flight line. He hated missing seeing the kids unwrap their presents, and playing Santa Claus, in general. The nuclear powered carrier, the second of its class, was the heart of the 7th fleet task force churning towards Java as the first twinkle of dawn lit the sky. He was going into battle with the naval contingent after an unencrypted message from the Salt Lake City DPS to Bullens' Intelligence division had given them a heads up about the commando raid on Jakarta. Randall had called him and told him to not question why the crazy Mormons were doing this, but just to back them up as soon as they got visual confirmation that it was happening. The fleet had been ready to roll for weeks. Now they were going forward, but not in the way that they had expected or anticipated.

He had barely had time to call Hope and let her know what was happening. She'd seemed kind of abrupt with him, but maybe that was just his nerves and overactive imagination working on him. Kip didn't have time to worry about what kind of female emotional issue she might be having, right now. To his left and right, smaller destroyers flanked the carrier as the klaxon alarmed that the first Javan ships had come into radar range.

The officer in charge was hesitant to answer him the first time he asked, but the look on Moerdani's face brought the response he was requesting. The communications room had confirmed that a naval battle was beginning between his forces and the New Americans north of Christmas Island. His air force was heavily engaged with fast and deadly aircraft that didn't show up on their radar screens, apparently. Reports of losses kept coming in, as one plane after another fell.

He couldn't raise the prison on the radio, so he assumed the worst from that area, now that things had gone quiet. If they had taken the penitentiary compound, that would free up more attackers to tighten the pressure on his guards here. He had reinforcements on the way, too, though.

Something heavier than a grenade blew up outside, maybe an RPG, against the wall. One of his guards was knocked down by the concussion, and his ears were ringing as dust and grit made his eyes tear. The sound of jet engines overhead signaled bad news. If they dropped ordinance on him now, the Caliph knew that his infantry reinforcements wouldn't arrive in time to be of any help.

If the 3rd fleet had remained in position, they could have finished off the Javan aircraft carrier and the rest of their navy piecemeal. With the other New American carrier group from the South Pacific headed around Tierra del Fuego to deal with the conflict in the Caribbean, it took three torpedoes from the trailing submarine to cripple the carrier. Once it had been stopped, the destroyers moved in to finish it off while the carrier wing decimated the Javan

Air Force from the land bases as soon as they caught air. Most of them never got off the ground, and never saw their destruction coming.

Captain Howell and a platoon dug in to hold the prison, while the rest of the surviving primary strike force redeployed to the palace battle. Just as they arrived and took up positions by the pool, racing motors came from three directions, and the thump of helicopter rotors approached. Corporal Timmons heard jibber jabber yelling coming up the hill, still out of sight, and figured that sitting still wasn't a good idea. There wasn't much future in it.

The clump of attacking soldiers rushed forward right into the open, before they could get thoroughly caught in the cross-fire from his attacking reinforcements, and made it under the porticos. Back and forth the helicopter gunship swept, its chain gun mowing down the concealed men in the bushes. Some of them might have survived the strafing, but a low black blur streaked in and the New American jet fired a missile point blank down into the refurbished Malaysian helicopter, raining fire down onto the courtyard and gardens in a sheet of death. Moerdani cackled, drawing an incredulous look from his men. "Allah is great! He uses the infidel's own weapons against them, and provides martyrdom for the faithful!" he explained. They looked at each other with raised eyebrows, and nodded in agreement.

New America's fleet couldn't stop the surviving Javanese ships from retreating, but the carrier wing did gain air superiority over the island before the land came into view, with only two lost aircraft. Hundreds of Muslim sailors spread their prayer mats on the tilting deck of the sole aircraft carrier in the Javan fleet as it slowly rolled onto its side and slipped beneath the waves. The sea burned from flaming fuel, welcoming them to Hell.

Their radioman was dead, but the transceiver on his back still worked. Timmons reached Captain Howell just in time to hear the platoon holding the prison being overran by the Caliph's reinforcements. The Captain ordered 'No Surrender' and signed

off. The other strike force had been caught by the gunship, too. They didn't answer his radio call. Corporal Timmons looked back at the winking flashes of firing from concealed positions in the courtyard. There was no way out that way. Their backs were against the front wall, and on the other side of that, was the bad guy they had come after, but couldn't quite reach. He was so close. So Harolding close. There were two guys with Timmons still mobile, and all three of them had taken hits on the way in. He sat back painfully onto the body of the radioman, and thought about his girlfriend and his mom and dad. Had Prophet Walker made a mistake? Would this have happened, if the Church had anointed a man, instead of a woman? He imagined what his memorial ceremony would be like, and who would give the speech. Probably his brother. The nerd. How many girls would cry for him? He briefly touched helmets with the Privates and told them the plan, so they could hear him over the weapons fire aimed at their general direction.

Through the second story window, the fires still burned in front of the palace, he could see. The Caliph had just received a report that the prison had been retaken, and none of the attackers had been captured alive. The officer who had radioed him claimed that the attackers were Saints. Saints! Why did those cultists get involved? In the wider battle, the New Americans had hurt him badly. It would take years to rebuild his navy and air force. But if they didn't land more troops, he would live to fight another day, praise Allah. The firing had slowed down from the front, then another explosion at the doorway triggered a final burst of shots. Venturing down the stairs, Moerdani saw the bodies of three White soldiers, just inside the door. The infidels had defiled his home, and threatened his life. But Allah was merciful, and he had survived.

Low-level flights over the prison and the Cali ph's palace filmed Javan troops sauntering around the grounds, shooting wounded Deseret troops and celebrating. The assault had failed, utterly.

Chapter Five

“I have been reading about the problems of youth. You know, with all the criticism that was levelled at von Schirach and his Hitler Jugend, it is forgotten that he did a fantastic thing with Germany's young. He kept them busy, he kept them out of trouble. In those years we did not have to concern ourselves with the worry of youths taking drugs, getting involved in crime, and sexual permissiveness. We did not have burning of national flags and draft cards. We had a healthy youth with healthy minds, all pulling together to build a nation. That is what we need today. We need to get them back on the right track.”
-Rudolph Hess

“Momma, just killed a man…put a gun against his head, pulled my trigger, now he’s dead…goodbye, everybody, I’ve got to go…”

Kelly’s personal driver didn’t bring the car around the day after the BBC carried their coverage of the failed hostage rescue attempt on Java. The fact that the Caliphate had given them an interview denying that he had ever actually had Carolyn McNabb as a prisoner, made it more of an international headline story than the Battle of Jakarta, itself. Deseret officially censored incoming satellite and internet media, as best it could, but there were always leaks. Within hours, Col. Harbin’s widow was on the air, sobbing for her lost husband. As she shrugged off Josh’s attempts to talk to her about staying home ‘until things cooled off’, she remembered how she had first gotten started down this path, with the unlicensed shortwave transceiver trap. That had been a lifetime ago.

The girls wanted to stay home from school today, because at the end of the day yesterday several of the other girls had been whispering about their mom being a ‘false prophet’. Girls could be so mean. Especially at that age. She had disconnected the phone

at midnight after the calls from the Council kept growing more heated.

“It may be, Prophet Walker, that we have reached that point, “ one of her closest supporters up until then had offered, like he was giving away candy.
“What is that supposed to mean, Thomas?” she had asked, exhausted by the casualty reports and the questions about the deeper scandal involving the assassination of Bellefont.
“Well, sometimes, Kelly” he elaborated, dropping the titular pretense entirely, “in life we burn bridges and have to know when it’s time to walk away…”
“And, has that happened, here, Thomas?”, she’d asked.
“Well, I’m not sure yet, Kelly, I just don’t know…”
“Oh, go Harold yourself,” she had replied, slamming the phone down.
This morning a small but growing group of protesters stood across the street. They were mainly war veterans and closet fundamentalists who mocked her historic moves to allow women a greater voice in public discourse by dragging three or four wives each out to hold up signs calling for her resignation. “Murderer” and “Traitor”, some of their placards declared. When no Department of Public Safety officers showed up to move them along, they became emboldened. Now they were getting louder.
On the Deseret News, no one was asking why Moerdani would have claimed to have Carolyn if he didn’t. As she stood looking out the window longing for a cigarette and wondering if her driver was even going to show, Kelly listened to the anchors interview one Bishop after another about the ‘secret alliance’ with the New American Navy, and “the shame and humiliation all Saints feel at the needless sacrifice of so many brave soldiers for no reason”.
The leaked ballistics report and its’ coverup was being treated as a second page story, even with her old Intelligence Division boss Jimmy materializing to tell the interviewer that he had known she was a corrupt traitor all along, and he had tried to tell them, but noone had listened. The sound of his gravelly voice, like a ghost from long ago, caused Kelly to turn from the window and glance

at the wallscreen. He had really gotten old. Where had the time gone? She felt her face, and the fine lines beginning there at the corners of her eyes and mouth.

Josh opened the door and yelled at the protesters to go away, but that just set off a new round of chanting. Karen hustled the girls back into their rooms, away from the noise, and pulled Josh back into the foyer by his arm. They both turned to look at Kelly. Josh took a step towards her. She turned her back to him and reconnected the phone. Immediately it began ringing again. The caller ID announced that it was the Deseret News. Smelling blood in the water, she surmised. Kelly dialed her own office number, to ask how bad the protesters were there. The phone rang four times, as programmed, and then went to voicemail. Noone answered. She tried again, with the same result. Karen was crying quietly in the hall. Her sister had never been able to hold things together under any stress, after her time in slavery.

Checking her voicemail, Kelly found one message from Hope telling her that the leaks hadn't come from her, but she hoped that the story wasn't true, and eight calls from Council members expressing their support unequivocally, then eleven later calls asking for her resignation. The eleven latter calls included all eight of the members from the previous calls offering support, as well as three more. She chuckled dryly as she listened to the first few words of each, before deleting them. Beep. Beep. Beep. She hadn't acted quickly enough to outmaneuver her political enemies.

The t.v. news feed switched over to a 'Special Report', on demands for clarification about the assassination allegations from the Republic of Texas government. Austin was recalling their ambassador today. Tensions were escalating on the border in New Mexico. Speaker Balderson vigorously denied any knowledge of the allegations during a press conference in the New American capitol. Kelly turned to Josh, softening now, with tears in her eyes. He took her in his arms silently, and kissed the top of her head. It was time to see who was still on their team.

By noon, the crowd of protesters had amassed to over a thousand, surrounding the house on all sides. A few of her loyal

guards had shown up, but they brought their families and luggage with them, as if they knew what taking her side in this would mean. Eight of the fifty members of the Council, those who had too much to lose if the Fundamentalists came back into power, stuck by her side. The other forty-two had drafted a resolution calling for her resignation and excommunication from the Church. The atmosphere in her living room felt like a wake, or a political party headquarters after a bad night, awaiting a concession speech. If that's what they wanted…

Reporters from all over the world continued calling and e-mailing her, asking for a statement. She wanted to be stubborn, but Josh led her into their room and they sat on the bed and vented, then talked about their options. He never once had asked her whether it was true or not. From a Texican born and raised, that was all the proof of his love and loyalty that she needed. It was what made the difference when he told her that they should leave.

Kelly made another call, to a New American phone number, this time. The Unified Command officer who answered was a double agent of hers. When he was faced with the choice of being exposed, or helping her rally support for her from the LDS community and churches across the border in Colorado, Andrew McDonald didn't have to think twice.

Just before dusk, as the protest outside turned into a candlelight vigil, Kelly returned a call from the Council. She curtly told them that she would resign her position and go into voluntary exile without a fight under two conditions. First, that no charges be brought against herself or any of her subordinates, now or in the future, and secondly, that any Deseret citizens who wished to join in her in exile could do so, without hindrance. In order to try to get the spiraling international situation with Texas under control, they agreed. Another two phone calls had a BBC camera crew and production team in her living room, setting up lights.

The first female Prophet of Deseret gave a live interview on BBC that went worldwide to Europe, Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and throughout North and South America, that night. In a sincere, strong voice with just the right amount of righteous indignation, Kelly denied the assassination allegation completely.

She claimed that it was a political stunt obviously designed to harm the reputation of the deceased New American Speaker. The evidence had been manufactured and was being promoted by the enemies of New America, and she considered herself to simply be collateral damage to their conspiratorial plot against New America. She insinuated complicity by the Javan Caliphate, without giving specifics.

As to the massacre of Deseret troops in Jakarta, she accepted full responsibility for that military defeat, and responded to the questions by stating that she had made the decision to attempt the rescue of the wife of the assassinated Speaker on her own, without the Council's knowledge or approval. Kelly did use the opportunity to point out that Java had claimed to have Carolyn McNabb as a prisoner, themselves, initially. She expressed her condolences to the families of the servicemen who had died in the operation, and even allowed a few tears to fall on camera, for their benefit.

After taking those two positions, she straightened and regained her authoritative posture and command voice. Because of the tensions between Deseret and the Republic of Texas over the slanderous accusations against herself and John McNabb, and because of her mistake in Jakarta, she would be resigning from public office effective immediately. She further stated that she would be surrendering her Deseret citizenship, and entering voluntary exile in the San Luis Valley of Southern Colorado. Furthermore, the Deseret government had agreed to allow any citizens who wished, to join her there, in exile.

That last part was a mere footnote to the international viewers, but had Randall Balderson's office in an uproar in St. Louis. The Speaker immediately realized that he couldn't tell her no, after Kelly had publicly exonerated New America in general and their founding Speaker in particular to a worldwide audience, and announced her move as if it were a done deal. Not without creating more problems for himself, he couldn't.

Within hours, Deseret and Republic of Texas troops stood down along the border. The Council accepted her resignation as Prophet, as well as the resignations of eight of their own

members, the next day. Balderson ordered the New American border opened for the Walker family and their party, which had snowballed to nearly three hundred persons by the time they reached Colorado. Another few hundred of the more progressive minded Mormons from Deseret, as well as from New Mexico and even from Oklahoma and Texas, joined their community there, over the next several months. Deseret fell back under the grip of the newly resurgent Fundamentalist Church of Latter Day Saints, but Kelly and Josh barely noticed. They kept their t.v turned off in their new place and didn't care.

"If the day should ever come, when you might just appear, even though you'd soon be gone, when I reached out my hands…if I could see you…."

Jack McNabb's Academy graduation ceremony was attended by more dignitaries and military officers than his dad's funeral, he noticed with some mixed feelings and pride. As he gave his Valedictory speech, ending it by saying "Class, I salute you", and giving all three sides of the audience in the gymnasium a stiff-armed Bellamy salute, some of them looked uncomfortable. They didn't know how to act towards him, since his dad had died, really. That was okay, he would teach them.

With his graduation from the Academy came an automatic commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Unified Command. For him, with his grades and test scores and performances on the combat and weapons ranges, that meant his choice of service branches. Even without his family political connections, he could choose his own path. Jack chose a two year combat infantry enlistment, to everyone's shock and dismay. His teachers tried to talk him out of it, but his mind was made up. Not even Hope could dissuade him. Gen. Harrison didn't try. He wanted some experience killing, hand to hand. Maybe he needed it. There was an old saying that no man ever really becomes a man until his father dies. Jack was still trying to get used to the idea.

The fifteen year old maintained the Warehouse as his permanent residence, although as the sole surviving heir of legal age, it had been willed to his older sister. She and Kip and their kids would be moving back to the capitol from Orange as soon as a new ambassador could be picked by Randall. It was time, and besides, that would help diffuse any further investigations into the Bellefont assassination, for the new administration. Kip had sat Hope down and told her what he had known and when, and she had accepted it. The kids were still sad about their grandma and grandpa, but happy to be moving to the big city, except for Mary, who had a boyfriend in Jo'burg.

They had mutually agreed that they would all move into the Warehouse and live in it, and his room would be kept for him alone, whenever Jack was off deployment. A simple memorial ceremony was held for Carolyn, and a marker for her erected alongside the larger obelisk for John McNabb, on the Capitol grounds of the Old Courthouse. Randall and his family, and the Cabinet members and their families, and several ambassadors and media members were there. The honor guard performed a twenty-one gun salute, then presented folded starless flags to Hope and Jack. A brief scripture reading and prayer followed, before the empty casket was lowered and covered. None of the McNabb family adults had felt much like celebrating anything when Christmastime came, so even for the children, it was a muted Holiday.

While Hope and Kip were wrapping things up in Southern Africa, Jack's first deployment was to a unit scheduled to flush some feral Latinos out of an old amusement park in central Florida. He looked forward to seeing his first wild nonWhites, as well as the ocean.

Several weeks later, his sixteenth birthday was spent on the oceanfront in Palm Bay. Somehow, it wasn't quite what he had thought it would be. Jack had inherited his father's near-sightedness, and wouldn't be eligible for corrective surgery until

his eighteenth birthday. His glasses kept getting dirty and smeared and fogged up. He waded through waist-high salt water grass behind a veteran Staff Sergeant from Emerald Coast who was more experienced in this kind of misery than he or the rest of his squad was. The eight other young men following him had come to accept him as one of themselves, despite who his father had been. That hadn't come easy, but it had come, with time together. The Sergeant was missing one ear, and told him stories about fighting hordes of black savages, a quarter century earlier, as they sloshed along. First the Sergeant, then Jack, then the Corporal, Stehl, from Pittsburgh. The seven Privates he was still getting to know. There wasn't a speck of sand or a bikini in sight. The rumor that the Cubans had an enclave in the area of the old roller coasters had turned out to be a real Mickey Mouse operation. There had only been three of them, and they were old and crippled. They had barely even bothered to run at all. And dirty? He had never seen such filth. They could hunt them down by their smell.

Finally, a mile further south, they hit an open area with some actual beach, although it was littered with driftwood and sun-bleached garbage. Corporal Stehl called for the medic, Private Gaede, to give each of them a malaria booster shot, while Sgt. Chittum showed Jack their position on the topo map tablet. The plan from division was to work their way South, then link up with the main Emerald Beach contingent coming down the Gulf side around the big lake, Okeechobee, where larger tribes of immune Latinos were camped.

This far down the peninsula, the surviving White enclaves greeted them like conquering heroes, or liberators. One night a whole town of fifty people welcomed them into their walled village and gave them a feast of seafood, fresh caught that day. That was near where Titusville used to be, so they still used that name for their fortress. Like most of the surviving White towns, it was scraping along at a nineteenth century technological level, but they looked healthy enough.

And the girls! Jack had never seen what a rock star was treated like, except for on old vids, but as the officer in charge of the squad, he had more feminine attention from the survivors than he knew what to do with, literally. He had always been treated differently, but not like this. It was amazing for an adolescent young man with limited experience, socially. Military discipline dictated that he not take advantage of his position, but several young ladies certainly tried their best to take advantage of theirs. He was the highest status male from outside their village that most of them had ever met.

Some of the Whites wanted to join the army immediately or follow along behind them as hangers-on, but except for one or two local men temporarily hired as guides, Jack felt that camp followers of any kind would result in an erosion of discipline and combat effectiveness, so he declined. Actually, his NonCom acted like a chaperone, most of the time. When the girls from communities that had been in sporadic or partial contact with New American authorities found out who their visitor was, it made his fame even greater. One Mayor compared him to King Arthur, the son of Uther Pendragon. The oldster had been an English professor, before the Balk.

The New American borders were advancing southwards, and soon the survivors in the White enclaves would be visited by doctors, engineers, mechanics, and teachers who would begin the process of reconnecting them with the world, he assured them. And to a few of the girls, he promised that he would be passing back through, himself, some day. Whether he really would or not, he liked their expressions when he said it.

Even though there was no Chaplain with them, the men kept up the practice of morning prayer before setting out each dawn for another patrol or sweep South. As their officer, Jack said grace over every shared meal. Some of the enclaves they encountered were a bit uncertain about the second nature that religious observance had assumed in the Unified Command military

culture. They had been isolated from the rest of the continent for so long, that some of them were unaware of the nationalization of Christian Identity as an unofficial state religion in the non-Mormon areas of the former U.S.. It would take some getting used to, for them.

In the day to day tactical exercises of clearing large areas of coastline and driving any immune virus survivors inland and South in front of them, Jack relied on Sgt. Chittum. The dishwater blonde teen, awkward in his last growth spurt, often stumbled at the heels of the man who had been at the Battle of the Two Bridges, like an overexuberant puppy. He learned more from the veteran every day than he had learned in combat training through the whole Academy. Like how to communicate when your ears rang from shooting, day after day. His N.C.O. helped shape the teenager into a capable junior officer, and a leader of men. By the time they got to the half-burned ruins of Port St. Lucie and the White enclave there, Jack's squad, working parallel to others in the same sweep, had bagged eleven Latinos and two blacks, and found one recently dead Asian, strangely enough. Even in Florida, he could tell that early summer had arrived. It was hotter and more humid than he had ever imagined possible, and even worse than it had been when he had gotten off the C-140 in Tallahassee.

Following the rendezvous with the other units, they held a collective debriefing, then a mission status update where the Colonel in charge of 'Operation Clean Sweep' revealed the second part of their plan. He nodded at Jack, recognizing him from his promotion ceremony at the Capitol, last year. After the roundup and liquidation of the immune nonWhites on the mainland, one pincer would continue down to Miami and reconquer it, then work their way down the Keys. A smaller contingent, after some seaborne training by Marines, would commence a naval assault on the Bahamas, assisted by the New American 3rd fleet.

After a week of R & R during which there wasn't much to do but sleep and clean their weapons and listen to Sgt. Chittum tell tall tales about what life was like when he was a kid, before the Balk, their training began.

First, there were trial introductions of the prototype M-3006 carbine, just in from St. Louis. The new rifle was a semi-automatic 30.06 based on the AR platform, with an added tri-burst feature. Jack liked the added stopping power, but it was a lot heavier and had a more significant recoil. Then, the mission specific training. The 3rd fleet Marines were relentless. How to board an amphibious landing craft. How to disembark from an amphibious landing craft. From the front. From the rear. Over the side. On the beach. In the water. Blindfolded. At night. The division of New American Unified Command Infantry, joined by three Companies of New American Legion Special Forces, numbered almost three thousand troops. Jack and the rest were put through the paces of a seaborne assault by another Company of Marines who'd gotten their boots wet from the reconquest of Myrtle Beach to the docks of Green Bay during the brief Franco-American Conflict a decade earlier. With a hundred changes of socks, they were pronounced ready enough. It was time to finish off both King Ray Ray and Rev. Clearly, once and for all.

"One day at a time, sweet Jesus, that's all I'm asking from you… just give me a chance, to do every day, what I have to do…"

The loss of New Orleans, and ninety percent of his actual congregation, had seemingly affected Rev. Joe Bob Clearly not at all. While the pleas for help from the deacons and Church of the New Dispensation officers, trapped in their basements by the radioactive rain from the lake blast, continued, he listened numbly. King Ray Ray had to take over trying to organize the defense of the city over the radio, but it was no use. He might as well be back home with Taneisha, for all the good he could do.

Once one radio broadcasting post after another went silent, the last few as New American ground troops blasted open barricaded

doors or set the buildings on fire on top of them, the Church of the New Dispensation leader became stoic. From three sides, Unified Command soldiers had swept in behind the fallout rain and the blast debris, preventing almost all of those in 'The Big Easy' from escaping, much less fighting back. For a generation, the diverse coastal city community had been taught that love and compassion and brotherhood were more important than studying warfare and violence. Most of them were unarmed, due to the strict gun control laws Clearly had ordained for the city. A few of the several thousand Church members who survived the bombs had the will to resist, but the New Americans weren't taking prisoners.

Some reports by those already at sea in the Gulf when the attack began reported that the last waterfront holdouts surrendered their positions by nightfall the fourth day after the bombings. New American armored units had followed the air strikes and deadly rain in, providing cover for infantry, block by block and building by building. Rev. Clearly locked himself in his hotel suite in Nassau to commune with the Holy Spirit. He stayed there for three days, before coming out. The preacher used up six island girls during his sequester. On day four, the sickeningly sweet smoke cleared, and Joe Bob emerged from his retreat. Looking like he needed a shower, he whined "Are you sure they went nuclear? It's all gone? All…gone?" Ray Ray just shook his head. It looked like it was all up to him now, oh sweet Jesus.

The call went out to every pirate with a radio. Come to stop the man. The man was coming to shut them all down. Ray Ray's informants had reported to him about the 3rd fleet being anchored off Boca Raton. F-22s circled his home in Freeport, several times a day. His Queen was beside herself. Any ship that got close to the fleet got sunk by their air cover. He knew it wouldn't be long, now. Like the monkey said when he got his tail cut off. "It won't be long, now." The pirate fleet grew, as the black refugees prepared for a desperate last stand. From throughout the Caribbean they arrived. Ray Ray gave them orders to swarm the landing craft as soon they came into open water, then retreat, and swarm them

again when they attempted the landing, wherever that turned out to be. Two hundred and eighteen vessels, from cabin cruisers to yachts to sports fishers to cargo and fishing ships, answered his call.

Sgt. Chittum laughed at Jack, then held the junior officer's head up as he threw up into the floor of the landing craft. He was so Harolding sick. Several others were seasick in the heavy swells, as well. There had been some whispers from the other guys, once they had recognized who their Second Lieutenant was. They had expected him to be a spoiled rich kid brat. He had proven how tough he was, and earned their respect. A little upchuck didn't change that.

They were underway and experiencing some chop from the other boats in front of and beside them. It was like being on a mechanical bull, in the old days, the Sarge yelled. None of them knew what he was talking about. Chittum shrugged and grinned. Puking again did make him feel better, though. None of his men seemed to care, or share in his embarrassment. Jack retched once more, finally clearing his head. He rinsed the taste out of his mouth with salt water from the wash. That helped. Then he cleaned his glasses. He wished he hadn't. A motley assortment of small craft had topped the southern horizon, growing larger as he watched. Corporal Stehl said The Lord's Prayer, out loud, as the big guns of their escort ships opened up like thunder.

John McNabb had allowed the Church of the New Dispensation and Ray Ray's pirate tribe to expand their control over the Gulf and influence into the Caribbean for fifteen years, because their presence choked down the Republic of Texas. The limitation of shipping repeatedly threatened foreign trade, restricting the R.O.T.'s economic growth. Even when New America had reclaimed most of what had, for a few years, been New Africa, they didn't take on the C.N.D. directly. McNabb had been content to contain them and begin recolonization through large scale agriculture throughout the SouthEastern corner of the North

American continent. St. Louis had reestablished the ports of Norfolk, Savannah, Charleston, and Wilmington on the East Coast. Soon more foreign imports from Europe came through the four reborn cities, than through the St. Lawrence Seaway which New American commerce had previously relied on. In fact, the reduction of traffic through Quebecois controlled lanes had led to the Franco-American Conflict, but a balance had been reached in recent years.

