

*In making things end, and in making things start,
there is nothing more glorious than keeping still.*

- Ancient Chinese text

Revolution 222

Don't Be Afraid To Be Happy

Robert Fenstermaker

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**In loving memory of my beautiful daughter Renee,
who once told me not to be afraid to be happy.
(1984-2005)**

Forward

For all those who seek answers to their problems from others – This book represents the idea that the power to change the world is found within each of us. When each of us, as individuals, make the choice to live responsibly and *choose to not react* to outside fear or stimulus, it can change our lives as individuals and, in fact, change the world.

Indeed, it is “externalization” by way of religion, cult, blind faith in others, alcohol, drugs, sports or the State that we become lost and fearful and are able to be manipulated into doing things out of reactive fears that are against our nature and benefit.

Regardless of how we justify our actions, they are either driven by internal or external forces, the latter only if we allow it. Our choices in these matters create our day-to-day realities and craft our destinies.

Revolution 222 explains how each of us can awaken our hearts to new possibilities based on every one of us accepting their own individual sovereignty. We each are a nation of one, choosing to connect with like-minded sovereign individuals who also accept their personal responsibility to be happy.

Find the place of stillness, the center of the soul and operate from there, fearlessly and from the heart. Wake up and experience the moment...this moment forward when we all cast off our chains by accepting our role in all the things that are not right in the world and take on the responsibility to change the world by first changing ourselves.

Don't be afraid to be happy!

Chapter I

Bob always said I would write a book about him someday, and I guess this is as close as I'll ever come to doing that. Let me tell you about Bob. Bob always had something to say no matter the situation or the occasion. He was a rambling train of information careening down the track, screaming ahead into the dark with no light at the front of his engine. Let us give pity to the poor sheep caught standing blindly on the rails. They never saw him coming.

Everyone within Bob's reach was subject to his relentless expounding on whatever happened to be going through his head at any given moment. His mouth was the loudspeaker for his brain, incessantly broadcasting the instant connections he made in his mind that tied everything into some new unified theory about consciousness and quantum time/space ...or, for example, how great it will be when biogenetic technology will be able to give humans a prehensile tail.

"It would make one hell of a conversation piece, and I'm sure the ladies would love it," he would explain.

Bob would go on to describe the various sexual attributes a prehensile tail would provide as well as the advantage of having a secure drink holder while you drove with two hands on the wheel.

"A safety feature for drunks, for sure," he said.

Bob delivered this to those around him as if he were giving an important service announcement that must be heard right at that very moment, forcing everyone to put forth an effort to either tune him in or to tune him out. He was not being rude, only obnoxious in a really smartass, funny way. It certainly did not help his cause to be able to pull thoughts from people's minds which he would immediately verbalize without running through the normal social filters the rest of us use in order to be polite and to avoid offending. On the surface, you would just call it stirring up shit and, in most ways, it was. However, I soon learned it was much more than that.

Bob and I used to meet after work for a beer and compare notes on our day. We called it our office - the corner booth. We would goof on the waitresses and talk about women, politics and religion.

Bob always said the three were the same. Maybe I'll find that in these journals and be able to share it. It's difficult for me to picture Bob without a notebook in his hand. He always carried one in his pocket where he jotted down notes in very small letters, filling the pages with words. He logged his dreams, and he said he dreamed every night. He would make out little spreadsheets of things like pro and con lists of the different ladies in his life and rate and weigh each. I'm not sure if he made serious decisions on that information or was just playing around. Probably both.

Bob abhorred decisions. Bob always said when faced with a decision and one of the options was to do nothing, than doing nothing was always the correct decision. He said the time to make a decision is when there is no option of doing nothing. That way, he said, "You are following God's plan."

Bob always said, "I didn't get to where I am today by having a Plan."

Most of us never really knew if Bob was serious and building his theories on facts, or if he was just blowing out ideas like a jazzman laying out chords on a saxophone, riffing out words instead of notes. I know he liked to do both. We had become used to listening to Bob's line of bullshit, but more often than not if you listened closely to what he was rambling about, and had a clue about the subject, you would get a sense that he was drawing from some deep and abstract well, as if his mind was connected to some unseen source ...the Bullshit River, I called it. However, one day it stopped being bullshit, and for that I take some responsibility.

It was about a year and a half ago, and Bob was wrapping up another rant about some grand-unifying theory – about mind, brain, big brother, who is John Galt, we're all slaves to the corporation, but it's all okay because 'all you have to do is sit there and do nothing' tirades. I remember many times thinking, what do you do when your closest friend of forty years is losing his mind? And on the other hand, thinking that here is an amazing genius sharing glimpses into worlds we could never find ourselves. It really seemed like a coin flip between the two.

“That’s it, Mike! That’s what it’s all about. Don’t do anything. Just stop and it all changes instantly.” As the words faded from his lips, he clapped his hands once loudly, did a Buddha bow at the waist, and then straightened up slowly, all the time silently smiling at me.

Breaking the silence, I said, “Maybe you should start believing your own bullshit, Bob.”

I didn’t see any light bulbs go off over his head, but I watched his eyes narrow for a moment and then his head started appropriately enough, to bob.

In almost a whisper, he breathed. “You’re fucking right, Mike. It really is as simple as that. I believe that’s exactly what I need to do.”

It seemed as if I had provided the missing piece to the puzzle that he had worked on assembling his entire life. I see now it was more; as if I had given a direct order that set in motion a great plan, for the lack of any better words, a plan of revolution and spiritual reform of the likes seldom seen in history. Wow. Whichever it was, from that point on all things did in fact change.

It just struck me. Here I’m writing about Bob when it is becoming hard to believe there is anyone left on the planet that hasn’t yet heard of Bob and already formulated some opinion and belief in who Bob is and what Bob means. So, here I sit at the turn of the new year like the rest of humanity, waiting and wondering if 222, February 22nd, will bring everything to a grinding halt as a result of Bob’s Revolution from the Couch.

Another thing strikes me; the words that I’m putting to paper now could someday be as important as anything anyone has ever written. Having known Bob for most of my life puts me in a unique position to tell the world how all of this has come about. In one sense, I feel a little bit like the Apostles telling a personal firsthand account of the life of the Messiah, or like Saint Paul setting out the fundamentals of a new religious order. Actually, I think I feel more like Winston Smith, the character out of Orwell’s *1984*, or as Bob would sometimes sarcastically call it, ‘The Road Map to Freedom.’ I guess

having the agents in black visit on too many occasions will do that to a person.

Given this, I suppose I shouldn't have been too surprised when I turned on the television last fall and saw that my friend Bob was the most hunted man on the planet.

Bob always said, "Everything, I mean everything you see on television is controlled and contrived in order to deliver a specific message, usually to a very specific audience."

Well, as far as I can tell, the message being delivered here is twofold. One, you wouldn't want to be in this man's shoes if they capture him, and two, you will get killed for preaching peace and love quicker than a dying Gandhi can utter the word Ram.

Looking at what I have on paper so far, I see that I've been writing about Bob in the past tense, when at the time I'm writing this he is still very much alive, at least according to the last news update from northern New Mexico. Nonetheless, I've been thinking of Bob in the past tense ever since I last saw him late last summer. The Bob I knew and had expected to meet was not the same Bob I met that day. He had completely transformed.

I was surprised when I received the message last September to meet with him in Oklahoma City at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building Memorial since the media had reported only a few days before that Federal agents had arrested Bob. The symbolism of the meeting location was apparent, as was the date, September 11th.

"Just in case 'they' are watching, it gives them something to think about," Bob explained.

Bob viewed our meeting here in the same way that he viewed his flipping off a 'donut eater' behind a security camera by pushing his glasses up his nose with his middle finger. Bob always liked to find ways to mess with the establishment. Of course always within the confines of the law which for a guy like Bob gave plenty of room to do as he would say, "Pervert the dominant paradigm," or as he sometimes referred to it as, "Fucking them in the ass when they ain't looking." It was really much more than that though. It was as if his

mission in life was to point out the blatantly obvious, the obvious fact that no man holds status over another man. This made Bob appear, shall I say, rebellious at times. After all, why does a man paint his aluminum sided house, comfortably nestled among nearly identical homes in a small working class neighborhood, in desert storm camouflage? The embassy markings complete with little flags on the fenders of his Honda was a nice touch, as was his declaration of himself to be the Sovereign and Independent State of Boblovia.

Not knowing exactly what to expect at our meeting, I was very surprised to see him alone without his entourage of the weird, which we were so accustomed to seeing on the news, or as they call themselves, the Confederation. I was also surprised to see a casually well-dressed, clean cut, middle-aged man, not the scraggly-bearded, longhaired, wild-eyed holy man I had last seen on the cover of *Time's* Man of the Year edition. He looked to be in great shape.

"Lost all the excess baggage," he exclaimed. "It's really unbelievable how much of it we carry around with us."

The smile was the same old Bob; however, the eyes belonged to a new man, and this man's eyes were looking deeply into mine. To be honest, I was a little frightened. I had been prepared to meet the Emperor of Boblovia or my old friend Bob, both being the same. Instead, I met someone that can best be described as being so incredibly at ease with himself that those around him were immediately affected. Fact that. I was there.

To describe accurately the extent of Bob's transformation and to understand the events of my meeting with Bob, I need to take this story back several years. Fortunately, I have Bob's personal papers and journals in my possession. He gave them to me to hold on to when he went on his 'walkabout.' As soon as I returned from Oklahoma I started to organize them and the notebooks he gave me, and I think I now have them stashed safely away. Without them, I would have been lost as to where to start. The good thing is I think what Bob left me does a good job of speaking for him in his own words, and I'm doing my best to put them in some logical order.

Some of this stuff goes far back and includes papers that he wrote in school, letters to and from friends and lovers along with old photos, grade school report cards and much more. I think I have the whole archive, with the exception of one of the notebooks he gave me in Oklahoma City. Damn if I didn't lose the one notebook that I gave him a long time ago for his birthday.

Trying to pin down when all of Bob's troubles started is tough. It's like saying mother's milk leads to heroin. Bob was undoubtedly on some sort of path to God-only-knows-where, but things really started to change for him last year around the time he had a nervous breakdown.

I remember when Bob first told me he was going to fake his own nervous breakdown. The funny thing about that is, he couldn't fake shit. I knew he really was having a nervous breakdown, but unlike most people, Bob had to be in control even when he wasn't. Make sense? Here is how I see it. Bob really was breaking down; in fact, he had been breaking down gradually over some time, over many years. It was almost by design. I'm not sure if he was absolutely certain that he would eventually succumb to his nervous breakdown or not. Nonetheless, he wanted to be as prepared as possible for what might be his inevitable insanity by practicing being insane daily. I really think he wanted everyone to believe he was crazy, and he spent many years proving just that to all of us. This way he would eventually have a plausible cover enabling his nervous breakdown to serve as an excuse or alibi for his subsequent actions.

It's like planning to kill someone with the intention of pleading insanity and being so clever as to have everyone convinced years in advance of your insanity before even picking the victim and initiating the heinous act, thereby completing the perfect crime. This wasn't much different from the way he approached most things in his life. I know that everything played out in his head in every conceivable scenario before he acted upon anything. It was like the many universes theory that he was always going off about. Bob

always said that he controlled his own destiny and created his own reality. Of course, it might be that he planned on going crazy as part of some greater, grander mystery; to what end, we may never know.

So, when I dropped Bob off on that dusty gravel road that bright early spring morning, I knew he had finally lost his mind ...exactly as he had planned it. By all measures of society, he was crazy. How else could you describe it? Here was a man not in the best of health, bailing out of a twenty-five year successful career, comfort and love all around him, success, fortune and fame becoming him, and he walks away, literally walks away as if he had no care in the world, no definite destination, no plan of arrival. Communicating nothing, zilch.

"I'm just going to take a walk," he said. "See you around." Off he went with a backpack loaded with all kinds of gadgets and gear too heavy for anyone but an experienced hiker to carry. He'll be back in a day or two, I thought. He just needs to get away.

Chapter II

The following is from a journal given to me by Bob in Oklahoma City, Sept. 11th.

After nearly a week out, I made it to the first big town along the river. I picked up the public park trail just north of town and followed it as it wound its way to the levee near the downtown business area. By this time I knew I had to lay up and heal because some of the blisters on my feet and back showed early signs of infection. The hanging gardens of the Hilton Hotel perched riverside certainly made my decision easy, not to mention the driving downpour that had me soaked to the skin. Even though my rain poncho had stopped protecting me from the rain, it still protected me from the scrutiny of the desk clerk. She seemed not to care what I looked like, or that all I had with me was camping gear. My plastic legal-ware (credit cards) was all she needed from me. In only moments, I had gone from a wandering river rat drowning in the rain into a nice little river rat all snug in his den.

For the next several days I stayed holed up in room 222 and enjoyed the modest comforts of running hot water and room service. Having sworn off television, I had plenty of time to put on paper all that I had thought through over the last week.

I remember wishing I had brought along a smaller notebook. You think like that when you are carrying all of your possessions on your back, but how do you pack for a nervous breakdown? Just what is a nervous breakdown anyway? It seems like you sure can get away with a lot by having a nervous breakdown. I knew a woman who shot and killed her cheating husband while he cowered under his desk, and she was let free because she was suffering a nervous breakdown. Nervous, nerve, break it down. My nerves have broken down like my car broke down. My nerves won't run anymore. The nervous system I have no longer responds the same to the stimuli provided by my environment. That's not to say my nervous system is broken; rather, it could denote that my environment is damaged and is sending stimulus that is flawed. It is all very logical, very basic.

Let's see. Here I am, unable to cope with one more day swimming in this madness we call reality. Do I have to point it out? Each one of us deals with this in their own way, and some of us find that we no longer function within the standard norm, especially

when the standard norm continues in becoming so narrow, leaving no room even for the standard deviation that results when anyone dares to wake up even a little. Pounded down like a nail. As G. W. Bush said, "Either you are with us, or you are agin us ...you terrorist bastards."

Another possibility is that all reactions are predetermined. All things are carved in stone. I'll buy into that premise when I see it. Perhaps from a behaviorist perspective it all unfolds as planned by goofy ol' God, but that seems to smack of pre-deterministic Newtonian thinking. It is hard for me to believe we live in a machine winding down a programmed path denying us any real choices in our lives. That's the lazy God theory. He worked only six days, made all creation, and now is laid back just watching it all unfold. I think God is a little more involved and ambitious than that.

Now, free will is another thing altogether. Infinite possibilities, kind of like that multiple universes quantum thinking I love exploring. That seems to make more sense to me. It matches up to my own experiences and observations. I, for one, know that I have on many occasions willfully chosen one course of action over another and certainly suffered, and sometimes enjoyed the consequences. It really is like dancing; God supplies the music and we chose how we wish to move to it. I think I will stick to that. It is my personal responsibility to choose how I want to react to things. In fact, it is just about the only thing any of us really has control over - what we choose to think and how we choose to react.

This course that I have chosen for myself now seems to have begun long before I stepped out my back door with my fully loaded backpack and my walking stick. That's how I found myself carrying seventy pounds of nervous breakdown survival gear heading out for my walkabout in the outbacks of this frightening new America.

I knew I would not get very far that first day. Not that it mattered. I wasn't operating on a schedule. I had no deadlines or destination, just a direction, southwest for no better reason than it's warmer there in the winter, and the Wabash River flows southwest from here. Walking eight miles that first day was just about all my feet could handle; however, the advantage of being out of shape and having sore feet was that I had plenty of time to make notes in my journal.

I was still hiking over familiar territory and I knew where I wanted to camp the first night, a nice little sand bar downstream

from a covered bridge. Beyond that, I had a place in mind that I had visited over forty years ago. I hoped to get that far by my second night. I wasn't sure what I would find there these many years later, but I thought it fitting that I return to the spot where I first dreamed of going on my walkabout.

I was on a senior high school trip in 1970 along with a couple of high school buddies long since gone from my life. That summer we traveled to a summer lake resort in a small Indiana town. Needless to say, I already had a reputation in my small rural school for being generally weird, a suspected dope head that read too much and listened to weird music no one else ever heard before. As with all things at this age, and arguably it seems at any age, this adventure all had to do with getting laid, and if I got a little stoned along the way, well that was a bonus. It was in search of the latter that I first met my friend Michael. Michael owned a head shop and boutique; the first head shop any of us had seen. It seemed like a good place to stop. The first thing I noticed stepping into the dimly lit store were the three gorgeous gals trying on bathing suits.

"Looks like one stop shopping," I told my friend Wally.

We worked our way through the clothes racks jockeying for a better position to see the ladies as they stepped out from the dressing room to admire themselves in front of the mirror.

"You gentlemen see anything you like?" echoed a voice from behind the counter.

I don't think any of us took notice of the man at the cash register when we came in, being intent on ogling the girls. I turned to see a man a few years older than me with long brown flowing hair, moustache and goatee. Behind him on the wall were two crossed swords, Samurai I guessed. He stood polishing a bright red, glass, three-foot bong. He raised it up to his eye and looked down its length right at me, as if he were cleaning a rifle and taking aim with the sights. He lowered it slightly and smiled at us.

"My name's Michael, and everything in the store is available," he said.

"I wish," I said, glancing towards the dressing rooms.

"I said everything," he shot back with an even bigger smile and a nod towards the girls.

"Really? How does that work?" I asked.

“You boys tell me where you want the party and invite the girls yourself. That keeps it looking legal. I’ll make sure they’re there on time, and I can pick up some party supplies, all for a fee, depending on what type of party favors you prefer,” Michael replied waving the bong, and again, looking the girls’ way.

“Romance isn’t a guarantee, but if one of these adorable sweeties happens to fall in love with you for the evening, well, those things seem to happen with these ladies all of the time.” By now, the girls were listening in and were whispering between giggles.

By the time we left the store we had agreed to emptying our pockets of all of our money and going back to the motel for the rest of our cash, mainly my graduation bankroll that instead of going towards my freshman tuition would be going to one night of wild women and drugs. Ah, the choices we make in life. It was arranged for me to come back a little later with the rest of the money and I would pick up a pound of smoke.

It was a short drive to the motel, but I was already thinking, what the hell did we just agree to? How could we be so trusting? As we piled into the motel room, my friends revealed they were thinking the same thing as me.

“We just took one heck of a chance on getting ripped off,” Wally said.

Rather than letting them know I was wondering the same, I realized the whole trip would be ruined if we doubted the agreement we just made with Michael. I reassured my buddies and told them they should be thinking about catching a buzz and getting right for this evening.

“I know I’m going to get laid tonight even if I have to do it myself,” I said laughing, hoping to lighten everyone’s spirits.

I left shortly with the intent of comforting my doubts about Michael before turning over any more money.

The store was empty when I arrived. Michael appeared from the back room.

“Great, you’re back. Give me the money.”

My hand was already resting on the money in my pocket and I quickly took it out and thrust it towards him.

“Good. I’m locking up. You can ride with me and we’ll go get your stuff,” he said, moving towards the door.

Again, I was surprised at myself for being so complicit. I offered no resistance. I suppose that's how great adventures go - just allowing ourselves to be swept along with the current.

We stepped out the back door. There sat Michael's car, a red over white 1960 Corvette convertible. He started the conversation, first assuring me the girls would be at the motel that night, and informing me that we had to drive to the other end of the lake to pick up someone else looking to score some weed. From there, our conversation covered many things. Michael told me of some of his experiences in Vietnam and shared his thoughts about things he had seen since his return. Soon, we realized we shared many common views. For the most part, I had been self-radicalized by literature and even more by reading history and understanding, even back then, that tyranny ruled over most of the world, including our own beloved country. I had realized early on that my views were in the minority. Michael, on the other hand, had been radicalized by his experiences, not the least of which was the war where he had been twice wounded.

We had just gotten into discussing about what we thought the future held when we pulled up in front of a lakeside cabin resort. I waited in the car and, in a moment, Michael returned with a beautiful young brunette with deep brown eyes and a dazzling warm smile. Jill squeezed in between us sitting mostly on my lap. Michael explained to Jill that we had been talking about how things would be forty years from now, particularly in the light with what we saw now happening in the world.

"I don't see anything happening," Jill threw in, "at least not where I come from," which turned out to be another little farm community about the same size and distance from where I came from, but in the opposite direction.

"My Dad has always sold cars. My Mom, they're divorced, has worked all her life too. It's work if you want to eat, get pregnant, raise kids, grow old and die. I don't think those things will change much in the next thirty years." Jill continued, "What's it going to be like for our kids? How much can this planet take at the rate we are screwing it up? What's it going to take to change it? I don't think anyone knows how to do that."

I said, "It just takes one good idea to change it all and a way to get everyone to buy into it at the same time."

“You will never get everyone to buy into the same thing. Look how many different religions and beliefs there are. If it were possible to get everyone on the same page it would have happened by now,” replied Jill.

I thought for a moment. “What if I said there is something that everyone, almost everyone, has bought into, and it touches our lives every day, but we don’t give a second thought to how abstract a thing it is? Its very existence is dependent upon everyone believing in the same idea, in the same way, at the same time. It’s something so powerful that it can build empires or destroy them and we treat it as necessary for our very survival and believe we can’t exist without it. Then would you believe the world can transform as a result of a single idea?”