The new Speaker was already inclined to clean up the mess left in the old South, and Harrison had been pushing for years to be allowed to conquer the Caribbean. The 5th fleet patrolling the northern Pacific from Anchorage to keep the expansionist Russians honest, and the 7th fleet being stationed in Perth to defend their Australian, Kiwi, and Oranger allies, left the 3rd fleet to alternate between Pearl Harbor and Buenos Aires. The Argentines required a short leash, lately. A keel had been lain and construction begun on a new Supercarrier which would eventually be the core of a new Atlantic fleet, but so far the New Americans had avoided being expected to clean up the pirates by not having anything more than coastal defense Coast Guard cutters in the Atlantic. General Smith had played that game of realpolitik on an international level with their European allies and Texican rivals. With his influence absent from the Cabinet, and Balderson not having named a successor to fill the Secretary of State position, the Speaker had begun to move conventional forces into position encircling New Orleans. His plan had been to retake the city through siege, using the Mississippi River fleet. Those maneuvers created the perfect opportunity for the sleeper agents, primarily within the Emerald Coast stationed forces, to kick off the aerial bombardment of the city early, before the ground forces or the freshwater naval forces were in position, but Moerdani had no way of knowing that he just sped things along their pre-planned path. Neither he nor anyone but the renegade Texican pilots could have anticipated that nuclear weapons would get used, either.

In the long run, the New Orleans incident led to a dialogue between Speaker Balderson and President Hampton about further, better planned, joint exercises against Rev. Clearly. While New American troops flushed out and liquidated the Church of the New Dispensation survivors in southern Louisiana, the Republic of Texas called up their troops and began mobilizing their limited naval resources. The lone star nation sent all three of their destroyers and nine cruisers from their home ports of Galveston and Corpus Christi to sweep from West to East through the Gulf. All of the stragglers from Ray Ray's fleet which had either planned on sitting the coming conflict out, or were slow at responding, were caught in the trap and either sunk or driven back to the C.N.D. outposts at Havana and Key West. Those bases, as well as the pirate outpost at Cancun, were attacked from the sea and from the air by a combined force of Republic of Texas and Emerald Coast air force flights. By the time Jack was retching his guts out, Texican Marines were storming the beaches of Cancun as the fortified resort hotels burned. The exonerated and lionized Lt. Charles Morris wagged his wings over Isla Mujeres in exultation.

Of the thirty-six pirate ships King Ray Ray had sent against the fleet in the open water, half were blasted to bits by the long distance guns before they came within a thousand yards of the escort ships and the troop carriers. Helicopter gunships rose from the deck of the N.A.S. Vicky Weaver and finished off the rest before they came within rifle range. Jack watched the carnage and wished aloud that he had gotten a chance to use the new M-3006. Sgt. Chittum grimly reassured him that he would have a chance, soon enough. The 3rd fleet continued East, without even slowing down or turning aside for a moment.

Less than an hour later, Freeport came into sight, and the Marines directed the infantry into position on the amphibious craft as F-22s roared by to strafe the beach. Taneisha was leading the defense of the island herself. Ray Ray listened over the radio as his Queen screamed for reinforcements over the noise of nearby

artillery rounds coming in. For the thousandth time, he wished he had some air cover, some missiles, or even a proper navy to protect his woman and his home with. Instead, he didn't have a single plane. Rev. Clearly mopped sweat from his flushed forehead and walked out of the room. Ray Ray called after him, to ask where he was going, but the heavy preacher didn't answer. The former New African General, and King of the largest surviving black population left alive, had to let him go. He had other things to worry about.

The New American supercarrier air wing had seen the mass of pirate ships before they sailed and motored around the West End tip of the Grand Bahama island, and a squadron peeled off away from their coverage of the impending beach assault to engage. The new targets looked to be close to two hundred medium sized craft, and only the larger ships in front appeared to be armed. Because of the sheer numbers, though, they enveloped the Northernmost few amphibious landing craft. Small arms fire began along the flank of the assault force. As Jack, along with the rest of his squad, craned his head to see what was going on to his left, Sgt. Chittum yelled for them to direct their attention forward, towards Bahama Princess Beach. They were minutes away from hitting the sand. The standard bearer nest to him, holding the Starless Stripes, knew that he was expected to be the first one on the beach. Jack wouldn't have said it, but he didn't envy the kid.

Third fleet' s F-22s tore up the rear of the mass of pirate ships they could hit without threatening their own ships or personnel. The Vicky Weaver's guns fired just over the heads of the assault troops to their NorthEast, directly into Ray Ray's mid-ranked forces. Some of the black warriors close in had begun doing what pirates have always done, throwing grappling hooks and boarding their enemies. Hand to hand combat began between ships. Two landing craft were lost before a New American Cruiser, the Kinsman Redeemer, rammed straight through the line of attacking boats, firing from above and both sides into them. The NAS

Blooddrop destroyer followed her in, adding her big guns to the noise and smoke and fire engulfing the pirates.

When the remaining pirate ships broke and retreated far enough away from the assault ships, the air wing bombed and strafed most of them into driftwood and oil slicks. Ray Ray cursed as he listened to it all unfold. He ordered the surviving ships to Freeport, to stop the attack at the beach. He promised Taneisha that help was on its way. She cried and begged him, all at once.

Rev. Clealry pulled his 9 mm and forced his Faithful guards to start the engines of his motor yacht. He would ride out like a warrior, like a champion, to martyr himself for the Lord. They pulled away from the dock, and headed North.

Even with the losses from the attack on their flank, over 2,500 screaming young men jumped into the surf and waded ashore, while a designated marksman from every platoon stayed behind in the amphibious crafts to deliver accurate 30.06 fire into the defenders on the beach. The covering fire was effective, but more than a few New American troops fell into the water to never rise again. The former New African refugees cleared swaths of the invasion force with beach-emplaced machine gun positions. It was a screaming blur. An amphibious craft pulling up beside Jack blew up as an RPG hit the opening tailgate. The concussion knocked him down to his knees, but Sgt. Chittum was right beside him, pulling him up out of the surf and handing him his rifle. It had dangled from his singlepoint sling, but felt better in his hands. His left ear and nose were bleeding, the crimson trickling down to his collar under his Kevlar. He couldn’t hear anything from that side.

The Second Lieutenant looked around for his squad. One of the privates was laying facedown nearby, with a red halo spreading around him in the water like a grisly snow angel. The rest were helping each other up. His new glasses, replaced just before they shipped out, were spattered with spray. Corporal Stehl was dragging along a private bleeding from a scalp wound. The flag lay half floating in the surf, where it had been dropped. Poor kid.

All around them other units were moving forward into the shallower water. Jack didn't want to be left behind. Reaching down, he pulled up the flag by its solid blue edge, and raised it up out of the water. Flapping the cloth free of itself, the teen waved it above his head. Jack waded forward awkwardly, hoarsely screaming "On me! Follow me, you Harolding cowards! Let's go on vacation!"

Queen Taneisha rolled her hand, telling the last machine gun crew in their elevated position to keep firing until the incoming troops were too close for the barrel to be lowered to reach. Xanadu and East Palm Beaches to the East were being overrun. She had lost contact with Silver Point Beach, but based on the noise of firing now coming from behind her to her left, it didn't sound good. They were out of RPGs. The surviving ships were having to go all the way back around the island to come to her rescue, and it didn't look like they would be able to get there in time. Her grown kids had already retreated to the docks behind the airport, to catch a ride out when they came by. Taneisha would stay. She had already told Ray Ray goodbye, in her own way. The last black Queen waved her dwindling guards back to the road.

Most of the other units had been pinned down on the beach, or were crawling for cover. In a very self-conscious way, Jack McNabb knew that moments like this were defining. When he stepped from wet sand onto dry sand, waving the flag madly, he neither noticed nor counted the difference. Sgt. Chittum put his hand on the junior officer's back as he ducked low, preparing to guide him belly first onto the sand. Shaking his head, Jack yelled "Come On! They're falling back! "Come On!". Because of the noise of battle, only those within a few feet of his unit could hear him, but everyone on the beach watched in awe as the tall teenager ran forward a few steps hunched over, then raised up to his full height. The black defenders targeted him as they retreated, in their anger. One bullet hit the stock of his M-3006 as others spat up white sand around him. Jack was unfazed. He

waved for them all to get up, and follow him. Chittum screamed and led his squad forward. Other noncoms, not to be outdone, raced them to McNabb. Turning around to face the channel, he led them at a run across Dundee Bay Drive, over the front defensive line. The junior officer had to stop and kneel to strap the short flag pole to his backpack, so his hands could both be free.

A wiry black man in cut off shorts pointed a shotgun at him before falling back in a spray of blood from a well placed round. This far forward, the covering fire from the amphibious craft was ineffective, so that must have been one of his own guys saving him. The covering marksmen were now moving forward as reinforcements, a second wave to take Ocean Hill Boulevard on their flank. All of the defenders he passed were down. Some were still moving, but the last ranks finished them off. To his left, one dark as the night crawled down off a truck bed and tried to surrender. It didn't work. All around him, a slaughter was going on.

Taneisha formed a second line along Sunrise Highway, once Pinta Avenue was overrun. A wedge of White soldiers crashed up the gentle slope of the back nine of the Emerald golf course, using the open ground to move forward quickly where the defenders had no cover or concealment. Any time she massed enough of her people together for a counterattack, the F-22s would come in and blow them to lifeless chunks. That had happened three times, already. They were losing heart. Sheer desperation made the former Louisiana fish market girl try again. The ships should be close enough to get her kids onboard, by now. She just had to buy them a little more time. Just a little bit longer.

Sgt. Chittum crouched in the burnt out doorway of an ancient Burger King, next to a roundabout intersection, chewing his superior officer out for such a stupid, reckless, crazy, misguided act of bravery. Jack just smiled. He had never taken to the habit,

but now would be a good time to vape, he thought. His adrenaline buzz was fading, so he had to either do something else quick, or hold their position here and take a seat. Across the road, the busted out windows of the Royal Islander hotel had been boarded up with stacked palm tree logs, their waving fronds still attached, like a surreal sideways dream. From the top of the log barricade, weak return fire continued. Jack had an idea. He ordered Chittum to go with him, and the rest of the squad to stay put. They had lost Corporal Stehl in the Country Club parking lot. He had gone down in a terrifyingly brutal moment of hand to hand combat with three black women who had sprung from behind a derelict car to hack at them with machetes, as he took point. The rest of the squad finished off the women with close range 30.06 blasts, but there had been nothing they could do for the Corporal.

He had just described to a disbelieving Chittum his plan to run across the road and use the gas station to move up behind the defenders in the hotel when the front of the building dissolved in a gout of orange fire. The current generation Banshee attack helicopters were coming into play, now that they could distinguish friend from foe. Along the front, the advance slowed, then stopped. None of the commanders wanted to be a casualty of so-called ‘friendly fire’ because they got mixed up with the bad guys. In minutes, the surviving defenders had turned and ran. The New American advance were ordered to hold their positions. With the added safety margin between them, the big guns of the ship to shore artillery opened up again, augmenting the hell being unleashed by the Banshees.

Taneisha’s heart sank as she saw her front lines collapsing in front of her, but even worse was the tearing sound in the sky that meant jet engines were overpassing the island. The remaining pirate ships were being targeted, now. She didn’t know if her children were on them yet, or waiting to escape. It didn’t matter, any more. None of them were getting off this island. As her panicked royal subjects ran past her towards the other side of the town, Taneisha dropped to her knees in the dirty street and held

her arms out to them. “Where are you going? Where are you going?”, she cried. The broiling sun eased up for a moment as a shadow passed between her and it. The Queen looked up, into the blur of nothingness. The bombs fell, and so did the New Africans.

The New American carrier air wing didn’t let a single pirate ship escape. After the ship to shore bombardment and aerial bombing, a few hundred blacks staggered, concussed and deafened and bleeding, from the smoke filled rubble. “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot!”, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot!, I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe!” they cried, pitifully. Jack, like most of the young men on the island that day, had never seen so many blacks before. From a purely anthropological perspective, it was very fascinating. This was one of the largest remaining concentrations of a nearly extinct subspecies. They obviously had been reduced to a helpless and harmless remnant. Jack fished his personal tablet out of his pack, and filmed a few seconds of video of the surrendering blacks, for posterity. Carefully returning his tablet to its’ pocket, he closed the pack. Jack gave Sgt. Chittum the signal. In the moment before the rifles opened fire, he realized that all of the other unit commanders along the line had been watching him, waiting to follow his lead. What a way to end the day.

It took the rest of the week to take care of their casualties and make sure that no defenders had survived. The New American forces had lost one hundred and eighty-nine dead, and tree hundred and twenty four wounded. By their estimation, including the pirate fleet, nearly seven thousand enemy were dead. There were no enemy survivors. Ten days later, they had cleared Great and Little Abaco islands, and Spanish Wells and Eleuthera Island. The pirate outpost in Havana had surrendered to the Texicans, and Key West had been taken by storm after an aerial strike. A large motor yacht had tried to ram the N.A.S. Vicky Weaver just off of Great Harbour Cay, but no other enemies were in sight. The yacht had been sunk before it came within hailing distance, in a

silly act of suicidal impotence. While the Texicans occupied Havana, the Third fleet tightened the noose around Nassau.

Ray Ray knew that his wife, his Queen, and their children must be dead. His home was gone. Nassau was in chaos, as everyone with a boat tried to flee before the expected bombardment or troop landing occurred. The few Church of the New Dispensation Faithful left had held a quick meeting and declared Rev. Clearly their second Saint, after Rev. Ike Huckleberry. Now they were stuck in a pointless debate over who should take over the congregation. As if it mattered. They were useless as feathers on a fish. Ray Ray considered trying to get down to Jamaica, and make a new start there. He just didn't know how he would even try, though. He told his guards to get out while they could, and he didn't have to tell them twice. In the end, he dithered around and got stoned and was still sitting on the couch watching old Chris Rock videos when the offshore bombardment began.

By the end of the month, Speaker Balderson and President Hampton had held a historic meeting in Texarkana, at the border between the two countries of New America and the Republic of Texas. Scott couldn't help but think of another meeting he had, so long ago, in this place, with Randall's predecessor. That was something the world could never know about, but he would never forget. The two leaders and their advisors and generals mutually agreed that Cancun and Cuba would go to Texas, and the Bahamas would go to New America. While the historic document was being signed, Jack was sitting on a beach in Florida, telling a young nurse war stories and showing off his new combat service medal and medal of valor.

"The men have been given twenty four hours, First Lieutenant." Sgt. Chittum said, grinning, as he gave a sketchy half salute from the second story balcony above. A barbecue smoked beside him. Jack knew better than to ask where it, or the meat on it, had come from.

“As you were, Staff Sergeant.” Jack called out, before returning his attention to the starstruck girl. He had lost his glasses again, but she looked better without them. “As you were.”

Chapter Six

“I have a dream that we can have one day, once again, a beautiful land. I have a dream that we can have a land of our own kind, in which the enemies of our people will cease to exist within our borders. I have a dream that one day, White people will be proud of themselves once again. When one day the value of race will be universally recognized, as it must be. When one day, it will be taught to keep your race pure, to ennoble and advance your race is the highest good in this world. I have dream that this current order will fall upon itself in misery, and the enemies of our people will be legally tried and convicted for their crimes. Those white people who have betrayed the interests of White people will be tried for treason, legally, through the process but will pay for their crimes. I have a dream in which the White House will one day become White once again, and not beige, and not black, and not putrid-colored green. I have a dream that we can have a land that we are proud of once again and not simply have platitudes to the American flag without having any kind of real basis behind it worthy of pride. I have a dream that one day, once again, we can be safe and secure in our homes, when one day our home will be our castle, once again, and nobody would ever dare even think about entering our home, to deprive us of what is rightfully ours.”
-Matt Hale

“Oblah di, Oblah dah, life goes on, ah, la-la-lalah, life goes on…”

Many of the European dignitaries present at the Continental trade summit normally wouldn’t speak to one another. They were in the same room in Berlin on the same day to discuss how the new loosening of exports from and imports to the Republic of Texas might affect them individually, and collectively. After coffee from the Argentine protectorates, the German Chancellor spoke first, making her point.

“I trust that we all enjoyed our New World beverages. Now, let’s talk about what Texas and its territories can give us, and what we can give them.” Gerta wanted them all to understand from the start that Greater Germany would promote increased trade with its’ Texican ally.

The Czar’s liver -spotted representative sighed heavily, stirring more sugar into his cup. “Russia is concerned that a flood of Texas oil will chop the legs out from under not just our petroleum industry, but others as well.” He gave a raised eyebrow at the British trade delegate, whose country counted their North Sea crude among their top exports. Most of the other nations represented: France, Greece, Ireland, Scotland, Portugal, Catalonia, Northern Italy, and lesser powers, were there as a diplomatic nicety. The three major players with an interest in Texican exports were England, the Russian Empire, and Greater Germany. Other European nations would only be customers, representing percentages of market share for the petroleum producers.

“It is true that those of us who are less politically motivated by existing alliances are more openminded about the potential negative effects of this new development.” The younger British man mentioned. “Perhaps it is time for a fresh outlook.”

“If you think that my age or my party’s long -standing association with the Republic of Texas makes this conference illegitimate, you may feel free to leave now, and just let your Russian friend speak for you.” Gerta seethed.

Raising his hand to forestall an argument, the French Premier’s man broke in. “If I may, we do not import oil so much as refine it from the our own North African possessions, of course. We, and our colonial territories there and in North America, consume most of what we produce. Yes, we may sell a bit of surplus here and there, to some of you, as one neighbor to another, but we never have been, or want to be, as prolific an oil exporting nation as

Russia, or as dependent on it as England." He gave a Gallic smirk at both of them. "This give us some objectivity, oui?"

The others waited for him to continue. With calls from even within the governing NPD increasing for her step down due to her age, Gerta was still stinging from the British implication that she was too old to govern, and stared icily at man from across the table. The Golden Dawn representative spoke up.

"With our facilities in Syria and Iraq, we are in a similar position, also," the darker - complexioned woman added. "We produce enough for ourselves, and little more."
"So," the Frenchman from the Front Nationale's home office resumed, "We have Greater Germany on one side, whose interests are for free trade with Texas in order to recoup their investment there, and expand that partnership, and oil exporting nations such as England and Russia on the other, whose interests are in maintaining a tighter market. And in the middle, the rest of the world."
"Perhaps a solution can be found by determining what we have, that the wild cowboys need." the clipped Oxford accent of the British gentleman, Runplen, intoned. "Supply and demand and all that, what?"
Gerta nodded in acknowledgement of this small succession. "Texas needs advanced technology, specifically electronics, metallurgical, and industrial production refinements. They need help with their space program, as well as their nuclear program, as we all know. Having an unsafe nuclear arsenal is more dangerous than not having one at all. We must acknowledge that they have one, and deal with that reality."
Runplen made the first offer: "We could perhaps ease their manufacturing problems, in exchange for certain assurances." He and the Russian diplomat exchanged nods.
"So, we offer to help them with their space program, and in exchange they pledge to market their petroleum outside of Europe?" the Czar's right hand asked, hopefully.
After a few minutes more of negotiation, a rough agreement had

been reached. It was one that Gerta would have to bully Hampton into accepting, but she felt sure that she could convince him to redirect his petroleum exports to South America, Australia, New Zealand, and Southern Africa, in exchange for an influx of technological assistance from Russia and England. During this time, the French and Greek representatives had been in quiet consultation.
“We also have, in addition to negotiating territorial claims in near-Earth orbit and space, another problem which does not have an economic solution”, the diplomat from Paris mentioned. “The problem with Java.”

“a tisket, a tasket, a green and yellow basket, I wrote a letter to my love, and on the way, I lost it…”

The Boers who made up the core of the Orange Free State and its’ territorial possessions south of the Sahara were a hard-bitten, Calvinist driven lot. The Dutch Reformed Church had never allowed much leeway for an influx of either the Christian Identity theology prevalent in New America, or the Mormonism of Deseret. A few of the Afrikaaners practiced polygamy, just as some New Americans did, but for the most part, the L.D.S. missionaries were just tolerated as guests. Because of a generation of little brother dependency on St. Louis, the attitude towards C.I. was more open, but it was still viewed as a bit out there by the older Orangers. Hope and her children, though, had always been welcomed warmly, and not just because of their diplomatic status. They had made many friends in Jo’burg, and Mary almost stayed behind to be with a Boer young man she was in teenaged love with. There was a small changing of the guard ceremony as the new ambassador and his wife took over the embassy and were introduced to the staff. After showing them around and making the transition with the Orange government agencies he would be working with, Kip and Hope and the kids said their goodbyes. They would all miss the dark continent, which had become so much lighter.

After two weeks of travelling by ship so they could haul all of their household belongings with them, they arrived in San Francisco, and from there rode the rails East. The stops along the way in Perth, Darwin, and Oahu had been a thrill for Hess, who loved adventure and new places. Finally, they arrived in the Capitol once more, and began settling into the Warehouse. Kip, after an in-depth discussion with Speaker Balderson, was nominated as the new Secretary of State, to deal with international relations. The New American Congress unanimously approved the nomination. Any concerns about further inquiries into the alleged Bellefont assassination plot seemed to have evaporated. Kip was soon talking to the fragmented Council in Salt Lake about their border security issues.

There were so many people in the largest city on the continent, and so much to see and do! The school system was more advanced than they were used to, but the kids were determined to study hard and catch up. Hess, for his part, wanted to follow in the footsteps of his cousin Jack, and enter the Academy. Hope was reluctant at first, then relented when Kip sided with Hess. Despite his academic disadvantage, Hess's family connection got him in. The other kids made friends, and Hope soon found that her father's old friends had not forgotten her, either. Their family began to become something of a New American nobility, once again.

"People try to put us d -down (Talkin' 'bout my generation) Just because we g-g-get around (Talkin' 'bout my generation) Things they do look awful c-c-cold (Talkin' 'bout my generation) Yeah, I hope I die before I get old (Talkin' 'bout my generation)…"

The Walker residence was a rambling three bedroom farmhouse on the edge of a cluster of homes being built by the growing Reformed Latter Day Saints community in their corner of SouthWestern Colorado. Along with the houses had sprung up a tabernacle, school, general store, and café, as well as a volunteer fire department. All of this, in typical Mormon fashion, so they

could be as independent as possible from the gentile population down the road in Alamosa. As the population closed in on two thousand residents, Kelly was disappointed not to be the obvious choice for Mayor. After all, it was because of her that all of these people were there, in the first place, she reasoned.

Josh tried to keep her busy and occupied, and help her avoid the inconvenient truth. Left to their own devices, even the more progressive Mormons who saw polygamy as an alternative lifestyle they personally eschewed were not comfortable with a female leader. Not dictatorially as a Prophet, or as a Chief Executive, or as Mayor, either. Kelly had been vocal against the first suggestions that they elect a male leader, as soon as one was nominated. Especially since they were nominated as a male leader, rather than simply as an alternative candidate. Not that Jed Smith was a bad guy. He was a decent, honest sort. And, among their religion, his last name alone would normally carry enough weight to swing an election. She just didn't like it being made that obvious that they didn't want her, or any woman, in charge.

To counter the move, she had nominated Josh, who hadn't really wanted to be nominated for Mayor or Bishop or anything else, but before he could figure out how to decline the nomination without causing a domestic dispute, the non-Deseret immigrants into their community had declined him. Apparently they weren't comfortable with a convert holding public office…or the spouse of a former office holder.

That was why, this morning, Kelly was angrily cleaning the house and yelling at the girls to straighten their rooms and finish their chores outside. Julia was old enough to respond rebelliously to that kind of ultimatum, she had that much of her mother in her. Abby was still more reserved, and seethed quietly. Josh decided that he would spend the better part of the day checking on the cattle, and the fences, and the watering troughs, and counting the leaves on the sparse trees, himself.

He understood that for someone like Kelly who had worked so hard and for so long to get to the top, being told that she couldn't stay there because she was a woman was an insult she couldn't bear. The husband side of him wanted to defend her, right or wrong. The rational, political side of him understood, however, that among conservative people, even the most open minded wouldn't accept a female leader, if it were left up to them. If it were forced on them, half or more of them would walk away, and go somewhere else.

The system worked differently in Germany, where Gerta was Chancellor only because she was the seasoned voice of the NPD advisory council in the parliament. She was safe because she was merely a spokesperson. In the early years of her ascendancy, Gerta had nearly been removed from authority by the NPD when her natural feminine compassion almost led to her forgiving two key party members who had been disloyal, and asked for forgiveness. After that, she had learned only to reflect the will of the Party.

Here, and especially among Saints, the natural inclination was towards a much more conservative base, one which would have been alienated by a female leader. They had been when she was the Prophet, even. Now, with that temporary and forced situation over, a male leader was desired…as a clean break from the scandals and accusations, if nothing else. They wanted to grow their potatoes and lettuce and wheat in peace. The fact that the San Luis Valley was within the borders of New America made a difference, too. Most of the trade from Alamosa, Monte Verde, and Center was with Pueblo and northern Colorado, not Deseret. That made it easier to not be fundamentalist, and harder to not want to put their pasts behind them, at least so far as their most recent pasts were concerned.

Half the families either were into the cattle business, or wanted to be. As a former Texican, they expected Josh to know one end of a steer from the other. In reality, he was a lot better at helping

them work out water rights with their neighbors, than branding heifers. He hoped that once she found her niche, Kelly would be content again, too. It was a hard pill for her to swallow, but the truth was, life was too hard out here for the refinement and luxury of feminine leadership. There was just no room for the kind of error in judgement which an emotional reaction might cause. He got that. Their girls would grow up to be schoolteachers or wives, hopefully first wives, or even merchants, but not politicians. That was fine by Josh. To his way of thinking, the destruction of traditional gender roles had done as much damage to pre-Balk society as anything else. He was glad to be shut of it.

It was going to be a different world that the girls would grow up in, and probably a healthier, saner, less dramatic one, once things were through settling out. Julia was close to marrying age, by LDS standards, and had never dated. It was amazing to him to think that they had never endured government-school taught sex ed classes, or diversity education, or anti-bullying seminars. They could ride a horse and drive cattle already, and by this fall, they would be able to help with the roundup of the church's community herd. Kelly would, too, once she got over sulking.

The one person who had really surprised him was Karen. She was out in the garden every day at dawn, then feeding and doctoring the sick animals they had up in the coral behind the barn. She seemed to have a real knack for farm life. Already, a couple of the gentlemen ranchers who had moved in from LDS areas of Oklahoma had come around courting her as a solid second or third wife candidate. Of course, their negotiations would be with him, not with her, but he wouldn't make any choice for her that she couldn't live with. He loved his wife too much to do that to her sister. Besides, as the head of the household, it was his responsibility.

In the next few days he had to go over to Trinidad to pick up a flatbed truck load of solar cells for the farm. He had been thinking about taking the girls, so they could go shopping, but maybe it

would be a better idea if he and Kelly went, instead. He ruminated on the idea while he watched a neighbor hand-crank open a sluice to fill his cistern. The neighbor waved, and Josh returned the friendly gesture. Folks around here were friendly enough to the Walkers, even those who weren't necessarily their supporters. They just didn't want a woman in charge. Well, it would be a day's trip each way, so that's what he would do. She'd like the theater, he'd take her to see a show, and they could spend some time in a town where folks didn't all know them. That would be nice. He decided he'd head home and tell her. Maybe that would bring back the smile for a moment that he'd been missing.