“I might believe it then, but don’t say it’s God. It can’t be a religion or belief in a particular governing system like democracy, for example. There are always others that value something different than the majority,” explained Jill.

“True. There will always be a few exceptions, people who formulate their views upon their own understanding and experiences that place them outside the commonly held belief system. However, I am not talking about religion or politics. I’m talking about this.” I reached into my pocket, which, by the way, gave me a good excuse to fondle her sweet little butt a little more and pulled out a dollar bill (I had held out a dollar from Michael for cigarettes).

“Here is concentrated power and wealth representing the condensation of human lives, specifically, the time and effort spent in trying to acquire this. But what is it exactly? We know what it is. It drives us, provides us with comfort and pleasure, it is a measure of success or failure and many other things. Jill, you point out that there are always people who, for whatever reason, do not buy into it. Let’s look at those that don’t buy into this,” I said waving the dollar bill. “Where would we find these people? Maybe in the Amazon forest, for instance? What does this dollar represent to them? What value does it hold for them?”

Jill thought for a moment. “It could be fuel for a fire or perhaps used for decoration, but really, to them it is only a small piece of paper.”

“Exactly. Just a piece of paper. It stands for itself for just what it is. For us to see it for what we make it out to be, we all have to share in the same dream if you will - the dream that says this is a symbol

representing power and wealth and is something in itself to be valued. Even though we can't eat it, we enslave ourselves to it as if it directly provides us nourishment. Pretty crazy, huh? So, it's not about whether everyone would buy into the same idea, abstract or not; it's if everyone believes it, then everyone IS believing it. Do you know what I mean? Then it is only a matter of getting everyone to believe in a new dream. Good ideas are many, what is always missing is a good implementation plan for seeding it into everyone's consciousness simultaneously. That may be the impossible part, but you have to think there has to be a way."

"Maybe someday we all will be hooked up through a machine or computer where that information just gets plugged in automatically," said Jill.

"As long as I have my fingers on the buttons I won't care," I laughed.

I hadn't watched where we had been driving. I knew we were still in Indiana, but the countryside had changed from flat farm fields to heavily wooded hills. We wound down several deep valleys and across old back road bridges paved with wooden timbers revealing, through the gaps between them, the water far below. Michael hadn't said much the last few miles. I had noticed he was concentrating on driving and on Jill's and my conversation. At times, he would cock his head as if to hear a little better and then, as a response to a comment, do a slow rolling nod that I took for agreement. Winding down a steep hill, he let the car coast almost to a stop. Then suddenly he veered into the woods.

It took me a quick second to realize that just maybe there was a road through the tall trees after all. I don't think I would have driven a car like his down it, but Michael appeared to have navigated it before. Jill and I rode along looking at the high forest canopy filtering in the late afternoon sunlight. I thought to myself that there's not many places like this left in this part of the state. It had the air of something old and ancient, unscarred by the chainsaws of time.

We drove into a small clearing. There was a collection of vehicles, mostly VW's and Harleys, parked in front of a small cabin barely visible against the trees. I could hear voices above the music coming from the backside of the cottage, but no one was in sight;

although the VW van parked next to us seemed to have been occupied judging from the moans and giggles coming from inside.

"Hang here a minute," Michael said before heading off towards the cottage.

Jill and I sat on the back deck of the Corvette and we took pause to admire the majestic trees hovering over us.

"Look how dark it's gotten," commented Jill. "The light barely makes it through the trees."

"Yeah, I wonder what time it is." Neither one of us had a watch.

"What did you say?" The voice came from inside the van.

Startled, I raised my voice and asked. "Do you know what time it is?"

"Right now?" the voice shot back.

Before I could reply, a man's head suddenly thrust through the open driver's window. A magnificent head, I must say, adorned with a huge blonde afro and a face covered with heavily bearded stubble, framed by pitch-black Orphan Annie spectacles.

"The time, my boy? You want to know the time? The time is right now. Right now. It's easy enough to remember, isn't it?"

"No, it just gets dark so early and I was thinking." ...I was thinking that it seemed like a lot of time had passed since I had left with Michael.

"My name is Jimmy. Did you guys ride in with Mike?" he asked as he shoved his meaty hand my way, all the time never taking his eyes off Jill.

I started to shake his hand, then I noticed it wasn't empty. He held a big fat joint. He offered it to me and I took a deep hit. The pot had a peculiar sweet taste to it and I thought to myself that it might have something mixed in with it. As I took a second hit, I followed his eyes with mine and turned to see Jill, wide-eyed and a little pale, sitting down in the seat. Jimmy's stare seemed to have had Jill pinned in her seat trembling. Actually, with those dark glasses, it was impossible to tell whether his eyes were even open. Then noticeably everything suddenly hushed for a long moment, a pregnant pause, the singing birds and the music both were interrupted by the silence.

"I didn't get your name." Jimmy said, looking back at me. His voice broke the silence like a gun shot.

"Bbbbob," I stammered

"Hi Bbbbob, this is Jjjjudy." Jimmy nodded towards an apparition emerging from the back of the van.

What was in that pot, I wondered? Appearing before me was an exquisite elfin princess, tiny, childlike. I thought for a second she was a child dressed in a sparkling green gauze pixie outfit, complete with fairy wings and tiny sequined slippers.

"Hi Bob." She seemed to lift from the ground.

Her eyes flashed into mine. I had never seen eyes like that, both metallic and animal like. I guess I mean not human. Judy took the joint from Jimmy and floated around to Jill's side of the car. As I was just about to speak in reply, Jimmy placed his hand on my shoulder and turned me towards the cottage, and said, "Let's go find Mike."

"Yeah, that's probably a good idea. My friends are waiting for me back in town."

I glanced back at Jill. The fairy princess was on her knees leaning over the front seat with her face close to Jill's. I think she was giving Jill a shotgun hit off the joint, but I swear I saw a cloud of sparkling pixie dust blowing in her face.

"You know, Bob, I've thought a lot about how time flows. Forget the clocks. Time isn't measured in precisely equally divided units that march on endlessly into the infinite. Time is measured only by the way we perceive it. Time is relative, but not necessarily the way Einstein said it was, relative to speed and direction. Notice how slowly time passes on a Friday afternoon right before quitting time. Then see how fast it moves on a Saturday when the day flies by and you've only just gotten warmed up for the day."

"I know that feeling too," I said.

"Try measuring time when sitting in class and the teacher says there is only fifteen minutes until break and you have to go to the bathroom really, really bad. Time stops, doesn't it almost seem to? Or, how about when you were a child? One year was an eternity. Turning sixteen seemed light years away, but as we grow older, a year at twenty-two is a span for which we can suffer anticipation and willingly endure sacrifices in hope of some expected reward. Like hating school, but hanging on until you get the degree even though you feel your life is already starting to race by. Contrast this with being an old man when a year is too precious to waste on mere sacrifice. As such, it needs to be enjoyed to its last day."

As we walked, the trees seemed to lean in towards us blocking out the last of the dimming light.

“Looking at the big picture, time flows like a river, but a river has many currents flowing all at once. I’ll explain. For instance, a father watches his children play and experiences a sinking feeling in the pit of his soul knowing they’re growing up at an alarming pace while, at the same time, he perceives time in relation to the job he is languishing in as going on forever. We experience time in a multitude of ways simultaneously sensing the impermanence of our own existence contrasted with the infinity of nature, much like a river that has the swift current in midstream, but flows lazily along its banks, sometimes even flowing backwards in quiet eddies and swirling pools. The river as a whole is constantly moving from the source to a destination, perhaps in parts and at different rates, but ultimately it all collects towards its goal of moving downstream.”

I felt as if I was caught in one of those timeless eddies.

“Those old and near death must see time as if it is a river approaching a great waterfall. The river gathers all of its currents and eddies gradually gaining speed in pursuit of the precipice over which it is headed. Going over the edge is death, where time is scattered to the wind, disorganized, becoming separate droplets, perhaps collecting in a smooth, calm pool, the void, but then a nearly undetectable current begins pulling from the bottom of the pool. We move from this life carried by many more rivers with their eddies, calm water, rapids, and whirlpools rushing over more drops and deaths and new beginnings until finally reaching the boundless, formless ocean. Swallowed in the void it becomes a part of everything forever until the big wheel turns and the sun pulls it up into the sky, yet another form that will fall again to earth to start the journey over. Time is a circle, no beginning, no end, a wheel turning in endless cycles erasing its own trail.”

“The serpent eating its own tail,” I interjected, remembering Ouroboros from English literature class.

“Yes, that’s exactly right. Life devours itself while constantly giving birth to itself. Creation is an ongoing process. It’s happening right now as we walk. Life is all process; there really is no actual content. Content is just what we choose to focus on. It is what we want to draw from the background, the process. We give meaning and form to it usually by dividing it into increments, which we call time. We see a solid object and subconsciously we measure it as

being here, solid and permanent. We can imagine its origin and its dissolution in time, but we fail to see it for what it is, which is just a part of the process connected to every other thing in the universe. It is our own prejudice that discriminates against the process. We single out so-called solid objects and enslave them to our misconceptions of time. Our tainted awareness demands them to behave and perform in ways in which we expect them to. A chair is supposed to hold our weight. That boulder will be in the exact same spot tomorrow. This planet will outlive us all. Therefore, if it is as you say, the snake eating its tail, and we are somewhere on that circle of time, then it stands to say we really aren't anywhere. Basically, we are always equidistant from any other point on the circle. We may think that the events of our birth and dying are milestones by which we can measure our place along the circle, but that is where our prejudice in perception comes into play again. Why should being born, or dying, hold any greater significance than being here, right now, talking and walking? It really boils down to this. You never have been, nor ever will be anywhere else, but here Right Now. So what time is it? Well, from my perspective it is right now, and it will always be right now. The Eternal Wow Now I call it. All that there ever was and ever will be, right now."

Right now is already pretty late, I thought. As we reached the cabin steps, I flashed on how the cabin blended into the forest when we first drove up. Then it was part of the process presenting form with minimum attention from my part. Now that I was interacting physically with the steps by climbing them, I wondered if my discriminating mind was giving them form or demanding them to exist as content, separate and discriminate. Fuck, I was stoned.

I followed Jimmy through the door. The cabin seemed amazingly big on the inside. I could hear more people in more rooms off to my right and farther back in the house. It took me a moment to get my bearings. The first thing I noticed was that Jimmy had dissolved into the party somewhere and that Michael was nowhere to be seen either. Whatever it was that I smoked, I was still getting off.

"Hold still. We're playing a game." A smiling, young lady stepped up close to my face. She had wonderful blue eyes and a charming, dimpled grin that, at first, drew my attention away from the fact that the word Ganesh was written across her forehead.

"Give this a second to dry," she said as she wrote on my forehead.

“What’s your name?” She asked.

“Bob.” I said.

“No it’s not! That’s not what it says on your forehead.”

“Ah, so your name must be ...” She cut me off with a finger to my lips.

“You can’t say my name. I haven’t figured out who I am yet.” She went on. “You have to find out on your own who you are. No one can tell you. You can figure it out by asking questions of others, but they can’t say your name, nor you theirs.”

“Am I someone famous?” She then asked me.

“I don’t know. I don’t recognize your name.” I replied.

“Well, I really must find someone to talk with who knows who I am,” and with a twirl, she was gone.

I took a few steps into the dimly lit room. Around a low table sat a group of people toking on a hookah.

“Look who’s here.” A tall thin fellow rose and greeted me with a bow, not exactly the greeting one would expect from Charles Manson. That was the name written on his brow.

“Have a seat, please, honored guest,” offering me a place beside him.

“Chuck and all the rest of us have been waiting on your return,” said Judy Garland from across the table.

I sat down on a cushion and someone handed me an end of a hose snaking from the hookah. I took a deep draw. I only had hashish once, but there was no mistaking what was in the bowl. I added my exhalation to the cloud of smoke surrounding us.

“Thanks, Chuck,” I said smiling. “I just came in looking for Michael. Have you seen him?”

Chuck let out a laugh, “Oh, I’m sure Michael is looking for you.”

I wasn’t sure what to make of that at first, and then I remembered my unknown name on my forehead. “I guess you know that you are Charlie Manson, do the rest of you know who you are?” That got a big laugh from everybody.

“Yes, I am Judy Garland and this is George Patton, the Lone Ranger and of course Tonto. We thought we knew who we were, that is until you arrived, ol’ Enlightened One.” This caused some more giggles.

“Enlightened One? Let me guess. Am I the Buddha?”

"Most assuredly, and so are we all. But that's not exactly what it says on your head, but you're close enough, wouldn't you say?" The Lone Ranger inspected the others for their approval.

"Your name is Siddhartha. Prince Siddhartha," said George Patton, a chubby cheeked blonde girl. "Have you come to share your wisdom?"

"That shouldn't take too long," I said trying to be funny.

Then Chuck suddenly took on the angry eyes of the real Mr. Manson. Drawing eyeball-to-eyeball with me, he sternly asked, "Do you mean you have little wisdom to give, or do you mean we have limited minds that are too shallow to comprehend your wisdom?"

"This is getting way too deep for me. I've already had my philosophical discussion for the day with Jimmy while walking in here."

For the second time this evening, a pregnant pause suspended the conversation. The room felt small now, as if it were closing in around me. The soft bubbling of the water pipe brought me back from la-la land.

"Who am I?" I asked again, creating more laughter.

"Well, if you don't know, then we're all in serious trouble," this time from Tonto.

"No, I mean what does this say?" pointing above my brow.

"You are Prince Siddhartha, here once again to deliver your peaceful message to help us overcome suffering. You are the young Buddha, yet to awaken, evidently," added Tonto.

I turned to study his face. I saw that he had no name written on his forehead and, by the look of his eagle beaked nose and fierce black eyes that forced me to shake my head and rub my eyes in order to actually distinguish real human features; I guessed he was a Native American. He looked a lot older than the rest of us, though his wide girth and moon pied face seemed to have stretched out any wrinkles, but the lines around his eyes gave away his age at over thirty, maybe pushing forty.

"I don't think I have the time to find enlightenment. I'd rather find Michael and maybe get on our way before it gets too late." I wondered if Jill was still at the car and worried about meeting up with my friends at the motel.

"I'm sure if you can find the time, you can find enlightenment," assured Tonto.

"Maybe you can help me find Michael too? Did you see him come through here?"

"Come with me, Prince Siddhartha. I will help you find your friend."

The head rush I got upon standing was almost enough to make me sit right back down. The eagle reappeared and said, "My name is Tonto, anyway that's my nickname, and I go by it. What's your name? I don't want to keep calling you Prince."

"Bob, just Bob. Are you a Native American?" I asked innocently.

"Native Hoosier. We beat the white men by a few hundred years. I'm part Miami Indian, and part French."

I listened as Tonto made his transformation back to being human.

"This area has a lot of Native American history. My Dad was French and a printer, my Mom was Miami, but she seldom acknowledged that she was of Miami decent. Most of what I know I researched myself, but I stopped seeking the facts of my ancestry a long time ago and began focusing on using my intuition and insights to help me be present and in the moment. That way I can think like my ancestors and have them live through me in this life."

We made our way through a crowded kitchen and out the back door. We walked to the edge of the deck to move away from the music. I had kept an eye out for Michael and Jill. The image of Jill with the fairy princess came back to my mind. I expected her to flutter by at any moment.

"What do your ancestors think of this party?" another attempt by me to be clever.

Tonto stood silently and looked out into the darkness. Below us ran the Tippecanoe River. I could hear her waters whispering over the ripples and could smell the breath of the river, a mixture of the new and fresh, mingled with a damp, old moss, dead fish aroma.

"They are happy to see this much light in celebration. They say tonight we honor these ancient trees and this sacred river with our presence - especially your presence, Prince Siddhartha, wise brother and hunter of men's souls."

"Why are your ancestors so happy to see me?"

"Do you know the story of Siddhartha?" Tonto asked.

"Actually, I have the book, but never got around to reading it," I replied.

"Read it. It's your life story. When you read it, remember this river. There will come a time in your life when you will need this

river, a time when you will come back to it in search for that which you seek.”

“The river has many currents. Which one is going to carry me along?” I said barely aloud. I confess, I was thinking more about the turn my life made that day succumbing to my lust and my need for heightening my reality that led to me blowing my college money and certainly taking a different career path. All the while it was looking like I was not going to get laid either. With this resignation, my thoughts turned to what Tonto had just said.

“Jimmy talked to me about the river of time and how it flows differently for each of us, or so it seems. I think I get the point he was trying to make with me. No matter which current sweeps us along in life, we are all in the same river. No matter how we perceive time individually, with our own individual perspectives, we are in the same river, in the same moment, and that moment is now.”

“There you are. You’ve found the time.” The eagle eyes had a very human smile.

“I guess since I found the time, then enlightenment should be just around the corner.”

“I know why my ancestors are delighting right now. Come on, let’s go look for your friend.”

We walked around the cottage. Everyone inside sounded as if they were having a good time. Again, I took note that the outer dimensions of the cabin didn’t seem to add up compared to the space inside. And once again I noticed myself giving form to the porch stairs with complete and total discrimination and prejudice. We stepped inside. I found myself at the end of a hallway. I must have come through a different door before, but I didn’t remember there being two doors. Tonto veered left into the smoky room that I had been in earlier. He shouted to me over the music.

“Check out down the hall. He’s probably down there.”

I saw an open door near the end of the hall. I could see the glow from a black light, and I could hear music and what sounded like voices coming from inside the room. As good as any place to start, I thought. Walking down the corridor towards the eerie glow, I mulled over what Tonto had said. The story of Siddhartha was my life’s story.

More of Bob's travels from his OK City notebooks - series of entries

My decision to travel along the riverbanks instead of the open road may have been my best. There is something special about folks you meet along the river and, unlike traveling on the road, rivers embrace us with their currents that sweep us along at their own melancholy pace, not ours.

It has been three weeks since I left my special spot on the Tippecanoe. For the most part I tried to stay close to the banks and out of sight. I didn't bring a map, but it's easy to follow the general course of the river by tracing the high cottonwoods and sycamores along the river winding its way to the south. I wonder if my feet will ever stop hurting. It makes for slow going, but that just gives me more time to write and rest and to see what is going on around me. Already my past life seems so distant. I have no regrets chucking it all in. I gave it all to Natascha and her kids mostly, and spread the rest of my things and money amongst my friends. I'm amazed that I actually have made it this far. I expected to have enough doubt and difficulty by now to have turned back or made a phone call to Mike to pick me up.

"Hey Mike. Come to Cayuga. I'll be waiting at the gas station drinking a cola and watching the dogs roaming the streets."

But, as I sit here in my cozy little campsite, my back up against a big sycamore, I wonder why I had not started my walk years ago. Even though not everything has gone like I planned it, and I planned it long ago, I felt as if I was finally at home with myself. I always had a feeling that at some point in my life I would just shuck it all in, just give up and quit, whittle down all of my earthly possessions and set out to see where I would wind up.

I tried to overcome my expected physical limitations by having a good plan. I researched the internet and selected all of the items I was taking with me with great care. I shopped for the most comfortable backpack outfitted with all of the cool miniature stuff like a tiny fire starter and first aid kit. I also had a two-man fly-weight tent and a down winter-rated mummy bag, add a cook stove, a combo-ceramic charcoal water filter, not failing to mention foodstuffs and clothing; that's why the notebooks, along with a bunch of other things, almost found themselves abandoned the first day. So much for having a plan.

This led to my first of many revelations. I wasn't going anywhere, physically or spiritually, until my feet were in good enough condition to make a good day's walk.

I have enough money with me, and I kept my cell phone and plastic, so I suppose if at some point I want to bail on this adventure, or for that matter, just stay in a motel again for a night, I can. It would be nice to have a bath though, and to escape these mosquitoes and horseflies. The flies are the worst, but I have developed a new tactic. The mosquitoes get one meal a day. I let the first one feed. I imagine that I am sacrificing my blood to the mosquito god and ask that I be spared from more bites for the rest of the day. The horseflies, I decided, just wanted to hang, so I give each one a name and then we go on to have some very good discussions. They are a rough bunch sometimes, and every so often, one of them gets out of line and decides to take a piece out of me; then beware, I smack their ass down. I don't mind expediting some of the nastier little bastards along their path towards rebirth. That's why I tell them the rules right up front. It seems to be working well since my walking meditation has improved from the lack of distraction. Although, thinking about it ...did my meditation improve because I was less distracted, or did it improve because I was distracted less because I was meditating more mindfully? These are the type of things one ponders when one walks.

One night I held up under a bridge to get out of the rain. It's so damn cozy by the campfire. I learned how cold it gets sleeping on a sand bar and that the river can come up at night and flood my campsite. Once the fire burns down, even in my luxurious mummy bag, the damp cold chills to the bone. Tomorrow I'll make another contact with civilization. I will need to re-supply myself. Hopefully, I can slide in and out without drawing too much attention. I'm sure that I must have the crazy refugee look down by now. I'm debating whether I need to get a motel room and do some laundry and get a good meal, but that feels a little too involved with the real world right now, and I don't have to deal with it right now because right now I am sitting in a circle of light from the small fire warming my bare feet. My poor feet; they are starting to roughen up and thicken in the spots where it hurts the most. Another few days and a few more calluses and then I should be able to cover a little more ground. I found that the sandals I brought are really the most comfortable. My feet can breathe, and wearing sandals make me take more

deliberate steps and encourages my mindfulness. I now realize that my feet have become my focus for mindfulness. The pain each step brings is a reminder to breathe steadily and deeply, inhaling and exhaling with deliberation. Deliberate liberation, for after all, that's what it is all about, this mindfulness trip I'm on. God, my old life had become too much for me to handle.

Of my search for the middle way, Natascha says I always take things to the extreme and this is the most extreme way to end up, but for me it seems completely different than that. For me, the so-called normal world, which sure as fuck stopped being normal before I bailed, seemed pretty fucking extreme to me.

(My apology, I need to be more mindful when I write, but it is representative of the mindless, not mindful, state I was in).

My point is that this mindful walk I have chosen to take upon this planet, rather than being extreme, is just about in the middle actually. To see where I had been in the real and necessary world, completely distracted, drawn by lust and drugged by comfort, never being able to catch up with the moment, would certainly qualify as an extreme. I didn't have the time or the desire to seek an end to my suffering. My anger became my politics, my lust my livelihood and my habits my dreams.

I have spent a lot of time convincing everyone around me that once they could see the invisible bars in the prison we all shared, we could change the way we live and change the world. I was like a cellmate, devising the escape plan and encouraging its execution but being too afraid to leave the cell come time to make the break. Contrast what I have just described to the opposite extreme of pure blissful godhead consciousness, then I say, walking and meditating on being mindful of breath and spirit for as many consecutive moments is just about as close to being in the middle as I can imagine.

I had to slip through several towns, none too big, and managed to do so successfully. I would wait until mid-day to pass through the bigger towns. I drew less suspicion in broad daylight cutting along the riverbanks lined with railroad tracks and old red brick mills. In the daytime I notice that people see me and steer clear of me a little, and the equipment on my back sort of puts me in a safer public category as opposed to pushing a shopping cart through town. The same goes for public squatting, or camping, as I call it. If you have a

nice sleeping bag and a cute little tent with all of the neat little gadgets that accompany the wilderness backpacker, versus sleeping in a cardboard box, then you become an oddity rather than an eyesore. Maybe that is the solution to the homeless issue - give them all equipment like I have and tell everyone they are on vacation, and then we would treat them like tourists. That's what I still feel like, a tourist.

I still have the urge to keep moving as if there is a place I need to be. Old habits are hard to break. I find myself setting goals for distance walked as well as how fast I can set up and tear down camp. I will have to meditate on whether I am that way, self-competitive, and if that is a quality of my character and accept it as such, or whether this behavior is a result of my conditioning taking place in the real world. One thing that is really starting to become apparent is how much conditioning we are subjected to. I have given it quite a bit of thought. Exactly what is conditioning? How can we recognize it? Are there invisible bars surrounding our prison cell? Is anything left in our experience that stands naked that's not prejudiced by the way we have been conditioned to perceive, if not in our current experiences then maybe somewhere in our memory? At what point did we as children become subjected to the social conditioning we now use to interpret our day-to-day experiences?

I spent all day seated alongside the river watching the rain from under my plastic parka. The hood fastened tightly over my baseball cap directed the water in little rivulets running over the edge of the bill. As long as I didn't move I had a chance of staying reasonably dry. So I decided not to move and just practice being mindful of the moment. As I settled into my quiet routine, my mind kept going off track, first distracted by the wind blowing the cold rain into my face and then drawn off point by my thoughts. I wasn't far enough into my meditative discipline to be able to groove on the bad weather and where I was at and all of that stuff, like wondering if maybe I've lost my mind, you know, the scary stuff that's fun to come up against knowing you will find your way back to peaceful valley or go insane, which in many respects is just about the same for me. Rather than battle the elements, I allowed myself to be carried along by the river of thought in my head. Usually when I meditate I try my best to be mindful and recognize when my focus moves away from the immediacy of the moment. This time I decided to use my thoughts as

my object of meditation. This requires mindfulness when choosing which particular thought to grab on to and be carried along by the mind's streaming current. That's the tricky part, being purposefully un-purposeful.

I sat there examining my thoughts, moving past the point where my legs fell asleep, and butt as well. Looking out over the river I thought about throwing myself into the rushing current. I envisioned a picture of me holding onto a log and floating all of the way down to the Mississippi River. When I was a kid we would always say Rivah, Mississippi Rivah. It was something from a cartoon, and it used to always crack us up. It's funny how I can remember so much of my past. I can remember back a long way. In fact, my problem is that I remember almost everything. I mean everything. My mind is full of so many trivial facts that I'm like a walking Jeopardy show. What I remember most are details, textures, smells, the angle of sunlight at the moment, my feelings at the time, my thoughts at each point. I remember all of the crap my brothers and I would pull as kids. As adults when we got together on those have-to occasions, weddings and funerals; I would try to reminisce with them, but I found that they could remember so very little about our childhood. Missing for them were those little events that at that time and age felt as if they were of major importance to me. Like for instance we had a kid move into our neighborhood. I remember Ralph Blume; they moved into the Chadwick's old house, the middle house on the hill going down to the river and the factory. Ralph was older than all of us, maybe ten, I'm not sure, maybe twelve, and he was a big kid. He reminded me of Curly on the Three Stooges. One time, a bunch of us kids were sitting around a card table set up in Ralph's basement. Perry Mulligan, who lived up on the other end of the block by the tracks, was playing with us. Ralph started screwing with Perry. He put some pet flea powder on Perry's arm. Perry quickly brushed it off. Someone said, "It's poison, Perry!"

Ralph began to elaborate, "Oh man, you've got to wash that off in one minute or it will eat your skin off!"

We all did our part to verbally whip Perry into a panic and then into tears.

"Run home and tell your mom. She'll have to take you to the hospital."

Perry started to bawl. Then he ran home and I don't think Perry was allowed to play at Ralph's any more, but the Blumes moved

soon after anyway, but not before Ralph's imitation of his father farting in the bathroom was indelibly etched into my memory. Ralph said his father sounded like a running chainsaw when he farted and that his Dad could fart louder than anyone in the world, and I believed him.

So my point is, if not apparent, is why do I remember this and in so much detail? I mean, I could go on to describe the house, the basement, how I felt at the time – this perhaps being the first time that I had gotten caught up in a group peer-frenzy that resulted in turning against a friend, and the feeling I had that this wasn't right, and feeling bad, but picking on Perry nonetheless, glad it wasn't me getting picked on, and the strangest and most problematic aspect of all this was the arising of some other awareness from inside of me, of being on the outside watching and recording, of knowing that I was the chronicler of all of our childhoods, and that this was important enough that I would someday be bringing this moment back to the world, and now have.

A clap of distant thunder brought with its rumbling roll a thought that, as I watched this movie in my head, I needed to file some mental notes to record later in my journal. Then I thought, who is recording the recorder? With the next breath I fell back into the river inside me.

So, I felt destined even then to be the recorder - the Great Rememberer. It's all still there. Christ, I can even smell the dust on the basement stairs, the smell of the river down the street mixed with the acidic electrical plastic tape insulation odor from Bryant's manufacturing. The routine of the gray old ladies that trudged up the steep hill to their cars every afternoon at four o'clock repeated five days a week. The old gray humped backed Packard with an old gray humped backed woman behind the wheel. The same woman who I, at age three, dropped my pants in front of and stuck out my tiny erect pink little penis at her. I remember having no shame after discovering just how good it felt letting it wave in the wind, soaking in the afternoon's radiant warmth.

"Shame on you, you dirty little boy," she hissed, thereby labeling me a pervert at a very early age. From then on I was reduced to hiding behind the mulberry tree in the backyard, way out by the

fence, where I could air out privately. How could something that felt that good be bad?

Why have I always felt so removed from everything? When very young, I would look at my parents and see them as strangers, and my three brothers were merely fellow travelers with some strange, shared fate. Do all kids ask the same questions that I did? Not really asking questions because if you waited until you could verbalize a question, mastered the language well enough to ask, then the question couldn't be asked. I mean the question was the only question. It was THE question – WHY? Life at that early age was all why? Or what? And even sometimes where? But it was the total experience. I remember asking questions with my tongue, the steel legs on the kitchen chairs almost metallically pleasant, the brittle grooved treads on the stairs, gritty Bakelite. I even asked a question of the lamp cord with my teeth while sitting on the metal heat register next to the bookshelves, long before Mom painted them blue, behind the imitation blond Danish end table with the turquoise lamp with the gold painted trim and black buttons beetle-like spiraling upwards. The taste of 110 volts, the wiggly blue lines around my chin just like in the cartoons, basically, the usual scared shitless dash to Mom, who despite herself, laughed. I bet I ran my tongue around damn near every inch of that house. Do you remember what a doorknob tasted like, each knob with its own distinct flavor?

I was always drawn to the out of way places in the house. I remember exploring on all fours. I can tell you now where the nail heads stuck up on the hardwood floors, bare around the edge of the rugs, out just far enough to stick in my knee. Each spot had a mood, each one special in some way. And what a great place for a childhood, growing up in the 50's in a small Indiana farming town, close and comfortable in the winter, and wild and energetic in the summer. I was so aware of the magical qualities of all that was there, and already aware of the passing of the moment, already feeling lost innocence that is lost gradually, a little bit each day. It's the same feeling as when you are doing something that makes you feel particularly good, a body massage, having sex, going to parties, all pleasurable times, the sense of awareness knowing it is fleeting. Once that shadow creeps over you, then you are finished, whether you're locked in your lover's arms, or playing with your friends on a

warm June night when the lightning bugs are at their peak and Mom said you could stay out until midnight. When the peak hits, you know it's all downhill from there for both your joy buzz and the lightning bugs. In this way we have all become conditioned to stretch the anticipation of the potential for fun – the approaching event, the next time, in an attempt to make it last. Milking the cow from the front, verses milking the cow from behind, as I do now. Pulling from the future requires projecting oneself into another place. It requires mental measuring and comparing.

Experience is a burden for us all made heavy by tons upon tons of cumbersome words, thoughts, memories, and socially controlled conduct, the figuring out right from wrong. That's it! That's what is lost. Do you see that? Innocence stolen by staggering myth trampled by misconceptions. I mean really serious misconceptions, like time is linear or that science can understand it all.

When I was a toddler doing my taste tour on the crawl, day was day, not today, not yesterday, not tomorrow, warm was warm and really warm wasn't hot it was just really - warmer. Good was good and bad was only less good knowing and feeling aware then that it all was good and that God was just really one big goof just being here. Look at happy babies, look them in the eyes, you will see what I mean. They squint and giggly goo at the world just tickled pink, the old soul, the willful player of the game. Then notice as they get caught up in thought, early thought of pattern recognition, the comparing, and the measuring. Usually it means they are crapping their diapers. However, that's a big event in a baby's life, suddenly feeling all this happening. Is it good this pleasant warm squish feel better afterglow? Now stinky – charging back into the fire, then the next time, the next time and thereafter, and now you remember uniform measurable patterns, linear time. Cause and effect, it comes in a flush, if you will. They are all natural evolutionary developmental stages. But come, remember really hard, what was there before this, before you started dividing the world into pieces? We were all aware then that is what was happening. I don't know, maybe I didn't get erased enough after my past life, maybe I brought part of that off-time, the in-between time, to this world. That's where we all start and probably return, but there is no beginning, no returning, just here. That is what a baby knows. Just here, here, here, here, here, here...

That stuck with me for a long while, forever as a fact. It was sometimes buried for long periods, but it was always there, or I should say here? For many years I thought everyone else was here all the time too; all kids do. I stayed in the here and now longer than most kids, and that got me into all kinds of predicaments.

I can't get the taste of these stair treads out of my mouth. Those stairs – two flights in an enclosed stairwell with a railing at the top in which we boys would launch huge hawks at each other below – unsuspecting prey. The tricks we would conceive to gain an upper hand, like when Slick found that he could climb across the chasm to the windowsill where he could carefully drop his salvo onto his target who would creep up the stairs with their eyes intently fixed upon the railing, until now the only known angle of attack. I asked my brothers if they could remember how you could sneak up the stairs silently with no creaky wood by keeping your feet on the outer corner steps of the first flight, then as you reached the landing where no foot could quietly touch, you grab the wide railing, swing around the second flight, then by hanging over the railing you walked the top edge of the baseboard getting just enough traction to reach the top. Ready to sneak and pounce below the pale bare light bulb of the hall light, not affording any aesthetics. They had no recollection having been conditioned to forget.

So you see, I have always been outside the norm - the deviation from the average. I guess that is why I've always tried so hard to hide it. Somehow I figured out at a very early age that it was best to lie low in the boat; nevertheless, all it usually took was for me to open my mouth and the truth was out. To put it another way, I never had to dress differently or get tattooed or pierced to be different. All I had to do was to open my mouth and speak, and then everyone knew I was different. Really though, it was just me being me. I used to hear from my teachers that I was a classic underachiever, but I preferred to think of myself as a very overachieving underachiever. I have taken underachieving and made it an art form using my life as my canvas. I strove to remain hidden in the school of humanity, swimming along with everyone else, trying not to draw too much attention to myself. Perhaps it is just a touch of paranoia acquired at an early age; just the same, it seems to have guided me well.

Thinking back to what Tonto told me those many years ago, that I would find the story of my life in the book *Siddhartha*, I'm now

beginning to see the truth in that statement. No, I was not born into this world as a prince in the sense that my family had wealth and prestige. My family of four boys and a mother and a father was just above the poverty level, very much lower middle working class, but the riches and opportunity of the poor working class in this country, in this time, by comparison to Prince Siddhartha's time, is comparable to the wealthiest of those days. I think, in these terms, we all are royalty. Like Siddhartha. I was sheltered in the halcyon days of my childhood, protected by the love around me and especially by my own naivety. For most of my youth, I was virtually untouched by the suffering in the world. But one thing above all that gave me protection was a deep understanding that the world was a perfect place and that death, pain and suffering, as well as happiness, joy and sorrow were all components of the same thing, the constant showering upon us all of the love and light of God, whatever God is.

Here is the story: I remember the moment as a child that I came to this realization. My family was Christian in much the same way as most our fellow citizens claim themselves to be Christian. There really weren't that many religious options available to anybody growing up in rural Indiana. I recall the whole family attending church together only a couple of times, Easter Sunday and a few times around Christmas. The rest of the time my brothers and I were sent off to Sunday school, I'm sure it was so Mom and Dad could do whatever it is they do when the kids are not around, which I found out, after having my own family, is sleep. I was introduced to God by a Sunday school teacher who, upon looking back, I'm sure knew less of the true nature of God than I did at age five. For me then, it was pretty simple. God made us. You couldn't see God, but you could see him when you die and go to heaven. He was everywhere at the same time but yet invisible. Also, you could talk to God and He would talk back to some of us. That was the basic foundation for my understanding of the creator and nature of the universe. Keep in mind, I also believed in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny too. Fairies, I didn't find out were real until much later. Again, there I was at age five soaking it all in, filing everything I was experiencing in my mental storage cabinet for use at a later date. Five years old, it must have been late September, I was dressed in my cowboy get-up. I had the kid's cowboy boots complete with the hat, holster and six-shooter. My brothers were at school.

I was walking the edge of the retaining wall alongside our driveway wondering whether God could see me right now. He is in the rocks and the grass and the air. He is in all of the profound mysteries of life. So, what is God? He is everywhere, in the trees, in the river, He is in the Sun. Okay, I can buy that. So we all grow old and die, no one lives forever, no one gets out alive. Well, that really levels the playing field I thought. It doesn't matter who is driving, we arrive at the same destination no matter what we do or accumulate along the way. Then it hit me. There is absolutely nothing to be afraid of even though none of us knows what will happen to anyone except growing old and dying - that is, if we don't die before then.

"So there is nothing to be afraid of, isn't that right, God?" I said aloud, stopping and balancing on top of the wall. Then God spoke back to me. I looked up above me and I saw God. I saw the Sun shining through the yellow turned leaves of the walnut tree. The Sun was singing to my heart. The light flooded into my soul and His voice spoke inside my head telling me that I was absolutely correct. There is nothing to fear, there is no reason to strive and achieve unless it's to strive and achieve a more complete understanding of God. Pretty heavy shit for a five year old, but I thought this was just an ordinary event experienced by everyone. After all, why wouldn't God want to talk to a child? It was only years down the road that I realized that most people are conditioned quickly by all of the can't dos in life that they never hear God trying to talk to them.

Letter received in Bob's PO Box, by me [Mike], a week after Bob left on his walkabout

Dear Bob,

Sorry I haven't written to you in a while. I think of you often and have more than once sat down to write to you to thank you for helping me along my path. Last night I was sitting on the veranda overlooking the crystal blue Sea of Cortez. The sunset was amazing. I wish you were here to share it with me. I'm so happy here in my new life. I never thought I could be this contented and happy. I miss the interesting conversations we had. Many of the things we

talked about I see happening every day. We do live inside a miracle that is being created constantly in front of our eyes.

As I was enjoying yesterday's sunset, I was wondering about everyone back in Indiana and wondering if you had made your break yet. Then I couldn't believe my ears when I heard your name over the radio on the local Mexican news broadcast. I still haven't picked up much of the language, so I couldn't tell what they were reporting about you. Raul, my scuba instructor, has a computer on the net, so I went to his place to find out what was going on. Wow, I guess I shouldn't have been surprised. You always said that you believed that you could change the world with one good idea. It looks like you have found a way to do that.

I remember all that crazy Boblovia stuff you would go on about. What did you call me, Kellyfornia? How cool, here I am, living on the Gulf of California. How did you know? The news on the internet had a link to your website with your Declaration of Boblovian Independence. I read it all and it is right on the money, especially the part about each of us individually having the right and responsibility to guide our own ship of state. That is the lesson I learned from you that first night we sat and talked. Each of us is responsible for being happy. That is a gift we can never share with someone else; otherwise, it becomes a burden that is too heavy for them to bear. Like Bob always said, don't be afraid to be happy.

I'm sure no matter what comes your way you will always be happy and fearless. I have to believe that you are having a lot of fun with this. I wish I had been there to see your stand-up comedy routine. Did someone really try to shoot you? I can't imagine that. Were your jokes really that bad?

Well, your message has seemed to have gotten out, and I guess there will be a few that will feel threatened by it, but I bet most people will find a lot of good in what you're saying. I will do my best to spread the word from here.

I hope this letter gets to you soon and that you can find time to write me back. I want to know all the details, particularly about the method you used to get the message out. Shame on you ...just kidding. You always managed to

put a twist or two into your adventures. So again, write me soon.

Thinking of you often.

Love, Kelly of Kellyfornia

Chapter III

JASMINE HARDY

(Part One)

(Voice from the television in a diner...)

“...Remember that comedian, Bob of Boblovia, who was shot at during an open mike comedy night? When we return, Entertainment Today will tell you what has been happening in Boblovia, and you may be surprised by how his message has gotten out...”

My name is Jasmine Hardy. I am from Poseyville, Indiana. I'm (was) a waitress at the 222 Diner just across the Wabash River where I-64 crosses Illinois Highway 1. The diner's name is 222 because we serve two eggs, two strips of bacon, and two pieces of toast for \$2.22. The coffee is extra, but the second cup is free.

Every day, for the last year or so, I said a little prayer on my way to work. I prayed that God would bring someone into my world that could help fill my life with love and a little excitement. I work hard keeping myself in shape and I know that I look pretty damn good for forty (or so). A day did not go by without some of the regulars, or some truck driver off the road, hitting on me. I tried dating some of them, but even though they might be nice men, their worlds seemed so narrowly focused on things that did not really interest me. Nascar, fishing, and drinking aren't what I wanted my life to be about.

This day did not start out much differently. I was up at three-thirty, and even though I did not have to be at work until five-thirty, I still felt rushed for time. I have to do my hair every day or it looks horrible. It's been a mess ever since the sun totally fried it last summer in New Mexico where I had been helping my sister build her adobe house. I had to cut it short and now it's almost long enough for a ponytail again. Then I have to eat, do my makeup, dress and then I'm ready for work.

I always hold my breath whenever I start my car. It runs okay once I get it going, but it needs some work done on it soon. That's easier said than paid for. You would think that after putting a daughter through nursing school and a son through prison, a mother would finally be able to settle in and to try to build a life for herself.

But, the education my son gained in prison was certainly more expensive than putting my girl through school and both left me deep in debt. I thought I had made my break when I went to New Mexico last summer, but my sister really let me down. That hurt, especially, after working so hard for her all summer long. At least now, I'm well versed on off-grid living, New Mexico adobe style. So, for the last year I have been living back home with my mom, who lives like a slob and drinks all the time, and my brother Tim, who is on house arrest for DWI. So yeah, I was looking for a man, my knight in shining armor, but I really had no clear picture in my head of exactly what kind of man a man-of-my dreams would be like. I just knew that I was not going to find him around here and God was not going to just drop him out of the sky; nevertheless, I always found myself praying just for that every morning driving across the Wabash on the way to the 222 Diner.

For the last two days, it had been unseasonably warm, nearly eighty degrees. All day yesterday, the wind blew in from the southwest bringing with it all of the dirt and dust from all the farms from here to Oklahoma. As the sun rose, I thought how weak and pale it looked on the horizon barely giving off enough light to make out the color of the brown clouds, dirtied by the brown dust, hovering over the dirt brown fields. God, I was ready for spring, but the weatherman was predicting that one last blast of winter was on its way and that we were going to start this day under a tornado watch. When you live in the tornado belt, you know when to pay attention to the weather.