When Josh rode back up to the gate, he noticed a strange horse tied up out front. The JS brand on the buckskin surprised him even more. He dusted himself off to be presentable before casually walking up to the porch, where Kelly was entertaining Jed Smith, in open and public view and with Karen as a chaperone as was proper for a good Mormon woman to do with a visiting male. She heard his boots on the steps, and turned to smile at him, with that old politicking gleam in her eyes.

"Why Josh, look who stopped by to visit! It's Brother Smith. We were discussing what we might be able to do to support his campaign for Mayor. He also came to ask you about seeing Karen."

Josh swallowed his smirk and shook hands with the man who stood, hat in hand, to ask for their endorsement, on two separate matters. Some things never changed. They just kept going full circle.
"You shake my nerves and you rattle my brain, too much love drives a man insane. You broke my will, but what a thrill. Goodness gracious, great balls of fire."

The Caliphate's surviving navy regrouped in the Javan Sea, careful to keep the island between themselves and the New American and Australian fleet. As the days passed and the attack wasn't pressed, or followed up by a larger land invasion, they

listened to the news of the New American and Texican conquests of the pirate strongholds in the Caribbean with relief. The Caliph licked his wounds, and ordered his servants to speed up the refurbishment and replacement of ships. He wanted to be ready, the next time the Allied fleet came.

The Imperial Russian Navy, consolidating their holds on Busan, Yokohama, and Osaka, began patrolling the East China Sea more aggressively. The Czar's mobile infantry found it slow going in East-Central China, where a generation after the Turkish Flu there were tribes of Han several thousand strong in the fertile river valleys. The Russian field officers decided to engage them, rather than leapfrog their settlements. In essence, this loosened the pressure on Moerdani from the North. It was simply a question of manpower and geographic area. The Russians were too far away to matter to the Caliph. While his navy scavenged the Philippines and Vietnam and Malaysia for salvageable ships, the former doctor turned Muslim dictator drafted every healthy male between the ages of fifteen and fifty into an army that he believed could consume any number of invaders. He was not willing to die like the stupid black pirates had died. Allah would preserve him.

Around the globe, Gen. Matt Ball studied the map again. He and Tommy Bullens had earlier been calculating the risks of fallout to northern Australia if they just stood back and nuked Java down to the water level. Now he traced the prevailing wind current chart overlain with the topographical map. Tommy followed along, making checks wherever there were dips in the highlands that the wind currents slipped through.

"Here, East of this ridge, a strong wind could carry contaminants inland, through this valley." He indicated the gap to Tommy.
"So, that's an area for potential temporary evacuation," the intelligence division chief noted.
"And for those who won't relocate voluntarily, we'll have to hold back the manpower to enforce a mandatory quarantine, just in

case of a worst case scenario.” Matt said.
“I know.” Bullens replied. “Better to be safe, than sorry. Balderson won’t like us forcing this on the Australians, though.”
“I’d like them all turning Muslim even less.” the Speaker spoke, from behind them. Neither had heard him enter the strategy room of the Old Capitol. “If it’s the best way, it’s the best way. What’s good for the race is good, right?” They both grinned at Randall quoting McNabb. That about cinched it.
Based on their interrogations of Ray Ray and some of the Church of the New Dispensation Faithful who had been captured when they occupied Nassau, the pirates hadn’t been working with the Caliph, or for him. They had just been doing their own independent thing. If they had been tied up with the Javanese, they might have fought harder, at the beach. They probably would have made the New Americans pay for every foot of sand they took. Definitely, they wouldn’t have gotten drunk or stoned and passed out, or surrendered.
What that indicated was that a seaborne invasion of Java, with its’ mobilized population of over a hundred million, would be a bloodbath. Even using conventional bombing runs and bombardments for days or weeks, the projected troop loss on the Allied side would be astronomical. Upwards of a million casualties, a number that they could not afford…and that Moerdani was not worth, really.
One plan in play was the idea of using the orbital habitat platforms to divert one or more than one asteroid or other large space rock into the atmosphere at a trajectory which would inundate Java with a massive tsunami. There were over eight hundred people living on the New American Lunar colony, now, along with nearly as many on the Russian habitat, even if they were in much more confining quarters. The Greater German habitat had half as many people, but greater technical sophistication, so they were better equipped to handle such an ambitious project. The British habitat was stalling discussion of the project because they didn’t want to reveal how limited their resources were. All in all, the diplomatic back and forth between the habitats and the lunar colony and St. Louis made for an

interesting political circus. Interesting enough, at least, to camouflage the true plan, exactly as Tommy had designed. This would take, in its' own way, greater planning and coordination than any science-fiction like asteroid strike. It just might work, though, if everybody did their part.
Speaker Balderson reached across Matt, to press the intercom button on the edge of the desk. "Jenny, ring up Attorney General Roberts, and ask him to bring up those legislation drafts authorizing biological warfare measures, please."
"Yes, Sir, Mr. Speaker, right away, Sir." There was a brief pause as she rang Jason's office. "And Dr. Edwards, too, Sir?"
The three men shook their heads at the eavesdropping secretary. "Yes, Jenny, call up Tina, too. Tell her we're going to find out if she's smarter than the average Moerdani."

"The path that I have chosen now has led m e to a wall, and with each passing day I feel a little more like something dear was lost. It rises now before me, a dark and silent barrier between all I am, and all I would ever want to be."

A week full of days on the beach and evenings with the nurse had helped the newly promoted First Lieutenant's bruises heal, inside and out. Sgt. Chittum crawled inside a bottle of tequila, or a succession of bottles, donated by their new Republic of Texas allies, and left Jack without any parental role models or guardians for the last three days of their R & R in Florida. The junior officer and his candy striper stayed out too late skinnydipping in the ocean, his last night there. Somehow, he lost his glasses on the beach. It almost got him arrested, but one of the M.P.'s recognized Jack from his dad's funeral a few months before, and didn't write him up for a curfew violation. His head still buzzed the next morning when the Captain had sent word that they were to pick up replacement newbies at the Company HQ.

Along with the five of them who had survived the battle of Freeport, they had a dozen new privates straight from the Unified Command's basic training course to herd along. Fortunately, their

new assignment was a learn-as-you-go cakewalk clearing out Paradise Island in Nassau, after the surrender of the pirates there. One wave of Marines had already been through, and picked up or put down anything still moving. Their mission was just to make sure, and to declare it ready for salvage and re-colonization.

The boat ride out was a lot smoother and more enjoyable than his first experience. They had the chance to watch dolphins play and sharks cruise, in the near distance. Jack even saw a whale flip up and wag its' tail at them as the troop carriers veered too near their pod. He wished he had his glasses, for that, so he could see them better. It made him think of stories his mom used to read to him, about giant sea creatures, kraaken, attacking the ships of his Viking ancestors, long ago. About Thor wrestling with the world-serpent. About his desire to kill, personally, those who had killed his parents, and if he couldn't find the ones who had personally done it, to start at the top with the man who had ordered their deaths, and work his way down.

Their landing on the beach was a lot less dramatic this time, too. Jack found it easier to wade ashore without bullets and RPGs coming at him. The stench of rotting corpses clung to everything permeable on the former resort paradise. Years, decades, of death and decay, the copper smell of fear and the iron smell of blood , could not be sprayed off with all of the high pressure hoses and sea water the fleet could pump. Twenty years of black habitation had rendered it uninhabitable. After the three companies of New American infantry spent two days clearing Paradise Island, the salvage teams moved in behind them and stripped the buildings of any usable mechanical equipment or supplies. There was surprisingly little worth saving.

On day three Jack led his platoon across the Atlantis Bridge into Nassau itself. Other teams were filtering through the city, collecting the few survivors who hadn't surrendered, flushing out some lone wolf resistors, and making a list of the resources

available for salvage. Their first stop was Princess Margaret Hospital, where the high value prisoners were being held after their interrogations. They were to make an assessment of the medical supplies, including portable oxygen tanks specifically, for some reason, left at the facility. Sgt. Chittum had no idea why they had been given the list they had been given, but then neither did any of the noncoms with the other platoons on the island, either.

It was obvious from the cloying smell and the smear of black smoke above the roof of the hospital that the crematory ovens in the basement were still operating at full speed. Jack didn't know if they were disposing of the blacks and Church members who had surrendered, or those who hadn't, and he didn't really care, either way. On the way over a lance corporal returning for his second rotation in Nassau had told them that all but the V.I.P.'s had been motored out a few miles and made to walk the plank. His Sergeant has told him to shut up spreading rumors, because everybody knew they had refused to jump in the water and the navy had left them adrift in barges and sunk them from a thousand yards off. He claimed to have seen the sharks in a feeding frenzy days later at the same spot, but who knew what to believe?

One of the Church of the New Dispensation's doctors, an Asian, was allowed to walk free under guard, to show them where the medical supplies on their list were stored. They first secured the narcotics and opiates, then the antibiotics. As they were led to the second story closet where the manual forklifts for the heavy oxygen tanks were stored, they passed an armed guard blocking the entrance to a secured wing of patent rooms. Jack nodded his head towards the doors and raised his eyebrows at Sgt. Chittum, who shrugged.

"So, Dr. Chen, is it?" The oriental nodded, wearily. "Dr. Chen, what's behind door number two?" Sgt. Chittum asked the exhausted physician.

“That’s where your people keep the prisoners. The ones they haven’t murdered already,” he mumbled.
“Oh yeah? Like, which ones?” Jack queried. “Anybody famous? Rev. Clearly himself?”
“No. The blessed Reverend martyred himself striking a blow against racism and bigotry. He has gone to stand at the right hand of Jesus until the son of God returns to destroy your hateful rule and cast you into the lake of fire where you can all fry with that heretic bastard McNabb.”
Sgt. Chittum glanced sideways towards his Lieutenant at the barb towards Jack’s dad, but the teen was smiling wolfishly. “So, nobody important, then?”
Dr. Chen sniffed. “King Ray Ray, the liberator of his people, a better man than any of you, is in there. He shares the wing with some of the most righteous of the Faithful. Until he is taken into God’s arms.”
“Oh.” Jack said. They continued to walk along the hall until they came to the locked closet.
“I don’t have a key to this. It’s kept at the nurse’s station.” Chen said, with a smart- aleck tone.
“Then why did you waste our time walking all the way down here?” Chittum growled, angrily.
The doctor shrugged. “The little things are all that I can do, any more, against you racist Nazis.” He laughed nervously.
Jack turned to one of his new recruits. He was squinting, getting used to going without his glasses. “Private, this man is an anti-White. Shoot him.”
The red haired youth licked his lips nervously, looked at the Sgt., who nodded, then raised his M3006 on its’ single point sling and leveled it at the doctor. Chen began to back up, a look of horror distorting his Mongoloid facial features, as he raised his hands. The blast slammed him back into the wall, which was smeared red when he slid down it, mewling like a kitten. The Private shot him again, finishing the job.
“Man, that was loud!” Jack said, his ears ringing. “We have to get some suppressors for those things, for indoor use, at least. Okay, Private, the next time I give you an order, you don’t hesitate. You

don’t look at the Sgt., or at your mom, or to Jesus himself for confirmation of the order, you follow the order, without hesitation. Is that clear?”
“Sir, Yes, Sir.” the designated shooter responded.
“Alright, then, just for that, double-time back to the nurse’s station and get those keys to the closet door. Then bring them back, triple time,” the First Lieutenant ordered.
“Sir, Yes, Sir,” the Private barked back, before giving a smart salute and turning to run back in the direction from which they had come.
Jack watched him retreat for a second, shaking his head in disgust. Then he turned to his noncom. “Sgt. Chittum, when the Private gets back, have him do five hundred pushups here in the blood on the floor while the rest of the newbies get the lifts out and take them to get the oxygen tanks loaded up.”
“Very good, Sir?” Chittum looked at him, questioningly.
“I’m headed to find a bathroom, Sgt.. Don’t wait for me, I’ll catch up.”
The M.P. at the door to the secured wing started to say something when the new Lieutenant walked towards him without hesitating. He took a half step forward.
“Did you hear those shots just now?” the junior officer asked.
“Yes, Sir, I did. What’s going on?” the guard replied.
“Looks like that Chink doctor wasn’t quite as surrendered as he acted. He tried to grab a soldier’s weapon.”
“He did!?!” the guard gaped, incredulously.
“Yeah, better look alive, there might be more of them trying something. I’ll go check on the prisoners, stay alert!”
“Yes, Sir,” the nervous M.P. stuttered, looking around wildly as Jack walked through the doors.
Ray Ray was strapped to the rails of his hospital bed. The sedation was wearing off, and the pain from his interrogation was returning again. There had been shots nearby. He had heard them. His fingers and toes ached where the nails had been removed, and his eyes, or the holes where his eyes had been, burned like fire.
After the voices, he heard someone moving from room to room,

spending a few moments in each. Once or twice he heard some thrashing, and a muted cry for help that was quickly silenced. Ray Ray was no fool. He knew what was coming for him. With Taneisha gone, he didn't care any more. They could have found out everything they had wanted to know just by asking, but they had fixed him, for sure. Just because they could. Even after he had spilled his guts.

When he was blinded, he first thought it was the end, but they kept going. They had taken his manhood, where only a bloody bandage covered his lap, now. He didn't know much of what had happened, after that. Ray Ray wished he had died fighting. Instead he had lit up and gotten so stoned they had taken him without a struggle. He would have been embarrassed, except that he was too tired and weak to care.

He heard the door to his room open, and tried to sit up. "Who's there?" he asked. "Who are you?"

"How original," a surprisingly young voice came from just beside his head. "The last four of you asked me the same question. I guess everybody wants to know the name of the man who kills them."

Ray Ray jerked at how close the voice was. "I reckon so. Who da Harold are you?"

"I'm the son of John McNabb. And based on your chart, you're the great General Ray Ray," Jack informed the prostrate black man.

"Whu? I don't believe you. That can't be so." Ray Ray whined as he shook his head from side to side.

The teenaged officer brought his hand up, allowing the antique fighting knife he gripped to drip blood over the former New African military leader. He held Ray Ray's head still with his left hand while he stabbed down into his throat with his right, over and over again. It got less messy each time.

There were three more rooms to visit before he rejoined his platoon, downstairs. He nodded at the guard authoritatively as he walked by. They were just getting the last of the oxygen tanks strapped on and looked annoyed that he had shirked the heavy lifting.

"Just in time?" Sgt. Chittum asked, grinning at him.

“Hey, it’s an officer’s prerogative.” Jack smiled. “I get to take it easy and let other folks do the hard work.”
They were clearing the airport for salvage the next day when a Captain and squad of M.P.s rolled up and took the Lieutenant aside to ask him what had happened at the hospital. He told them that just before trying to grab one of his men’s guns, the Asian doctor had said that he wanted to make sure that all of the prisoners in the hospital were free. That’s why he had went into the secure wing to check on things, but all of the room doors had been closed and he hadn’t heard or seen anything suspicious, so he assumed that everything was alright. “Why, did something happen after we left?” he asked them, looking them straight in the eye.
The Captain of the military police, an officer with a nametag that read ‘Shoop’, looked at Jack, then at his Corporal, then back at Jack. He gave him a very perceptible nod. “Your father was a great man, Lieutenant. I served with him a long time ago, when I was just about your age, in Peoria. He saved my life, more than once. My condolences.”
“Thank you, Captain, Sir. The only thing that lives forever, is the fame of a dead man’s deeds, he used to say.”
“Well, then, I think he’ll be around for a long, long time. Kind of like that fighting knife of his, I see you still have,” the Captain pointed out, looking at the hilt of the blade Jack carried horizontally along his left kidney.
Jack tapped the handle of the knife and smiled. “I remember him, too, Captain Shoop, and just like him, I always remember who my friends are.”
The Captain smiled back. “You do that, Lt. McNabb.”. With a nod of his head and a wave to his men, they were back in their Humvee and gone.
His men all looked at him when he rejoined them. “What was that all about?” Sgt. Chittum asked him.
“Oh, just an old friend of my dad’s, who wanted to pay his respects,” Jack replied.
It was another two weeks before the island was declared fit for re-colonization. The plan was for the Bahamas to be a trade and

naval hub for New America’s southern flank. The men who had served there would never think of it as a vacation spot.

Chapter Seven

"If Satan himself, with all of his super-human genius and diabolical ingenuity at his command, had tried to create a permanent disintegration and force for the destruction of the nations, he could have done no better than to invent the Jews."
-Willis Carto

“There are places I remember all my life, though some have changed. Some forever, not for better, some have gone and some remain.”

It would be years until New Orleans could be reopened as a port to bring goods up and down the Mississippi. Half the city, the most important part for shipping, was a blasted, irradiated mess. That would keep the eggheads in St. Louis bottled up and directed to the East Coast, away from his Gulf. Scott Hampton felt like giving the renegade pilots who’d nuked it a medal, but instead he had just given them a pardon and their wings back.

The President of the Republic of Texas was determined to use the time he had as an open window of opportunity. The European Coalition had agreed to leave him unfettered trade in the rest of the world, if he kept his oil out of their domestic markets. That was good enough for him. His new good buddies in the Unified Command were mopping up things in the Caribbean for him, taking care of his long-standing pirate problem. He even had gotten Cuba and the viable Mexican ports out of the deal. Of course, the Germans were already making noise about wanting to send in salvage teams to Guantanamo Bay, to further their ‘partnership’ by looting the old U.S. base there. Scott didn’t care. He had gotten what he wanted.

The British were going to help him expand and modernize ‘The Eyes of Texas’ orbital platform, and he was going to help them get more resources to theirs, in exchange. Texican raw materials in

trade for English and German engineering. A fair trade, all around.

The exodus of a few hundred of his Mormon citizens from New Mexico and Oklahoma, mainly, had actually allowed him to nationalize their ranches and farms and give them like feudal rewards to his most loyal officers. He didn't think the cultists would turn into much of a problem for him, there in Colorado, across the line. Kelly and her Reformed L.D.S. would be more of a headache for old Randall Balderson, than himself, Hampton calculated. The Fundamentalist bent of the new regime in Salt Lake would make Deseret look inwards instead of outwards for quite a spell, too, giving him a rest out West. Texican Mounted Infantry Units were once again riding the fences right at the old New Mexico line, looking for weakness in their neighbors.

Scott found that if he kept busy enough, his mind didn't dwell on his wife. He stayed around people, to ease the pain, but she was always there in his mind, haunting every solitary moment. At his age, even though a man of his position always could, he had no desire to remarry, or even get involved with another woman. He just had his regrets. Her kids wouldn't speak to him, not even at the funeral. Well, he understood, they had just found out that their biological dad had actually been involved in some kind of conspiracy-driven assassination, in all likelihood. For all they knew, he might have been involved, too. And now their mom had killed herself, a sad and lonely death. As far as Scott was concerned, they had as much to feel guilty about as he did, though.

Over the years, he had played King Herod, and tried to eliminate any who might have been his successor, or too ambitious, or too capable. If any followed after him who did a better job than he had, everyone would forget him, wouldn't they? He couldn't have that. So it was that Scott Hampton's management style had evolved into dividing his underlings against each other, and plotting them to take sides in Byzantine, internecine court

rivalries. By keeping them weak, he had remained strong…or so he thought. When he looked around and tried to find someone better than a petty bureaucrat or sycophant, there were none to be seen. And now that he was old, and thinking of the future of Texas, for once, there were few up and coming that he might trust to hand the reins to, some day. That realization was impetus to begin assessing who in his court and administration were just suck-ups, and get rid of them.

Whether it was the drive to keep himself busy and avoid thoughts of his deceased love, or consciousness of his own advanced age and looming mortality, the former Air Force General did more for his nation in the first months after he became a widower, than he had in the previous decade. It would have been easier, if he hadn't painted himself into a corner, and governed alone.

Salvage teams sent out from Austin scoured Cancun and Havana, followed by engineers who restored public services, and colonists who established the beginnings of Texican communities in both cities. Texas Rangers probed throughout Cuba, locating and eliminating the scattered survivors, and blazing trails for new pioneers and settlers to come. The Republic of Texas Navy became the dominant martial force in the Gulf of Mexico, leaving the Caribbean and Atlantic to the New American fleet. With German aid, their power grid and rail structure began upgrades, too. And then, the tankers full of petroleum flowed outwards once again, to Texican territorial possessions first, and then to the Argentine sphere in South America.

President Hampton knew that he had to rebuild a coterie of advisors and administrators, from the ground up. A few men, such as his Commander of the Texas Rangers, Brad Nelson, stood out as leaders whose advice he could trust. He began grooming others to take charge of their departments, for the good of the Republic. Scott Hampton stepped up from his role as President for Life of Texas, and became something more…he became a statesman. Perry Bellefont, at last, would have been proud. Of his

wife, at least, if not his successor.
“Whistle sister, whistle, and you shall have a goat. I can’t whistle, brother, because it hurts my throat…”

He had thought, when he was a kid, that East Texas summers were hot and humid. They were nothing compared to Lenin Park. The green area around a lake just south of Havana was the last refuge of the black pirates they had flushed out of the city, and it was miserable going for the Texas Rangers. One thing that kept them hacking through the overgrown public space was the fact that their Commander was right there beside them.

Brad Nelson stopped to wipe the sweat off his face with a sodden khaki sleeve before taking a long drink of water from his canteen. He wished he could have a cold shower. Or some ice cream. Over the last two decades, the black pirates from New Africa under Ray Ray had driven the Cuban survivors of the Turkish Flu out of the former capitol, and into the bush. A few thousand of them hadn’t died from the original strain of the virus that had been brought to the island early on in the pandemic. The blacks, so susceptible to the strain genetically engineered by the Orange scientists and spread throughout the globe, were immune to the older form. They weren’t immune to the bullets from the Texas Rangers’ rifles, though.

So far, they hadn’t seen any of the native Cubans. Nelson had heard from the German Major who had moved into Guantanamo Bay that there were a few of them over at that end of the island. But here, it was just the defeated pirates, who knew that surrender meant death.

He could still hear the engines of their Land Rovers idling at the old Calabazar bus station, so Brad knew that they weren’t very far off of the road. It just looked preCambrian. A small group of retreating pirates had fled into the jungle on foot, just a half hour ago. Now, there was no sign of them. Well, it wasn’t like they could hide forever, or blend in, he thought with some amusement.

The eight Rangers with him looked around uncertainly. There wasn't much more they could do here.

Pragmatically, the Commander had enough imagination to forsee how having Cuba as a Texican territory, even if they did have to share it with the Germans, would benefit his country. At least until New Orleans could be cleared out by the New Americans, the Gulf of Mexico would become a Texican lake. That would open up all of Central America to salvage and colonization. Within his lifetime, they would rule everything from the Equator to the Great Plains. That was a plan worth hacking through some overgrown ferns for. Not all day, on a wild goose chase, though.

He had met some of the New American Marines when they had agreed to divide up the newly conquered islands, and they seemed like okay guys. You couldn't really tell who was from one side of the border, and who was from the other, except for their uniforms. It was kind of hard to remember when they had all been citizens of the same country. Of course, Brad had just been a teenager when the Balk hit. Those memories faded a bit, every year, and seemed more like a dream, than something real. The world had shrunk for him, down to his home town, and then, as things recovered, his county and his state, his new nation. Then as now, the most important things had remained his friends and family. Now, that meant his wife Luisa, a Mexican-born woman of pure Castilian ancestry, and their three boys. She had the same color of green eyes that his mother had, and two of their three children had inherited the emerald trait. Hers had been one of the ruling elite landholding families from Mexico City, which as part of the semiindependent Mexican state, was a Texican satellite fiefdom.

A man of lesser ability might have been held back in his military career because of being married to a foreigner. Had he not been the very best at what he did, competitors might have used it against him. Being physically imposing, at over six and a half feet tall, had helped. Nelson had been even more ruthless and

cutthroat in his ascension to power than they had, though, and overcame them all. He just had not become personally corruptible, in the climb.

Having a wife who was independently wealthy had made it a lot easier to refuse bribes. Having one so beautiful had made it easy to avoid blackmail over nonexistent affairs and indiscretions. Although there was no named successor to the Presidency, and the office of Vice President had been left empty for years, the Commander of the Texas Rangers served the role of the second highest military officer in the Republic. That made him a target to many, and an icon to all.

Nelson didn't feel much like an icon as he clambered back up the muddy bank, out of the waist-high grass. But setting an example for the men was necessary to keep morale up…and to make sure that their loyalty was to him, no matter where his wife might have been born. As they settled in the Land Rovers and enjoyed the laboring air conditioning, Brad thought about his wife, and the moment he had first seen her, the day her father had welcomed the Texican ambassador to his home. The purpose of the visit had been to negotiate open access to Tampico for Texican colonists. It had turned into love at first sight for the then-Sergeant and the young lady. A week later she had ran away from home to find him. Her wealth had made it possible. It had taken him all the years since, and three grandsons, to gain her family's acceptance.

Commander Nelson hoped that in a few more months, his tour of duty here would be over, and Texican colonization of Cuba could begin. Then he could see Luisa again. Until then she and the boys lived in Austin, near the Presidential mansion. It was customary for the families of Hampton's most important and closest officers to live close by him while they were deployed. The implied threat insured many men's loyalty.

Back in their pre-fab barracks at the Port of Havana, within sight of the Republic of Texas naval squadron and its guns, Brad pulled

off his boots and stretched his toes as he changed into dry socks. A meal of fish stew and canned vegetables would help him drift off to sleep tonight, but first he wanted to write a letter home to Luisa and the boys. If he made it a short one, it could go out on the next ship bound to Houston for more supplies. The infrastructure of the city had been looted and vandalized back to the stone age. It was even worse than it had been when the Cubans themselves ran it, Brad observed. Industrial machinery and parts and generators and equipment to get the basic utilities going again would take many trips across the Gulf. At least now the circuit would be free of pirates.

“Well, I used to wake up in the morning, get my breakfast in bed
When I'd gotten worried she'd ease my aching head
But now she's here and there, with every man in town Still trying to take me for that same old clown
Because I used to love her, but it's all over now…”

Oahu had never achieved full self-sufficiency. The island state still depended on weekly supply convoys from Seattle and Portland’s grainaries, gathered from throughout the plains, and beef from the pastures of Alberta and Montana. Steel from Pittsburgh and cars and trucks from New Detroit arrived on ships as needed, like clockwork. But the gasoline and diesel used at Pearl-Hickam was refined and loaded on tankers directly in Anchorage, the diamond of the North. In fact, even with Norfolk and the other Atlantic ports open for business and flourishing, the New American economy was still centered on the other coast.