“...Welcome back. You may recall the story of the man in Indiana who had to dodge gunshots while on stage at an amateur comedy night. His name is Bob and his comedy routine about his declaring himself as the independent state of Boblovia so inflamed a man in the audience that he pulled out a pistol and shot at him. That man is now doing time for attempted murder, but it seems Bob's provocative routine has generated a much different reaction from many folks. The latest internet buzz is all about Boblovia. You may already know that if you spend much time online. Now his message appears on websites ranging from religious apocalyptic sites, to the campus crowd blogs, to even many pornographic adult websites...”

I didn't have a chance to look at the television or the weather radar, until I had helped to get the restaurant open for breakfast. My manager and one of the cooks hadn't arrived yet. The weather was turning nasty. One of the customers that had made it in, I knew well. He was Father Daniel from the St. Francis Monastery near Ferdinand. Father Daniel looked like what everyone thought a monk should look like. He had a baldhead ringed with gray hair, wire rimmed spectacles, and he wore a heavy brown robe. It was interesting to watch the new customers' reactions when Father Daniel would come into the restaurant. I guess people are more accustomed to seeing nuns in their habits than monks in their robes, but for us locals, living near the monastery; we were quite used to seeing both. I had been keeping my ear cocked to the television listening for the latest weather update, but what caught my attention was the mention of 222. It was about a guy who said he was declaring himself the independent state of Boblovia and about his Couch Potato Revolution. The Revolution from the couch to take place on February 22nd, next year, on 2/22.

“...Millions of people a day are hitting on these websites, and hundreds of new sites, with people declaring their own independence, are springing up each day. Boblovia has almost achieved a cult status on some campuses in the US, and the Europeans are starting to follow this story too. The London Times published an editorial saying that maybe this is a sign of the American public returning to the individual ideals that most of the world had come to expect from Americans...”

Bleeet, bleeet ,bleeeet ...the National Weather Service has issued a TORNADO WARNING for western Posey and Knox Counties in Indiana, and eastern Lawrence County, Illinois. At 5:45am a severe thunderstorm producing tornados and severe winds, damaging hail, and heavy rainfall was spotted near Enfield, Illinois in Clark County heading northeast at 45mph. Storm watchers have reported several funnel clouds associated with this cell. The following towns in this storm's path are: Crossville, Calvin,

Graysville, Kneadsburg, and Mt Carmel, Illinois, and Vincennes, Indiana.

“...and we tried to contact Bob, and it appears he has not been seen for several weeks. However, we were able to interview a friend of Bob’s and this is what he had to say...”

The meager light from an invisible rising sun cast a green tint to the ominous black clouds approaching from the southwest. Father Daniel and I, along with our cook and dishwasher, Jose and Nacho, stood at the front of the diner transfixed by the storm bearing down on us. With no warning, a strong wind gust shook the whole diner. The large windows seemed to bow inwards from the sudden change in air pressure. At that moment, I noticed a figure climbing up across the interstate by the bridge that crossed the river. He was walking straight towards us bent forward by the wind at his back. He had only a narrow strip of ploughed field and the access road off the highway to negotiate before he would reach us. The figure quickly merged into the blur of driving rain and hail that was headed our way too. Then suddenly I heard a loud snap, the unmistakable sound of lightning hitting very close by followed by a boom so loud it almost dropped me to my knees. That took care of our electricity. The diner went dark: the television became silent.

“Everybody into the walk-in freezer!” yelled Jose. “Let’s go, now!” He added urgently.

Good idea, I thought, but just before I turned away from the window, I took one last look to where I had last seen the figure struggling across the open field.

“That’s no place to be,” I spoke aloud. Then I cast my eyes back up to the sky and I saw my first ever tornado barreling down upon us. It was coming over the river right at the back of that poor SOB trying to make it to the diner. There was no way of warning him. He was close enough now that I could see his long hair whipping around his face. He had a big walking stick that he used to prop himself up, nonetheless, with each step, it looked like he might break free from the planet and come sailing right at us.

“Get back here, Jasmine!” I heard Father Daniel calling to me.

I was the last one in the freezer and we shut the heavy door behind us. We all huddled along the wall in the pitch-black cold and listened to the sound of shattering glass and the howl of the tornado.

We stayed in the walk-in for nearly ten minutes. Jose cracked the door ajar and we could hear that everything outside had quieted down. We stepped into the kitchen and then Father Daniel opened the back door and we saw the storm receding.

“That funnel cloud must have passed right over us without quite touching down. The Lord was with us today,” he said.

I went into the dining room. Everything was a mess, but other than most of our plate glass windows having been blown in, the restaurant was pretty much intact. I went outside to check on things. My car was in one piece, but not entirely unscathed. The grease dumpster from the diner had turned upside down on the hood of my car, lovely, I thought. The other businesses around us seemed to have survived with little damage as well. Although, the tall sign for gas across the way had blown down, as well as, the forty feet tall 222 sign we had that used to be visible from the interstate. It had fallen like a felled tree in the direction of where I had last seen that man struggling against the storm. My god, I had forgotten about that man. My heart leapt in my breast as I ran to where I had seen him last, just about where the three huge 2's were now lying in a tangled heap in the ditch across the road. I remember thinking, what would I do if I found someone severely injured. I have never seen anyone badly hurt before. I wasn't sure how I was going to handle it. I ran across the road all the while surveying the wrecked sign looking for anyone pinned under it. I stopped at the ditch and looked closely over the field. The wind had died down as suddenly as it had risen. The field was littered with all kinds of debris, but I couldn't see anything that may have been a person. Suddenly, the sun broke through close to the horizon. It lit the scene like a stage light. The low angle cast long dark shadows outlining everything in black. The sky, I have never seen a sight like that, the ragged clouds chasing the storm to the far horizon were lit in hues of blue, green, red, orange, and yellow. It was amazing, but most amazing was the perfect double rainbow that framed it all. Father Daniel must be smiling, I thought.

I turned my attention back to the ditch. The big white 2's had folded over onto themselves. They were brilliant in the light. I was surprised by how big they were up this close. I flashed on the feeling that I was standing before an ancient monolithic monument reducing

me in scale creating a feeling of insignificance, but at the same time, creating a feeling of being connected to the whole world and everything in it. I heard a thump, something bumping against sheet metal. Underneath one of the giant numbers, a piece of the sign flipped up, and over, and up rose this being. There he stood below me in the ditch, stark naked and rubbing his head. Did I say stark naked? I got the full show. This man had had the clothes ripped from his body, all of them except for the sandals on his feet. I let out a startled breath and then he focused on me. A huge smile spread across his face. His eyes were madly alit by the fire of the sunrise. He began to laugh, first in a quiet, stuttered way and then his laughter rose as he climbed up the slope towards me until he stood within arm's reach. He threw back his long hair and scruffy beard, stretched his arms out wide and with a crazy smile he laughed joyfully to the rainbow and to the sky. He then lowered his gaze and looked into my eyes. We both stood there like that, not laughing, not even breathing, and then he wrapped himself around me in a great bear hug. I found myself with my arms tight around him feeling full of joy and life. We both exploded in laughter. That's how Father Daniel found us a moment later.

"Are you hurt, young man?" He asked. Everyone was young man, or young lady, to Father Daniel, no matter their age. "The Lord has taken your clothes, my good fellow."

We broke our embrace, but he still held his arm around my shoulders.

"Here, take my robe." Father Daniel offered his garb to the man.

I never gave much thought to what a monk wears under his robe and I guess I was more than a little surprised to see Father Daniel in a white knit shirt and tan, well pressed slacks. He now looked like a banker headed for the golf course, which I later found out was exactly what he had planned for that day. As the clothes make the man, I guess it goes for a robe too. The naked man from the ditch, who only moments before looked like the wild man from Borneo, now appeared in front of us looking like a figure from the Bible, with brown robe, sandals and staff. He looked down at himself and ran his hands along the fabric.

"Thank you, my Brother." He said softly.

"Praise our Lord, it seems to fit you better than it does me," replied Father Daniel, while stepping back for a better look. "You look like John coming out of the Wilderness," he added.

“He looked more like the god Ganesh a moment ago.” I chimed in, not believing I said it aloud. I pictured in my mind the Lord Ganesh, the elephant headed god of Hinduism, with his trunk hanging out and a nice trunk at that; although, the rest of him seemed to be pretty weather beaten, covered in insect bites and scratches.

“Oh, I get it, Ganesh, that’s really funny,” my newly found friend said closing the robe a little tighter around himself.

“Pardon my trunk,” he said with a chuckle. “222, unbelievable, my God, unbelievable!” He turned and looked up at the giant numbers, “Yes, God, I will take this as a sign.” He seemed to be talking to the sky, but then to Father Daniel and me he said, “You know I just finished asking God for a sign.”

“Ask and you shall receive,” affirmed Father Daniel. “And this one had your name on it,” he added.

“Yes, it may as well have my name on it. B-O-B, Bob, 222 there’s no difference.”

“Your name is Bob?” I asked.

“Yeah, yeah ...my name is Bob,” he said as if he had to think about it first.

“I’m Jasmine and this is Father Daniel,” I offered my hand and then it struck me how funny that was; after all, I had just been hugging his nakedness.

“Where did you come from? Do you need help? Do you need a ride somewhere?” I asked.

“A ride, yeah, that would be good. Where do you want to take me?” Bob inquired.

A rather odd response, I thought. “I thought maybe you broke down on the interstate.”

“No, no, I’m traveling on foot.”

“Well, I guess I could take you to my mother’s. You can clean up there.”

“That would be fine, Jasmine,” he simply said, then added. “I’ve got some things back there under the bridge I need to retrieve.”

Okay, I thought, so I’ve been hugging a hobo, but what the hell. “Well, go get your things and I will see if they need my help cleaning up here.”

After a little while, Bob returned and took a seat in the corner booth with Father Daniel where they quietly talked while sharing the last of the warm coffee that I had made before the storm had knocked out the electricity. I could only see the back of Bob’s head,

just a tangle of ratted brown hair, but I could see Father Daniel's face; he had a glowing smile and his eyes fixed on Bob as he listened intently. Soon, my manager showed up and told all of us to go home. Her husband was on the way with some plywood to board up the windows and she needed to contact the owners before anything else was done.

"Go on home, Jasmine. Your family is probably worried about you."

I couldn't imagine that, but I could imagine them sleeping through it all. I walked to the corner booth and said, "I'm ready to go. They are sending us home. Do you still want to come with me?"

"I can't imagine anything I would rather do, Jasmine." Bob said looking like somebody's old frayed teddy bear.

"Am I going to be all right with this guy, Father Daniel?"

"I'm sure you will be fine with this man, Jasmine," he replied.

"Did you get your things?"

"All that was left," he said indicating towards several notebooks in a clear plastic bag. "The big sycamore that I had been camping under was uprooted in the storm, but I personally suffered no great loss. I'm happy to still have my journals."

Turning to Father Daniel, Bob said, "Thank you, Father Daniel, I will remember what you have told me and I will honor your order by wearing this robe."

"No Brother Bob, you honor us by wearing it." Father Daniel took both of Bob's hands in his, bowed, and kissed them. He then turned to me putting both of his hands on my shoulders and radiated his love to me. "You stay with this man, Jasmine. You help him in any way you can. Promise me that."

"Okay, Father Daniel, I guess I can help him."

"Remember too, Jasmine, God will provide you all the things you need in your life."

I just need a life, I told myself. Then I recalled the prayer I had said coming to work that morning. Well, maybe God did just drop my dream man from the sky; although, I didn't believe then that this was quite what I had in mind. Oh well, it had been a strange enough day already and it was still only nine in the morning. There was still a lot of day left.

Oh Hell, I forgot about my car. It was a mess, and to make matters worse, I'm a vegetarian. It was bad enough that I would

come home from the diner smelling like a hamburger, now I had to drive around in one.

"Excuse me if my car isn't kosher," I joked.

"I'm Ganesh, remember?" Bob said with a chuckle.

"Well then excuse me if my cow-lard covered car causes you any consternation." I shot back.

Bob helped slide the grease bin from off the hood. It was of no use trying to remove the soupy grease that had run out over the hood and fenders.

"I'll have to take it to the carwash first. Now let's see if 'Sweetie' will start." I held my mouth just right and turned the key, nothing, not a click, grind, or grunt. "Damn! It usually turns over at least." I tried again, still nothing.

"Okay, third times the charm. Keep your fingers crossed." I pumped the gas and turned the key again.

Silence.

"I've about had it with all this. Is life supposed to be like this? Is it supposed to be this hard? Christ, I'm forty years old and I'm living with my mother." My forehead pressed against the steering wheel and I started to cry a little, and I never cry. I felt so alone at that moment. I even forgot Bob was with me until he spoke.

"I am the Ganesh, the Son of Shiva and Parvati. I am the destroyer of evils and obstacles. I am the Lord of success and the God of education, knowledge, wisdom, and wealth. And don't ask me how I know this."

He never looked my way as he spoke and he continued staring out the window in silence. I turned towards him and it was as if I had never looked at him before. Something seemed to radiate from him, other than the odor of the un-bathed; no, I really mean it was like a light or something. It made it hard for me to focus clearly on his face.

"Okay," he said nodding slightly then looking at me. "The car should start now." Without taking my eyes off him, I turned the key. Of course my car started.

"Nice, very nice, I guess I should take you with me everywhere."

"Take me wherever you want, Jasmine," he said, smiling back.

Take him where? I ran through all the places I could take him. Let's see, first the car wash and try to get this crap off and hope I don't have to use the wipers before then, after that, well hell, I have to stop at Mom's and change and get Bob here in and out of the

shower before he has the pleasure of meeting her. A wave of embarrassment flushed over me. Am I embarrassed for her being a slob and drunk, or for me admitting that this is where my life is playing out? Yes, forty years of beating my head against a wall just to have it come down to this, the culmination of my total life experience and this is it. Me and a man named Bob, in a car that with each breath, as it is getting hotter, smells more like a burning hog barn. Then suddenly a strange chill ran down my spine. I think we've all had those kinds of moments when you consciously become aware that one particular moment is being indelibly etched into our memory. For me, this small piece of time, sitting in the car, the weirdness of the day, and the overpowering stench of spoiled bacon now was cemented into my reality forever, - this moment, right now, from which everything else that is going to happen in my life will follow. Yes, this was the peak of my soul's forty-year evolution on the planet Earth. At least that's how I remembered it feeling then.

"All right then, let's go," and we pulled onto the highway.

Once on the road, Bob started leafing through his notebooks. He seemed very amused by most of it. He would read a little and then start laughing and saying things like, "Yes, yes, that's it exactly, I should have seen it then," all the time expressing his delight.

"Would you care to share your amusement?" I asked

"Yes, of course. I was reading some of my last entries. I see that once again I started to doubt how God provides all of what we need whenever we need it."

"Oh really, well I need a lot of things. He could start with a new car or at least one that starts."

"It seems to be running fine now," said Bob while offering his upturned palm towards me.

"So doubting God is funny to you?"

"Yes, how can anyone doubt God?" Bob implored.

"I have to be honest with you. I don't go in for that God stuff," and before I could explain, he said,

"Neither do I."

After a long silence Bob said, "I would like to get a Bible. I was traveling with one, but it got blown away."

"I'm puzzled. You just said that you were like me and didn't go in for the God stuff."

"I didn't then."

“You mean like then before, or then when you said you didn’t go for that stuff?”

“Yes, to both. I would like to keep studying it though. It’s been helping me. It’s very beneficial for seeking understanding when trying to communicate about spiritual things in this land.”

“Is that what you do? Are you some sort of hobo preacher or something?”

“Not that I know.”

That is how our conversation went as we drove back to Poseyville. All that I learned about my mystery man was that he was not a fugitive from the law, had never been in a mental hospital, and had been hiking on foot through Indiana for several weeks.

“We need to give Sweetie here a bath before something tries to eat her,” I joked.

The hot grease on the hood was glistening in the sun. I rolled into the car wash on the edge of town and started feeding quarters into the slot. I could see Bob sitting in the front seat writing in his journal. I think I’m usually good at reading people, but reading Bob was difficult. I got the impression that he was quite smart and gentle, so I felt safe with him. I greatly valued Father Daniel’s assessment of Bob, and I couldn’t shake the feeling that there was much more than just happenstance going on here. There seemed to be a purpose for our meeting, but for the life of me I couldn’t understand what that purpose was. Perhaps it’s that I haven’t seen a man naked in far too long. I was feeling something stirring there too, and that had me thinking twice about my own sanity.

I heard a tapping noise and realized that I had gotten lost in thought and had frozen with the spray wand directed right on the windshield in front of Bob. I turned the spray away from the car and Bob climbed out.

“I think that spot is clean,” he said smiling. “I need to find a restroom,” he added.

“There’s a restroom over there,” I said pointing to a gas station across the street. “I’ll be through here in a few minutes.”

Bob went his way and I finished cleaning the mess off my car. I don’t want to do this anymore, I thought to myself. I don’t want to waitress anymore, I don’t want to live at home, and I don’t want to live here in Podunkville any longer. I need to move on before I do lose my mind or I wake up old and alcoholic like Mom. This town will do that to a person. It seems drinking and snorting meth had

turned into a recreational sport around here, and with that, I looked up and saw two of our finest serve and protectors outside their patrol car in front of the gas station talking with my Bob. What are they doing with my Bob? He is mine and they can't have him. I laughed to myself thinking how attached I felt to him already.

As I crossed the street, I could see that they were starting to put handcuffs on him.

"Hey Bill, what are you doing to my friend?"

I knew Bill and his partner Herbbie. They had been to my house many times to harass my brother Tim who is on house arrest. I think they stopped ever so often just to tease him and make him feel even more worthless. Tim and these two had grown up together, but there was no love lost among them.

"You know this asshole, Jasmine?" inquired Herbbie.

"Yeah, I know Bob. He's my friend. Why are you arresting him?"

Bill explained. "For one thing, he's walking around in public in a bath robe with nothing on underneath; that's borderline public indecency. Two, he doesn't have any identification on him and the law says you have to carry an official government issued ID, and three, I don't care for his bullshit attitude, so we are going to hold him until we learn a little more about this jerk."

Well, the prick can count to three, I thought to myself.

"Come on guys, he's with me. He lost everything when the tornado hit the 222 diner this morning. He was caught in the storm and I don't think he is quite himself yet. A friend of mine, Father Daniel, offered his robe for Bob to wear and I'm taking him home so he can get some real clothes and clean up a little."

"Why didn't you tell us all this?" officer Bill asked Bob.

"You never asked," Bob replied.

"Are you sure this guy didn't get hit in the head?" Bill glared at me from behind his dumbass, mirrored sunglasses. "We will let you go with Jasmine, but I'm going to check out your story and it had better be accurate."

"Or what, Billy; you're going to arrest me too?" I can never keep my mouth shut.

"False informing to a police officer is a crime as is not having proper identification, so don't push us, Jasmine. Now get out of here before we change our minds."

"Hold on a minute. Sign this first." Herbbie had his ticket book out and indicated to Bob where to sign it.

Once we got back to the car, I asked Bob what was on the ticket.

"It's a seventy-five dollar fine for not having proper identification," Bob said.

"What exactly did you say to those jerks?"

"I declared diplomatic immunity and told them they had no authority over me."

"Great, that's a good way to get them fired up. That's what those dicks are all about; they go out of their way to make sure everyone knows they are in charge. It seems ever since the whole 9/11 thing they have gotten worse. It's like they know no matter what they do, they will be backed up by the whole justice system. We are all criminals now and they are infallible."

"I'm sure they are just trying to do their jobs." He paused then added, "If their job is enforcing the new world order, I guess they are pretty good at it."

"You sound just like my Uncle Leo. You two guys should meet."

"I would like that very much. Does he live here?" Bob asked as we pulled into my mom's driveway.

"He lives in the Ozarks. This is where I live with my mom Patty. She is a drunk. So is my brother Tim; he lives here too. Mom drinks herself to sleep in front of the television every night except on bingo night, then she closes up the bar down at the corner. Tim is on his second year of house arrest. All he does is stay in his bedroom surfing porn on the internet. Tim is a veteran of the first Gulf war. He came home a different person, and not for the better. We never found out what happened to him over there. He did get a big check from the government for something; he won't tell us why, but it was enough to pay off Mom's mortgage and now they get by on Mom's social security and some of Tim's veterans' benefits."

As we climbed out of the car, our two uniformed buddies cruised slowly by giving us the Cool Hand Luke stare from behind their reflective cop glasses.

"Pricks. You know this town now has a Homeland Security armored SWAT vehicle? What the fuck for? Just so they can play with their toys and terrorize us with their stupidity? My blood boils just thinking about them."

"You must have a little Uncle Leo in you too, I'd say." Bob was right. I do take after him.

“Come on, let’s try not to wake up Mom. I’m in no mood to listen to her shit today. You can shower and I will get some of Tim’s clothes for you to wear.”

I had barely seen Tim come out of his room for weeks, and I had only been in his room once before; that was last year, soon after I had moved in. He had his computer all set up and was spending all of his time online. I’m not sure exactly what he was doing online all of the time, but judging by the porno posters and calendars, I think I had a good idea.