Dr. Tina Edwards looked over the manifest from the small freighter which had just arrived in Coos Bay from the Hawaiian islands. Her longsleeved doctor’s smock, the Surgeon General’s traditional garb, rustled over the readout as her time-blemished hands followed the lines. The New American Marine Recon team had successfully captured a ship full of Moerdani’s subjects from Kupang City. The nighttime raid had gone well enough. No casualties, very little resistance, and over a dozen test subjects

for her research. They were remarkably docile and obedient, according to the report from the ship's captain. Especially for royalty. She would have him rewarded with a bilge full of Iowan corn to take back to Oahu, for his discretion. The matronly doctor believed in fair recompense.

What Moerdani had done, by developing a vaccine for the Turkish Flu, was insure his rulership by controlling who received the gift of immunity, and who did not. It had only been realistic for his laboratory to produce vaccine for a few thousand of the most essential Indonesian personnel and their families, after all, with the materials and resources he had had available. Sur had been very selective and bargained hard, when passing out the cure. Ultimately, what had saved Javanese civilization was not the vaccine, but the isolation they had maintained from the other islands during the crucial quarantine period. As government after government fell across SouthEast Asia, that became harder and harder. Their handling of refugees and immigrants had to become more and more ruthless. Any who attempted to get in were shot on sight.

Because of this, there were two primary classes of Javanese in the Caliphate: those who had never been exposed to the Turkish Flu, and those who were immune to it. Those who had been vaccinated were not carriers of the disease. That immunity was partially inherited, however, the children of the elite were carriers of the disease, communicable but uninfected, themselves. This third class, growing but still small, were considered a special elite, and remained aloof from the commoners out of necessity, less they begin the viral contagion all over again. Once they reached the age of eighteen, if their families had remained loyal to Moerdani, they were granted the vaccine, as their parents before them had received, and were no longer contagious carriers.

It had been foolhardy of the Caliph to establish an Islamic school for young noble children so far from the capitol, and so lightly guarded. The fourteen young royals seized in the Kupang City

raid had the virus within them, harmless to those who did not have any Asian ancestry, but lethal to those who did. Dr. Edwards was certain that she could weaponize the original strain within just a few weeks of intensive laboratory tests. She might have grayed and stooped over the years, but her mind was still razor sharp. If any of the royal children survived, they would be returned home, of course. To infect and kill millions, on their own, she hoped. The weaponized virus, they would make sure did the job, if the spoiled little brats didn't.

None of the New American cabinet had objected to the plan. They all had known Carolyn personally, and they owed this final gesture of loyalty to the first Speaker. Attorney General Roberts had drafted the legislation authorizing the use of biological warfare agents by the Executive at the discretion of the Speaker, and it had already passed through the unicameral Congress unanimously. There had been no dissent, and a verbal aye vote was recorded in a closed door session.

Tommy Bullens had come through once again by locating the school, and Gen. Ferguson had ordered the raid, at Speaker Balderson's direction. In the meantime, Kip had quietly advised their allies, Australia and New Zealand, of what was about to happen in the region, so they could prepare.

While Dr. Edwards spent the first Sunday the prisoners arrived in the capitol interviewing them in preparation for the medical experiments, the rest of the cabinet attended a special church service. In honor of her adoptive father, and in order to secure the family name and its' lineage as a dynastic succession, Kip and Hope and the children were taking the unusual step of adopting the McNabb last name for their family. Just in case Jack's military adventures went awry, so the new royal line would not end. Thousands of St. Louisians packed the cathedral and the grounds outside, where large plasma screens broadcast the renaming ceremony to those assembled. Milions more watched the spectacle on Post Dispatch TV broadcasts. When Kip and Hope

McNabb and their six children emerged from the church, the roar of the crowd was deafening. “Give me a whisper, and give me a sigh…give me a kiss before you, tell me goodbye…I know how you feel inside, I, I’ve been there before. Something’s changing inside you, and don’t you know…”

His head roared. The tunnel vision and gray blur were old friends, tinged in red. In clearer moments, he was cold and dispassionate enough to recognize that he had an impulse control problem. His psychology classes at the Academy had taught him how to take a step back and disassociate from a situation, to indulge in self-analysis. He could even self-psychoanalyze. Being socially isolated due to status. Losing a close sibling in an accident he had survived himself, at an early age. The death of both parents, violently, at the same time. A little post traumatic stress disorder was to be expected.

The problem, though, was that he had always had an issue with impulse control, at moments, for as long as he could remember. He had the heart of a poet, but the soul of a clown, which made him Harold things up at the worst possible moments. Sometimes it was just a flash of temper, shades hotter and sharper than most people knew. It took less to set him off, and longer, much longer, for him to cool down. He could become enraged by the most casual slight and tremble and fume for hours. His reaction to anger was more extreme than most people’s too. A minor incident could leave Jack ready to cut off all ties to someone, or declare them an enemy.

He really liked and respected Col. Northcutt, the New American officer briefing them before the beginning of a joint training exercise the Unified Command was holding with their Texican allies along their shared border, where New Mexico and Colorado met. The jovial man hadn’t said or done anything to offend him, in the least. Not that he had heard with his shattered eardrum, or seen with his nearsightedness, at any rate. On the contrary, he had been deferential to the First Lieutenant, as most superior

officers were, in a professional way. Why, then, did he begin to have those raging, pushing impulses?

Perhaps it had been a moment of boredom or distraction as the meeting near the La Jara reservoir had droned on with detailed troop instructions and redundant reminders to not engage in live fire exercises that might spook their Texican Mounted Infantry counterparts running parallel maneuvers a few miles South of them. Maybe it was the heat, seeping through the canvas roof of the tent, and drawing the sweat from his sunbleached hair. Whatever the trigger, Jack felt a silly urge to stand up and scream, to throw his metal chair, or to start shooting, starting with the Colonel. Anything to interrupt. It didn't feel like a cry for attention. It felt like an option. An alternative. A half breath, a slip, a relaxation of a second away.

These impulses came and went, so far without him letting them slip. He had never told anyone, but they worried him. He had never told anyone, because they worried him. The best medicine was to ground himself, to focus hard, and not slip sideways. He concentrated on the details of the instructions, the route that his platoon was to take along old Highway 17 to 285, then right on 142 to the rendezvous point with the other platoons at the Rio Grande. Less than a hundred miles, through dry scrub and desert. They would be done by nightfall.

An image flashed in his mind of how shocked Northcutt would be if Jack blurted out "bullcrap". Okay, time to push back the edges of thought and memory. He made himself retrace his past month. Watching the ruined resorts on Paradise Island flare up in a controlled burn as they left. The overnight stops in two Florida enclaves where he had made good on his promises to a couple of local girls. The convoy of trucks back up the coast to Tallahassee, where the Emerald Coast had treated them to a night in an old but well maintained four star hotel and a steak dinner, before their flight out to St. Louis on C-140s. From Lambert, they had been dismissed for 24 hours of R&R in the capitol.

Jack's first stop was at the Old Courthouse, the New American primary government building, though in recent years the mechanisms and offices of state had overflowed into the adjacent blocks, as well. Randall had welcomed him into the office that he still thought of as his dad's, and couldn't enter now without the sting of imagining his old man sitting behind the desk that now held a picture of Mrs. Balderson.

They were up to something big, based on the working lunch he had interrupted the Cabinet in the middle of. He didn't stay long, just long enough to shake hands all around and tell them informally how things had went in the Bahamas. Jason said that he looked like he had come back a grown man, especially without his glasses. He had meant it, Jack could tell. Gen. Ball told him to take his staff car from the garage, and asked the secretary to call a driver, so the easily recognized young officer wouldn't be mobbed by the media or fans on the street. It also would help the other pedestrians and commuters, since he couldn't see so well. Jack stopped at the monument outside where his parents were both interred, him in fact and her in spirit. He placed his hand on the shoulder of the bust mounted at eye level, and stood for a moment, in contemplation. The sun was nearly over the top of the arch by the time the car came around to pick him up.

At the Warehouse, Hope gave him a big hug and told him that she wanted him to remember that this was his home. The younger four of her six kids mobbed him; Adam, Megan, Victoria and Carol, who had been named after her grandma. Hess was away at the Academy, and Mary was volunteering at the base hospital, helping with the injured combat veterans from Freeport. Hope asked him if he had seen Kip, and he said that he had, at the Cabinet meeting he'd interrupted. She had one of the staff make a big lunch for them all with his favorite, supreme pizza, as the main course. While it was prepared, he told her about the battles he had been in, and she caught him up on the gossip in the capitol. The pizza was the best he had ever tasted, he recalled.

After lunch, Hope had gotten more serious after sending the kids to go play in the back yard. She needed him to sign some papers related to the trust that was being set up, for the family, to settle his parents' estate. The house would belong to the two of them, commonly. Most of the liquid assets were also to be divided. Some of them would go into accounts that would guarantee he would never have to survive on army chow alone. A couple of the accounts were in foreign banks, one in Berlin and another in Montreal, that would have to be liquidated in person, at some point. Everything looked satisfactory to him. He joked that he guessed they didn't need to call Jason for this, and she replied that he was the one who had drawn the papers up for her. They both laughed, like brother and sister, and the papers got signed. It was bittersweet.

Jack played with his nieces and nephew out back for a while, enjoying the freedom are carelessness of the brief time, while Hope sent a courier off to Jason's office with the documents. After the kids wore him out playing chase, her brother went upstairs for a bit, on his own. A long hot bath in his own tub sounded good.

Everything in his room was just as he had left it. After all he had done, and gone through, it looked like the room of a stranger, of a kid, he thought to himself, in amusement. A guard had left his issue duffel bag at the foot of the bed, but he decided to not change out of his uniform, just yet. The bath would wait.

Leaving his room untouched, the heir headed down the short third floor hall to the armory. Racks of rifles, shotguns, and handguns lined three walls, and cases of ammunition were stacked on the floor. Bladed and specialty weapons were cased along the fourth wall. Although it wasn't exactly regulation, Jack exchanged his standard sidearm for his dad's matching Glock 21 .45s, with extended magazines, tritium sites, and balanced opposing shoulder holsters. He slipped the rig on, mounting the pistols buttforward under each arm. Two spare magazines fit in pouches below each pistol. He tested the weight, relishing it. Jack kept his

dad's fighting knife that he had carried in and out of the Bahamas, and added a boot knife for each inner calf. Finally, a third .45, a more compact version, went in an inside the waistband holster at the small of his back. Hope had said that everything in this room was his. He would get some good use out of it.

All of his parents' personal effects from their bedroom had been boxed up and put into storage, as Hope and Kip had moved into the master suite. He would go through that stuff some other time. For now, he spent a few minutes in the private library, walking out with his mother's Bible and a family photo album, both of which he stashed in his duffel bag. That left him less time in the tub, but the hot water opened his pores and cleared his head like a pot of coffee.

The driver had been hanging out with the staff in the kitchen, so he was easy to find. Telling Hope that he would be back to spend the night, Jack directed the middle-aged veteran to take him to the base hospital. He had intended to visit a few of the guys he had served with who were still recovering from their wounds, and sneak them in some chocolate that the Argentinians had sent to the Warehouse with a veritable forest of flowers in expressions of condolence. Hope had hid the chocolates from her kids so that Jack could see them, and endorsed his idea to give them to the troops, instead of making cavities.

Three of the guys who had waded ashore at Freeport with him were still there, and glad to see him, especially when he started passing out the treats. Two had minor wounds and should be released soon, but the third had lost a leg from the knee down and was undergoing therapy so that he would be ready for a prosthetic when the amputated limb healed enough. A couple more he asked about hadn't made it, they confirmed somberly.

Mary turned the corner to see him sitting on the edge of one of the men's beds, telling war stories, and nearly dropped the tray of medicine she was carrying. She recognized him as a celebrity a step higher in nobility than herself, more than as an uncle through

adoption. The shriek she let out startled all four of the men, and then she was jumping up and down and hugging Jack, as the other three watched jealously. The vibrant redhead had been the object of the wounded men's admiration for days and weeks. They were embarrassed when the Lieutenant introduced her to them as his niece.

After he left the three wounded soldiers after making them promise to stay in touch after they were released, Mary took him on a personal tour of the rest of the hospital. They had a few moments to act like two normal teenagers, then they met the doctors and had to behave formally again. Many of the other patients also recognized Jack, and he shook every hand in the ward. Although he was almost two years older than her, in this place Mary was the host and he was the guest, so Jack allowed her to take the lead, which she enjoyed.

He spent the remainder of the afternoon at the hospital, visiting wounded troops. When her shift ended, they called the driver and took a drive to the Academy together. Normally unregistered visitors weren't allowed, but in his case the post guards made an exception. Jack and Mary spent the evening visiting with Hess, which greatly improved the boys' stature in the eyes of his classmates. They ate dinner in the faculty lounge with Professor Ness, Pastor Reed, and the other staff, though, so as to cause a minimum of disruption among the students.

On the long drive home to the Warehouse, things had gotten a bit awkward when it became apparent that Mary had a star-struck crush on him, but Jack had pretended not to notice. After they arrived, he tipped the driver generously with two New American gold twenty dollar pieces and slipped off to bed after talking to Kip and Hope about their day, and how well Hess was doing. That night he lay in his old room, listening to his C.D.'s and munching on midnight snacks from the kitchen, until he passed out, like a normal teenager.

The next morning after breakfast Kip dropped him back off at Lambert, where he was set to reactivate. Instead of getting on another plane, though, new orders had come in for the joint exercise. They were trucked over to the railyard, put on a train, and spent the next six days rumbling across Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado. He had never seen so much corn. Then, just when he got tired of the corn, there was nothing but wheat. Then it became too dry for even the wheat, and he saw a lot of desert. That still hadn't run out. Having one cramped airplane-sized bathroom for every hundred soldiers had given them something to do, any way: wait in line for a claustrophobic self-administered sponge bath once a day, and when nature called.
By the time he had methodically went through his memory file in counterchronological order step by step back to the present, the latest impulse had passed, and the Colonel was asking if there were any questions. He had missed the last half of the briefing. All he knew was that they were supposed to run East along the border, parallel to the Texicans on their side. Oh well, he would just wing it, like he always did. That's what he had Sgt. Chittum for.

The noncom was no more pleased than Jack was to be bouncing along a dry and dusty road in a Ford semi-armored SUV, following an identical vehicle spaced twenty yards ahead of them. The Texicans had shown up in gleaming new British Land Rovers, courtesy of their trade deal with England. The Fords were more functional and utilitarian, but less comfortable than the Texican's rides. Mounted Infantry sure had changed a lot, over the years.

As the unsophisticated shocks kicked them with every pothole and bump, Sgt. Chittum commented dryly that at least the Texicans hadn't shown up in new Mercedes troop carriers, as they were rumored to be receiving from the Germans, soon. That would have stung even more. The third SUV in their group, driven by Corporal Hudson, eased a little too close for comfort, so Jack radioed him to back it off a bit. Ideally, the twelve men were supposed to be scanning the terrain for insurgents of unknown

origin. The only insurgents were low rocky hills, sand, and maybe some snakes and scorpions. As Private Snider had opined, the real idea was for them and the Texicans to convince one another that they could drive side by side without it breaking off into a shootout.

It seemed like a long way to come and a lot of trouble just to prove they could play nice. He had asked the Sergeant why they hadn't just used some of the local troops for the exercise, instead of bringing them in. Chittum counted off the reasons, on his fingers. One, to see how long it would take them to deploy troops from the capitol to the border without overwhelming air superiority. Two, to send a message to everyone not involved in the maneuver. And Three, to not pull the local units away from their normal patrols and duties. In other words, this trip wasn't about the Republic of Texas at all. It was about rattling sabers at Deseret.

They had just passed the halfway point in their little scenic drive, without a single screaming New African pirate or bomb-throwing Javanese Muslim in sight. As they turned off of 285, a dust cloud coming up from both sides appeared, quickly obscuring the road as they drove towards it. Jack gave the order to slow down. He could see another platoon, not fortunate enough to have been assigned to the road, zoom past them a half mile to the south. He had thought that he was the lucky one. Now, he wasn't so sure. A rumbling soon resolved itself into the sound of many hooves, and then the cattle were right among them. He ordered a full stop to all three SUVs. Cows were in front of and all around and nearly on top of them, pushing each other and mooing piteously. Jack thought it must be a stampede.

Out of the dust rode a woman, a girl, really, on horseback. Long brown hair shone in the sun behind her as it escaped from the cowgirl hat she swept off her head to beat her wild-eyed mount closer to them.

“What in the name of the lost tablets do you gentiles think you’re doing spookin’ my cows like that? You just drive in here like you own the place, turning the whole herd to ninnies…” The hardened soldiers watched her, their mouths hanging open, as she continued her invectives. She stopped short as the passenger side door of the second S.U.V. opened, and Jack stepped out, his hands up.

“Oh! Hey. It’s you. I mean, you’re…Hi.” The cowgirl stammered, jerking her horse’s head around and turning the same color red as her dusty kerchief. Jack was beginning to get used to that reaction from folks.

Her name was Julia Walker, she told them, after she had climbed down and shook hands with him self-consciously. A younger girl rode up and was quickly sent off to round up the frightened cows and bring them back.

“That’s my sister Abby,” Julia explained. “She’s still young, you know, but she’s learning. We were just in a hurry trying to get the herd into town before dark. We weren’t supposed to come out this far by ourselves, but I wanted to show everyone that we could do it.” She added proudly. “Sorry if they scared you, your…uh, I mean, Sir.”

“Just call me Jack, Julia.” he replied, reassuringly. “All of my friends do. I guess we scared them as much as they scared us.” He squinted and smiled his best smile at her, testing its’ effect. “If you recognize me, all the way out here, you must have heard about the joint exercise we’re doing?”

Julia blushed even deeper, then straightened to her full h eight. “My dad said something about it, but I calculated you’d be way further South of here, you know, close to the actual border?”

Jack laughed out loud at her brass, making her blink. “You’re right, me, too. Most of us are. I think they gave us the northernmost route just to make it soft duty for me. On the road

and all. It frustrates me, sometimes, but then again, I'm not complaining."

It was her turn to laugh, a low chuckle that caused something to tighten up in his chest. Her light hazel eyes flashed in amusement. "but anyway, I already knew who you were. Who you are. My mom talks about your dad all the time."

"Nothing bad, I hope," he joked, but something in her face made him hurry on talking, to smooth that over, whatever it was. "Being from around here, I guess you're some of the new Mormons?"

"Yes!" she declared, defensively, ready to fight over it, if she needed to. This one was fiery, he thought, and had more layers than he could see. Wait a minute…
"Did you say your name was Julia Walker? Walker, as in…" he let the question dangle.
She looked down at the dusty asphalt for a split second, deciding something, then met his eyes again. "Yes. She's my mom." Julia's eyes searched his.
"Well, I'll be," Jack said quietly, with a smile. "I guess you and me have a lot in common, kind of, then, don't we?" Julia nodded, turning from blush to pale again.
Sgt. Chittum cleared his throat from the S.U.V.. "Sir, it looks like the obstacles have cleared themselves from the roadway."
Jack had another of those impulse moments, of pulling one of his Glocks and shooting out a tire as an excuse to stay here with this fascinating girl longer, or shooting Chittum for interrupting. Instead, he offered Julia his hand again.
"Miss Julia, once again, our apologies for spooking your herd. I hope you make it safely home before dark. Please pass along my compliments to your mother and father, and assure them that if I may ever be of service to them, they need only remind me of your name." Before she could think of what to say in response, the Lieutenant turned on his heel and climbed back into the Ford Frontier, waving his driver, and the other two, to proceed.
The young lady stood in the road for several minutes before she

remembered to catch her horse and find her sister. They did get the cattle into the communal corral, just before dusk. Her dad said he had been worried, but was proud of them. Her mom was more angry, than happy, but at least they were back in one piece, she said. That night over dinner, Abby told the story, as much of it as she had seen and heard, to their parents, before Julia could even decide not to. Karen froze stock still, then turned and quickly left the room. Josh and Kelly exchanged a glance heavy with meaning. She tried to listen to their conversation that night after the girls went to bed, but her heart was still thumping so hard that she couldn't make out a single word.

Jack thought about the brown-haired girl whose mom, rumor had it, had once been held prisoner by his dad, and become his programmed assassin. If the rumors were true, or even if they weren't, it might be kind of dangerous for them to be living so close to the Republic of Texas border. If she had killed their President, that was. After all, that was one of the reasons he had been assigned the northernmost route during the exercise, in case any of the Texicans blamed him for his dad's alleged involvement in Bellefont's assassination.

He felt a momentary surge of protective instinct over Julia for that, even though he knew it was silly. Then Jack wondered how much hatred Kelly Walker must have for anyone with his last name, after the way things had turned out for her. The adolescent romantic aspect of his personality thought of comparisons between himself and Julia and Romeo and Juliet. He talked about the cowgirl and their complicated familial associations so much to Sgt. Chittum on the train ride back East that the noncom got a bottle during their brief stop in Pueblo before they began their wide swing around the still radioactive ruins of Colorado Springs, and was drunk the whole next day.

When they arrived back in St. Louis, Jack told Hope about the encounter over a family dinner, to see what she thought about it. Halfway through the story, Mary got up without excusing herself, spilling her glass of fresh milk, and ran out of the room, stifling a sob. Kip lowered his eyes and shook his head at his brother-in-law, insinuating that it was some inscrutable feminine issue. The

younger kids giggled nervously. Jack was flustered, but continued, despite the bizarre behavior of his niece.
Kip's opinion was that Kelly probably did harbor a lot of resentment towards the family, whether she was guilty of the assassination or not, and whether anyone had 'programmed' her to do it, or not. People tended to believe what they wanted to believe, whether there was any evidence or logic to it, or not, too. Sometimes, they could even fool themselves into believing something they knew wasn't true, he explained. Jack knew what he meant, he had seen the same thing, in the army.
Hope's response was less philosophical. She just said that it was a long way to Colorado, and there was no foreseeable reason why he would be out that way again, so he probably wouldn't ever have to worry about seeing her, ever. Somehow, that didn't make Jack feel any better.
The next day after reporting in, the Lieutenant was told that he had new orders. The Unified Command wanted to have him go through courses in diplomacy and civics at the Soldiers Of The Cross Training Center, to polish him in preparation for his scheduled promotion to Captain just after his seventeenth birthday, coming up. It looked like he would be leaving his unit behind for a semester and going south into the Ozarks.

Chapter Eight

“The storm is brewing. The pressure is building. The Jews and the politicians may believe that they can keep the lid on. They may believe that by getting laws in the United States like they already have in Canada and Britain and many other countries, making it illegal to write or say anything which is Politically Incorrect—that is, anything which they can label as “hate speech”—they can delay the storm until it is too late for us to save ourselves. They may be right, but I don’t think so. I think that storm will come soon enough to allow our people to redeem ourselves. I also think that when it comes it will be violent enough to blow every last member of their tribe to hell—and also everyone who has collaborated with them. At least, I hope so.”
-Dr. William Pierce

“Well, I've been afraid of changing 'Cause I've built my life around you But time makes you bolder
Even children get older
And I'm getting older too…”

Each election year the same old interest groups lobbied for favors. Campaign donations in exchange for a little looking the other way when contraband wheat shipments left Thunder Bay for Montreal instead of Milwaukee. Kickbacks and bribes. Hiring relatives. Bumping the Speaker’s endorsement up in the Post Dispatch evening news broadcast before the story on the Alaskan pipeline expansion in exchange for an exclusive interview on election night. That was a dicey one.

For half a generation, the environmental pollution from the blasts at Omaha, Colorado Springs, Hainan, and a half dozen sites on the East Coast had dipped temperatures by an average of ten degrees in the northern hemisphere. That had done more than just give central Canada the poorest wheat crops they had experienced since the Balk put them back to nineteenth century

planting and harvesting methods. A quarter of the cattle in Alberta had either died or been driven South to Montana and Wyoming that first winter after the Chinese got nuked. It had been cold enough to force the Dakota shale sites and the Alaskan fields to limit production, despite the increasing demand caused by the economic recovery in the lower thirty-eight. Now, just when Texas oil exports were limited by treaty to Central and South America, Alaska was having another petroleum boom. He adjusted his waistband, wishing he had time for more exercise, or a social life. But the papers would have a field day with that.

There had been a time, right after he had first gotten out of the service and was thinking about running for the Manitoban state legislature, when Paul had almost gotten married. She had been a nice lady, a pretty blonde war widow whose husband had been away on business in Toronto when it got hit. But she was Quebecois, and her parents and extended family were back home in Ottawa. It was occupied by the French ‘peacekeeping forces’ in the aftermath, and she had left Winnipeg, and him, to be with them. He had never seen or heard from her again. It was easy to lose track of people without an unregulated social media world to Google. Since then, he hadn’t taken the time to date, in single-minded pursuit of political power. The months and years had left him alone; a powerful man, but a lonely one.

Governor Martin had visited Anchorage last year, for the annual New American Governor’s Conference. The growing city, home to the Unified Command Northern Pacific Fleet, had actually been warmer than Winnipeg. The very eligible, if aging, bachelor had definitely noticed, by the way the women dressed. In fact, the new census showed that it was the largest metropolitan area on the West Coast, surpassing Seattle, Portland, and Coos Bay. With the exception of Whitehorse, the former Canadian states usually voted and conferenced as a block, except for last year. British Columbia had broken ranks and voted with the Pacific states, for the first time, too.

The former 2nd Lake Winnipeg Cavalry Sergeant understood that Russian expansion was forcing them all to close ranks on the Left Coast. Fortunately the Czar was looking South, these days. And, his situation with the frogs wasn't the only hotspot to be watched. They had the same kind of distractions down in the Bay Area, still rebuilding after the temporary Chinese invasion and occupation there. Southern California was pretty firmly Deseret territory, up to Bakersfield, just as Nevada was. The Pacific States Coalition were facing a resurgent missionary effort by the F.L.D.S., as the Mormons found a new zeal for land and souls. The regime change in Salt Lake had all of them worried out West. But he felt sometimes like he was facing the Quebecois on his own.

With the Western half of Ontario added on, Manitoba was the largest of the prairie provinces, and Alberta and Saskatchewan generally marched in lockstep with what Paul said. Having Balderson's endorsement, he counted on being reelected, once again. He just wished it was a sure thing, though. His hernia was killing him.

Over the last couple of years more French colonists, first from former French possessions in what had been third world nations before they were depopulated, and then from the European continent itself, had been setting up shop further and further West of Sault Ste. Marie. Maybe he had gotten complacent during all the remigration and settlement of New England following its' occupation and pacification by the united Francophone forces of Quebec and France. Maybe they all had.

The New France border at the Hudson River had long stabilized, and after the brief conflict which had ended in a negotiated cease-fire, things had been quiet on that front. The wounds cut by the Poughkeepsie Massacre had healed, somewhat. Here in the North, though, a discontented minority still resented having been reigned in from winning what they had felt sure would have been an easy victory.

That fringe had put Paul Martin, a Nationalist Party candidate, himself, in a hard primary fight he had barely won. For an incumbent, that stung. Especially since the hawks were threatening to boycott the election in protest. That might tip the ballot boxes to the Unionist Party, whose candidate wanted to placate the Quebecois in hopes of convincing them to strengthen ties with the other North American continental powers, specifically and primarily New America, and wean Montreal away from Paris.