I slipped by Mom’s door. I didn’t want to wake her or her yapping little piss ant dog of hers. Gordy was its name and I hated that beast. It was some sort of terrier with wiry hair that bushed out all around its face not quite long enough to hide its dark watery eyes and snotty nose. My God, that sounds like a description of Bob. I hope he’s in there taking care of that.

I tapped on Tim’s door. “Tim, it’s Jasmine. I have to talk to you,” I whispered.

“Hold on a minute,” Tim cracked open the door.

“Let me in. I need your help,” I persuaded.

“What do you need? Are you okay?”

“I need some of your clothes. Now come on, let me in.” I leaned on the door.

“Hang on.” He undid the latch. “What’s going on? Aren’t you supposed to be at work?”

I spent a few moments explaining what had transpired that day and tried to make sense of what I was seeing on Tim’s walls. Gone were the pinups and girlie posters, well most of them. Above his desk was a large poster of some slinky brunette sitting in the saddle shall we say, smiling and holding up a poster saying ‘Fuck the Military Industrial Complex, We Chose to Work for Peace’ and a web address for Naughty Natascha. The same Naughty Natascha that had signed a personal 8x10 glossy to Tim, ‘Thank you, FR Tim, none of this would be possible without your help, Love XOX , Naughty Natascha.’ Tim had it framed and sitting proudly next to his computer. The remaining walls were covered in maps and bulletin boards. Photographs of peoples’ faces from all over the world, all personally signed and stuck up with colored pins with tiny pennants for each photo littering the map. A large flag draped the wall above his bed that read ‘Free Republic of Timali.’ None of this was making

any sense to me. I felt as if I was in a command center or a war room. I thought Tim had flipped out.

"I can help you, and I need your help too, Jasmine. I need you to deliver this package to Uncle Leo. I need it delivered in person, but I can't do it myself. I thought maybe you could drive out and see him. I can cover the cost and I'm sure you can get a few days off. It will take them at least that long to get the diner ready for business again, plus now you have your friend Bob to travel with you. It might be fun; you need some adventure in your life, Sis. What do you say?"

I heard Mom's little beast yapping and then I heard Mom. "Who's in the goddamn bathroom?" she hollered.

"I think that's a damn good idea, Tim, but what's in the package that you can't just mail to Uncle Leo?"

"They're important papers that I don't want to risk losing in the mail; besides, I don't think they deliver mail to Uncle Leo's place."

"Bob's about your size; pack a bag for him would you? What's all this about?" I asked indicating to the covered walls.

"It's the Revolution, Sis. Uncle Leo can tell you all about it."

"I'm sure I will hear about it, whatever it is. Uncle Leo has been getting ready for the revolution for a long time. From the looks of it, it must be in the genes."

I took the clothes Tim gave me down the hall and tapped on the bathroom door. It sprang open and there stood Bob, wrapped in a towel. The steam rolling out made it hard to see what I thought I was seeing.

"I've found a friend. We just showered together."

I was aghast. There was Gordy perched on his shoulder, the two of them looking like twins with their wet hair slicked back. "Here, take these." I shook my head. How would I ever get that picture out of my head, I wondered. I went to my room and started to pack my bags. I might as well get out of here, I thought, even if it's just to go see crazy Uncle Leo. That done, I headed downstairs. I heard voices from the kitchen. It was Bob and Mom talking. I found Bob sitting at the kitchen table and, unbelievably, (if you knew my mom) she was cooking and laughing.

"I'm fixing Bob some breakfast. Do you want some, Dear?"

"Ah, yeah, that'd be fine."

"I'm trying to talk your friend into going to church with me."

"You, Mom, going to church? Since when?"

"Since I saw Saint Peter stepping out of my bathroom."

I noticed that Bob was still wearing the brown robe.

"I had this amazing dream last night that I died and that Saint Peter was leading me to the Pearly Gates, and here he sits, in my kitchen, and I'm fixing him breakfast."

"I would love to go to church with you, Patty, but Jasmine and I are going to visit Uncle Leo."

My mind raced, how did Bob know that? Tim was still in his room.

"Oh leave that old coot alone; he don't want no company." Mom had such a way with words.

"Patty, do you have a Bible I could have? I lost mine in the storm."

We ate breakfast while Mom flirted with Bob. She chattered incessantly, giving Bob the complete family history in the time it took to eat two eggs, two bacon strips, and two pieces of toast. Bob listened without comment. He just ate and smiled at Mom. Tim came in, gave me a hug and whispered to me that he had hidden a box in the car's trunk by the spare tire and some cash under the driver's side floor mat.

"You must be Bob. I'm Tim, Jasmine's brother."

"Good to meet you," said Bob.

"I heard you had a run in with a couple of our town clowns."

"Yes, I think they were ready to arrest me. Jasmine rescued me and I got away with just a ticket." Bob reached into his robe and pulled out the ticket.

"Give me that; I'll see that it gets paid. No telling what the penalty would be for not paying this." Without giving the ticket a second glance, Tim stuffed it into his pocket.

"Thank you, Tim."

"Yeah, thanks, Tim," I repeated.

"Are you about ready to go?" I asked Bob.

"I have to say goodbye to Gordy." Bob reached down, picked up Gordy, and fed him the last of the bacon from his plate. God, I could not get over their resemblance.

"Are you going to get dressed, Bob?"

"I'm dressed," he replied standing up and opening his robe to reveal that he was wearing cargo pocket shorts and a 222 Diner t-shirt that I had once given Tim. Bob gazed off into the distance with his arms spread wide. Then he quoted the Bible, "Behold, I send you

forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves,”

“You are magnificent in your robe, Bob,” Mom said admiringly.

“Yeah, the robe is a nice touch, but be careful about standing out too much in public,” cautioned Tim.

“But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues,” finished Bob.

“Let me get that Bible for you,” said Mom.

We said our goodbyes. I couldn’t remember Mom ever being so pleasant. Tim told us to be careful and to drive straight through if we could. He said it would be safer that way. I thought about the box safe in the trunk; safe from what I wondered. I was sure I didn’t want to know.

By the time we hit the road it was early afternoon. If we drove all night straight through, we would reach Uncle Leo’s by sunrise.

“You told Mom we were going to Uncle Leo’s. How did you know?”

“Earlier, you said that I should meet your uncle.”

“Okay, I see.” I pulled into the gas station to fuel up.

“You better stay in the car.” I reached under the floor mat and pulled out a stack of bills, nearly three thousand dollars and a map. I nearly fainted. Now I was really starting to wonder what was in the box in the trunk.

I filled the tank, checked the oil, and spent a little time stashing up on some munchies for the road before returning to the car. Bob was sound asleep. He had retrieved one of the pillows from the back seat and had his robe wrapped tightly around him curled up against the passenger door; so much for having company for the road. It was probably for the best. I needed time for my own thoughts. The faint smell of hamburger grease from the heater vent reminded me of how the day had begun. Pictures ran through my mind: the storm, the funnel cloud, crowded together in the meat locker, Bob naked crawling out of the wreckage, Father Daniel, the cops, greasy car, Tim’s war room and secret box, Mom’s breakfast, Gordy and Bob side-by-side ...I knew I wouldn’t be able to lose that picture. I laughed. Here I go again off into the unknown, or to be more exact, off into the ozone, Ozone, Arkansas, Uncle Leo’s stomping grounds in the Boston Mountains of northern Arkansas.

My family had not heard much from Leo the last five years or so. Tim was the only one who had stayed in touch. I last saw Leo a long

time ago. I was in my mid-teens. He had just moved to the Ozarks. Much like Tim, he was deeply affected by his war, Vietnam. I don't understand how they get kids to volunteer today. Can't they see how real the war experience is? It sure seems that the government has succeeded in creating a disconnect from the hard reality of killing and being killed. The kids are sold on the benefits of a military career without seeing in any way how damaging war will be to them and to us all.

Uncle Leo, I suppose, saw it the same way. He had experienced the unimaginable realities of war, the brutality and savagery, but he had felt it was still the right side to be fighting for, and he has held onto that belief for as long as I have known him. His bronze star and two purple hearts were his most cherished items. Leo did not talk of the war much when I had been there last. He proudly flew the American flag at his gate though he held a profound mistrust of politicians. He went to the VFW twice a year, on Memorial Day and Veteran's Day. The remainder of his time he spent up in his holler, as Mom would say. Leo just wanted to be left alone so he could take care of his little piece of the world that he bought for next to nothing near Ozone. It will be nice seeing Uncle Leo. I bet he has really done a lot with the place.

My Bob was sound asleep. My Bob seemed like my dog and I don't mean that in an insulting way, rather, it was as if Bob was under my care, comfortably sleeping. I don't think he had a concern in the world. I drove on into the sunset with one hand on the wheel and the other constantly fiddling with the radio dial trying to find something other than country music, not that I don't like country music; I was just trying to find some talk radio to keep my mind off of my troubles. I settled in on a NPR station from Carbondale. They were interviewing the student editor from the Southern Illinois University's *Daily Egyptian*.

“...in your piece you state that this is the beginning of a new revolution that is sweeping over the world. Why are you convinced of this?”

“We see many factors working in unison that are helping to bring this message before an audience that is apparently ripe to receive it. Foremost, is the availability of the internet to everyone nearly everywhere on the planet to share

information. Never in Mankind's history has there been a mechanism that can present a singular idea to so many, simultaneously. Paradigm shifts have occurred before, quite often as result of new technologies, and equally as a result of new ways of thinking, and both go hand-in-hand. As technology advances in ways that enhance communicating, new ways of looking at our world evolve. In turn, our evolved understanding quickens the development of newer technology and this process continues to accelerate exponentially up to today.

We believe what we are seeing now with the Boblovian Revolution is the closing of this self-reinforcing feedback loop. Ideas and information now are shared instantly and technology is made available immediately. We no longer see a delay between one and the other. What once took generations, decades, years, now only takes weeks or days or much less. This represents a significant step forward in evolution for our society.”

“Where do you see this taking us?”

“In essence, each person on the planet now has the capability to use the same tools with the same information or knowledge as everyone else. What happens when a complex system such as our society homogenizes? This can best be described this way. Each person has become like a piece of a broken mirror, divided, but still reflecting the whole. The power is shifting to the individual, perhaps really for the first time in our evolutionary path. In much the same way as Marshall McLuhan described the medium as being the message; our current medium of being able to reach individual minds individually lends itself particularly well to informing the masses on the idea of individual liberty.

An idea such as the Boblovian Revolution has an appeal to people of diverse cultures and economic standings. It really supersedes our current form of governance. People are increasingly being conditioned to accept more responsibility themselves in regards to how they choose to interact with each other and our governments. In much the

same way as Globalization has erased political and economic boundaries while eradicating our traditional definition of sovereignty, the information age has erased similar boundaries that had us isolated with our separate beliefs and systems that we use in order to find our place in society.”

“The Boblovian Revolution, or as some call it the Boblovian Way of Life, has provided a foundation for a working model for how things can be.”

“Yes, the idea expresses beauty in its simplicity. We each are our own sovereign entity free to forge new alliances and relationships with other free and sovereign individuals. The theory is, if I understand it correctly, that by empowering each basic unit, meaning each of us, a new order will emerge that will transcend that which has come before it. Yes, it will transcend the current state, replacing it with a vision of the new desired state, a state of mindfulness. Once we each accept the responsibility for our own personal protection and well-being, once we take that responsibility back from the central state, we find that it will become increasingly important to be mindful of our actions and words.”

“In your piece you also described a condition of continual negotiation. What do you mean by that?”

“It is not unlike how countries currently function. Our nation is always seeking balance in some things and advantages in other situations. We agree to share resources and systems in order to encourage free trade of goods. The same can occur among those that have declared their freedom from the collective and are seeking to establish new relationships and new agreements with each other that are not dependent on third party representation. We will have to wait to see how it works itself out.”

“Speaking of working itself out, tell us what you think about 222. Next February 22nd. Will this be the turning

point? And, what about the man that started all this, Bob of Boblovia? Why do you think he has remained silent and invisible through all this so far?"

"Bob of Boblovia, yes, he remains a mystery, but it goes to show how the power of a single mind sharing an idea via the internet can trigger widespread change. Whether we will ever hear from Bob again, or whether he has anything more to contribute to this remains to be seen. Bob's has already delivered his input into our consciousnesses. What actions result from that? Well, that is dependent on each of us and how we choose to respond."

"We have reached the top of the hour. We will break for our news report then we will return with Ed Dunnigan, editor of SIU's Daily Egyptian, our topic - the 222 Revolution."

I must stop living in a bubble. This was new stuff to me. I had to laugh to myself a bit, here I work at the 222 Diner and I have a Bob with me. Well if there is a revolution happening, I guess you have to be online or watch TV to know about it. I bet Tim could tell me all about it. Then I flashed on the walls in his room and the names on the photographs. There I go; I'm thinking too much again.

I needed a break from life and from the road. I hit the next exit and pulled into a Stop and Rob. Bob stirred from his sleep, barely awake, he rubbed his eyes and asked, "What time is it?"

I glanced at the dashboard, "2:22."

"Of course. Where are we?"

"I need a cup of coffee, are you coming in?"

"Yes, that sounds good."

"We need to lock the doors," I remarked, as Bob started out his door. "Don't you think you should leave the robe in the car?"

Without the robe, Bob fit in quite well with what you see at a quickie stop along the highway at this time of day, sandals, cargo shorts, and the t-shirt from the diner. I headed to the ladies' room, and upon my return a few minutes later, I heard, "Duuude, I want that shirt," from the kid running the cash register.

"Why do you want this shirt?" I could hear Bob ask.

“222, dude, haven’t you heard? You’ve been living in a cave? You kinda look like you have been in a cave.”

“I will trade you shirts,” offered Bob.

“I can’t do that. This is my flag man, only I can wear it.”

“F.R. Frankenstein, that’s me.” The clerk spouted pointing to himself.

“Check this out.” Frank was the name on his name badge. Frank rolled up his shirtsleeve to show a bandage.

“I just got this baby yesterday.” He removed the gauze and revealed a new tattoo of the numbers 222 clustered like a cloverleaf on his shoulder.

Bob leaned in closer for a better look. He peered at it intently, his nose only inches from the tattoo. Bob leaned his head first to the left, and then to the right, “That’s nice work, clean and simple. I’m afraid to ask, why 222?”

“Duuude, you know the Boblovian Revolution, 222, next February 22nd.”

Frank proceeded to put the palm of his hand on top of his head with his fingertips forward and then did a Stooges Curly like staccato beating of the top of his head.

“Maybe you should keep that shirt, old man. You’ll need it as a reminder of the re-vo-lu-tion.”

I quickly stepped in front of Bob and told Frank that all this is together and paid for Bob’s drink and bag of cashews and my cigarettes, grabbed Bob’s arm and got the hell out of there.

“Are you all right?” I asked Bob.

I had watched Bob’s face as he was talking to the clerk. I thought he was getting ill.

“You turned as white as a ghost in there. I have never seen anything like that. I thought you were getting ready to faint or something.”

“I’m fine. I was a little blown away in there by that clerk.”

“He was a little strange. I heard him carrying on about that 222 thing.”

“Yeah, he wanted this t-shirt.”

“This 222 thing is pretty weird. I was just listening to something about it on the radio before we pulled in here.”

“Really, what were they saying?”

“It was an interview with someone about the Boblovian Revolution, something about a world revolution and the internet and how one idea can be expressed simultaneously, I think.”

“Exactly how did they say all this got started?”

“They didn’t talk about that; some guy named Bob that hasn’t been seen for a while. I remember hearing he was comedian or something. That’s all I know. So, what made you turn pale and wobbly in there?”

“I was reminded of a dream I had. I’ll tell you about it some other time. Turn the radio on. Let’s listen. Maybe we can find some more news.”

“...I would like to follow up on that. The Boblovian message, as you describe it, has manifested in some surprising ways. It seems to have had its roots as an inside joke among some, then quickly became somewhat of a cult, or a bit faddish, or at the very least, something ‘kinda cool’ for the younger generation, but the message connected with a much bigger and more diverse audience than expected.

How can the message be effectively maintained against the pressures of being just another fad, and will it be able to motivate significant change across a broad range of cultures and beliefs?”

“Fads are a result of rapid sharing of information and, as such, quickly fall victim to the next fad. Most often, fads represent something new and unexpected, something not seen before. They remain on the periphery of our culture seldom permanently taking root, thus their transient nature. With the Boblovian Revolution message, we have something that appears to have filled in a gap and provided for a need that may have gone unrecognized, but existed nonetheless.

It really compares to the unalienable rights defined by our American forefathers which were a wonderful expression of man’s place in relation to his world and his god at that time. I believe that over the last one hundred years in particular, the conscious understanding of these rights has diminished for many reasons about which I go into in more detail in my piece.

Diversion and distraction characterize fads. They decorate our world in a way that makes us comfortable in how we relate to it. Fads bring us together through the sharing of a common interest that often manifests in our modern world as advertising and news, which when looked at from afar, are all one and the same.

The Boblovian message has grabbed hold of our culture using many of the same tools that are employed in pushing a message out in front of people that again, is seemingly intended to drive an action towards purchasing and consuming, or in informing or propagandizing, or satiating via mindless distraction. It is used much like a sleight-of-hand trick. We are directed to watch the one hand and to ignore what the other hand is doing. It's not very often that what we are conditioned to want, and which we strive to possess, is seen as having anymore far reaching consequences than a monetary cost to ourselves. Lost is the understanding, for instance, that to desire and possess material objects comes with a cost to our environment and to the people that manufacture it."

"...So the Boblovian Message is, in essence, the plucking of an inner string within each of us. It starts a vibration that emits a note that harmonizes with like-minded others growing into a powerful chord that starts others to vibrate and they, in turn, take up the same tune."

"Very nicely said."

As I turned down the radio I said, "That all sounds so nice, but ol' Bob is probably off somewhere selling the movie rights and developing a Boblovian Conquer the World video game while all the crazy people start stocking up for the end of civilization."

"Is it crazy to stock up for bad times?" asked Bob.

"No, I suppose not, but then again you haven't met Uncle Leo yet."

Following the route that Tim had drawn out on the map, we crossed the Mississippi River at night over an old iron-trussed bridge

that hung in the darkness, seemingly arched cautiously in fear of a good shin knocking by a passing barge.

“Riv-vah, Riv-ah.”

I looked over at Bob and he was dozing off once again wrapped in his robe, muttering lowly, “riv-vah, riv-vah.”

Along in the night, I found a roadside park in a small town that Tim had marked as a safe place to stop. We slept there in the car until the first light of dawn. I awoke and took time to get my wits about me. Bob was not in the car. He probably was doing what I had to do, pee. After finding a convenient bush, I took time to stand and admire the sky. A crescent moon hung above the paling horizon. Venus dangled nearby.

“Omm, ommm mani padme hum, om mani padme hum, ommmm...”

My eyes had adjusted to the twilight enough to make out a nearby form. Bob lay sprawled out on his back atop a picnic table chanting softly. I quietly moved in nearer and listened closely. With my eyes closed, my breathing slowly fell into rhythm with his. I felt beautiful energy flowing through me. I looked into the heavens and felt like I was seeing the stars for the first time in my life. I suddenly understood. The stars are mine. They are not some distant whatever stars are, they are right here in my mind, in my eyes, in my breath. They are as much of this world as the ground I’m standing on. We are one and the same, plugged into the love radiating from the center of our galaxy. “Om om om ...”

“Everything is tapped into the same energy, everything is this energy, it’s all electric living.” Bob sat up, swung his legs over the edge of the table then turned to me and said emphatically like a TV announcer, “It’s All Electric Living!”

The rush through me brought everything to a halt. The present moment felt eternal, and Bob, well he was glowing, literally. I thought at first it was trick, but I had seen what was under that robe and it wasn’t a long handled flashlight. That image popped me back to reality. All I could stutter was, “Are you ready to hit the road?”

Driving the winding highway with the sun rising behind us, we could see that spring had arrived in the Ozarks. Everything looked so crisp and clear, and I felt as if I had rested in a featherbed. If I could whistle, I would have whistled a tune. Instead, I turned on the radio. In Arkansas, you have a fifty-fifty chance of either tuning in a country station or a preacher station. I had found the preacher...

“...starting with 2Timothy 2:22”

“Flee the evil of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will.”

Bob reached for the dial. I thought he was going to change the station, but he turned up the volume instead. It was obvious he was very interested in what the preacher had to say.

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”

“They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose truth - men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.”

“I can’t listen to that crap.” I said turning down the volume. “I suppose this 222 thing is going to crank up all of those end-time

wackos. I hope they're right. Anything would be better than this rut I'm in."

"It seems to me that passage describes things very well. Don't you agree, Jasmine?"

"Yeah, especially the part about worming in to take advantage of weak-willed women. I will never let that happen to me again. Hell, what am I talking about? I would settle for anyone who wants to worm in now."

For the life of me, I don't know why I did what I did. Well, yeah, I know why I did it. I reached out, took Bob's hand, and slid it down the front of my pants. Maybe it was from the warm glow of energy I still felt. It's all electric living he had said, and right then the electricity flowing between Bob and me made me horny as hell. Needless to say, we arrived at Uncle Leo's a little later than planned.