Governor Martin had heard that down in New York, the blast craters could be seen from the orbital platforms, when their orbit was just right. They looked like acne scars, the pockmarks of a new nation's pubescent growing pains. Baltimore and Philly and the flooded ruins of Toronto and its suburbs were still dark from space, too. Nobody had, or would, reclaim those ghost-filled ruins. Sometimes he lay in bed alone at night and wondered why one of those offcourse Chinese missiles couldn't have hit Montreal, or Quebec City, instead. It sure would have made his life easier. So would a wife, but that chance had passed him by.

On this particular night, his fitful tossing and turning was interrupted by an unexpected phone call from the Surgeon General's office. An UnderSecretary was calling each state executive leader personally to advise them that due to the imminent threat of future biological warfare involving genetically targeted viral agents, an Executive Order would be forthcoming within the next week, at the request of the Surgeon General's office. A new round of mandatory DNA tests, this time for every citizen over the age of eighteen. They wanted to make sure that everyone was safe.

"What we're going to ask is that just as with a selective service call up, all males of legal age must report for a cheek swab and remain on the facility premises for an hour until the test results are tabulated and signed off on," the scripted statement was read.

Paul promised the young man on the phone from St. Louis that he would call a governor's cabinet meeting in the morning to begin

mobilizing the state health department and militia units, in preparation for the tests. They would be ready by the end of the week, as ordered. That should shut the Unionists up.

“Some will win, some will lose Some were born to sing the blues
Oh, the movie never ends
It goes on and on and on and on…”

The Soldiers of The Cross Training Center had grown over the years since its’ founding to finally consist of several multistory academic and dormitory buildings scattered across a hillside, and an annual class size strictly limited to one hundred students. Nestled securely in the Northern Arkansas Ozarks, it lay at the heart of The Knights Committee’s empire within an empire. The eight County area controlled as a private fiefdom reflected the neo-feudalism emerging in various corners of the continent. Even before Northern Arkansas had liberated the remainder of the state, the sole legislative representation from the region in the national government had been, and remained, a member of the dynastic family which ruled there.

Jack spent his sparse evening free time after his political science and history classes in the Heritage Museum, wandering through the Hall of Martyrs and pouring through the archives. The purpose of his education was not just to fine tune his diplomatic skills and his understanding of human individual and group psychology. His was a journey of inspiration and motivation through embracing the history of his people.

The normally year-long leadership training course had been compressed into a semester on the special request of the Attorney General, Jason Roberts, whose family had originally established the college. Jack took a week of classroom instruction in each subject as a foundation, then completed the courses through independent study with tutoring from his academic advisors. This required the First Lieutenant to endure a rigorous eight hours per day of classroom study and tutoring.

The other students, who also lived in the on campus dormitories, looked at him with some awe. Most of them were his age or a year or so younger. All of them were from leadership families and elite new nobility from throughout New America. His dormmate was a wealthy importer from Chicago's son named Seth Rollins. Seth was kind of an electronics wizard, but an anti-social nerd. They had very little in common to talk about. Seth also snored like a chainsaw.

Although he was mentally exhausted every evening once his classes and meetings ended, Jack usually found a couple of other students loitering in the Heritage Museum, when he unwound there. Several of the girls took their hero-worship of his celebrity status a step further and developed crushes on McNabb. He caught a lot of sidelong glances, smiles, appraising looks, and outright stares from the twenty or so young ladies around campus. One of them, from a plantation family recolonizing central Virginia, was always sitting in the Hall of Martyrs hoping to have a moment to talk with him, whenever his classes ended. Tracy had memorized his schedule and even engaged in some small talk with him. During his second week, she made her move.

At first, Jack almost said 'no' to the invitation to go hiking in the woods with a group of the students. He had spent his first weekend on campus meeting with the Roberts and Pender families, old friends of his parents, and settling into his dorm room, then exploring the Museum and Hall. He hadn't really planned what he might do on the weekends, after that. Probably just sleep and read and study. Sundays, of course, were for mandatory church services. Tracy had other plans. Her winning smile, and a flash in her eyes that reminded him of a brown haired girl in the desert of Colorado, convinced him to go along.

In addition to Tracy and himself, the hiking group consisted of Jeff, from Emerald Coast; Joey, from Kentucky; Mike, from West Pennsylvania; and two brothers, twins named Parker and Steven, from Idaho. The other two girls with the group were Tracy's

friends, Shawna and Lynn. They were both from Arkansas, so they were considered local girls. Considering that over eighty percent of the student body was male, that reflected a pretty even split, he reflected, as he stepped out of his dorm to join them.

As usual for a hike in uneven terrain, Jack wore hiking boots, heavy cotton jeans, and a long sleeved flannel shirt over an issue t-shirt. Looking over the other assembled teenagers, he recognized that they must have grown up soft and spoiled. Their sneakers and shorts blared it, loud and clear. He would have to take it easy on them.

The only thing working to mute his competitive spirit and helping him to relax and just enjoy the outdoors was Tracy. She had braided her long reddish-blonde hair into twin loops that were tied behind her neck efficiently, and wore a common sense cotton shirt and ankle high walking shoes, at least. Before they had made it down the first gully she had paired up to walk beside him and ask him about the capitol and the Battle of Freeport. She had seen a BBC documentary just a couple weeks before about his heroics, apparently. He tried not to be evasive, even though he didn't often talk about the bloodier aspects of his experience with civilians… especially girls. He held back the more vivid elements. As they reached the creek at the bottom and the others stopped to rest, already winded, Tracy seemed to accidentally stumble towards him, and he caught her, instinctively, without thinking about it. Her smile told him that she hadn't fallen on accident…at least not physically.

"Ooops," she whispered, her breath hot on his neck. "You saved me." She fogged up his glasses, or something did. Tracy held on for a second or two longer than it took to regain her balance, gripping his side.

Jack had been more places and seen and done more than most men twice his age, and he knew what she was doing…but that didn't change a dang thing about how it affected him. And she knew it.

“You probably fell a lot further when you came down from heaven,” he teased, letting her know that he could be cheesy with the flirtations, as well. She laughed and squeezed tighter, then let him go with a look of promise.

Shawna and Lynn each paired off with one of the Idahoan twins in some kind of petty adolescent female competition, leaving the other three boys to horse around and throw rocks in the creek. Jack and Tracy moved off downstream a bit and found a small cave they climbed into. It was really more of a rock overhanging bluff, but it suited their purposes. She sat close to him in the loose chert and told him about how her family, whose last name was Cavanaugh, had originally been from Mississippi, but joined the refugee trail north when their enclave had collapsed. That was before she had been born, of course, but her parents still talked about those days, when they were feeling nostalgic.

Jack, in turn, told her a couple of stories that his mom and dad had told him, about the Balk. Talking about them stung more than he had expected. His voice trailed off and after a moment he realized that she was looking at him with compassion. She knew what had stopped him. Tracy gave him a quick hug, then a kiss on the cheek, leaning into him for a second before jumping up and skidding out of the cave. On the way out, she turned and looked over her shoulder at him, flashing a daring grin that invited pursuit. Somehow, Jack knew this territory was more dangerous than any pirate-infested beach.

On the way back up the other side her hand found his, and he helped steady her as she climbed up the steep ravine, from tree to tree. He took it deliberately slow, helping her find firm footholds in the leaves and downed limbs. The group regathered, Shawna and Lynn looking like cats who had swallowed canaries, and the twins beet red and flushed.

“Where did all ya’ll get lost to?” Lynn asked Tracy, twinkling, as her hip seemed attached to the boy beside her.
“The same place ya’ll did, I reckon.” Tracy answered. The three

stag boys guffawed and hooted and ran around in circles, like silly kids.

Jack and Tracy led the way on the return hike out. As the others fell behind, she told Jack about Virginia, and her adventures exploring the ruins of the old U.S. Capitol with her father and uncle on day trips. Aside from those outings, life on the huge farm had been boring for her, she claimed. That's why she wanted to enter the diplomatic corps, and become an ambassador. So she could travel and see the world.

Jack learned something about a certain class of people, the new nobility, that day. He discovered that their sense of entitlement didn't just cover themselves, it extended to those whom they recognized as peers, as well. Tracy seemed to simply assume that at some point Jack would become Speaker. So maybe his celebrity status was as much for what they expected he would be, as it was for who he was, and who his parents had been?

Fate was inexorable, he knew. But noone had ever told him that he had inherited any title or office. He wasn't sure that he wanted to.

The third and fourth weeks, he spent a lot of time with Tracy. Sometimes they would walk through the Hall of Martyrs together after classes until dark, then sit out under the stars until the curfew bell sounded, looking at the nighttime sky. Their cafeteria trays usually ended up going on picnics into the treeline. Lying flat on his back in the soft grass, beside a soft warm girl who idolized him, Jack felt that life was pretty good. A couple of times after curfew they slipped out and thrashed through the brush to 'their' cave together, using a pair of night vision goggles he borrowed from the college armory. Tracy looked good in green and black.

On Sunday mornings, they sat together in church, respectably, and helped keep each other awake after the night before. When he wasn't attending a Congressional session in the capitol, the regular minister at the church was Rev. Andrew Pender, the representative from Arkansas. Attorney General Roberts, his uncle, often visited, as well. Whenever Congress was in session, guest speakers were invited to speak from the pulpit. Tracy was delighted, and Jack surprised, when one of his Psychology tutors,

Dr. McCorkle, asked him if he would give the message the next Sunday.
Not being a theologian, the Lieutenant nonetheless agreed. He gave a personal testimony, beginning with how important faith had been to his father, and to the establishment of the national government. As he ended with a description of the conquest of the Bahamas and a call to action against the Muslim Javanese, Jack was answered with a standing ovation by the congregation. Three of the girls fainted.
Academically, Jacks' grades hadn't declined in the least. Following his first month there, he was given his first academic standing report, and held a solid 4.0 g.p.a.. The second month, his course of study shifted to basic engine repair, welding, and carpentry, to remain in line with the S.O.T.C.'s vision of a balanced psyche. Except for the mechanical books, that meant that he had even less homework than before, so he had more time for Tracy. The two were openly dating, now, in public, as a known couple. Halfway through his second month, they took a Saturday afternoon trip into town together, using a borrowed S.U.V. from the college motor pool. Jack took Tracy for pizza, and afterwards, when she had to stop to use the restroom, he slipped into a corner shop and bought her a silver necklace with a celtic cross on it. She was thrilled, and nearly cried when he dangled it in front of her face after she came out.
"Do you like it?" he asked her, teasingly. Tracy reached for it, but he swung it away, past her grasping fingers.
"Oh yes, I love it, is it for me?" she gasped. Jack laughed and told her to turn around. She did, and lifted her hair so he could put it over her head. All the way to their next stop, a book store, she beamed.
Just as they were leaving town, a busload of tourists from the Republic of Texas pulled up beside them at a red light. Within seconds, shrieks split the air as Jack was recognized. Cameras clinked against the bus windows. It dampened their spirits for a few minutes, but by the time they got back to the college, the couple were laughing about it.
When the celebrity pictures of Jack McNabb and his mystery date

appeared as stills on first the Austin and Dallas and Houston, then the global news service broadcasts, the response was quite different in some quarters. Young women from the Arctic to the Gulf fumed in jealousy, but none so much as two in particular. In St. Louis and southern Colorado, doors were heard to slam and glass objects to break. And along the shores of Lake Anna, one of the most powerful families in the Virginia territory hosted a party to celebrate.

“So you think you're lonely
Well my friend I'm lonely too
I want to get back to my City by the bay Ooh, ooh…”

Being a minor official in as large an organization as the Front Nationale’ in France, where patriots pushily demanding equal footing with their big brother Greater Germany could only gain it by stepping on their smaller siblings the Republic of Catalonia and Sardinia and the Belgic successor states in turn, had made it hard to stand out. Here in New France, Yvette’s more subdued, passive aggressive tactics reaped greater dividends. Let her bosses in Lyons worry about whether England was going to pay their share for the Chunnel maintenance, or if the new Prime Minister of the Republic of Northern Italy was serious about annexing a third of Switzerland. She could do more good, over here.

She realized that it might be a mistake to underestimate the locals. That was a classical colonial error. The New Americans, even after the body blows they had taken, had certainly pulled things together in time to withstand the siege of Albany. And now, they were even stronger, because they didn’t depend on the St. Lawrence Seaway for European goods. Yvette interpreted that as simply calling for more subtlety. And the thirty-something bombshell was all about subtlety. Just ask her ex-husbands.

It would be uncharitable, she felt, to describe her as a ‘spy’. James Bond had never shopped where she did, when she was home in Paris. But Yvette Le Blanc was more than just a

diplomatic attaché. She was, by any measure, an intelligence asset for the French government, as well as their territorial regime in Montreal.

If a New American border guard stationed in Schenectady had gambling debts, she would find out to whom and for how much. If a ship from New Detroit passed through Trois Rivieres, Yvette would know whether the manifest was accurate before it hit international waters. Her business was information. And business was, as always, very good.

Most of the time, she lived and worked in Montreal, but travel was a daily part of her job, as well. From Connecticut to Quebec City, nobody was better connected. Up and down the New England coast, she had informants in every sleepy town where the TriColour now flew, and the schoolkids had learned to speak French in school. Yvette was one of the cogs in the wheel keeping France in control of five former U.S. states and as many Canadian provinces. All of it centered on Quebec.

She had just been a schoolgirl when the French Foreign Legion, then the French Marines, then the whole army, had been called up to assist their cultural and linguistic brethren in North America. With their shared history and the obvious opportunities available, all Quebec had to do once they declared their independence from a fragmenting nation, was to ask. Yvette remembered how the media coverage of the colonization had changed over time, from a humanitarian mission to a peacekeeping mission to a stabilization mission. Now, the citizens of France would have another revolution if they were told they had to live without the natural resources and tax income and, for many of them, free land, made possible by their continued presence here. Yvette was a patriot. If it were possible that her deeds could be known by the public, she would be a hero. Alas, that would kind of defeat the whole purpose, however, and render her ineffectual. Oh well, perhaps when she retired. She could write her memoirs, and change some names and dates to protect some sources. She

took another vape drag, an affectation she had picked up in Boston, and looked out the window as her train rattled north towards the night.

This new assignment, posing as a new secretary to the scandalously drunken Quebecois consul to New America in Winnipeg, would be the challenge of her career. Not because she would have to cripple her Parisian accent to make it sound Quebecois. That she could do, and had done, any number of times. The hard part would be pretending to be a secretary until she could arrange to meet the Governor.

Intercepted traffic indicated that the New American government was going to go through another of their agonized and self-humiliating mandatory DNA tests. Probably to identify and quarantine any of their citizens with the faintest trace of Asian or AmerIndian admixture. This subjecture was arrived at by the FN home office because the only enemy which St. Louis had left standing which current science would allow a genetically targeted viral attack against was the Indonesians.

Her job was merely to confirm this, but secondarily, she might remain in position in case there was a future opportunity to destabilize their rival. First Lady of Manitoba wasn't exactly Queen of the Realm, but it would serve her needs. Yvette looked at the picture of Paul Martin in the lamplight. His dossier said that he seemed to like blondes with sob stories. She would dye her hair and rehearse a cover with a lost family angle in the morning. She vaped again, enjoying the rush of the nicotine turned to maximum.

The early years when the starving Americans had welcomed the blue helmeted French soldiers had yielded to protests and revolt before she had made it out of the slums. She had been too busy hiding with her Algerian mother when the mass deportations of Muslims began. Even though she was half French, she would have been sent off, too, and she wouldn't abandon her mother to that fate, anyway. Her father had never come for them, like he

had promised. Abandoned and hopeless, knowing that her daughter could pass for White but she could not, Yvette's mother had killed herself, running at a row of riot police with a Molotov cocktail while her daughter watched helplessly from hiding. From that day forward, she had been on her own, in the chaos of the era. She had survived. She preferred not to dwell on how.

By the t ime Paris has been declared 'cleansed' of Muslim immigrants, Yasmine had become Yvette, and learned to speak and walk and eat and act as if she belonged there. She had joined the youth branch of the Front Nationale' as further cover, then moved up in the ranks. The Turkish Flu had put her in bed for a week when it swept through, but many Mediterranean French suffered similar collateral effects from the pandemic, so her illness went unnoticed amid so many others. Three years later, she found the slumming French man who had dishonored her mother, then abandoned them. He was living with his other family, a wife and two children and a cat in a fancy apartment near the city center. The fire was ruled an accident. Only the cat escaped the inferno.

What had reminded her of that?, Yvette wondered. Looking out the window at the skeletal remains of burned out buildings left over from the resistance to the occupation, as they rolled by? Perhaps so. Some day there would be enough immigrants from the French working class seeking a new life to rebuild or replace all that had been lost from this corner of the continent, and more.

As she turned off the vaper, the olive-complexioned woman gave a silent prayer of praise to Allah that the French, in their arrogance, had never implemented the kind of mandatory DNA tests that the racist American Nazis used on their own people. Not even high value government assets such as herself, Yvette thought with some amusement. With a second moment of gratitude, she thanked the Prophet that she had been given a chance to be in a position to perhaps, perhaps, save the remnant of His faithful whom the infidels sought to slaughter.

Her intelligence report indicated that the new Speaker had endorsed her target in the ongoing re-election campaign. Well, his new girlfriend might convince Governor Martin to ask Randall Balderson to visit his state and give an in-person speech. Something to really win the crowds over. Yvette wondered if losing two Speakers to assassination in less than a year would awaken the unbelievers to the futility of opposing the will of Allah?

“Yes, there are two paths you can go by, but in the long run
There's still time to change the road you're on
And it makes me wonder…”

The visitations to his royal residence, still under repair from the attack, continued relentlessly, every hour. Sur Moerdani fumed at the kidnapping of the young noble children, many of them offspring of his closest supporters. The families should understand, though, that life or death came only through him. He, as Caliph, was the right hand of the almighty, and he alone could provide the vaccination booster which would allow their children to live as mortal Gods among the thronging multitudes of Java. Or, they could keep bugging him, and their surviving children could spend the rest of their lives locked up in quarantine. Just however they preferred.

This latest headache couldn’t have come at a worse time. True, his naval forces were getting two or three new boats refurbished and reconditioned to seaworthy status each week since the battle. Most of them, though, were small to medium sized pleasure craft, or yachts, with only a couple derelict Taiwanese cruisers giving him any real reason to smile. They would just have to keep salvaging every port in the South Pacific they could get to without straying into Russian territory in the North, or New American and Australian territory in the East and South. What he really needed was to rebuild his air force, which had been worse than decimated. That was a harder quest, it seemed. Even in hangars, modern airplanes succumbed to the elements, and quickly. And from what he had seen, there weren’t exactly loose nuclear

weapons just laying around to be picked up. The Russians had seen to that, throughout the region.

He could only guess that the Australians had taken the innocent children. Maybe for the New Americans. Five times a day, after the ritual was satisfied, he sent hatred towards the unbelievers. Especially since he was constantly reminded that his rug faced a city filled with the bones of the believers.

The doctor he had once been itched away at the corner of his mind with a paranoid fear that the missing children represented a plot by the infidels to unleash Satan's fury on his people. He knew it could be done. As the Turkish Flu had closed in, he had used the same amoral methods of research and development, to find a cure. He even knew how it might be done. He did not know whether the White faithless cowards had the will and devotion to anything required to see it done. They had proven that they lacked the will to use nuclear weapons against him, probably lest they poison the air of Northern Australia. They had proven that they lacked the will to sacrifice enough of their mortal flesh and blood lives to conquer the Javanese nation by conventional means. Had they been believers, any cost would have been accepted, and martyrdom welcomed, for victory. That, the Caliph knew, was the main difference between his worldview, and theirs…and that was why he would win. Or rather, all praise be to Allah, the merciful, the victory would be granted to the righteous.

All he could do for now was vaccinate as many of his most crucial people as possible, perhaps framing it as a benevolent gift to soften the pain of their losses. Meanwhile, they would continue to prepare for a final confrontation, a climactic showdown, with evil. When he was ready, he would send a force of millions of believers down onto Darwin and trap the infidels therein Australia, to destroy them. The three nuclear research reactors on Java had yielded enough radioactive byproduct for two good-sized dirty bombs. Enough to poison Perth and Brisbane and open the continent up to invasion. Many of his men, some of his best

engineers, had died obtaining and securing the material. They were now enjoying the promised seventy-two virgins, just as he had promised them as they lay dying. Now, he needed a delivery system, and the right opportunity to slip them past the infidel fleet. All else the Caliph needed, was time.

In the fullness of the seasons, as the Prophet had promised, victory would be given to the faithful who were worthy through righteousness to conquer in His name. Sur Moerdani would tell them when.

Chapter Nine

“We must delve into our roots and reconstruct what history has divided.”
-Kemal Ataturk
“Where am I to go, now that I've gone too far?”

The laser printer chirped, spitting out a color photograph of the latest Most Wanted pictures sent from the Intelligence Division in the New American capitol. Commander Nelson uncurled the still damp paper, glancing at the faces which Secretary Bullens considered the most dangerous on the continent. Two serial killers, targeting isolated colonists in what had been the New African dead zone. A former double asset provoking conflict between Deseret and the New Americans in California. A woman suspected of being a French espionage agent. An old man who led an organized crime ring looting national treasures in ruins from Philadelphia to D.C., to sell on the international black market. And his man, an immune survivor of the Gulf cartel.

Pablo Juan Castrito was somewhere in the mountains of Eastern Cuba, all reports indicated, organizing the virus survivors into resistance cells, in exchange for their oaths of loyalty, of course. Like some modern day Castro, the Commander guessed. That explained the new alias he had chosen as a nom de guerre. He was building an army, right between Brad’s Texas Rangers and the German Commandos holding Guantanamo Bay. Which way he would hit, was anybody’s guess. With President Hampton’s approval, Nelson had reached out to the New Americans for some help with that. He wanted to see just how deep this new alliance went. So far, so good.

“Hey, Brad, is that our bad guy?” his adjutant Terry asked, getting a cup of coffee. Running water had been the first priority once the local power grid was brought back up in Havana. Fresh coffee hadn’t been far behind.

“Yep, that’s him, along with some other winners we’re supposed to keep an eye out for,” Nelson replied.
“Well, I’ll be sure and watch for them, while we’re doing another residential sweep today,” Terry joked. With the power turned back on, brownouts were still a problem. Only the Rangers with combat experience outside the loop were actively hunting for Castrito. The rest were working their way outwards from the Bay to the Loop, replacing transformers and turning off junction boxes while guarding the Texas Electric utility workers.
“Yeah, how’s that going?” Brad asked. The goal was to have the downtown ready for re-colonization by the first of next month.
“We’re on schedule, but from what I hear, they’re selling citizenship to British nationals in exchange for re-colonization assignments. It might not be fancy enough for their tea parties.”
The Commander just smiled. “Well, if you lived on a crowded island where it had been snowy and wet and cold your whole life, you’d be lining up to live in a tropical paradise like this, too, Terry.” Because his wife wasn’t a native Texican, he had a more open mind towards foreigners than most of the intensely nationalistic Rangers.
“Hey, don’t be giving the Swedes and Norwegians any ideas, they’ve been frozen solid since the little ice age started. They might want to come next,” came the grumbled reply.
“What’s the matter, you want to switch the mission parameters to keeping the beaches free of Swedish girls, too?” Brad joked.
Terry finished his coffee, then stretched thoughtfully. He shook his head, smiling. “No, I reckon not.”
While the rumor among his military officers that President Hampton was ‘selling’ citizenship to the British wasn’t exactly true, it was close. Thousands of English citizens, miserable from two decades of weather that had been even wetter and colder than in the past, were also eager to escape their dependence on foreign imports on their island. Texas needed skilled workers, especially those with technical and engineering or utility backgrounds, as colonists for their new possessions. It was a good fit. Though most native Texicans had plenty of room to move South or West if they wanted new land to settle, very few were

drawn to Cuba. The Brits would have to learn to drawl.
When they first arrived, they would be set up in temporary prefab housing units alongside the Rangers installation, for their own security. After a week of orientation classes on the local geography, climate, flora, and fauna, the Brits would be assigned work details clearing residences that the Republic of Texas's Corps of Engineers had judged to be habitable. Then the teams would be divided up to remodel and repair what needed to be, to make them ready to move into. It would be rough on them for a while, but eventually they'd get settled in.
The Commander of the smaller Ranger unit running a parallel operation in Cancun was running a race with Brad, to see which of them would be ready to take on colonists first. The first hundred were expected at the former resort hub in two weeks. It would be a close competition. Havana was better set up to accept families, though, so it would draw more colonists.
In the SouthEastern corner of the island, the Germans were moving the first of their naval assets into Guantanamo Bay. Aside from the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean had become a German pond over the last generation, so their ocean-going fleets had expanded along with their abilities and opportunities. Greater Germany was stationing a squadron consisting of a destroyer and two cruisers, along with their support craft, at Gitmo. Two thousand sailors and Marines were already there, and that number was expected to double. That didn't worry Commander Nelson much.
"We all feed the gods we choose to serve," he had told Terry, when the adjutant had expressed concern over the influence of Greater Germany. There was no way around it, they needed the technical and scientific assistance, and the trade. Now that they were friendly with the New Americans up North, it looked like the Republic of Texas was just making nice with everybody. It made Brad feel a little better knowing that 'The Eyes of Texas' was not only growing every day, the orbital station was installing an offensive capability, as well.
Pausing in his mundane paperwork duties, Brad had a sudden thought. What if the New American lunar base, and the Russian

and German and British stations, all had the same idea? He guessed that there was a rocket scientist or intelligence chief in Austin, just like Tommy Bullens in St. Louis, who was tasked with thinking about things like that. Way above his pay grade.

Thinking of Bullens, the second and third sheets spilling out of the printer held the Unified Command's estimates of enemy forces remaining on Cuba. According to satellite imagery provided by the New American Space Command's honcho, Gen. Matt Ball, their technicians guessed there were around seven to ten thousand surviving Cubans on the island. That was along with a handful of black pirates thrown in there that would probably be slaughtered by the vengeful islanders, themselves, once they caught them. The New Africans hadn't treated the Cubans too nicely, when they'd taken over.

Most of those Cubans had moved into the Eastern half of the island. There was one remaining pocket living off the land in Zapata National Park to his South, but the rest were mainly clustered in the Sierra Maestras. That meant that they would be a bigger problem for the Germans, especially once Castrito had them organized. He faxed over the information and accompanying satellite reconnaissance photos to Guantanamo, as a courtesy.

In Berlin, Gerta looked over faxed copies of the images. Her eyes were weaker than she wished, but it was clear from the text that the Greater German garrison at Guantanamo Bay would have to be strengthened. Punitive raids into the wilderness West of the base would be required. The Chancellor of Greater Germany would leave those details to the NPD Council, or to the new Chancellor, or to the local base commander. Somebody else, besides her. Today was her last official day in office. Tomorrow, she would begin boxing up her personal effects. By the end of the week, she would be back home in Bavaria, where it was a bit warmer. She had great-grandnieces and greatgrandnephews to spoil.

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end." The announcement of Gerta's resignation came as a surprise to

Randall, who asked Kip to look into whom the NPD might select as her successor, and reach out to them. She

had been a staunch friend to New America, despite her opportunistic alliance with the Republic of Texas. The new Greater German leader would be an unknown element to contend with.

At the weekly cabinet meeting, Speaker Balderson had asked Secretary Bullens to liaison with the Republic of Texas's intelligence division within the Texas Rangers, with Gen. Ball's assistance in technical resources, while the Secretary of State focused on the diplomatic reapprochement with Austin. Kip was absent from the discussion this time, already on the way to meet with the Republic of Texas President. Scott Hampton had always been a cunning bastard. Who knew if they could trust him?

General Ball would continue to move forward with the armament emplacement on the Lunar surface, to defend the base if necessary. Ongoing expansions financed by oil exports and tariffs were anticipated to open habitat for additional staff by the end of the summer. The population would reach 1,200, then, Matt reported to the group.

"As far as that known thorn in our left side, how ready is the fleet to deal with whatever Moerdani might have left up his sleeve?" Randall asked the Secretary of Defense.

Gen. Ferguson looked at Victor Brown before nodding and answering. "We're ready for whatever, Sir. We have him bottled up."
"Good. So, the re-deployment of the 3rd didn't harm our combat readiness in the Pacific?"
"No, Sir, Mr. Speaker. We shuffled some ships around, left Anchorage a little short, but Ivan's distracted with looting China, it's a safe enough gamble." Gene assured the Speaker.
The General of the Army concurred. "If they move south of Java, we'll engage. As Matt can verify, the Caliph is scouring the South

Pacific for anything that floats, though. So, it's just a matter of time before he tries something," Victor added. The Old Capitol's basement war room went still with anticipation.
Randall looked at Gen. Ball, who nodded. Tommy Bullens also agreed. "Every port from Ho Chi Minh to Manila, he's emptied. Satellite confirmation is consistent with our other data."
"So, he can only go one direction," Ferguson said. "South. Right at us. Where we'll see him coming."
"Which means that he plans on taking out our eyes, or surprising us, somehow," Gen. Brown interjected.
"I just had a sick thought." Attorney General Roberts mentioned. "Is he capable of genetically engineering a virus that would target us, Tina?"
The doctor steepled her fingers together and touched her chin to them for a moment, before answering. "It's not impossible. The human genome is mapped, and there ARE diseases which Caucasians are more susceptible to, but not with the assurance that we had with the Turkish Flu…" Jason raised his eyebrows at the Surgeon General's use of the word 'we'.
"I want to know what his capabilities are A.S.A.P.," the Speaker ordered Tommy, who nodded. "Will do."
"And what are OUR capabilities in that area, Dr.?" he asked. Tina's frown receded to invert into a smile.
"Six of the test subjects have survived the final trials, and the rapacity of the militarized strain is quite remarkable. We should be ready for mass production of the agent in a dispersable form in a matter of weeks," Edwards proudly announced.
"Excellent." Randall smiled. Tina wasn't through, yet.
"But, this viral contagion will be more expansive than any we saw previously. Not only could any whom the DNA tests indicate have a genetic proclivity be infected, they could be carriers for a jumping off point, a hybrid mutation between strains, if you will. The testing and quarantines must be absolute." She looked nervously around the room. Noone in this strategy session underestimated the risk involved.
"Okay. After the over-eighteen year olds are tested, and they see it's nothing to worry about, we'll do a second round of tests, on

those under eighteen, to make sure that everybody is covered," Balderson decided. Dr. Edwards made a note, and nodded.
"What else is on the agenda for the next week?" the Speaker asked. Attorney General Roberts tapped his pen beside the next item of business.
"Well, the general elections are coming up in two weeks. You have requests from four sitting Governors and two challengers to visit and give promotional campaign speeches on behalf of candidates, and from nineteen Congressmen and six challengers in the legislative races."
"With all due respect, Sir, the security arrangements for…" Victor paused a moment, calculating…"thirty-one cities in a fourteen day period, it's just not feasible, I'm sorry."
"Now, hold on a moment. Jason, if I gave one speech in one stop in which I endorsed every candidate in that state's elections that I wanted to, how many would that be?" Randall inquired, shifting his bulk at the head of the table. He pulled a comb from his pocket and swept back his trademark pompadour. The hot Missouri sun beat in from the window behind him, even with the armored blinds closed. The air conditioners hummed as background music.
The Attorney General counted and thought. "Eleven states, Sir." The comb disappeared back into the Chief Executive's pocket with a flourish.
"There ya go, Gen. Brown. Eleven states, the lawyer says. Surely the S.S. can protect me in eleven cities?"
Unable to make a face at his boss, Vic stuck his tongue out at Roberts, who snickered goodnaturedly back at him. "Yes, Sir."
"Good, good, and make the night before the election stop be in Winnipeg. Paul Martin has been calling and asking me every day for a month."
"Winnipeg it is," Gen. Brown repeated, scribbling furiously.

"For what is a man, what has he got? If not himself, then he has naught. To say the things he truly feels, and not the words of one who kneels."

In Austin, Kip had found Scott Hampton to be more open-handed and serious than ever. He acted like a man who had seen his own mortality, and maybe he had. The New American Secretary of State had no illusions. He knew that Hampton would continue to do solely what he felt was in the Republic of Texas's interests, even to the exclusion of every other player. Even their allies. But that was to be expected. That he could deal with.

In the diplomatic negotiations, it was underlined that New America would accept Greater German presence in the Gulf and their possession of Guantanamo, since that was a fait accompli, anyway. Likewise, the British colonists in the new Texican possessions. President Hampton agreed not to seek to expand their claims further into the Caribbean. Most importantly for this meeting, Scott pledged continued cooperation along the New Mexico/Colorado/Deseret quadrant. Fundamentalist missionaries had crossed over to attempt to radicalize the more liberal Mormons living on the New American side of the border, and that was worrisome to the local authorities, there. They had been calling St. Louis for help. Kip's next stop after leaving Austin was to fly to Pueblo and see what could be done about that situation, before it unraveled.

After meeting with the Governor of Colorado, Kip McNabb's motorcade ventured into Reformed Latter Day Saint country. The local church wasn't a recognized civil authority in the SouthWestern corner of the state, but as their numbers had grown, they had assumed a lot of power, regionally.

Kelly knew that Kip had expected her to be at the meeting, but she was reassured by how warmly he welcomed her. It had been a long time, and so much had happened. They stayed on topic while Mayor Smith and the Bishops were present. The discussion centered around how best to exclude the F.L.D.S. missionaries from radicalizing their local youth and recruiting them to return to Deseret.

“Really, we’ve seen the same kind of problem arise in California, along the border in the Central Valley,” the Secretary of State said. “So, while it is urgent, your situation isn’t unique, and we do know, from experience, how to deal with it.”

“Alright then, Mr. McNabb,” Mayor Smith replied, em phasizing the obvious last name. “How do those of us who have to live here in their shadow, after leaving them behind, ‘deal with it’?”

“The best way to fight a closed society is with openness,” Kip answered. “And the best way to fight extremism, is with an equal level of exclusion to their missionaries.” “So, your advice would be to not let them in?” Kelly asked. Kip nodded, gratefully. “Our job is to secure the border. If they do get across the border, your job is to not let

them infect the minds of your children, and take them from you. The best way to do that is to close them out.”

Mayor Smith and the Bishops considered this. They would have to talk it over, in a closed door session, but they would see the sense in it. While they were pretending to make up their minds, Kelly invited Kip to their home for supper.

“Well, that depends,” he answered with a grin. “Can you feed a dozen S.S. guards, too?”
She could, but Abby and Julia had to end the clucking of four more of the families’ hens to do it. Kelly and the girls prepared them for frying while Josh showed Kip and his men how a modern farm on the edge of the desert was run. Things had been a lot easier around the kitchen before Karen had gone and become the Mayor’s third sister wife. Still, there was plenty for everyone, and the visitors enjoyed a home cooked meal.
After the dishes, the men followed Josh back out to help with the evening chores. While they hayed and watered the cattle, Kip and Kelly retired to her parlor to speak privately. At first, it was a bit awkward. She asked him about Hope and the kids, and how they liked St. Louis. He asked her about the last few days as things

had fallen apart for her in Salt Lake. They compared notes on the packages they had been sent. Both agreed that there was more to the story than just Mrs. Hampton's letters had stated. Kip made no accusations, and asked no specific questions, since he already knew, and she knew that he knew. As a mutual courtesy, neither of them acknowledged it.

In a quietly understated way, Kip made it clear to her that nobody in St. Louis or even in Austin bore her any animosity. In fact, they needed her leadership in this corner of the frontier. Things could get ugly at any moment in California. With the Fundies in control, you just never knew. He asked her about what connections she still had in Salt Lake, and which members of the Council who remained were the most reasonable, comparatively speaking. She gave him everything she knew, as well as the names of Deseret military commanders who chafed under the restrictive FLDS leadership. He would confirm her information with Bullens' office, but it sounded solid.

Before they rejoined the guys they could hear laughing and talking on the porch, Kip gave Kelly a sad smile, the kind which could be shared only between old enemies who had hurt and been hurt so badly that it was way too far to care. She smiled back, understanding. The future was all they had, and it was always what you made it.

As they loaded up the S.U.V. motorcade with sacks of leftover fried chicken for snacks on the way back to the airport, Kelly's oldest daughter Julia handed him an envelope. It had Jack McNabb's name on it. Kip nodded gravely to her, and put it securely in his pocket.

"It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no Senator's son, son. It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no fortunate one."

After his mid-term exams, which were on double the usual number of subjects, Jack was mentally exhausted. Fortunately, there was a week's break for the mid-Summer 'Founder's Day' holiday that Congress had just enacted, in honor of his father. He could think of no better way of spending it than to visit his family. Tracy was a bit put off that he wasn't going to spend the week

with her, at her parents' home, to meet them. That set off some alarm bells in the young man's mind. He kissed her goodbye and promised that he would see her in a week.

Although it was close to the national election day, Hope thought that this trip home would be a good opportunity for the two of them to tie up some of the loose ends of their inheritance. There were still some foreign accounts to liquidate. She wanted some extra funds to redecorate the Warehouse's ground floor and her suite. The kids needed their own furniture. Mary wanted her own room. Hope showed Jack the one she was in now, with newspaper clippings and pictures of him covering the walls. The younger kids crawled all over their uncle, wrestling with his feet and legs and begging him to play.

His living allowance made the Lieutenant comfortable, but Jack had been thinking about buying some new clothes and a car of his own to use when he was off deployment, so he agreed to go with her for an overnight trip to Montreal. The day before, they made their plans, talked it over with Kip, and got all of the financial paperwork necessary from Jason to close out their parents' account there. They had no idea how much it would be, but they couldn't do an electronic funds transfer between the two countries, so they'd have to bring whatever was in the account back, themselves. Rather than take guards and be obvious, they would just slip in and out themselves with a couple of extra suitcases that would be empty on the way in. Mary pouted that Hope wouldn't let her come along. She wanted to see Montreal, too, she'd insisted. Hess was home from the Academy on a visitation pass, and asked Jack to tell him about Freeport Beach, again.

The flight from St. Louis to Chicago was uneventful. They were pestered a bit by gawkers, even in first class, but that was the cost of not flying privately, as they normally would have. The international flight from Chicago to Montreal usually required extra screening, coming and going, but their passports and faces got

them waved right through. A stewardess asked Jack for his autograph. For her little sister, she said. Hope winked at him and said that she bet she didn't even have a sister.

In Montreal, they were met by Quebecois state security. At first the police refused to speak English, and even though they both could speak it passably, Jack and Hope refused to speak French. Finally, out of frustration, the police told them that they were there to assist them, and to avoid any public disturbances. To help them. That was the last thing either of them had expected.

Jack told them that their reason for being in the country, just as he had just told customs, was to do some banking business. Their return flight left in four hours, so they wouldn't even be staying overnight. The police were relieved to hear that, once they understood. They agreed to give him a police escort to the bank and back to the airport. In exchange for an autograph, mais oui?

"For your sisters?" Jack asked them, grinning. The blue - uniformed cops mumbled to one another in French for a second in confusion.
"Non, pour..for my wifes." The younger one answered. Jack laughed as Hope rolled her eyes and produced a pen.
The front counter cashier at the Banque Nationale was alarmed to see a group of policemen escorting the two foreigners into the lobby. Her manager was even more alarmed when she saw the balance of the account they were seeking to close. And the safety deposit box.
Jack had never known just how heavy fifty pounds could be, especially when it was in fifty sixteen ounce gold bars. In monetary value, the suitcase he muscled out of the doors was worth slightly less than the over two million New American dollars Hope drug behind her in her suitcase, on its' rollers. He figured she could get some nice furniture, with that.
The Quebecois police had radioed for backup because of the withdrawal. French military police joined their parade back to the airport, past security, and right back onto the plane, an hour early

for takeoff. Hope was disappointed that they wouldn't let her stop at a souveneir shop along the way, for some wine and cheese.
Their connecting flight was to Winnipeg, where Randall was giving a speech and holding a dinner. They couldn't wait to see his face, when they showed him their carry- ons.

"Freedom, well, that's just some people talking. Your prison is walking through this world all alone."

Yvette had been working as a secretary for a week, before she found an excuse to run some paperwork over to the Governor's Office from the consulate. The stupid fax machine, always breaking. Her silly sense of direction, getting lost in the Governor's Office, and walking right in on him as he ate lunch alone. But he had been so nice, accepting her apology and inviting her to stay and share his disgusting roast beef sandwiches.

It had been too easy, telling him that he should eat better, that she would make him a good dinner with real food, good French food, the next night, as repayment. They'd seen each other three times since then, as much as his busy schedule allowed. The last time, she had let him have what he thought he wanted. The next morning, she had gotten flowers, along with a card inviting her to go to the Speaker's campaign fundraising dinner and speech with him. 'When was it? Oh, the night before the election? Why yes, she was free…'

On their second date, Paul had told her, casually, about the reason for the ongoing DNA tests, as he had heard it. It was time to finish off those dirty Muslims, once and for all. 'Those who didn't remember their history, were doomed to repeat it', he'd said. Yvette couldn't agree more.

She sent the confirmation code to Quebec City. Their mission was completed. Hers was almost done.
"When I first saw you with your smile so tender, my heart was captured, my soul surrendered."

Jack and Hope left the airport in Winnipeg, and went directly to their airport. After ordering lunch through room service, they called up Randall's security detail to tell them where they were, and their room number. Then they ate and watched the news. The Russian Empire was announcing that the last Han villages along the Yang-tze had been eradicated, and central China was now pacified. The Czar's fleet sailed south from Hokkaido, towards Taiwan. A Russian submarine had sunk a Javanese salvage vessel off the coast of Vietnam. Riots had begun throughout Angels City after F.L.D.S. missionaries had been arrested by New American authorities in Fresno. Argentina announced a new trade deal with the Republic of Texas. The Former German Chancellor had passed away in her sleep after retiring recently from a lifetime of public service. Greek and North Italian border guards had exchanged fire over a wine producer's strike…

The knock on the door startled them both. Hope had showered first, so Jack answered the door and welcomed Randall and his wife into the room. Hope came out of the bathroom, and they showed them the contents of their luggage. They were pretty surprised, to say the least. Jack handed Randall one of the one pound gold bars, as a remembrance of his dad, and hopped in the shower, himself. Hope asked the S.S. to secure their luggage in the hotel's vault. A few minutes later, he had dressed and they were on their way to the dinner.

Travelling together in the Speaker's armored personnel carrier, they told them abo ut the trip, and Montreal. Then Mrs. Balderson asked Jack how his college work was going. The small talk evaporated as their protective convoy arrived at the stadium.

The group disembarked, then were hustled to a dressing room backstage, under heavy guard. There, they talked about the elections, and the likelihood that the ruling Nationalist Party would maintain control of the Congress, and the legislative branch. A half hour before the scheduled speech, the S.S. knocked on the

door, and ushered in Governor Martin and his date for the evening.

They shook hands all around, then talked about how cold the weather still was up this far North and what was being served for dinner. The Speaker took Paul aside to discuss his talking points, and the Governor's date, a tanned blonde woman he'd introduced as Yvette, asked where the ladies' room was, and excused herself. Hope and Mrs. Balderson were talking about how hard it was being a mother these days, and how lucky she was to have a good nanny, when Jack saw the Governor's date reenter the room from the restroom. Something about her eyes, cold and reptilian, made him look closer. His instincts moved him toward the Speaker, placing himself between the two men and Yvette. Governor Martin looked up at her, and his smile froze as her arm rose, pointing a small semi-automatic pistol at the Speaker, who looked confused. Hope pushed Mrs. Balderson down onto the floor and began to draw a knife from her purse. In a cool and detached part of his mind, Jack observed that it would be a long and underhanded throw for her. She would never make it. No Harolding way.

Jack was happy. Happy that he had a chance to be the center of everybody's world. Happy to have it all up to him. Happy to have an excuse to kill, without mercy. Happy that he could be here, as nobody was for his dad. At least, nobody good enough.

His suit jacket was unbuttoned, as he reached with both hands simultaneously for the crossdraw Glocks in the shoulder holsters. He had walked in and out of airport security without even thinking about them, he was so used to wearing them everywhere he went, and never being questioned. Putting them on had become as natural as putting on his pants.

She hadn't said a word. Like a professional. Almost detache d. No wasted motion or time or effort with useless, pointless words. Yvette shot first, before he could clear leather. Jack had no idea where that bullet went, or the one after. The third one, though, he

tracked exactly, as it slammed into him and hammered his chest back, right in the middle of his sidelong dive. The young man's twin .45's leveled, and he began firing both at once. Above left, above left and on target, on target, on target, on target and below right, below right. Jack and Yvette both hit the floor at the same time, but she had more holes in her, than he did.

He tried to sit up. He couldn't catch his breath. Somebody somewhere was crying, and somebody else was coughing wetly, but it couldn't be him because it hurt too much to suck in air. His big sister was there, telling him to stay with her. He tried sipping air a bit, instead of gulping it in. At least Yvette had stopped coughing. He could see her leg sticking out of the dark green cocktail dress from where he lay. It still trembled, but without purpose. Oh, the rush. He was trembling, himself, he noticed. Jack closed his eyes to steady himself. His ears rang again.

Nobody else was hurt. A lamp and a wall had been hit on one side, and a cocktail dress and second wall ruined on the other. The Speaker and his wife, and Hope and the governor, were untouched. Mrs. Balderson stopped sobbing, when she saw that her husband was fine.

The paramedics said Jack had a broken rib or two, but the .40 caliber round hadn't penetrated his Kevlar. They'd take him in for an x-ray and to bind them and give him some pain meds, but he would be okay. At the Speaker's insistence, the speech and the dinner would go on, even though Governor Martin was visibly shaken. Hope rode in the ambulance with him, while the S.S. took witness statement and collected the evidence, and Yvette. Paul watched them bag her up, sadly. His shoulders raised up and down, and then he was fine.

The media, who hadn't been told of the incident, remarked on how somber and dignified the incumbent looked that evening, as if he were reflecting on his legacy. He spoke briefly about the need for unity, and strength; for love, and compassion. Then he cautioned them not to turn their compassion outwards, to those

who might deceive them with kind words, but to remain wary and trust only those who had proven themselves trustworthy. The hawks in his party loved it. Speaker Balderson, whom he introduced with a flourish, felt upstaged.

When Jack was released from the hospital the next day, his left arm in a sling to keep it still and his ribs from moving, Hope was still with him. She had called her nanny and told her what had happened, and left a message on Kip's voicemail. Secret Service accompanied them back to the hotel, for their luggage. On the way, they heard on the radio that the French Premier had denied that the French woman who had died in a car accident in Winnipeg was an employee of their government, despite her identification. Exit polls indicated that Governor Martin would win a landslide reelection victory, after Speaker Balderson's endorsement speech the night before. It was expected to rain, all week.

Back in St. Louis, Jack had half of the gold, about half a million New American dollars worth, deposited in a safety deposit box in the Bank of New America, downtown. Like father, like son. The remainder he had converted to cash at current market value, and hired a broker to invest a quarter of it into Republic of Texas Petroleum futures, a quarter into Ford Motor Co., and a quarter into New American government bonds to help finance the Lunar base expansion. With a couple of calls, the base optometrist had another pair of glasses in his prescription sent over. The remaining quarter, about two hundred and fifty thousand New American dollars' worth, he placed in a handful of interest bearing accounts in different banks, which he could draw from as needed, before heading back to school two days later.

On the morning he was to leave, Kip returned from his trip just in time to hear the whole story, be sworn to secrecy, and give Jack a letter 'from a mutual friend out West'. He told him to wait to read it until he was on the way back to college. The Secretary of State was astounded at the financial windfall, as much as he was by the

dramatic adventure, all around. Mary told Jack that he should stay with them and recover. She offered to nurse him back to full health. She was trained for it, after all. She even offered to let him stay in her room, where she could keep an eye on him until he got better. Hope nipped that in the bud by reminding Mary that he couldn't afford to get behind in his classes, if he wanted to make his promotion on schedule. In reality, she and Jack both knew that Randall Balderson would make Jack a General right now, if he asked for it.

On the flight home, he shifted uncomfortably in the seat, trying to find a position that didn't hurt his ribs. The stewardess gave Jack extra special attention, because he was injured and in uniform, even before she recognized him. When the other passengers started to complain about being neglected, he had a chance to open the letter one handed and read it, from out West. It made him grin so big, that he had to read it again. Twice.

Tracy and her parents were there waiting for him when he got off the plane, unexpectedly. They had wanted to wait and meet him before they went home after flying back with her at the end of the break to tour the campus and meet with her professors. All three of them were alarmed at his injury. He told them that he got it from falling down in Manitoba. It was, after all, the truth. Tracy was very gentle when she hugged Jack. At least, until her parents waved goodbye and got on their plane. Then his ribs hurt, more than before.

Chapter Ten

"In an age of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act."
- George Orwell
“You can't fight the tears that ain't coming, or the moment of truth in your lies. When everything seems like the movies, yeah, you bleed just to know you're alive…”

The two genetically targeted viral pandemics, the Turkish Flu and the African Flu, along with their different strains and variations, had killed off seventy percent of the world’s population over little more than a single decade. Over four billion, three hundred and eighty million lives were lost, due to the laboratory work of a few genocidal virologists. That astounding number included not just those who died directly from the contagion, of which ten to fifteen percent of the targeted population groups were totally or partially immune, but also those who succumbed to starvation, warfare, and secondary diseases which resulted from the collapse of order in the affected nations. In Africa and Asia, the homo sapien species became endangered of extinction.

A further seven hundred million, give or take, died from the other effects of The Balk. During what would become known as the Bottleneck, nearly a hundred nuclear weapons were used on Omaha, Colorado Springs, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, Providence, Beijing, Hainan, Cairo, and the ancient cities of the Middle East. That was aside from the smaller tactical nukes used in New Orleans, Tel Aviv, and in northern India. A larger percentage died from starvation and ethnic cleansing merging into civil wars than from the direct effects of nuclear weapons, however, especially the first winter.

Another decade of declining health standards and nutrition led to a further reduction in global population numbers from hunger and illness. Life became, in many areas, brutal and short, once again.

By the time Captain E ric Gruber's C-140 crew had buckled in and gotten clearance from the Darwin Field tower to take off, the Earth's human population hovered at around one billion, four hundred million. With the special cargo they were carrying on the hot northern Australian day, their mission was to reduce that by another seven percent. The six Indonesian teens who had survived months of torturous medical experimentation were restrained in the back. Tied to fold-down seats and wearing parachute packs, their eyes were dead, their faces slack. The four armed guards weren't even necessary. Seeing eight of their friends die as they endured blood sampling and injections on a daily basis had taken all of the spirit out of them.

Capt. Gruber's pre -flight meeting with the big transport's nine man crew had been brief, but blunt. Unified Command intelligence indicated that the Javanese Caliphate planned to attack Australia. With over a hundred million people, nearly a quarter of that under arms, the Muslim horde couldn't be stopped using conventional means. The amount of nuclear devices required to destroy that size of an army would also poison much of their allies' land area, so that wasn't an option, either. They had to go biological.

He remembered the cold eyes of his co-pilot, Lt. Williams, dancing as he outlined their mission. Williams had no family left alive older than himself. They had all been in Omaha, while the air force brat had been visiting his grandparents out of town due to the growing chaos in the cities. He had married and had kids of his own, but at times seemed almost reptilian and emotionless. Some scars were just too deep to heal.

The rest of the crew were too young to remember much before the Balk, and just wanted to get this over with and go to the only home and the only life they knew, back in New America. They had no idea what they had lost, Eric thought. It must be nice, not knowing what you were missing. He remembered the old world all too well. Some days he woke up thinking for a few seconds that

the last twenty years had just been a bad dream. Then he realized that it was true. Usually about the time he noticed that the bed was empty beside him, where his young wife used to lay.

As they had finished the pre-flight checklist, Williams had pushed the power button on the decidedly non-regulation CD player wired directly into the dashboard avionics power grid, and out to the intercom system. He reached an open hand out to Eric. Shaking his headphoned noggin from side to side in amusement, Capt. Gruber gave his copilot a thumb's up. Smiling back, Williams pulled a sleeve of CDs from inside his flight jacket, and flipped it open.

"Okay, here we go." Williams said, almost under his breath. The Captain grinned.

"Just remind the cargo handlers to push the kids out after we're over land." He said, cutting into the intercom so those in the back could hear him.
"Alright, but do we tell them where the Harolding cord is to pull first, or not? I forgot!" came the sarcastic response from the tail.
Taxiing down the runway and gaining thrust, the first bars of the new popular Celtic Punk band 'Rising Eire''s hit song 'Elbow Room' filled the cockpit and cabin with the screech of electric bagpipes. In moments they were lifting and turning in a slow circle over the Pacific, headed West. The whole crew knew the words, and sang along, to rid themselves of the jitters. Some just mumbled, but Williams really belted it out:

"Went to see you in a zoo, cause you were always last to bloom,
Now your kind's runnin' on fumes, we got us some elbow room"

The second half of the semester at the Soldiers Of The Cross Training Center passed more quickly than the first. Jack reverted back to a study of advanced propaganda techniques, mass psychology, and oratory. Tracy spent every possible hour with him, making it clear to all of the other girls that McNabb was her personal territory. On weekends they went hiking and swimming

together, or drove into town to eat. He filled in twice more on Sundays at the pulpit, to practice the public speaking techniques he was learning, and engaged the academic staff in several debates in both Lincoln-Douglas and Parliamentary style, as well as Socratic interrogation. His hearing loss gave him the habit of inclining his head towards the person he was debating, a trait he used to his advantage, as a gesture of cordiality, to disarm them. He wore his glasses on stage, and driving, when he needed them.