Chapter IV

COLONEL LEO WAPPLE (Part One)

Sworn FBI testimony from Poseyville, Indiana police officers: Kesterson and Cantu

FBI: “Gentlemen, I’m about to play back to you the story you just gave us. It is your responsibility to correct any information before it goes into the case file.

Both, you, Officer Herbert (Herbbie) Kesterson, and you, William (Bill) Cantu have stated you first learned the identity of the person you detained on April 5th on the morning of the following day. Is this correct?”

WC: “Yes, we were parked in the lot across from the Stew and Brew restaurant. Herbbie and I stop there every morning and get our breakfast to go. I was running license plate numbers through INGSOC. You do it almost without thinking, you know. Then every once in a while you hear it hit hot and then we’ve got something to do for the day. I know the big city cops have cameras that scan license plates automatically, even while moving down the road, but we still do it the old-fashioned way down here. Anyway, I took a break from that long enough to punch up NOX News to see if the tornado from the day before had made it nationally, and that is when I first saw the story on Bob Windowmaker, only they kept referring to him as Bob of Boblovia and telling the story of the revolution and the internet porn thing.”

HK: “Yeah, it was the porn thing that got us talking, huh, Bill?”

WC: “Well, we talked about the news and that everyone was looking for this Boblovia guy.”

HK: “Yeah, I was trying to lean over to see this Boblovia guy’s girlfriend’s website on the screen when I dumped my breakfast burrito down the front of me. I said, oh well, this was the third day in a row for this shirt. As I was cleaning myself up, I found the receipt from the ticket I

had written the day before to the guy we found with the Jasmine Hardy woman.”

William Cantu read the signature aloud. “Bob Windowmaker, Ambassador of Boblovia. Then I remembered all that diplomatic immunity crap he was spouting and I knew we had our man.”

FBI: “You had your man? What did you exactly mean by that?”

WC: “That’s just it. He wasn’t wanted for anything, at least not yet.”

FBI: “Then you, and officer Kesterson, made a visit to Tim Wapple’s house?”

WC: “That’s right...”

My niece’s voice poured through the intercom. “I’m Jasmine Hardy. I’m here to see my Uncle Leo.” I watched her car pull through the remotely controlled gate on one of the many security monitors that lined the walls of the windowless room. I thought of how long it had been since I last saw Jasmine. She will be surprised with the changes I have made. I hope she enjoys working for the Revolution.

“A phone call for you, Colonel. It’s from Bobcat.”

I knew that was Tim’s war command code name and this was more than just calling to check on the delivery of his latest package.

“This is the Walrus.” I spoke into the phone.

“Bobcat, Walrus, confirm ID of deliveryman. Repeat, confirm ID as Bravo, Oscar, Bravo, BOB, of top command, copy?”

“I need confirmation, Bobcat. Give me your report,” I requested.

Tim told me that while gathering up his laundry that morning he found a citation issued by the Poseyville Police made out to my niece Jasmine’s traveling companion tucked in a shirt pocket.

“This Bob fellow that Jasmine is with signed the ticket as Bob Windowmaker, the fucking Ambassador of Boblovia. I don’t know why it took me so long to make the connection, Commander. It all makes sense now.”

“Walrus, Bobcat, copy Bravo, Oscar, Bravo, confirm contact in two minutes”

I hanged up the phone and reviewed in my mind yesterday’s communication from Tim. Jasmine was traveling with an un-vetted companion. I had already decided to keep him blind to our operation.

Now with this new information, we would have to remain even more cautious.

“How Bob of Boblovia has arrived at my doorstep is beyond me,” I mused. “Can it just be incredibly good fate?” I picked up the intercom and ordered, “Escort detail front and center. We have important guests to welcome.”

Chapter V

JASMINE HARDY

(Part Two)

The first thing I noticed driving up the lane, was that Uncle Leo had cleared all the trees and brush from both sides of the road. This created a hundred feet wide swath of green winding up the valley. I felt sure that we were being watched. The road made a sharp turn onto a wooden bridge over a long narrow lake that hadn't been there when I last visited as young girl.

"Your uncle has a draw bridge?" Bob twisted in his seat to look through the back window.

Negotiating a steep rise in the road, I rolled to a stop and let out a low whistle.

"What the hell?" What I saw made me gasp.

Before me was another gate surrounded by a high double chain-linked security fence with razor wire placed between. Ahead I could see a low concrete building set deep in against the hill. More roads branched off to similar buildings. We drove on to what looked to be the main building and parked beside a long row of camouflaged painted all-terrain vehicles. Coming up a ramp was Uncle Leo flanked by two armed men dressed in combat fatigues. Uncle Leo wore a black t-shirt with military slacks and high-laced boots. Leo turned and spoke to his escort. They held back while he came forward to greet us.

"My God, Jasmine. How long has it been?" He gave me a huge hug and a kiss on the cheek.

"Uncle Leo, you look great." For a man in his sixties he was very fit and trim. He sported a full head of snow-white hair and a matching neatly trimmed moustache and beard.

"Did you have a safe trip, Dear?" Leo turned and smiled at Bob.

"No problems. We slept for a few hours in the car, but mostly I drove straight through. This is my friend Bob. He made the ride with me so he could meet you."

"Hello, Bob. Nice to meet you," Leo offered his hand.

Bob responded with a crisp salute. "Glad to meet you too, Commander."

Leo's chin dropped and his eyes surveyed Bob from top to bottom. "Leo will do just fine," not returning the salute he turned to me and asked, "Did you bring anything from Tim?"

"Oh yeah, it's in the trunk under the spare." Leo gave a quick nod to the two men behind him and they followed me to the back of the car. They removed a metal box and handed it to Uncle Leo who placed it under his arm and then he took me by the hand.

Addressing Bob, Leo said, "I'm sure you could use something to eat and a place to freshen up. Richard will take you to your accommodations."

"First the mess hall, then off to the concentration camp!" Bob gave Leo another sharp salute and a big wink. This time Leo instinctively returned the salute. Bob spun on his heels and headed out with Richard.

Leo faced me, "So, Jasmine, let's go inside and you can tell me about your quirky friend Bob."

For the next hour, Uncle Leo gently interrogated me about my companion. Leo learned all that I knew about Bob up to that point, and was convinced I had no clue, at that time, of Bob's true identity. That meant that only he and Tim had that information. Leo knew he would brief Richard, his second in command, and for the time being he kept me, and the rest of his command in the dark until he could figure out the importance of having the instigator of the coming revolution in his midst.

"Now it's my turn to ask some questions." I placed my hand on the big metal box lying on the table. "For starts, what's in this box that I had to personally deliver?"

"Have you ever seen a half of million dollars in cash before?" asked Leo. He undid the latch and opened the lid revealing neatly bundled one hundred dollar bills.

"Jesus Christ, where the fuck did Tim get that, and what in the Sam Hell are you going to do with it?"

"Running an army isn't cheap, Jasmine. It's money for the Revolution."

"What revolution? You mean the Boblovian 222 thing, that revolution?"

"That it just may be, it just may be." Leo's voice tailed off. "You are here now, Jasmine, and you are family, so there are no secrets between us." All but one obvious secret I was soon to discover.

“We have time for the nickel tour, then we will catch up with your friend and get some grub.”

Thirty minutes was enough time to get a good flavor for what was going down on Uncle Leo's estate. We drove by several sets of barracks flanked by rifle ranges and obstacle courses. Several buildings sat deep into the mountain and were heavily guarded.

“Those are our armories. We have collected a surprising array of weaponry over the years, all of which will come in useful in due time.”

“How many soldiers do you have here, Leo?”

“That's classified, Jasmine, but what you see here is only the tip of the iceberg. Our organization goes by many names and stretches from coast to coast and border to border. It has taken us nearly forty years to get to the point where we can affect the necessary change in our government.”

“It looks like you plan on it getting violent. Is that what you're preparing for, Leo?”

“You have to break eggs to make an omelet, my Dear.”

Leo and I rolled to a stop in front of the mess lodge. It, like every other structure on the grounds, was well camouflaged from above and blended into the landscape. We both went in and found Bob still eating. Bob, upon seeing us, wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his robe.

“Hi guys,” greeted Bob. “Richard here has been telling me all about your army and your plans for launching a revolution.”

Leo looked sternly over Bob's shoulder at Richard who held his hands up, palms forward, eyes wide and shook his head in denial.

“You seem to be an astute observer, Mr.... I don't believe I got your last name,” responded Leo.

“I just go by Bob. I'm not much on formality.”

“Jasmine told me how you two met. How long had you been hiking along the river?”

“Not long.”

“I was wondering if you had seen any of the recent news about the Boblovian Revolution. It's all over the airways, and the fellow who started it all is named Bob. He's from your neck of the woods and he hasn't been seen for a while. Is he anyone you know?”

“Not anymore.”

“I see ...well let me ask you this. What do you think this Bob fellow would think of our little operation here?”

"I doubt he would give it much thought at all really. He probably would just want to keep moving on."

"You don't think he would see how he could take his revolution to the next level with our help?"

Bob rose up from his chair with his arms spread wide, staff in one hand and notebooks in the other. His robe and flowing beard made a commanding presence. "May I read you a poem I wrote the other day?"

Leo gave a slight nod. Bob opened his book and in a bellowing voice began to read. "This is titled, Gotta Dance."

Gotta Dance

We walk and fall down at the same time
Picking ourselves up by our sorrows
Lifting the next foot miserably into the future
When does it start to feel good?
When I fall and just lie there
Being still and abandoned
To the deeper despair of breathing air
Then the meat puppet hand
Slips on the meat puppet glove
God leads the band
And we dance hand in hand

"We each can dance however we want, Leo. This is your dance, not mine. I won't be staying here. Thank you for the meal, perhaps you have a place I can bed down for the night then I will be on my way in the morning."

My heart sank. What had I been thinking? I was a fool for thinking we were here together. For some reason, especially after last night, I thought we might be able to continue on with this wild adventure. The thought of going back to Poseyville and the diner made me feel desperate. I wanted to cry, but my old feelings of rejection and hurt brought out some bitterness in me that I had thought was long gone. As usual, instead of speaking my heart, I spoke my mind.

"I should have let those cops back home have you. Then I wouldn't have your sorry ass to drag around."

“I’m sorry if I have been a burden to you, Jasmine. I’m thankful for having met you, and you too, Leo and Richard.” Bob shook their hands and lastly mine. “I will never forget you, my lovely Lady.”

Bob then pointed out the window. “I would very much like to go sit under those pines for a while.”

We stood there watching him gently glide out the door and across the meadow.

“Send someone to keep an eye on him, Richard. Don’t disturb him, but I don’t want him going anywhere for now,” ordered Leo.

I got myself another cup of coffee and sat alone by the window watching Bob sitting amongst the pines thinking that maybe I should go sit with him, but again, the pain of all my past rejections paralyzed me. My own self-torment prevented me from doing anything other than staring into my coffee cup. I was already regretting my decision to let Bob go on his way without me.

Chapter VI

COLONEL LEO WAPPLE (Part Two)

“I will give you my assessment, Richard.” I leaned closer so Jasmine couldn’t overhear. “I’m convinced my niece is still clueless about Bob’s real identity, and I have to admit, I am not a hundred percent sure he is who we think he is. To be honest, I expected a lot more from the leader of the Boblovian Revolution. The fact that he seems to be playing his cards so close to the vest makes me wonder if he has his own plan for what the Revolution is to become. I really don’t know if he is an asset or a detriment to our cause here. I can see where his non-violent approach could get in the way when things start to crank up. So let’s do this. If he wants to leave, let him leave. Put your best men on him as a tail. I want updated at least twice a day. I need to know his every move, who he talks to, and who he meets with. If we can get a bug on him, that would be even better. I want to know all that he knows soon.”

“What about your niece?” asked Richard.

“I’ll have a talk with her in the morning and the rest will be up to her. She is free to come and go for now.”

Chapter VII

JASMINE HARDY
(Part Three)

Like a Buddhist monk, Bob sat under the pines for the rest of the day and into the night. I dearly wanted to go to him, but my feelings were still hurt. A handshake, that's all I got. It's as if he didn't even care. Hell, for that matter, why do I give a rat's ass about him? He's just some fucking derelict I picked up. He might be a fucking serial killer for all I knew. I went to bed determined to get back to Indiana, get my things, and move to New Mexico like I always wanted to. I wanted to get out into the desert and away from humanity.

The sun rose to another stunning spring day, but I was in no mood to enjoy any of it. I showered as quickly as I could. To hell with my hair, I thought. I wanted to get the hell out of there before I changed my mind. I was just getting into the car when Uncle Leo drove up.

"Good morning, Jasmine, I'm headed for the mess hall. I want you to join me." It sounded to me more like a command rather than a request, so I climbed aboard the ATV.

"I don't want to see Bob there. I just want to eat and say my goodbyes to you and hit the road back to Indiana," I said more determined than ever.

"Your friend Bob left just before daylight, so I don't think we will bump into him," Leo answered.

"He left? On foot? Without saying goodbye?" I felt the familiar sting of disappointment sinking in again. My old life of two days ago flashed in front of me. That person, me then, can't be who I am now. The world is starting to unravel and all I'm going to do is watch it come down on the television at the diner? No, I made up my mind last night. I'm going to head west.

"Fuck going back to Indiana," I found myself saying aloud.

"Stay here and help us, Jasmine," offered Uncle Leo. "There's a lot of work to do between now and 2-22."

"222, is this what it's all about? You and Tim, you're not behind all that are you?"

"God, I only wish we were, but we have found a way to take advantage of it. Through Tim, we have been able to get the money

that we need and it's coming from donations from millions of people around the world through a porno website run by a girlfriend of this Boblovian fellow.

"Bob, I'm starting to hate that name."

"Yes, Bob indeed. So far, we only have been a fringe beneficiary from all the 222 hoopla. That is until now." Leo put his hands behind his head and leaned back in his chair. A big smile broke out across his face. "I'm surprised, girl, you haven't figured it out yet."

"Figured what out, this whole 222 thing? I don't give a shit about it or Bob, whoever the fuck he is..." Duh, newsflash, dumbass, the 222 shit with the t-shirt, diplomatic immunity crap, the 222 diner sign, what? Am I in some crazy movie? All these thoughts swirling around my brain coalesced into the obvious realization.

"He's the Bob, this Boblovian guy? I'll be go to hell."

"Either he is some kind of nutcase, or he is the most brilliant revolutionary on the planet. From what we can gather, the former seems more likely. That's why we had someone follow along after him. You know, just to keep an eye on him to see no harm comes to him."

"You're spying on him?"

"More like watching his back. This thing has exploded. Everyone is taking a hard look at this. Everything is ripe for a big change and the call for the Boblovian Revolution next February has gotten an amazing amount of traction. We don't know exactly what to expect, but we welcome it, and we are determined to help this follow whatever course it takes, if only because any change at this point is good change. Are you sure you don't want to stay and assist us?" Leo paused and put his hand to his ear. It was evident he was receiving a message in his earpiece.

"Come on. We have got to see this." I followed Leo to the back of the room where he turned up the sound on the television.

CNN: "...we have this just in. The whereabouts of Bob Windowmaker, the originator of the Boblovian Independence Movement may be known. We take you to this report from television station WTHV in Terre Haute, Indiana."

Reporter: "WTHV received a phone call from the Poseyville, Indiana Police Department. We traveled to

Poseyville and met with two Poseyville police officers, officers Herb Kesterson, and William Cantu.”

WC: “Yesterday officer Kesterson and I questioned a man walking across Main Street here in Poseyville. We approached him because he was wearing a long, brown monk’s robe and carrying a wooden staff. Our concern was for the public safety. We asked this person for his identification, which in the State of Indiana, is required to be on the person when in public. Not having identification, this person gave his name only as Bob and then proceeded to declare diplomatic immunity due to his being the ambassador from Boblovia. He was not forthcoming with any other information at the time. Officer Kesterson and I were preparing to detain him for more questioning when his companion, a local woman, arrived and explained the reasons for his dress and behavior. Her story was that this person was a victim of the severe weather that pounded our area that morning. At that time we issued a citation for improper identification and the two were allowed to go. The following day, officer Kesterson was performing administrative work and noticed the signature on our copy of the citation was of one Mr. Bob Windowmaker. We immediately went to the residence of his female companion, a Miss Jasmine Hardy, where we were informed by family members that the two had departed the previous afternoon to visit some of Miss Hardy’s relatives down south. Since neither of these people have been charged with any criminal activity, we ended our investigation, but not before contacting the FBI.”

Reporter: “What was the FBI’s response?”

WC: “We were debriefed and then we turned over all our evidence, uh, I mean material, to them.”

Reporter: “What was this material?”

WC: “We gave them the copies of the citation and of our video and audio recordings made from our patrol car. We were thanked and asked to report any additional information we might collect.”

Reporter: “The word on this story leaked out at the same time that we received our tip at the station. As soon as this story broke, our phones have rung non-stop. News media

from all over the world have contacted our station to press for more details and to make arrangements for coming to Poseyville.”

CNN: “We will get back to that feed in a moment. CNN has just received the following footage taken from the patrol car of the two Poseyville police officers.”

Uncle Leo and I watched the two nincompoops hassle Bob, who stood there regally in his robe. Then, there I appeared to the rescue. My fifteen minutes of fame, I thought. Next on the tube they flashed up two pictures of Bob, one a blow-up from the video, wild-hair and all, and the other a picture before all the hair. Certainly a handsome man; I knew he didn’t look like Gordy underneath all that hair. I didn’t do too badly after all.

Leo switched to another station that had several talking heads.

“...as you can see behind me, Federal officials are preparing a news conference here in Indianapolis. Henry, you have been following this story from its inception. Bring everyone up to speed if you can.”

“Tom, as we reported some time back, a gentleman named Mr. Robert Windowmaker made news when someone shot at him on stage during his amateur comedy routine. Robert Windowmaker went on to formally declare his personal individual sovereignty as the Free Republic of Boblovia. Not long after, his idea of independent individual sovereignty spread rapidly via the internet. Apparently his message was linked to a popular pornographic website that Mr. Windowmaker was associated with through his girlfriend who goes by the name Naughty Natascha. In the last few months this, as some call it, Boblovian Revolution has drawn to it a mammoth amount of attention and serious support. These supporters are calling on others to take part in the Couch Potato Revolution, the do-nothing revolt. Their hope is that if enough people from around the world participate in this event, which is scheduled for next February 22nd, hence the 222 Revolution, a message will be sent to all governments that, as they describe it, will make clear that people have accepted their personal responsibility to be free.

Until today, all our attempts to locate Mr. Windomaker had failed. This 222 Movement has apparently taken on a life of its own without any specific spokesperson; although rumors abound suggesting that Bob Windowmaker is very active behind the scenes. This report certainly adds a new twist to that speculation.”

“If I may interrupt Henry, in a few minutes we are going to a live feed from one of the 222 Jamborees that are scheduled to take place this week in various gathering points around the world. The buzz surrounding this story from Poseyville, Indiana, has generated tremendous excitement and anticipation from the crowds gathering at these events. Organized on the internet, a call went out to all the followers of the Boblovian way of life, as stated on one of the major 222 websites, to come together to negotiate a confederation of independent sovereign individuals. These events are being staged in nearly twenty states. One such gathering is taking place today on a private farm near the town of Ozone, Arkansas.” (Speaking aside: “Are we ready to go there?”) “We now go to Helen Hicks with this report from Ozone, Arkansas.”

“Are we on?” (*The reporter on camera is jostled by a crowd flowing forcibly around her*). “Tom, hang on. Let’s move behind this car.” (*The camera goes askew for a moment and then Helen Hicks is back into frame talking into a microphone stooped down alongside a vehicle*).

“All morning this event has had the feel of a Woodstock happening. People have been camping over the last several days, and then starting yesterday afternoon the number of people pouring in has grown tremendously leaving the organizers and local authorities stunned.”

“Tom, just minutes before we went live, an old farm truck pulled onto the property and a man matching the latest description of Bob Windowmaker stepped out. Immediately, word spread through the large crowd gathering here. Chants of Bob, Bob, Bob are filling the air.” (*The chanting grew louder even as she spoke*). “We have sent two members of our crew into the crowd to try to verify the identity of the man we saw wearing a long brown

robe who arrived just moments ago.” (*Helen Hicks reaches to her ear and nods several times*). “OK, Tom. We have the driver of the truck and a passenger of his that just delivered this man who is believed to be, by this growing multitude of Boblovian supporters, Bob Windowmaker.”

“Please give us your names.”

“I’m Dan Dalton. This here is my brother David. He’s home from college.”

“You were the driver of the truck that just dropped off this man wearing the brown robe, correct?”

“Yes. Ma’am, we picked him up walking down the road about five miles back.”

“Did he identify himself to you?”

“He didn’t have to. David was just showing me his picture on his cell phone. You know he was telling me about this Bob fellow and all this 222 stuff; that’s why we came here, so I could see all this for myself.”

“David, you recognized Bob Windowmaker?”

“Oh, for sure. At least I recognized him as fitting the description that was displayed on my cell phone. I thought it was someone dressed up to look like him headed for this 222 Jamboree, but I don’t know. I had a feeling it was really him. He only told us his name is Bob and that he had caught a ride from Indiana to here. We told him we were coming to this festival, and he asked if we would take him too.”