Nine weeks passed by, and the time came for his graduation, just a week after his seventeenth birthday. Jack had received cards and e-mails and letters and calls from all over the world congratulating him on the graduation and the birthday, but the ones which meant the most to him came from Hope and Kip; Mary, who sent an X and O filled note of her own, and Julia, who sent him a birthday card smeared with lipstick.

He spent the special day with Tracy having a picnic on a mountaintop, then rock climbing while she watched, duly impressed by his display of fearlessness. That evening after dinner, she gave him a special present. In a silver box, salvaged on one of her childhood excursions to the old capitol, was a weather-stained oval insignia the size of a small dinner plate. The eagle in its center was surrounded by the words ‘Seal of the President of the United States’. Jack thought that it was the coolest gift ever.

“This belongs to you. It’s your destiny,” she said, as she placed it in his hands. He turned it over, looking at the design. It looked like it had been mounted, somewhere.
“Maybe, but who knows what our destiny is?” he replied, setting it carefully back in the box.
“Betrothed, not to sound patriotic, but Randall Balderson isn’t a real leader. He’s just a placeholder for you. He’s a…a regent.” Jack raised an eyebrow.
“For me, you mean?” He looked doubtful.

“For you and nobody else in the world. You were born to lead. And I was made for you.” Tracy declared.
“And nobody else?” he asked, his lips touching hers. She answered him without words.
As he packed to go back to St. Louis to await orders, there was tension in the air. The Third fleet was rejoining the Fifth and Seventh in the Pacific, and the new Atlantic fleet was taking over operational control of its’ own theater. All active duty troops in the Unified Command were being redeployed. The news was full of Caliph Moerdani’s face, threatening to undertake the Islamification of Australia and declaring Sharia law in Java. Rumors of war were everywhere.
Tracy was afraid for him, but proud at the same time. Her plans were to move to St. Louis as soon as she graduated in four months, and go to work for the State department or the Speaker’s office or some other Executive bureau, so they could be together. She talked about getting their own place. At the airport, she tried not to cry, and almost did it. He promised to call or e-mail her as often as he was able. Her tears tasted salty, but gratifying, as he climbed aboard with a secret smile.
Waiting for him at Lambert Field was a letter of promotion to Captain, and deployment orders to Coos Bay. He had a twenty four hour leave before he had to muster for the award ceremony and unit assignment and briefing. Jack called Tracy and told her that he had made it, and shared the news with her about his promotion, just as he’d sworn to. Then he called Hope, to tell her that he was in town for the day and would stop by later. She said that she’d have lunch ready.
It was too early for the banks to open, so he took a cab over to the Old Courthouse and told his mom and dad about the promotion, at their monuments. He wished his dad could see Tracy and Julia, he told him. He didn’t mention Mary, that would have been kind of awkward. Especially in front of his mom.
Jack did a whirlwind tour of four banks he had accounts in, creating a minor riot, checking balances and withdrawing a few thousand New American dollars for spending money. Then he stopped by a florist, and paid handsomely for a contract requiring

them to send a single red rose to Julia with his name attached to a card, and the same each week for the next four months until graduation to Tracy, at the college. Next, he decided to save some time the next day by going to the Unified Command's Quartermaster Division office now. McNabb's letter of promotion and his recognizable face got him a new Captain's dress uniform, two sets of rank insignia, four sets of battle dress utilities, and the rest of his equipment and gear. With the cab's trunk stuffed full, he finally went to the Warehouse, to his family, and his home.

Mary had been watching the security camera monitors all morning for her Step-Uncle to finally get there. When she saw his cab turn up the street, she jumped up and frantically began brushing her hair and straightening the top she had picked out to wear today. The teenager was out the door and past the honor guard to throw herself into his arms before the driver could get the trunk open.

It had been a long time since he had been back, and Jack admired the new furniture along the way as Mary dragged him upstairs to see her new bedroom. He stopped at the door as she ran from one point of interest to another in the small suite, decorated in French Versailles style. That was a shocking scandal for her parents, considering how things were with France these days, she told him. Mary invited him to come and sit on the bed to see how soft it was, but he demurred, using the excuse that he had to go see if the guards had put his bags in the right room, since they'd changed everything so much. She pouted, but followed along.

His room was still unchanged, of course, regardless of Jack's joke. He hung up his uniforms and repacked his other gear in his issue duffel bag, to be ready for in the morning. Mary sat on the edge of his dresser and talked constantly about how much time she had spent in here, wondering what he was doing in college, all this time. He told her about his classes and the hikes in the mountains, but mercifully left out any mention of Tracy. A guard knocked on the outside of the open door, to let them know that it was time for lunch. Jack noticed that the S.S. uniform had changed, becoming more severe and crisp looking, as they followed him to the elevator.

After lunch, Captain McNabb tried on his dress uniform, and he and Hope went to see Kip. Mary was told to stay and watch the younger kids. Her mom had noticed how smitten she was, and it embarrassed Hope more than it did her brother. On the way over she apologized, but Jack shrugged it off with a joke. He was used to it.

The Secretary of State's secretary buzzed them right in, and as they entered his office Kip got up and came around the desk to thump the two bars on Jack's epaulet, grinning.

"So, you got the promotion! In my day you wouldn't even be old enough to vote, much less lead troops," he teased.

"In your day, you'd have been eaten by a sabre-tooth tiger by now, old man," Jack shot back. The two men shook hands, and they all sat down in the leather chairs arranged there for small staff meetings.

"Now, I hear you've become quite the celebrity. And teen heartthrob," the Secretary of State smiled, moving some papers out of the way. Jack blushed. It was one of the things that girls loved about him, he always turned red easily. Hope nudged him with her elbow.

"All the girls want to have his babies, and all the boys want to be just like him, from what Hess says," she eyed Jack to see if he could a deeper shade of crimson. The far corner of the ceiling suddenly became very interesting for the new Captain.

After some small talk, Kip told Jack about the mission they were undertaking. The week before, six highly contagious virus carriers had been airdropped into the Caliphate, four in Java, and two in their largest off-island colony, Kuala Lumpur. The operation, which was still highly classified, had created a few disease vectors, but the 'Moerdani's Gift' virus wasn't spreading as rapidly as Dr. Edwards had predicted. From what Tommy Bullens could determine, Sur was having whole villages around the landing sites quarantined and burned off, with the occupants still inside. It was heartless, but effective in slowing the spread of the virus.

In retaliation, the Caliphate's entire army was massing, apparently to make good on his invasion threats. The intelligence division was also concerned by satellite radiation readings picked up by

some of Gen. Ball's space-based monitoring stations on the lunar surface. Aside from the three preexisting readings from Java, there now were two more…and the sources looked to be mobile.
"Does that mean that he has a couple of bombs?" Jack asked.
Hope sucked in her breath, in fear. This was the first time she had heard about the radiation signatures.
"They seem to have originated from the previous three sources, so probably Moerdani has made collected some fissionable material from the research reactors. Low yield, but very radioactive fallout." Kip answered.
"So, our job is to put an end to this before he ruins a big chunk of down under, huh?" McNabb asked.
"Not just that. He could use them to open the whole continent up for invasion. And once he gets a foothold…" Kip let his thought trail off.
Jack leaned back. "Well, do we have a better means of infecting them with the new virus?"
Hope looked shocked. "Jack, we've already tried that. You heard him, it didn't work. To try again would take too long."
"Actually," Kip interjected, "we do have a plan in the works as we speak. Plan B. Not too creative, but it should soften them up before we send the poor guys like you in."
Jack looked at his sister. "See, worry wart? There's always a contingency plan."

"I come here to put my arms around you and tell you one final goodbye, so come and let me put my arms around you, and I'll see you on the other side."

"Do you ever get the weird feeling of vuja de?" Eric asked Lt. Williams, as they were met by their F-22 escorts from the N.A.S. Valley Forge.
"Do you mean the strange sensation that somehow, what you're experiencing hasn't ever happened before?" his co-pilot finished the old joke.
For this trip, the cargo bay was filled with eighteen racks of pressurized tanks holding an aerosol version of 'Moerdani's Gift'.

‘Plan B’ consisted of flying low over the island, and dispensing the viral load. Cargo masters in the rear bay would switch out each set of tanks as they emptied. The dangerous aspect of the mission was that they would have to fly low and slow, to get a good dispersal pattern.
The Caliph’s air force had been badly depleted by the recent conflicts with the New American fleet’s air wing, but two outdated Taiwanese Air Force jets rose to meet them as they descended over the Timor Sea. The F-22s swatted them out of the sky like flies from twenty miles away with air to air missiles. The two men in the C140’s cockpit watched the streams of fire whoosh away, then the radar blips disappeared from their screen. A long Chinese Mig got a shade closer, before suffering a similar fate. Before the next contact, they were edging over the steep mountainous coast, and Gruber hit the ‘active’ button to signal the Cargo master’s to begin earning their dinner.
The first set of tanks got them past Kupang, at such a low altitude that Eric could swear he saw people running in the streets below as they approached. When they crossed the strait and dived in towards Mataram a few minutes later, anti-aircraft fire streamed up to meet them.
“Well, at least somebody is awake down there.” Williams snarled.
The Captain nodded and pulled up, so as not to belly into the stream of flak rising in a deadly arc. Another gun emplacement opened up to their North, and was quickly silenced by an air to ground missile barrage from their escorts. The buildings of the city loomed up like cypress knees out of the smog swamp, then passed behind them. A thunk and screech of shifting pallets in the back indicated another change in aerosol tanks. The ‘ready’ light turned green. They were right on schedule. Under his breath, he sang…

“I’ll fly away, oh glory, I’ll fly away. When I die, hallelujah, by and by, I’ll fly away…”

He had seen video of one of the teenaged girls, hanging from a tree by her parachute harness. She had begged for help until a

villager had climbed up and cut her down, careful to catch her before she fell. That villager had been bedridden the next day. He, and his family, were dead two days later. This viral strain, whatever it was, was much quicker acting and deadlier than the original. The symptoms were similar: diarrhea and vomiting, followed by passing blood, then bleeding from all orifices, and death, for most. Sur really had to give credit to whomever had done the virology work for the infidels. His newly called up army had surrounded the half dozen sites as quickly as possible. Kuala Lumpur and a village at the foot of Mount Merapi had not been contained, and the virus was spreading there. The rest of the sites, he had ordered quarantined and bulldozed and burned. Anyone who tried to leave was shot. It reminded him of the good old days, only in reverse.

His big twin surprises were ready, and being loaded onto old tankers, since they had ended up being much larger than he had expected. Each was the size of a car. Not that it would matter. They would do the job, just the same. Two hundred thousand martyrs were ready to cross the Timor Sea to Australia, at his command.

The first reports of another unidentified craft, he just discounted. Their New American fleet did flyovers every day. Then the reports clarified that a flight of incoming aircraft were making their way, at low altitude, across Java, from East to West. A half dozen of his impossible to replace fighter interceptors had been lost, trying to stop them, by the time a sickening twist in the Caliph's gut made him realize what they were doing. A chemtrail, the air defense marshal said. Oh. Oh. Those clever, clever prophet-denying infidels.

He had to act quickly. He was out of time. Moerdani frantically called his officer of the day. "Tell every plane we have to get up and take down that spraying demon, any way they can. Crash into it if they have to. Allah will be grateful and reward their martyrdom. Stop that plane, at all costs!"

“Yes, my Caliph,” the General replied. “And the invasion? Should we postpone it until the situation is clearer?”
“No! Now, load them now, on every boat that floats, every ship, send them now, it starts now! I declare a jihad against the infidel unbelievers. Jihad!” Sur screamed at him. They were all so Harolding stupid.
In Yogyakarta, the throngs of Muslim holy warriors were ordered to begin climbing aboard the flotilla of private craft they had amassed for the crossing. It would take at least three days for the lead elements, the faster ships, to arrive at Darwin. The rest would filter in behind them, as quickly as they could. The operation began in Lombok, too, but some of the soldiers there were already reporting feeling nausea. Their officers yelled at them and called them cowards and whipped them onto the boats. In less than two hours, a large part of the army was on the water, headed South.
One of their F-22 escorts took a direct hit after they were swarmed by several fighter jets at once, and pinwheeled out of the sky. Eric heard the pilot curse then begin to pray before he impacted. Reinforcements with full loads of armaments arrived to replace their other escorts before the interceptors attempted one final approach. They were knocked out of the sky from a safe distance. By the time they dispensed the second to last set of tanks over Jakarta, the Javanese were throwing helicopters and training planes and even a passenger jet at them. Their desperation hurt to watch. He looked at Williams, and exchanged grim nods. This day would stick with them.
“Man, Lieutenant, don’t you have any tunes?” he growled. Back in the cargo bay, the last set was in place. They turned as tight a U-turn as could be made in such a beast, as the green light turned on, again. Gruber finished his arc and aimed for the biggest buildings in the city, downtown. The path took them through the aerosol stream they had just released, dispersing like a thinning cloud as it fell onto the city.
“Hey, Captain, you got any Indian in ya?” Williams yelled, as the aerosol washed over their windshield.

“Nah, I passed the test, without even studying. How about you?” he answered. His co- pilot just grinned. They’d soon find out.

“On the wings of a snow white dove, God sent his pure sweet love, yes he sent down his love, on the wings of a dove…”

Some six thousand five hundred miles away, Captain Jack McNabb was sitting on a Hawaiian beach in his issue swimsuit, telling Sergeant Chittum and a group of four junior officers about Yvette. Now that the election was over, the incident had been mentioned casually in the news, so he felt safe giving his side of the story. With a bit of embellishment, of course.

When he’d shown up for mission briefing and unit assignment, he’d requested that his old platoon be one of the four assigned to him as his new Company. Sgt. Chittum, grumpy as always, had been glad to see him. He could tell by how the noncom criticized his gear as being too shiny and noisy. The rest of the guys stood a little taller, to be back with him, and relished being the pets of the Company. They were designated First Platoon. That had made the other three noncoms push their men even harder. Since this was his first Company-sized command, McNabb would have only sixty men to potentially mess up with. After some experience, he would earn a couple more platoons.

They had expected another long train ride, but instead they’d been loaded immediatel y onto troop transport planes after a ten minute dissertation on the situation by Gen. Ferguson himself, from a stage in the assembly hall. The eight thousand assembled Unified Command soldiers tried reading the faces of their nearest officers for more insight into what they were headed into. Jack, like the rest, kept his best poker face. General Brown had already given the officers a more in-depth briefing, minutes before. It had pretty much jived with what Kip had told him, with less specifics. This was just a back-slapping cheerleading session, by comparison. Starless Stripes everywhere, ‘America The Beautiful’ playing softly in the background, the works.

A force of the size being moved would be leapfrogged in stages across half the continent to Coos Bay, to load onboard the Seventh fleet. The skies above St. Louis were soon crowded with planes, headed out. It hadn't been a flight of comfort, and Jack had used the time to chat with his four new lieutenants and their noncoms. He knew it was crucial that he get to know them, and build some bonds of trust, before they went into battle together. He might have to give these men an order that would mean their deaths, or worse, the deaths of their men. They needed to have faith in him.

During the three h our mess break in Coos Bay, they hadn't had much of a chance to see the growing Oregon city. Just the naval base alongside the airstrip, and a gray stretch of rocky, churned up mud flats from the excavations. Most of the town was inland, they'd seen as they landed.

Sgt. Chittum took lead over the other noncommissioned officers in instructing their men to use the bathroom, get something to eat, and reassemble in an hour. Just like herding kindergarteners, he called it. The base was so crowded that it was hard to even move through the halls. This was a huge operation, they realized. They were a part of something really, really big.

As Jack wolfed down some macaroni and cheese and Salisbury steak in the officer's mess, he listened with half an ear to the rumors being shared. Most of the officers were just as scared and clueless as the men they commanded. They just weren't allowed to show it. In between their conversations, many of them kept stealing sidelong glances at the celebrity. One thing he hated, was how everybody looked at him like he was expected to perform, all the time. He could never just be. A plasma screen in the corner flashed images of men like them loading onto ships just like they would be, but the conversation was too loud to hear what they were saying about it. Since it was the Post Dispatch TV news broadcast, he could imagine it, though. Sisk-boom-bah, rah rah rah, go troops!

After another trip to the head, just to make sure, he got all of his junior officers together and ordered a headcount, claiming a corner of a terminal waiting area as their own, right between two other units. Officially named Company C of the 4th Battalion, 2nd Regiment of the New American Expeditionary Force, they were still a few helmets short. Captain McNabb sent two corporals back to the enlisted mess hall to round the slow eaters up. After they returned and another headcount confirmed the lost sheep were all there, he had all four platoons do stretches, pushups, and sit-ups, before herding up again. The next leg of their trip would be even longer.

Soon a loudspeaker announced directions for each unit, twice, and they pushed and shoved in a good-natured and somewhat orderly fashion to the right pier, and managed to find the right ship launch, amid the organized chaos. Walking up and down, he organized his Company by platoons, and squeezed them into line with the others. The troop carrier they were set to board loomed above them, just twenty feet from the edge of the dock. The ships were really packed in tight, in and around the port. Slowly, the line started shuffling forward.

Getting them all to their quarters as the first order of business, so the soldiers could get out of the way of the crew, and the ship could get underway. Another just like it was waiting in line next to sidle up and take on another regiment.

In less than a half hour, they felt movement, and wished they could see the ocean topside. It felt like they were in a steel tomb. He ran his finger along a fresh weld in the bulkhead, still damp with its' new coat of gray paint. Jack tried not to think about how far below the water line they were, or how long it would take to fight their way to the top deck if anything went wrong. He just hoped he would get used to it.

Over the next four days, he did, kind of. In rotation each Company got some deck time each day for calisthenics and fresh air. The rest of the time was spent checking and rechecking gear, mission

briefings giving updated reports on the situation as it developed, and lots of joking and story-telling and camaraderie building. Jack had been sitting in his bunk, writing a letter to Tracy, when Lt. Shaddon stuck his head in his curtain, knocking against the steel rail as he did.

“Captain McNabb, Sir, Colonel West requests your presence in the officer’s club,

Sir.”
“Son of a…” Jack sighed. The letter would have to wait. Just his Harolding luck.
“Okay, thanks, Lieutenant, as you were.” He put the half-written page and the bible he
had been using as a desk to write it on back into his duffel, scooted it under the bunk with
his boot, and straightened his b.d.u. uniform.
“Does my hair look pretty?” he asked Shaddon. The junior officer smiled back good-
naturedly, and saluted.
Col. West had called a meeting of his Company officers to give them the latest: they
were going to lay up at Pearl-Hickam for a day while the rest of the fleet caught up, and
they refueled for the final leg of the trip. From here on out they would be in contested
waters, so the men were being granted a shore leave. It was 0800 local time, and they
were to be back on board and ready to depart by 0800 the next morning. As Jack got up to go and tell his men the good news, Col. West caught his eye and motioned him
towards him. Uh-oh.
“I just got a special order, directly from the Secretary of Defense, about you, Captain.”
West said, eyeing McNabb up and down critically.
“Sir, with all due respect, I’m not sure I’m ready for the responsibility of taking

command of the regiment, yet, Sir.” Jack quipped. The Colonel blinked, weighing
whether to get mad as a wet cat over the smart-mouthed remark, or take it as a joke. He
chose the latter.
“Neither do I, Captain. So, I guess we’re both lucky that wasn’t the order. No, I’ve
been ordered to make sure that you stay safe, when we get to the fighting. How do you
feel about that, son?”
Jack frowned. “Sir, in my experience, the safest place to be in a battle is so close to the
enemy that they can’t see you in their sights, Sir!” He answered back in regulation form
this time, erect, eyes forward.
“Good, I’m glad to hear you say that, Jack, because you wouldn’t be your father’s son
if you felt any differently.” West replied, softening his tone. “Look, Captain, I’ve read
your record, you’ve proven yourself, nobody doubts that you’re the real deal. But if you
know as much about what we’re wading into as I do, you know that it could get real dirty,
real quick.”
“I won’t let the Colonel or my men down, Sir.” Jack promised. The Colonel saluted
him, and Jack stiffly returned the gesture.
“I didn’t think you would, son.” the graying man reassured him. “Now, go tell your
troops to prepare for beaches and bikinis, within the hour.” Jack grinned, spun on his heel
smartly, and headed midships.
It was actually more like four hours before they docked and were secured and the
hatch opened, and another hour before they could find the beach. And, the bikinis were
outnumbered by troops splashing in the water and roasting in the

sand by twenty to one.
Still, here they were in Hawaii. Jack tried to not to think of how many people had starved
here, after the Balk and the Chinese occupation. Oahu, which was not on their tour list,
was a port town of 10,000, but very few of those had survived the starving time here. “Hey, Captain, do you reckon any of them poor cannibal wretches are still around?”
Lieutenant Adams interrupted, rubbing SPF 50 sun block all over his face. Great timing. “Only at the officer’s club, Adams.” He replied, before getting back to his story. He
was almost to the good part.

Chapter Eleven

“Anyone who says that the Prophet was black should be killed.” Ahmad ibn Abi Sulayman, the companion of Sahnun. Ibn Musa alYahsubi, Qadi ‘Iyad, p.375”

“Stop and think it over. Put yourself in my unique position. If I get stoned and sing all night long, it’s a family tradition.”

The Third and Fifth fleets’ combined air wings strafed and bombed the small pleasure craft and speedboats and yachts and fishing boats that dotted the ocean like a swarm of ants. After two days on the open water, they came under almost constant attack from the air and the sea. There were so many of them, the naval guns had to concentrate on the front edges of the wave. The radio traffic was filled with commands, responses and questions without answers. Far below, the dark sea was turned to fire by the ordinance and spilled fuel. Still, the fanatical jihadists surged Southwards.

The two arms of the seaborne invasion met and mingled in the Beagle Gulf. Half of the crews were already sick, to the point of not being fit for duty. They anchored off the Tiwi islands and radioed for help. Moerdani screamed and cursed at them over the radio. The northern wing hadn’t been hit by the aerosol dispersal, and were not yet infected. Their combat effectiveness was only being degraded by their losses from air attacks. The commander of the flotilla begged his Caliph for air cover, to fight off the New American attacks. Sur not so patiently told him that there were no more planes left to send, and that his duty was to continue the jihad.

The missile cruisers of the Third fleet began to destroy the sitting targets of the southern flotilla at anchor, before the big guns of their destroyers kicked into the fray. The Fifth cruised between the

northern flotilla and Bathurst island, while the air wings continued their bloodbath. The carnage grew, and the flotillas sank.

Miles to the East and West of the raging slaughter, a single tanker slipped away on each side, heading Southwards on trajectories of their own. Their departure went unnoticed, amid the confusion of battle.

“Well, I’ve been all around this great big world, and I’ve seen all kinds of girls..”

Company C reluctantly put their battle dress utilities back on over their swimming wear the next morning, after a night on the beach. Jack didn’t mind, there hadn’t been enough girls to go around, anyway, and the enlisted females were off limits to officers such as himself. Fraternization, they called it. Oh well. Sgt. Chittum and a few of the other men were still buzzed from a night of drinking, but they staggered up the gangway with the rest of them. After all were accounted for, they hit their bunks for a nap. The sun and swimming had drained them. Over the next twelve days, they would have plenty of time to recover.

“Oh, but I couldn’t wait to get back to the States, back to the cutest girls in the world…”

The Fifth Fleet made a stand at Coconut Grove by the d awn’s early light, firing up the small boats who had slipped closer under the cover of darkness during the night. Soon, the F-22s were airborne again, using the daylight to their advantage. The Javanese invasion force, poorly prepared and without air cover, had lost half its’ strength to sickness from the virus, and another quarter to direct combat action. A landing in Darwin itself was impossible. However, the invasion fleet was so large and scattered out, that it could not be destroyed in one fell swoop. Minute by minute, hour by hour, the leading edge of the flotilla was chewed up. The commanders of the vessels in the rear of the formation saw this, and attempted to peel off to the West. A few dozen boats carrying about a thousand jihadists slipped past the

fleet into the middle arm and made landfall. The next day they captured the small town of Berry Springs. The frightened townspeople, long fearing an invasion of this kind, fled towards Darwin. The invaders held their position until the larger mass of ships in the rear, fleeing the air assault, beached on the West bank of Port Darwin as the day finally faded. The eighteen thousand, four hundred holy warriors hiked; wet, tired and miserable, along Highway 34 all night, hiding in the ditches when planes flew over from time to time. While the remainder of the fleet was sunk in Beagle Gulf, they slunk into Berry Springs.

The Battle of Beagle Gulf had lasted forty-eight hours. It had been, really, an example of massed numbers against massed firepower, and the firepower had won. Back in Jakarta, Moerdani fumed. He had lost communication with his forces for long hours. Finally, at dawn the second day, the Caliph had confirmed that less than twenty thousand of his quarter million men had survived the crossing. Two hundred and thirty thousand men, nearly his entire army, had been blown up, shot, burned, or drowned; or were scattered up and down the Australian coast, being mopped up, one boat at the time. He could ill afford to worry about them, though. The aerosol fog had torn a strip down the center of the heart of his nation. Tens of thousands of his people were already dead, and the virus was spreading, outwards, North and South, in both directions. Soon, things would reach the tipping point, where panic would set in. The former doctor issued an order for all of his most loyal and crucial supporters, all who had received the vaccination and booster, to join him at the Caliphate palace. There were several thousand of them, all together. They would save what they could, for the work of Allah. Sur still had a couple of cards to play.

It had been a hellish day, night, day, and second night, from the air. Gruber could only imagine how it must have been on the ground, and on the waves. After the first twelve hours, the first and second string carrier air wing pilots had been exhausted, so the third string, those of them who normally flew less deadly and

aerodynamic craft, were red flagged if they had qualified on the F-22s. Eric had, back when he was a green Lieutenant. Williams hadn't, so the lucky bugger watched the fireworks from the navcomm deck. Captain Gruber had flown mission after mission, without a single shot headed downrange towards him. Load up ordinance, take off from the deck, dump the ordinance on the biggest mass of ships you could find, then go back to load up again. After six hours he was so sore and wired so tight that he almost undershot the landing deck. They pulled him off the line for six hours of sleep with a sedative, then woke him up with a stimulant. The first stringers had gone through their shift again, and there were still jihadis to sink. The tired but determined pilot saddled up for another ride. Rinse, cycle repeat. He had never seen so many small ships in one place. As far as the horizon, there were sailboats and catamarans, cigarette boats and fishing trawlers, cabin cruisers and patrol boats. Most of them halfway out were sinking, capsized, or on fire. Those in the rear were shearing off for greener pastures, instead of coming at Darwin head-on.

By his third rotation into the grinder, Eric noticed that most of the craft still under power were no longer engaged. They had, from his vantage point, run themselves aground across the bay, and been abandoned. That meant that the Caliph's surviving men were afoot and loose somewhere, but the overwhelming majority of boats were dead in the water. Literally. Thousands of boats, lifeless now, bobbing in the burning waves. It sure looked like Hell to him.