“So David and Dan, you don’t have a positive identification on him.”

“Not yet, but I did get his autograph. Isn’t that cool?”

“David, I see you have a t-shirt on that says F.R. Davidonia. Please tell us about that.”

“I believe that each person has the responsibility to accept their own sovereignty as a free and independent individual unfettered by the constraints of any larger government than that which the individual chooses to participate in. In my case, the only government that I answer to is the Confederation of Free Republics comprised of others like me. Hail Davidonia.” (*Davidonia waves to the camera. The crowd is louder in its chants of Bob, Bob, Bob*).

“Thank you Dan and David. Tom we are going to pull back from the crowd a bit and regroup. We will try to get an interview with this individual, who for now, we can only assume is the real Bob Windowmaker.”

Leo and I were dumbfounded. “Now you see it for yourself, Jasmine. The people are hungry for a new direction, and our friend Bob has found a way to tap into that. I wish I knew his intentions and what he’s planning to do next.”

I shook my head. “I see a lot, but I’ll be damned if I understand any of it. I can tell you this, Uncle Leo, I will not be going back home or to New Mexico, not yet anyway.” I pointed at the television, “Which way to this 222 thing?”

“It’s right on the highway south of here; I don’t think you can miss it. Remember, Jasmine, we don’t know anything about what he is really up to, so be careful and watch yourself. You will be taking yourself right into the eye of the storm. Whatever you choose to do, keep what we are doing here a secret. We will not allow anyone to compromise our operation, and that includes your friend Bob.”

“And the same goes for me?” The chill I got from the look in Uncle Leo’s eyes was the only answer I needed.

I would have loved to have watched more of the broadcast, but I felt the urgent need to get my ass in gear and find Bob. Uncle Leo took me back to my car. Leo’s base seemed eerily deserted. There were no other vehicles in sight and the only sound was the early chatter of birds from the forest; nonetheless, I still felt as if someone was watching me. Little did I know that feeling would stay with me for a long time.

I drove down the drive to the highway, a narrow two-lane blacktop cutting through the mountains. I tried the radio, but the reception was blocked by the high rock walls towering over the sharp hairpin turns. I had a hard time believing that it was only yesterday that I was driving to work and praying for something to change my life. It was then that I realized how happy I was and how much fun I was having. Life is much more interesting when you don’t know what’s around the next bend. And, around the next bend was a roadblock. A long line of cars sat stopped in front of me. I couldn’t help noticing the sign in the rear window of the van directly in front: Set Yourself Free, Join the Boblovian 222 Revolution –next

February 22nd 2-22. Next to it was a decal that read F.R. Smittytania. It had a coat-of-arms with crossed barbeque utensils over the number 222. The license plates were from Arkansas and they read 222 as well. As the traffic started to pile up behind me, people started coming out of their vehicles and intermingling. I thought I might as well get out myself. It was obvious I was going to be here a while. Out of the van poured a family, husband, wife, a boy and a girl. The man driving the van shaded his eyes and looked up the road.

"I see F.R. Jebongo coming this way," he said to his pretty wife in the long print dress. "He'll know what's going on." He gave his suspenders a snap and turned as I walked up.

"Howdy Ma'am, You headed to the Jamboree?"

"Yeah, looks like I'm not the only one."

"Hey Jebongo, how you doing?" Jebongo was wearing a tied-dyed t-shirt with F.R. Jebongo hand lettered across the front.

"The police are turning everyone back, or at least trying to. They weren't expecting a turn out like this. Have you heard the latest news? They think that Bob himself is here. They said he rolled up with the Dalton boys this morning. They found him walking down the road and gave him a ride."

"Do they know it's really him?" the pretty lady asked.

"I don't know, but I'm going to get in there to find out," added Jebongo.

"Oh, it's him alright," I chipped in. They all turned to look at me. "I gave him a ride out from Indiana." Strangely, I felt a lot of pride in that.

"You sure do look like the woman in the police video. What's your name?" Jebongo asked.

"Jasmine Hardy. Yeah, I saw that film clip this morning. That's me." The excitement evident on their faces made me swell up even more. For the first time in my life, I felt like I was someone important.

The young boy asked, "How come you ain't in there with him?"

I smiled, "You are going to have to ask him that when you meet him, that is if we can find a way to get in there." Looking up the road, I could see hundreds of people milling about.

"Shoot, that's easy, we know all the trails into there. You can come with us, if you like, Miss. By the way, my name is Taylor Smith. This is Shelly, my wife, and that's Bo and Emma," pointing to the children.

“That would be fantastic. Let’s go.” I couldn’t wait to get started.

We turned our cars around, and I followed Taylor and his family back the way we had come. After only a few miles or so, we turned up a dirt road to a lovely cabin nestled in the woods. Not long after, Jebongo rolled in and we all got into Taylor’s off-road jeep.

“I sure do appreciate your help,” I said as we rolled out.

“It’s not every day we get to meet a celebrity.” They all looked at me as if I was someone special. I chuckled inwardly wondering what was in store for me now.

It took several hours of winding along highways and back roads before we started up a forest service road. Earlier on, we had passed Uncle Leo’s gate. Both men looked at the gate then at each other.

“Pretty quiet there,” was all Taylor said.

I remembered my uncle’s warning and kept my mouth closed. There was no need to let anyone know I was his niece. Eventually we drove onto a faint track through the woods that wound up and up amid tall pines and oaks, across rocky ledges and into deep muddy holes that nearly swallowed the jeep. The lowering sun was starting to cast long shadows deep into the forest when Taylor turned off the rugged path and drove several hundred yards in and around rock and tree. He parked in a small clearing at the crest of the mountain. We all climbed out and stretched our stiff muscles.

“We’ll have to hoof it from here. It’s less than two miles, mostly downhill,” Jebongo explained, as he took care of preparing our gear.

“Come take a look at this.” Taylor stood on a large boulder peering with his binoculars through a gap in the trees.

I was the first to look. “Wow, it looks like it goes on forever. How many people do you suppose are down there?” I could see out through the broad valley several miles away where the land turned to rolling green pastures. It was too far away to make out much detail, but it reminded me of when my dad would take me to the Indy 500. We would camp in the huge grassy parking lot the night before the race and watch as a city of tents and RV’s sprang up, but this was much greater in size and color. Over the scene before me were hundreds, if not thousands of banners and flags gently flapping in the curly smoke of a multitude of campfires and grills that had settled into a thick layer of blue haze that blanketed the valley. Above that were several helicopters and airplanes circling and hovering.

“That’s amazing. I can’t wait to get down there.” I had never done much hiking before, and I know I never had walked downhill

for hours on end. It about crippled me. Thankfully, young Bo offered to carry my ridiculous little suitcase. It seemed so out of place in this beautiful scenery, about as out of place as my lightweight tennis shoes I was wearing. By the time we had finally reached lower ground, my feet were soaked and blistered and my shins and calves were cramping.

Up in front, Taylor yelled, "We're almost there."

The bend of the trail delivered us out to a ridge where we could finally see clearly for the first time the extent of the tent city laid out before us. Dominating the whole thing was a huge stage reminiscent of a Grateful Dead concert with the giant PA and all. The stage backdrop had the numbers 222 lit in ever changing brilliant colors, and the flags in the crowd stretched literally to the horizon. Soon, we were walking in amongst people of all kinds, groups of people enjoying themselves, singing and making music, cooking, eating, laughing and talking. Everyone we passed beamed a big smile towards us and waved. It was so mellow and beautiful. As the darkness was taking hold, I felt like I was in a new country of overwhelming benevolence.

"I think we should make our way to the stage," suggested Taylor and we all followed. I wondered where Bob was in all this.

As we neared the stage, we heard a band playing a cover of Jim Dandy to the Rescue, by Black Oak Arkansas, except they were singing Boblovia to the Rescue and the crowd was eating it up. We saw a long line queued up heading to where bright spotlights bathed an area in front of the stage. We took a spot at the end of the line.

"What's this line for?" Jebongo asked those ahead of us.

"We heard this is the line to meet Bob and sign the New Declaration of Independence," was the reply. This should be as weird as hell, I thought.

The line moved slowly and I got the chance to meet many more people as we inched our way towards the stage. They had come from near and far to take part. Churches had brought busloads, college kids had come in caravans, families had come with friends, and I even heard that everyone in some small town near Little Rock had come as one. We moved by booths that were as varied as the people. They were selling t-shirts printed with your own individual sovereign name, blank copies of contractual agreements for establishing trade agreements, protection agreements and shared resource agreements between free republics. One table was offering

free customized copies of the New Declaration of Independence that later would be read aloud on stage. These we could hear playing over the public address system. We each took a copy. Other booths were set up to provide advice on things such as, the union of marriage between two individual sovereign states, common possession of property within the family and as part of a greater confederation of independent individuals, among other things. This all was being taken very seriously by those giving advice and those receiving it; nevertheless, the joyfulness of what all this meant never seemed to be lost on anyone. It truly had a carnival atmosphere about it.

Eventually we got near enough to see what was happening on stage. I kept looking for Bob and listening for his voice from over the PA, but there was no sign of him yet. We approached a table sitting in the bright circle of light. It was a signing table which those attending to it explained to us was where a mass signing of the Declaration of Individual Sovereignty was taking place. The declarations were attached to a continuous roll of paper that all those waiting patiently in line were eager to sign. The document was feeding through a scanner and, in real time, going out to the internet. The same thing was happening simultaneously in hundreds of other locations worldwide. We were told that over six million individuals had signed it today alone and over twenty million were to have signed the declaration by the end of the weekend. It made sense to me to sign it as well, but I had to come up with a name for my free republic. Jasmania. No, that sounded crazy, like maniac. It may apply in my case, but I knew I could do better. Jasmany, no. Jasminastan, better. Jasminica, I liked that, and that's how I became the Free Republic of Jasminica.

As we each moved past the signing table, a camera projected our image onto the huge video screen behind the stage. Upon signing the document, I looked into the camera, smiled and said "Welcome to Jasminica." Instantly, a roar arose from the crowd much louder than the cheers of approval given to those signing ahead of me.

"That's the girl that was with Bob! That's Jasmine Hardy!" This acknowledgement swept through the nearby crowd. I felt someone's hand on my shoulder.

"Miss Hardy, are you Jasmine Hardy?" I turned to face a man with the name F.R. Ivania displayed across the front of his shirt.

"Yes, that's me. Can you tell me how I can find Bob?"

“Indeed, I will take you to him. He wanted us to watch for you. He is expecting you. Follow me.”

“These folks are with me. They helped me get here and I want them to meet Bob too.”

“Come along then, all of you.” We trailed behind Ivania as we wove through the mass of people. Along the way I was congratulated for signing the declaration, for helping Bob, and for standing up to the police in the video. I even signed a few autographs, which really blew my mind. After a good hike through this impromptu city, we arrived at what I later learned was a yurt. It is a round structure, dome roofed, with walls made of material supported by an interior lattice frame. Stationed at the entrance were two large men who, by the way they carried themselves, appeared to be armed security. I wondered if they were Uncle Leo’s men. Ivania explained who we were, and then we were allowed inside. The interior was dimly lit. The circular room was open with the exception of a partitioned off portion opposite the door. There was a group of people clustered to one side speaking softly to each other. Across the room lay Bob, sound asleep. Ivania introduced us to the others there, and each greeted me with hugs and encouraging words.

A middle-aged man of medium build named Roger pulled me aside. He wore a cell phone in his ear and a black t-shirt that read www.222.com, The Revolution Starts with YOU. I later learned he was the organizer of the Ozone 222 Jamboree.

“Bob has been asleep almost the entire time he’s been here. Was he that way when he was with you? It’s hard to get much out of him when he is awake. He really is an enigmatic sort, isn’t he?”

“That’s putting it mildly,” I responded. “May I awaken him?”

“You’re a free country, Jasminica.” His pleasant smile reassured me. I quietly sat down on the cushions next to Bob. I could hear him breathing peacefully and deeply. Again, I found myself matching the rhythm of his breathing just like the night before last at the rest park. I felt the tension drain from my body. The headache I had all day faded. I was tired. It had been a busy day to say the least. All I had been focusing on was on finding Bob, and now that I was sitting next to him, all I wanted was to sleep. I lay my head on his chest and closed my eyes listening to his heart beating slowly and steadily. His arm moved across my shoulder and he gave me a squeeze without opening his eyes. I wrapped my arms around him and drifted off to sleep, sleeping as soundly as I think I have ever slept.

I awoke just before dawn spread out on a beautiful oriental carpet with a silk pillow under my head and covered by a marvelous patch quilt. I lay there looking at the stars through the clear domed yurt slowly letting the realization of who I am, where I am, and what I was doing there come back to my consciousness. As it all came flooding back into me like a computer being rebooted, I heard someone speaking softly into my ear.

“Miss Jasmine, Miss Jasmine, are you awake?” It was Bo, Taylor’s son.

I turned my face towards the voice. “Where’s Bob?” I wished I was still snuggled up on him.

“He asked me to wait for you so when you woke up I could take you to him.”

“That sounds beautiful.” I sat up and stretched. I felt wonderful. “Did you get to meet Bob?”

“We all did. We sat and talked with him for hours. My mom and dad acted like kids around him; they were so excited and so was I. He sure had a lot of nice things to say about you.”

“Really?” I wanted all the details, but my heart started doing flip-flops and I wanted to hear it from Bob himself. “Can we go see him now?”

Bo nodded and together we stepped out of the yurt into the dim light of dawn. In the east, across the silvery dewed meadows the sky was misty pink. A low haze of wood smoke and fog hung in patches in the trees and out over the countryside. People were starting to stir and prepare for their day. It was as if I had stepped into an ancient scene, a fairytale encampment in an enchanted forest. I followed Bo as we weaved our way in and around the awakening assemblage. Folks were raising their flags and setting out their pennants, each representing their own individual sovereignty. I chuckled when I heard one family singing their own national anthem with hands held to their breasts as their flag was unfurled. I was inspired; all this because of Bob, that quiet gentle man whose arms I slept in last night, wow!

“Bob’s up there at the farmhouse, it belongs to Sam Lightwood. This is his farm we are on. He knows my folks and belongs to our church,” Bo informed me as sunlight beamed on the distant hills.

“What’s going on over there?” I pointed to beyond the farmhouse to the glare of bright lights in the distance.

“That’s where they have blocked the highway. A bunch of television news trucks have set up there with all their big satellite dishes and antennas. Sam won’t let them in; they all want to talk with Bob.”

“I bet they do.” Then it hit me, God, they will want to put me on TV too. No way am I ready for that, at least not until I can clean up and fix my hair.

As we approached, I noticed the yard was fenced off and there were security people manning the gate. I was sure now that they belonged to Uncle Leo. They recognized Bo and me and let us through. Bo and I entered through the backdoor directly into the kitchen. There were several people in the room. I saw Roger standing next to an elderly man in denim coveralls that I knew had to be Sam Lightwood. There was Taylor and Jebongo along with two other men, one in a sheriff’s uniform and the other I didn’t recognize. They were in a heated discussion.

“Damn it, Roscoe, I know this has gotten out of hand. We figured on hosting no more than seven or eight thousand, not a hundred thousand,” Sam was telling the sheriff.

“More like two hundred thousand now that the news of Bob being here has gotten out. Hell, we have people camping along the highway a good ten miles up the road, and they are still pouring in, and you guys in the media sure as hell aren’t helping us.” The sheriff directed this to the neatly dressed gentleman that now I recognized as Shawn Anderson, the guy from CNN.

“We have a duty to report the news, that’s it, and the sooner we can verify that that man in there is really Bob Windowmaker, the better. If we can confirm it isn’t him, then the sooner this wave of people coming in will subside.”

“And if it is him, what kind of mess are we going to have on our hands then?” Roger added.

“Listen, Roger, you have violated all the permits, and I know it’s not your fault; you didn’t see this coming. But I’m being pressured by people all the way up to the state capital to take you into custody. Now you know I don’t want to do that, but I will if I have to.” The sheriff was obviously agitated.

“There’s someone who can help us,” Taylor indicated to me.

“Jasmine Hardy, I’m pleased to meet you.” Shawn Anderson recognized me immediately and offered his hand. Sam and Sheriff Roscoe Fischer both introduced themselves, as well.

“We would like to interview you this morning, Jasmine, Bob too, if you can get him to talk to us.” Shawn had that pearly smile you always see on TV. “First we need to know if he is really the Bob we are looking for. My team has been in touch with the Indiana State Police and the FBI. They are frantically trying to give us a positive ID. I appreciate any assistance you can give us. We will pay for your interview too, if that will help.”

“Why don’t you just interview Bob?” I knew my time was coming soon when I would not be able to avoid the media.

“Ah, he’s kinda hard to talk to, you know.” Jebongo went on. “He got up in the middle of the night and said he was going to look at the moon. We followed him while he walked, not really knowing what to say to him. Taylor asked him if he would like to meet Sam, the owner of this farm. ‘That would be nice,’ he said, and then we came here. As soon as we got to Sam’s he saw all the children here, and he’s been in the parlor reading poetry to the kids since. Was it hard to get a straight answer out of him when he was with you?”

“I think his answers are too straight if you know what I mean,” I replied.

“None of us has gotten anywhere with him. He’s just very polite and smiles all the time. Can you talk to him for us? We really need some direction,” Sam Lightwood said.

“I need some coffee and to freshen up first. I’ve got to clear my head before I can do anything.” More than feeling foggy, I wanted to look my best for Bob, not being too sure it really mattered to him. I went off to primp myself and in a little while returned to the kitchen for my coffee. The discussion among the men had become more strained.

I sat through two cups of coffee listening to men being men, talking but not hearing themselves, all the while watching what was happening on the small television set on the counter. The sound was off, but I could read the news banner tracking across the bottom of the screen. I felt like I was in a dream. I was seeing a picture of my image from the big display screen from behind the stage from last night along with Bob’s face and a live aerial view of the farmhouse I was sitting in.

I read the words crawling across the tube: Ozone, Arkansas, 222 Jamboree, scene of the first Bob sighting with hundreds of more sightings now reported around the world. Jasmine Hardy, the traveling companion to the person believed to be Bob

Windowmaker, the leader of the 222 Revolution, is in Ozone, Arkansas, giving support to the fact that this particular Bob was the one seen with her in Poseyville, Indiana, three days ago, and most likely is the real Bob Windowmaker.

Roger spoke, "Ok Sam, I admit when we asked you to host this thing, I thought the turnout might be quite a bit larger than we estimated, in fact, we were hoping it would be, but we thought we were set up to handle it. How could we have even guessed Bob would appear and we would have this mess on our hands? If you want to blame me and 222.com, go ahead, but you guys sure didn't help by blasting it all over the airways."

"It's our job to report the news as it's happening. You can't fault us for that," Shawn Anderson snapped back. "There are a hundred reporters out there right now wanting to get some official word from someone, whether it's you, or Sam, or the Sheriff."

The sheriff, in an official tone, said to Roger, "All right, I'll make you all a deal. You go on camera and make an appeal to have everyone go back to where they came from and start shutting this thing down. I don't want this going on through tomorrow. It's no telling what we will have on our hands by then. Whatever legal issues will come of this, we will deal with that after we get Sam's farm cleared out."

"You know, Sheriff, I can put you on stage and you can tell these people yourself. I'm not going to be the one to turn this off," Roger spoke defiantly. "I've got more news for you, Sheriff," now speaking with a definite sneer, "What we are witnessing is the future, the power of the people, the power of individual sovereignty. You're getting a good taste of the 222 Revolution, and by the time next February comes around you had better either have joined in with us or have hanged up your badge, because I sure wouldn't want to be in uniform come then." Roger unfolded his arms long enough to jab his finger towards Sheriff Fischer. "We're not going to let you push us around anymore."

"The sheriff is just trying to do his job, aren't you, Roscoe?" Sam attempted to calm things a little. "I agree with the Sheriff, we have a public safety issue here. We don't have the facilities, the food, or any of the support we need to accommodate all these people. I regret having agreed to this, and I don't take kindly to being misled and manipulated," he added emphatically glaring at Roger.

“Judas Priest, it’s going to take a lot more than an overflowing Porta-potty to stop our Revolution. It has been peaceful so far, Sheriff, but you know this is fucking Arkansas, and at least two-thirds of the people here have weapons. If you want the fucking Revolution to start right now, then go ahead and try to assert your measly authority here.” Jebongo said it as if he meant it.

Sam noticed Shawn sitting to the side scribbling notes, “Give me that!” he said ripping the notebook from the newsman. “This here is all off the record. I can kick your ass and the rest of you TV people off my land anytime I want! Don’t forget that.” Everyone in the room was getting pissed and so was I. I had listened to enough.

“Boys, boys, boys, this is exactly the type of testosterone bullshit that made this movement necessary. First, other than me, I don’t see any women in this room. Why do the men think they have to make all the decisions? In the future, I think women should have an equal say. Secondly, who has the plan? None of you seem to have given any thought to what comes after this.” I had everyone’s attention now. “You know you have a man sitting in there that can’t be allowed to wonder off on his own. He needs our protection. And another thing, do you think out of all these thousands of people here there won’t be any of them that won’t have to be back to work on Monday? Even at that, my guess is you are still going to be dealing with at least three or four thousand who won’t leave just because they know Bob is here. You can count on them not leaving until they hear what Bob has to say, and that includes the horde of media out there, and it includes me. Now everything has been peaceful up to now like Jebongo said, but he’s right, it could get ugly if we don’t come up with a better plan than just standing here in this kitchen bickering. Isn’t that right Smittyntania?” I was looking for some support.