Ground radar stations in Darwin and carrier based radar systems on board the 'Ruby Ridge' were sweeping the coastline for any moving craft. The two biggest signatures, while not engaged in the action, also failed to answer any frequencies. Both were at the fringes of the operational area, and moving away, in opposite directions. Gruber and three other F-22 subs were ordered to refuel rearm, and investigate, eyes on, the nearest unknown. That

must mean we're about done here, he thought to himself, as he coasted in.

Moerdan i had estimated that it would take a week for the tanker, with its' skeleton crew, to make its' way down to Perth. Once there, they were to arm and detonate the dirty bomb stowed in a container on deck. It should be enough to destroy the port and poison the city, killing a million Australians, if the winds were right. The good citizens of Derby had been glued to their tellies watching news coverage of the invasion and massive sea battle taking place up in Darwin, a thousand miles away. Most of them had never been there, but it was too close for comfort. The local boys were rounding up their guns and ammo and planning on heading up there to help fight the muzzies. Outside the Blue Bird café, Mick and Wayne were loading up in their flatbed when they saw four planes circling around a ship, just inside King's Sound. They stopped and watched. It was the weirdest thing to happen in town since half the town's population had died off, all the Abos, a generation ago. A couple of the establishment's other customers walked out onto the porch to stare, with their hands over their eyes, at the dancing dots. It looked like the ship had come into the Sound to evade the planes, who were darting around like hummingbirds over it. Suddenly one dipped, and dove. There was a wink of light, followed by three more. Although it had all happened miles away, it looked like the four planes flew off to the East, after that. Three days later, tens of thousands of dead fish and an oil slick washed ashore. The seafood never was the same around Derby parts, after that.

The second tanker foundered after being rammed off Port Moresby by an Australian coast guard boat that had poured every ounce of ordinance they had on board into the big ship without sinking her. The crew of the 'Cairns Queen' were honored posthumously with the New American Medal of Honor, the highest award for bravery which could be given to a foreign citizen. All of the radioactive material on board the tanker was successfully recovered.

By the time the New American Expeditionary Force arrived in Darwin, over a week later, the tide and currents had swept most of the wrecked ships and debris to the shoreline, but it was still a sight to behold. Every man among them had cabin fever from being shut up for so long each day, for so many days in a row, and seeing that they had missed the climactic battle only made them feel worse. Jack addressed his assembled company after getting some good news from Colonel West.

“Cheer up, you Harolding babies! You might be late to the party, but there’s still some cake left. There’s still some brown Jihadis left for us to send to Allah!” the Captain yelled. His last words were drowned out by the cheering of his own men, and those on each side who had overheard.

The Caliph had accepted no excuses and no explanations or apologies from the remnant of his invasion force. Once the two tankers ceased transmitting, Moerdani ordered the less than ten percent remaining in and around Berry Springs to attack the New American base and airfield in Darwin. He hoped the twenty thousand men would make a brave sacrifice, as martyrs for the faith. Although close to three thousand of his most crucial supporters who had earned immunity had arrived at the palace, the rest of the country was rapidly falling apart. He had lost contact with most regions outside the capitol, except for a few ships who refused his order to join the invasion, and refused to come back into port, because of the virus. In the streets the bodies had piled up so quickly that they couldn’t be removed fast enough. Out of desperation, he had engineers and diplomats, computer programmers and electronics experts, and paper-shuffling bureaucrats digging mass graves and hauling the bodies in by the tens of thousands, to fill them. They were the only ones left.

The New American Marines from their base in Darwin, supplemented by the Royal Australian Rifles and several hundred naval and air force personnel from both countries, had moved

south to block the Javanese invaders at the Arnhem Highway. Although outnumbered, they had managed to fight a rear guard action and evacuate the town of Humpty Doo. Skirmishes took a toll on both sides, as the Caliph's surviving officers promised the invaders that if they broke through to Darwin, a new fleet would be waiting there, to take them home. It did more to boost morale than the offer of seventy-two virgins.

As both regiments disembarked, Col. West called a general officer's meeting on board his flagship. Maps of Darwin and the peninsula lay piled across the conference table in a jumble.

"There's no way around it," he stated bluntly. "No pun intended." His wry smile eased their tension. "We can't outflank them, so we're gonna outgun them. They're low on food and lower on ammunition. All they have is what they dragged ashore with them. Now, the Marines and the Aussies have been softening them up. But we're going to go straight at them, head to head, down Highway One. There's eight thousand of us, and nearly that many, combined, already in the fight on our side. The invaders have a bit less than twenty thousand, but they're fighting for their lives and they know it. Thank God for our air cover or we'd be fighting ten times as many of them, and they'd be in the streets of Sidney by now." West paused, looking at each of the men for a second, before moving on.

"Men, our advantage in firepower has been kicking their butts all week long. It's gonna finish the job, too." The Colonel paused. "And let me add this, on a personal level. All of you know our history. You know how we got here. You know that there has been, let's face it, a global race war going on, for all or most of your lives. We didn't ask for it, but it came upon us." His voice softened, urging them to listen more carefully. "Now, what we face today, is the largest remaining nonWhite army in the whole world. Let me repeat that. The whole world. If we destroy them, the battle for the whole planet will be ours. Maybe not immediately, but inevitably. And people will be talking about this battle, and

your part in it, as long as there are White men and women who need their heroes." Col. West pointed at the map, where the position of the Muslims was circled in bright red. "Now, boys, ya'll go be heroes!" Jack joined in the cheers and applause, but his eye was gauging the distances on that map, and calculating how far their air cover would extend.

Fortunately, the first and second string fighter jockeys had gotten their beauty rest, so it extended all the way in. As hundreds of two and a half ton trucks rolled down the highway South in a line, dozens of fighter jets roared overhead past them, followed by several slower, heavier bombers. They could see the smoke of the front lines a half hour before they got there.

By nightfall, Jack was hunkered down in the bathroom of a Caltex service station at a three way intersection, thinking about the fact that he had been on the beach in Florida and on the beach on the West Coast, well, kind of, and on the beach in Hawaii. The constant explosions had nearly burst his eardrums, again. He wondered, if he got out of this, what the beaches, and the girls on them, might be like in Australia.

He wasn't in the restroom answering a call of nature. It just happened to be the only part of the building without any windows. He needed the binoculars to see across the street. They looked cooler than wearing glasses, anyway. Windows were a definite liability, considering the amount of firepower that the Caliphate's soldiers weren't supposed to have, that nobody had bothered to tell them not to have. The Captain wasn't enjoying the privacy typical of such a location, either. A whole platoon, Chittum's First, was in there with him, being intimate under fire.

His Second Platoon was next door, holed up in the Didgeridoo Art Gallery, or what was left of it. The Third was holding his other flank, behind the Humpty Doo Hardware store, whose roof was on fire. The Fourth had escorted all of their casualties back up the road to a lure shop, after Jack had cherry-picked most of their combat ready soldiers to replace the walking wounded and non-

ambulatory they were relieving. That reduced his Company's effectiveness by a quarter. Pretty good odds, he thought.

The F-22s had torn up the front lines of the Javanese, forcing them to retreat into the residences and businesses scattered throughout the landscape, which reminded Captain McNabb of southern Colorado, and a brown-haired cowgirl there. The bombers which had been circling, waiting for their chance to get in on it, filed in to drop their payloads on the buildings. Blast after blast blew the roofs off, leveled walls, and drove the surviving invaders out into the open again, where the F-22s could get at them once more. Now they were like a swarm of angry bees. Very angry bees. Company C had been stung.

Thirty miles off the coast of Perth, an older generation ballistic missile submarine received an encoded directive from St. Louis. The code was decrypted, verified, counterverified, and confirmed again. The renamed N.A.S. Virginia had a job to do. All crew were called to battle stations. The Captain and Commander inserted their keys, put in separate authentication passwords, and selected target coordinates, double confirmed, then keyed in an ordinance sequence identifying specific tubes to be activated. A launch system began for two side by side tubes. An alarm sounded throughout the boat. The seconds clicked away, and the sea poured forth its fury into the sky, to arc up and begin back downwards, past the apex of their flight.

Sur Moerdani stood under the portico, with a perfumed handkerchief held to his face. Even with his diminished forces having removed the corpses for nearly eight blocks in every direction, the sickeningly sweet smell of decay rose through the humid air. Below him, the Caliph's city rotted. A lifetime of hard work, of planning, and sacrifices, all gone. He had begun as a middle class merchant's son. And worked so hard in school. He had been the first in his family to go to college, then to medical school. His family had been so proud of their son, the doctor. Sur

had become a virologist, a government researcher, an important person. Then the world had gone crazy.

Like most Indonesians, like most people in the world, to be honest, he had snickered as the greedy, selfish, arrogant, fat Americans fell. Laughed as they killed one another. It had been wonderful.

But then the Jews had been caught alone in their racist sandpit and played nuke your neighbors. Even that hadn't been enough to save them. Allah had made sure that every weapon the Zionists used against the faithful, from nuclear weapons to their evil genetic virus, eventually was turned against the serpents. But the Turkish Flu had mutated more than once. It had swept not just the Middle Eastern states, and not just Israel, but Asia from the map, as well. All but Indonesia. Because of him. He had saved his people…for a time. Now it was all gone.

At the edge of his courtyard, a chubby Indonesian woman in a filthy Versace gown paused from studying her ruined manicure to look up at the sky, where a small boy was pointing. His eyes followed hers, to the two side by side exhaust trails arcing overhead. 'Not again', he thought. 'What do they hope to accomplish with more virus? They've already killed everyone they can kill with their virus…' Caliph Moerdani's thought was never completed.

Seventeen hundred miles to the East, they couldn't see the flashes of ligh t, or feel the heat from the two explosions that disposed of all the bodies in Jakarta, living and dead, turning them to ash. The invaders didn't know that the Caliph and all his surviving supporters had entered the upper atmosphere, either. It would take all night, and half the next day, to convince them that they had lost.

It was ironic that the surrender of the Indonesian Muslim forces happened in the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. After not being able to reach Moerdani, or anybody else in Jakarta, their

commander had correctly assumed that they were on their own. His forces had been reduced to less than eleven thousand men. Captain Jack McNabb and Sgt. Chittum stood together and watched the Muslims stack their arms. For once, he couldn't think of anything smart to say. He never could get used to the continual ringing in his ears after every battle. This time it was so bad that his balance was off.

A week later, the surviving Muslim troops had been deported back to Indonesia, where ninety percent of them soon died from the virus they had been exposed to upon landing and making contact with the immune carriers. The fallout from Jakarta had drifted East, but remained north of Australia's coastline. Jack lay on a lounge chair on Mindil Beach, comparing the Aussie sunset to others he had seen. He had some letters to write, for the next mail ship headed home.

Across the sand, the Australian loudspeakers played "America The Beautiful", his national anthem, in honor of their New American allies. The Starless Stripes flew proudly in the warm ocean breeze.
"And now, the end is near, and so I face, the final curtain…"

The last lights went out in Indonesia. The crew on duty at the helm of 'The Eyes of Texas' carefully monitored every visible change on the surface of Earth from above. As their attitudinal jets shifted their orbital path, they got a good luck at most of the land area of the planet, at one time or another. The digital photographs on the display monitor showed the comparative views a quarter century ago with the same views today. In a normal world, the two sets of images would have been reversed. One would expect that as time went on, the technological advance of civilization would have created more and more points of light on the continents below. The effect of the Balk was that the opposite had transpired. Closest to them, a blotch of yellow indicated the Orange Free State in Southern Africa, with pinpricks of light radiating outwards for a few hundred miles around it. The

rest of Africa had returned to its original state as ‘the dark continent’. On the upper horizon, Europe shown as brightly as ever. As they traversed their way around the globe, they would see a vast darkness through most of the world.

Th ere were some things which couldn’t be seen from space, though. The unmarked graves of three 99% White guards who had refused to be blackmailed into treason by the conspirators, and disappeared. The buried reports of confessions by other failed testtakers, made months before the Speaker’s assassination, ignored and hushed up to keep from damaging morale. And the truth that a conspiracy doesn’t have to be bulletproof, to be devastating.

Even after the arrests and interrogations following the attack on New Orleans, a lot of distrust persisted within the Unified Command of New America, especially of nonNordic personnel. It was only after every soldier, every guard, and every supply clerk had been re-tested and those tests double checked, that some tension eased out of the ranks, like a pent up sigh.

The damage to the morale of the Secret Service was deeper. Their humiliation was tempered with wounded pride that they had been infiltrated to such a degree. Follow-up investigations of the McNabb assassination, in a report released months later, found that a half dozen Secret Service guards had refused to be blackmailed. That was scant comfort to their comrades who had passed the test, and never had to weigh whether they would have turned, or not. But all in all, it was discovered that as many as twenty persons, including the families and friends of guards, had attempted to report the blackmail efforts. Had it not been for an institutionalized paranoia of genetic taint, the plot could not have moved forward as it had. Some of those reports had been made to the men’s superior officer. The Captain had plugged those leaks. But more damning, others had been made to different branches and offices who had been hesitant to act on them and thereby expose how many test-failures were in positions of trust.

In time, this led to an institutional overhaul of the Secret Service into an elite force which took pride as much in its genetic quality, as its combat efficiency. A new caste system emerged in the New American Unified Command, based on the sliding degree of racial phenotype. Promotions began to be based on degree of Nordicism, at least unofficially. The evolution of priorities was incremental, but profound.

The Chicago Protocol Treaty of 2036 was signed by all of the members (New America, the Republic of Texas, Quebec, Greater Germany, France, England, the Russian Empire, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, the Orange Free State, and even Deseret) with representatives present. It officially set the population limit of each orbital platform or stationary super-orbital station at 10,000 persons, and limited inter-solar defensive systems to non-nuclear weapons. The long-term effect of this treaty was to encourage the construction of more stations and platforms, at greater distances from Earth, rather than larger stations, in near orbit. Like on Earth, things tended to spread out, and separate, in space. That was true of people, too.

Fifty Years After The Balk

There were three heirs in contest for succession to the Speakership of New America when Jack McNabb passed away after nearly fifteen years in office. The relatively short rule of Kip McNabb before Hope's husband had his heart attack while visiting the first New American permanent colony station on Mars in June of 2051 had paved the way for a dynastic inheritance. Jack had been in the right place at the right time to step into the highest office on the continent. His sister being the Speaker's widow, and throwing her public support his way, made the ascension bloodless.

But now, with the beloved leader not having named a successor, Hope was left with the unenviable task of choosing a new ruler from among her rival relatives and descendants. Jack had only been forty-five when the diabetic stroke had killed him, an early

death in any time. It had been an especially severe shock considering the extended lifespans becoming more and more common. Cancer had been defeated with the finetuned mapping of the human genome, as had most other diseases and ailments with a partially genetic causation. Diabetes, too, but the recently deceased Speaker McNabb had feared being overthrown or deposed if he revealed his weakness, his sickness, to even his doctors. He had literally rather die, than show a vulnerability. And so, he had.

White January snow fell softly over the slow river, as Hope sat in her rejuvenation therapy bath, staring out the window above the arch. Even in her mid-fifties, she found that her heart could still be broken. Silent as the snow, she said a prayer for wisdom to make the right choice for her family, and for her people. Her tears joined the essential oils to float in droplets along the surface of the emulsion. She would miss her little brother, as much as she missed her husband, and her dad before them. But she wasn't just weeping for the dead. Hope wept for the living, for their expanded opportunities, and their diminished choices.

The matriarch of the McNabb Dynasty had some diminished choices of her own to consider. No woman could be Speaker, in the long tradition of post-Balk New American society. But she could, and would, be the kingmaker. No matter which choice she made, some would be offended, perhaps to the point of rebellion. She had to make sure that her choice did not cause a civil war, or a schism within the family.

Sean Walker, the oldest potential successor, was twenty-eight, married to a noble lady from the Russian Empire's higher echelons, and had two small children, both girls. His second wife was a local girl from New Denver. She hadn't conceived, yet. Like his ancestors, Sean was a Mormon, but practiced the faith more in honor of them, than in loyalty to the pacifist agrarian society which was officially a New American protectorate, now, in the Western half of the continent. Sean was the current Governor of

Colorado, as his mother had been, before him. She also had been the Speaker's second wife, even though she had kept her family name.

Jack's first wife had borne him a son, too, albeit two years later. Jack Cavanaugh, named after his dad, was the twenty-six year old Congressman from Virginia. Like many in the New American neo-feudal polygamist structure, his mother, Tracy, had also kept her maiden name. Over the last few decades, that had become the custom among noble circles, to mollify the fathers of betrothed daughters. Jack was the father of an infant son, and had not yet taken a second wife. His only spouse was the sole heir of a wealthy Virginia noble family, too.

Jack and Sean both had younger brothers, two and one of them, respectively, but they had all foresworn their right to inheritance in order to present a united front in support of the older siblings. If they hadn't, Hope's decision would have been even more complicated than it was. Still, the involvement of Julia and Tracy, as two aggressively competing mothers, made compromise between the familial branches a distant dream, at present. They both acted as if they were sure that their eldest had been the Speaker's favorite, and intended successor. Neither of them were correct. Both of them knew it. Hope was ashamed to be glad that Kelly had passed away two years before, following Josh. The force of her personality behind Sean would have been unstoppable. Having the united RLDS congregations aligned with him, like the Virginian nobility on the other side, was bad enough.

And then, there was Mary. Hope's oldest daughter was more of a leader than Hess had turned out to be, but because of her gender, his name had been forwarded as a claimant to the office, instead of hers. Hess was not the Speaker's son, but as his nephew, by adoption if not by blood, he had a solid claim, as well. Mary, who had never married, had known Jack McNabb better than anyone, and more than anyone knew, except for Hope, herself. She had taken his death the hardest, and was still in

mourning, a month later. The choice had been put off for too long, already, though. The memorial ceremonies from St. Louis to Moscow to New Chicago on Mars had long finished. Governors from Luna to Emerald Coast had asked if it was okay to raise their flags from half-staff, yet. People wanted to move on, in this fast-paced world, and off of it, where mining ships zipped from the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter to the growing orbital colonies, and back, daily.

This morning, Hope had been forced to intrude on Mary's self - imposed seclusion to ask her to endorse Hess's claim. Mary had told her that she didn't care, that nothing else mattered, any more. Hope had taken that as tacit approval. It was as good as things were going to get.

After her rejuvenation bath, Hope sat down with the halffinished manuscript of Jack's hand-written memoirs. Somebody would have to ghost-write the last chapters of that, too. She had always been the kind of fool who believed in happy endings.

The End…of the new beginning.

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Ezekiel 33:7-11 1599 Geneva Bible (GNV)

7 So thou, O son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and admonish them from me.
8 When I shall say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt die the death, if thou dost not speak and admonish the wicked of his way, that wicked man shall die for his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.

9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die for his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

10 Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, Thus ye speak and say, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we are consumed because of them, how should we then live?

11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O ye house of Israel?

A Century After The Balk

His dogeared copy of ‘Founding Father’s Son’ lay across the 2100 A.D. centennial translation of the Holy Bible, approved by the Church of Israel. The two official government publications were mandatory, but Thomas Jefferson McNabb was the kind of old-fashioned moderate who preferred to keep the volumes separate, rather than combined as the stricter denominations published them, these days.

Aside from his Great Grandfather’s biography and the scripture, T.J. didn’t own any other print books. The collected libraries of human history were available on demand as neural downloads, even for Organics like himself. If, like millions of others, he was willing to surrender his Numircan citizenship and undergo GeMO-therapy for the offworld colonies, memory enhancement was one of the several mutative options available.

For the colonies which required a greater phenotypic shift from the Organic base norm, of course, post-vitro mods were prohibitively expensive and complicated. The system-wide celebrity and dynastic heir-apparent had his niche in life chiseled out for himself before he was conceived, the old fashioned way. T.J. could no more have been preborn a Troll with a skeletal structure engineered to survive the gravity well of Bol’Shoy on Kepteyn b, or a Gill able to breathe the atmosphere on Gliese 832 c, than he could have been born an Asian. Of course, both of those colonies were a half a lifetime’s flight away. The kids born with those mods had plenty of time to grow to maturity at half light speed before they arrived in the new worlds.

Royal and Noble families of Citizen and Taxpayer status were allowed unregulated reproductive privileges, but the Residence and Lumpen classes were eugenically matched to continue the Ethnicity Resegregation Initiatives which had been legislated by

his grandfather, just before the Northern and Western Hemispheric Union.

First Citizen McNabb often sat a bit apart from his security at the Martyr's Park bench by the fountain, to savor the illusion of anonymity. He could watch the clusters of Celtic red-heads and blonde Nords and round-faced Slavs maneuvering around one another like schools of differently colored tropical fish, with smaller pods of darker Med and Alp subethnics darting in and out. Government run schools weren't ethnically segregated, yet, but the academic courses were customized to suit the different inherited personality types and proclivities of the subraces.

This morning, he had explained the diversification process to his son, G.W., again. The nine year old had ran in, winded from climbing a tree with the other boys who all felt like superheroes in the lunar colony's low gravity, to ask why his friend Jimmy's big sister had to "marry a boy who looked like her."

T.J. had laughed. "Well, son, you've studied natural selection in Biology class, right?" "Um, Yes, Sir. Kinda." George Washington McNabb said, hesitantly.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to test you, buddy," his dad reassured him, cutting up an apple and handing it to the boy, one slice at a time.
"Don't choke on that. Okay, here goes. All species differentiate, they specialize, within themselves, as different bloodlines within the bigger overall group develop different inherited traits, right? Like the pigeons, some became gray and could hide in the smog and survive, while the white ones got seen by the hawks and eaten?"
"I remember," G.W. said, munching away.
"And, remember that some of those specializations are the result of climactic or other environmental adaptations, and some are accidental, and some are on purpose? The ones on purpose, we call 'eugenics'?"
"Like the Trolls?" the youngster asked, wide-eyed. He had

forgotten his apple slices for a moment.
“Yes, like the Trolls. So, the way that natural selection works is that the different subgroups, or sub-species, within a species, all compete for territory and resources, to see which of them is the best adapted, the most fit, and has the best physical and mental traits needed to survive, right?”
“That’s what our teacher said. She says that’s why she has blue eyes,” the boy contributed. Finally, the last wedge disappeared.
“Well, she’s right. And the best suited, most favored, subspecies wins the natural selection contest. And what happens to the other subspecies, the other races, son? Remember?
“They go extinct. Like dark-skinned people,” G.W. answered. “So, that’s natural?”
“Sure, it’s natural. You see, multiracialism, having more than one race mix together and especially to interbreed, well, that destroys the true diversity, the real genetic and inherited differences between different population groups, that nature requires for the natural selection process to continue. See?”
“Just like I made my apple gone? It’s extinct!” the royal heir asked.
“Kind of, but even worse, because instead of just being gone, what’s left is neither the same subspecies or race as the mother or the father. And all of the tens of thousands of years, or even longer, of adapting and evolving and adding recessive genes, is gone, buried in the more primitive, less evolved dominant genes, reverted back to the base form. All the hard work and sacrifices of all their generations of ancestors is lost, undone. Do you remember what ‘recessive’ means?” the man asked.
“It means newer, more recent, more advanced, right? Like the sharp edge of the knife you used to cut the apple, dad?”
“Very good. And if that edge is lost, if the most recent, most advanced, recessive genes are buried by mixing them back with the dominant, less advanced, less recent forms, like mixing recessive blue eyes with dominant brown eyes, …well, it’s a step backward for the human species.”
“Hot pipe! I get it. So, why does she have to marry a boy who looks like her?” G.W. queried, trying to see the whole picture.

His dad smiled, ruffling his son's hair. "Because, once all of the subspecies, or races, except for one have become extinct, the one surviving race becomes the new de facto species, son. Then the whole process of differentiation and specialization and competition between groups as a part of the ongoing natural selection process continues. The different ethnicities within that race become the new de facto races within the new de facto species. Like that knife edge, it's a continual honing process, to keep us, humanity, constantly improving sharpening, evolving into something greater, and better. That's God's design. His will is for us to constantly improve ourselves as individuals and ourselves collectively as His children, through the process He created."
"So, God wants them to get married?" the fifth grader wondered.
"You could say that. By marrying and having babies with people who are like us genetically, our own race and even our own ethnicity, we help to re-sort out the new species, and establish different races within the new species, who will compete with each other to see which is most fit. It just keeps going, forever, it has to, or we fall backwards." came the patient response.
"Oh," a light bulb came on. "So, what about the Trolls and Gills and the others? Are they new races, too?"
"Yes, they are, and they're almost new species, already. Genetically, they've been modified so far away from the base, that they almost aren't genetically compatible with Organics like you and me any more. Kind of like donkeys and horses make mules that are sterile, right?"
"That's good." the boy said, thoughtfully, wrinkling up his nose. "I've seen pictures of Troll girls, they're uuuuuuuuggggggggllllllllyyyyyyyyyy!"
"Probably they wouldn't be if you were a Troll boy, though," T.J. noted, grinning. His son made an exaggerated gagging noise.
"So, do they hafta?" the interrogation boiled down to. The father emphatically shook his head.
"No, son, nobody has to follow the reproductive laws. Or God's laws, even. There are tax write-offs for those who do, and family subsidies if you fit certain genetic criteria…certain standards. But anyone who doesn't want to live by our laws, can leave. They can

take off with whomever they want, even, together, if they both decide to."
"Where do people like that go, daddy?" his son's pale eyebrows rose, imagining outlaws running off, hand in hand.
"Well, down in the Republic of Texas, people just have kids with whatever featherless biped they want to, willy-nilly. Even in Deseret, they generally marry anybody their church approves of. Usually more than one, at that. So, they're welcome there, too, if they convert."
"What about on the other colonies? Do they follow birthing laws?", G.W. asked. He looked up, past the lunar dome, towards the stars.
"Of course ours do, but like in Texas and Argentina and Deseret, most of the orbital platforms and new worlds don't. At least not yet. A couple of them even allow homosexuals to marry."
"I guess that means that our way of doing things is competing with theirs, too, to see which is best, huh, dad?"
"Right. And we'll let God decide which way is truly His will, son. That's all we can do, is leave it in His hands."
That gave his son something to think about while he ran back outside to climb up into that moon tree again and explain things to his friend.
It was difficult for anyone, of any age, to come to grips with the understanding that at long last, a portion of humanity had control over its own destiny, and held its own future. Even for the Speaker. Finally, there was a rope over the abyss, and only eyes such as his could see what awaited on the other side. Man was something which was being overcome. While science had handed him the power to manipulate the intelligence levels and personality types and physical attributes of the next generation, he would not. The responsibility of the higher man was to sort them out, and let God and His nature judge. About the Author

Billy Roper is a former high school and junior high History, Civics, Economics, and Geography teacher. He has been a candidate for public office, and a lifelong political activist, leader, and spokesman. Mr. Roper has a Bachelor's degree in History and

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