“You all know Jasmine, I mean Jasminica is right. We need to get a grasp on what all this signifies. We have the world’s attention as we speak. If we don’t walk the talk it will all be for naught. We need to respect the ideal of individual sovereignty; that’s what has brought us all together. There are no leaders now, no one person is in charge, and the old authority no longer applies.” Smittyntania shot a glance at the sheriff. “We need to come together with a charter, and a damn good one, on how we are to come to agreement on things. The bottom line is we are all guests of Samania. We have to first respect his sovereignty or gladly get off his land.”

“Thanks, Tay...ah, Smittytania. Everyone is still welcomed here, but you are right, we need to work this thing out. We need to remember we are at the dawn of a new way of dealing with things. We can’t go on pointing fingers and blaming each other. The whole idea of 222 is about taking on the personal responsibility of being a free individual. We do need a charter, an organized approach. We need to lead by example, each of us individually and collectively. We need to come together and communicate a model of cooperation among all free individual republics so the rest of the world will see how this is going to work from here on out.” Sam lowered his voice and turned to me. “But most of all, we need to know what Bob has to say. We sure can use his guidance. You will help us with that, won’t you?”

“I’ll do my best, Samania.” I took one last gulp of coffee and went looking for Bob.

I found him sitting on a cushion in the parlor reading from his notebook. The children were nowhere to be seen; in their place lay three large dogs and two cats placidly listening to Bob.

“And to answer your question, yes, there are cats in dog heaven, but no dogs in cat heaven.” Bob looked up at me, “Say hello to Jasmine.” I found myself acknowledging their innocent stares.

“Nice to meet all of you, and nice to see you again, Bob.”

“Jasmine, you are as beautiful as ever,” he looked at me as if he really meant it. “I’m very happy you are here,” he motioned for me to sit next to him.

“So Bob, I found out who you really are.”

“I would like for you to tell me who that might be sometime. I’ve worked hard trying to find that out.”

“I know you are the one who started this whole 222 thing. You’ve been playing me the fool. Now my face is all over the news and I haven’t made up my mind if I like that yet.” I really didn’t know why I was getting upset.

“Jasmine, if there’s a fool in this room, it’s me.”

“Well, that’s about the only honest answer I’ve gotten from you.”

“Your right, Jasmine, you deserve honest answers.” Bob rose and walked to the window. He threw open the heavy drapes. “It seems I’ve struck a nerve.” This he said more to himself than to me.

I stood beside him and looked out. The farmhouse sat like an island in a sea of people. It still had not sunk in how this man standing next to me was responsible for all this. I had heard the news

stories about Bob's comedy act and the internet and some mention of the money coming in from some porn site, and absolutely none of that fit the man next to me.

"Why do you play so dumb to all this? Why didn't you tell me who you were?"

He turned from the window and with a huge smile on his face said, "All this is news to me too, Jasmine. Remember, three days ago I was sleeping on a riverbank. I've been walking the countryside for several weeks, so I can't say I saw all this coming."

"You know, Bob, I said a prayer on my way to work the morning the storm hit. I never pray, but that day I did. I asked for a new life, that a new path would open before me. I guess I got what I asked for."

"A perfect example of creating your own reality," Bob's bright blue eyes reflected the morning sun.

"This certainly isn't what I had in mind," I added.

"What did you have in mind then?" Bob asked.

"Christ, I don't know, I didn't get that specific." I remembered asking God for a male companion, but I didn't want to tell Bob that.

"I guess this is a good lesson for the both of us. We should be careful with what we ask for."

"I'll say, I didn't ask to be all over the airwaves like some freakin' celebrity either. Do you know that you are the biggest story going, and down there by the road the media is clamoring to get you on television? Hell, Shawn Anderson is in the kitchen right now waiting for me to talk to you and to try to get you to appear on his newscast. So, what do you want to do, Bob?"

"I liked reading to the children. Maybe I could read to them?" He waved his hand towards the window. "Yes, that's what I will do. I will read to them."

"That's it? You're just going to read to them? What? Outta the goddamn Bible or something?"

"I'll read from my notebooks." He always had them with him.

"That's fucking lovely. By the way, what the fuck is a meat puppet anyway?" I remembered the poem he had read to Uncle Leo the day before.

"We are meat puppets; everyone's a meat puppet, Jasmine."

"So I'm a fucking meat puppet, that's what you think? I guess that explains the other night."

Bob took hold of my hand and said softly, "And we dance hand in hand."

We stood silently for a long moment looking into each other's eyes. I did feel affection, I guess you might call it love, but whatever I felt at that moment I knew I would have this man always in my heart from then on; but nonetheless, I looked at the milling throng outside, the helicopters and the television crews, and I knew he would never belong to me.

"I will need your help, my Lady. We are all here for a reason. Do you want to find out what that is?" He squeezed my hand a little tighter.

"I do." I nearly blurted it out. I felt almost as if he had proposed marriage to me. "Just tell me what it is you want me to do."

"Have you had breakfast? I could use something to eat," Bob said as he settled back into the cushion on the floor.

"Well, that's pretty easy." Then I remembered why I was out here. "You know, Bob, when I go back into the kitchen, those folks in there are going to be all over me looking for some answers from you."

"What's the question?" he simply asked.

"Ok, you've got Mr. TV in there wanting an interview. Hell, the whole world wants to know if you are really Bob Windowmaker. There are more immediate issues about how you being here will attract tens of thousands more people here and what that means to Samania and the local authorities. They already want to shut this thing down and have threatened Samania and Roger, the organizer, with arrest. The consensus in the kitchen seems to be that it's all up to you to put some order into all this. I guess they need some help in finding a voice and direction to take this where it needs to go."

"I'll have eggs, over hard, and some bacon if it's available."

"Uh, ok, that's it? That's all you want? Will there be anything more, Your Majesty?" I said sarcastically, but with a smile.

"Then I would like to go read to this audience. Can you see if I can do that?"

"Will you talk with the media? Do you have a message for them?"

"My message is for everyone. The media are welcome to listen too. If they demand more than that, I don't mind you speaking on my behalf if you feel you are up to it."

"What the hell, what do I have to lose?" I shot back.

I went back to the kitchen. Anderson was on his cell phone talking to his bosses. Seeing me, I heard him say, "Here she is right now. I'll call you back." The others sat looking quietly at me. "What did he say? Is he going to talk to us?" Shawn asked.

"Bob wants breakfast, two eggs, and bacon if you've got some." It hit me that Bob hadn't given me any real direction at all.

"That's all he said?" Samania asked.

"Over hard." I left it at that. I guess I was already starting to speak like Bob. I waited until they pressed me for more information, and then I explained that all Bob wanted was a forum to be heard, to read to the world from his notebooks, and that he had chosen me to be his media liaison. I'm so fucking full of bullshit, I thought, but what the hell; I'm going to have some fun. "He wants to go on stage and talk. He'll give you all the information you need then."

"Will he go on camera with us and give us an interview?"

"I'm sorry, not at this time, but he has given me permission to talk to the press. I'll go on camera, but only with you, Shawn. But first, can we get him some breakfast?"

I remember reading Abbie Hoffman's biography a long time ago. That was back around the time that he died, about the same time my brother Tim was heading for Kuwait. In my youth I remembered how romantic all the stuff in the sixties sounded. That and reading through most of Tim's library had made me well versed in the radical movements of that time. Hoffman had years to learn how to be an effective organizer. He had a long time to hone his skills in dealing with the press. I had no time, and here I was at the center of a world revolution. I wondered what Abbie would do in my shoes; probably exactly what I did – wing it.

So that's how I found myself being the public spokesperson for Bob of Boblovia, the mastermind behind the 222 Revolution, the Couch Potato Revolution, the don't just do something, just sit there revolution, and it wasn't an easy job. I knew I was colliding with the establishment head-on. There was no escaping that. And I knew enough to know that whatever I said was going to directly impact whatever came next. If Bob wasn't going to step up, then I would have to.

I looked to Shawn, "The sooner we can do this, the sooner I can enjoy the rest of my day."

Surprisingly, I was not the least bit nervous. Shawn set the interview up in the backyard. I wished I had on one of the Free

Republic t-shirts proclaiming me as F.R. Jasminica, but a 222 Diner shirt had to do. I could only imagine what my friends back at the diner would think.

“CNN Special Report: A Shawn Anderson CNN exclusive live from the 222 Jamboree in Ozone, Arkansas.”

“Welcome again to our viewers and welcome to our overseas audiences. I’m pleased to have with me, Miss Jasmine Hardy, who has been traveling with Mr. Bob Windowmaker, the mystery man behind this incredible scene going on behind me right now. Thank you, Miss Hardy, for speaking with us.”

“Please, call me Jasminica.”

“Jasminica, that’s the name you have adopted for yourself as a participant in the 222 Movement?”

“I am the Free Republic of Jasminica, a sovereign individual nation of one.”

“I see. Jasminica, you might not be aware of the latest breaking news. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has confirmed the identity of Bob Windowmaker through analysis of the video imaging received from the Poseyville, Indiana, police. Leading into this broadcast, we aired several interviews with some of your coworkers and customers at the 222 diner near Poseyville. They have given us the account of how you met Mr. Windowmaker. How soon were you aware that he was Bob Windowmaker, the man responsible for the Boblovian Revolution, as some are calling it?”

Ignoring the question, I proceeded. “I have been asked to read this statement from the organizers of this event, the folks at 222.com. We thank everyone for their demonstration of support shown by the massive turnout we have had at all of the 222 Jamborees. While we deeply respect each and everyone’s individual sovereignty and their right to be participants in this event, we unfortunately have to ask those who have yet to enter the Jamboree grounds, and those who are making their way or planning to make their way to Ozone, to please stay at home. Our logistic support planned for this event has not been able to meet the demand of this large of a gathering. For all others

already on the Jamboree grounds, everyone is asked to leave by 7:00 pm this Sunday evening as planned. We will continue this event as scheduled, and we will be announcing any future plans from the stage. So please continue enjoying yourselves in this glorious show of individual sovereignty. Thank you, Shawn, for giving me an opportunity to read that.”

“Jasminica, just before this interview, I recounted with our viewers how you have been thrust into the limelight to the point now where you have been asked to be Mr. Windowmaker’s spokesperson, in essence his media liaison, because it was something he wasn’t willing to deal with himself. Is that correct?”

“If you say you recounted a story before I came on, then I believe that is correct.” The Bob in me was taking hold.

“Well, yes, but I’m just trying to help establish with our viewers exactly what part you play in the 222 Revolution.”

“That’s very simple. I am the Free Republic of Jasminica, and I am free to enter into any treaties, pacts, or agreements that I choose. I hold no other official title other than Empress of Jasminica. As for speaking for Boblovia, I think he will be speaking for himself soon. Boblovia will be addressing the collection of free republics that we have here with us tonight. That’s all I have to say at this time. Rogerdonia will be able to provide more specific information regarding plans for this gathering of revolutionaries.”

I shot Shawn Anderson a quick glance and stepped away from the camera. Like the pro that he is, he didn’t miss a beat. He quickly turned to Rogerdonia and continued the interview. I felt I had said enough. The less everyone knows about Bob and me, the less likely the whole Tim and Uncle Leo thing would get connected. I was sure both of them were spinning on their heels by then. I was certain that none of this had figured into their plans.

Once evening rolled around, a deal had been negotiated to allow a live feed from the stage to the world. None of us had a clue as to what Boblovia would do or say. He had spent most of his time that day with his notebooks. Around eight o’clock in the evening the stage lights dimmed. Slowly a single spotlight grew in intensity

revealing Bob sitting on a small platform littered with large cushions. He wore his robe, of course, and he had done little to comb out his wild hair and beard. Baba Bob came to my mind. He looked like some holy mystic from the east. No introduction was made, nor was any needed.

The crowd roared to their feet. Everyone present felt the tremendous energy coming from the moment, a moment we all knew, for whatever reason, was going down in history. Bob rose to his feet, hands near his sides, palms open. He acknowledged the crowd with nods and a warm smile. After nearly five minutes of constant applause, he sat down. He motioned for the crowd to quiet and then he spoke.

“Can everyone hear me?” Again, another stupendous roar rose from the crowd. A chant started, “Can you hear me?” repeated over and over; it was crazy.

Finally, after settling the crowd back down, he started again. “The Emperor of Boblovia requests a zone of silence extending from his borders to yours for the next hour. All those in concordance please signify by remaining silent.” The silence was interrupted immediately by a voice from afar, “We love Boblovia.” Laughter trickled over the audience.

“Thank you, my love for you as well, but I can see we need to further our negotiations a bit more,” more laughter and then complete calm and quiet. The stage was set.

“Welcome fellow Ascended Travelers. It’s wonderful being free, free from ourselves finally. It’s been a long journey, and our journey continues. Awaken and come together.”

Bob calmly gazed out over the gathering for nearly a minute before he continued. He had everyone’s rapt attention. “Please let me read this to you – A very wise person once told me, ‘don’t be afraid of being happy.’ I had to ask myself, was I afraid of being happy? What was I afraid of? I looked around me. I thought I was happy. I had many comforts and some success. I knew living means accepting things as they happen, and that not all of what happens in life is happy stuff. I was sure that I had acquired enough understanding to realize life is full of ups-and-downs and that I had found happiness through all that life dished out. Life had been very good to me; nonetheless, there has always been an underlying sense of not being completely happy, a sense that things should be better. This was a feeling I carried with me most of my life. On one hand I

understand that suffering is derived from wanting and desiring, but on the other hand, how could I even possibly feel happy when there is so much suffering and injustice all around me? Was my compassion and empathy for other's suffering an obstacle for experiencing happiness? I concluded that I knew a great deal about suffering, but very little about happiness.

I certainly have experienced suffering, as all of us have. We love, we lose, hearts break, minor and major disappointments all occur as we travel through life. Happiness seems interwoven through all these tribulations, but our sorrows make up most of our emotional burden that only is occasionally lightened by the presence of happiness. Why is suffering so easily grasped on to and carried by us when happiness is so elusive to our grasp and is so fleeting in its experience? Wouldn't it seem that both would be equally as easy, or equally as difficult, to hold on to? What possibly would make me fear happiness? Perhaps I was attached to suffering because it was so readily available. It always seems to be around when we look for it, why not happiness? I look around for happiness. Yes, there it is in nature's beauty, in deep contemplation, in a baby's smile, however, I failed in attaching myself to it like I was able to do with unhappiness. Think. Okay, the middle way, the Tao of living, the balance of all things equal attachment/un-attachment to both happiness and unhappiness. That type of understanding provides a path where I can be equally unaffected by both emotions. I've walked that path and thought I had overcome suffering, and that led me here to the role of the fool. It worked for a while. I could face each and call it that. That's that, and that's that. The long thing is the long body of Buddha, the short thing is the short body of Buddha, I'm Buddha, you're Buddha. But damn it, I still like happiness better, even after experiencing, at times, the perfection of the Tao, the perfection of all creation. Think, think, boil it down. We each have a responsibility to ourselves for how we want to feel. Just as I can never be responsible for your unhappiness or you for mine; no one can be responsible for each other's happiness. We all need to accept our own personal, individual responsibility towards attaining happiness. This is true in every sense and, of course, we all are waking up to that. Great. So have I answered the question? Why am I afraid to be happy? Because in this culture, if you go around being truly happy, they will lock you up. It's about as simple as that.

For me to be really happy all of the time, then the rest of the world needs to be happy too. Really, what choice do I have? What is keeping the world unhappy? Each of us in our own way may have found this inner happiness, but if you are like me, you find the unhappiness of the world at large as a hindrance towards the type of happiness that only comes when the entire world is vibrating at a higher positive energy. What can I do to help raise that energy on a global scale?

You create your own reality. Yes, each individual reality experienced by an individual is entirely created by that individual, whether through highly attuned conscious activity or subconsciously experienced through the filters of our senses. Either way, asleep or completely awakened, we are physically manifesting our reality. I've tried it both ways. Awakened, I've not been able to step out of the shadow of the collective suffering of humanity; awake it is more as if we create our reality. The effort of creating becomes burdensome when we realize that we also share in the creation of all the suffering that lingers deep inside each of us.

Being asleep, on the other hand, we effortlessly create our reality in our dreams. Oh, if only life was like a dream, effortless creation continuously. Wouldn't it be nice if we shared in a collective dream where we could creatively create instead of a crating around a collective reality that is supported by our shared ignorance of any alternative? Of course, there we have it. By recognizing that we share in this ignorance, we can awaken to the dream. Once the dream is identified, it can be changed. This dream can end and another one can begin. How simple is that?"

The entire time Bob was speaking, Rogerdonia was astutely typing in phrases and points of emphasis into his laptop making the words appear on the stage's backdrop. Who's Afraid to be Happy? Your Happiness is Your Responsibility. Do You C-R-A-T-E Your Own Reality? DREAM A NEW DREAM.

Bob looked up from his notebook and out over the sea of people. "Perhaps it's not all that hard. We just stop dreaming one dream, and start dreaming another. But to make that switch from the old dream to the new dream, we must pass through a moment of complete stillness. We must stop and see with our souls our old dream and turn away from it, and then, focus on our new dream. Quick, don't just do something! Sit there! Stop, look and then move forward.

Ideas are the seeds of dreams. All of us here share this idea of collective individual sovereignty. We have moved into the perfect moment when a single idea can be shared simultaneously aided by our new technologies. An idea, a seed, can grow within each of us and together we create a new dream that flowers from our hearts. We dream a world of working together as enlightened individuals, people operating from the power of personal freedom that will bring forth helping, sharing, giving, receiving, loving and laughter, comfort and sympathy, a dream not c-r-a-t-e-d by us, rather, a dream that is shaped by our common sharing of the idea of free individual sovereignty, the idea that we each need to take care of our own selves, and the only way to do that is by taking care of each other.

We now journey forward with a new opportunity before us. I am so thankful that I get to be a part of this; I am thankful for being able to share an idea with all of you. I am thankful for all of you. Thank you.”

Behind him, displayed in red, white and blue were the words rippling in a digital wind, From Boblovia with Love that transitioned into 222 Revolution The New Dream Begins February 22nd. A cacophony of horns, cheers, and shouts of 222 vibrated ever louder. Rogerdonia fed the tumultuous sound back through the PA increasing the crescendo to a deafening roar. With another touch of a button he cued the dazzling display of patriotic fireworks. It was fucking amazing.

That talk became known as the Boblovian Address. He was to speak from that stage only one more time, the following night, before what was supposed to be the closing ceremonies. That was the night he read his poetry. After the Boblovian Address, Boblovia retired to the yurt. He said he was more comfortable there and Samania and Rogerdonia felt it was a more secure spot and less in the limelight. The same couldn't be said for the farmhouse, which is where the rest of us retreated to watch on TV the spin that was going on over the airwaves. Never did I see any serious discussion concerning the importance of what was going on. For the most part, Bob was marginalized in the press as a crazy kook borderline celebrity. Even when, on occasion, some other participants of the 222 Jamboree were interviewed, no matter how mainstream and levelheaded they came across, they were still laughed at and ridiculed by the talking heads and so-called experts. Nonetheless, the

message was getting out and had been getting out for quite some time as evidenced by the growing mass of people that continued to flock to Ozone over the next few weeks. During that time we all worked together to create a buffer around Bob, both physically and publicly. Bob and I spent very little time in each other's presence. He occupied himself with sleeping, eating, meditating, writing and, for a couple of hours each day, teaching, by giving readings from the grove, as we called it. Each day at exactly 2:22pm, Bob would settle into his cushion under a grove of walnut trees. He once mentioned to me that he once saw God in a walnut tree, but I didn't press him for the details. I was usually too busy trying to keep the media at arm's length and trying to spot what Rogerdonia called the spooks. Undoubtedly the government had people infiltrating the cause, but the comical thing about that was there never was any what you could call a cause. There was no organization other than Rogerdonia and few of his friends laboring on keeping the 222.com website updated and running, and the poor folks like Sam, Taylor, and Jebongo who had taken it upon themselves to do their best to provide some basic services to those that remained on the farm.

Most of the attempts to clear out everyone after Sunday night were futile. Many people did leave, only to be immediately replaced with new ones coming in. The authorities were running out of patience, but they understood that much of what was happening was out of everyone's control. Nevertheless, each day the pressure grew for us to do something to bring some order to the scene. That's not to say no control was bad, in fact, the way the 222 Confederation organically evolved was inspiring. Chaotic at times, yes, but it seemed that whenever some need arose there was immediately something to satisfy that need. That went for there always being enough food to feed everyone and the Porta-potties being pumped, to one day, someone donating the services of a private helicopter. The latter being very helpful in solving our biggest dilemma - what to do with Bob.

Well into the second week at Ozone, Sheriff Fischer, who more and more was starting to sound like a convert of the revolution, tipped us off that the Arkansas Troopers were making arrangements to take Bob into their custody to, as he put it, provide for Bob's personal safety. It wasn't officially an arrest, but more of a plan to remove Bob from Ozone and put him on ice so things could settle down some. The Founding Fathers, as we jokingly referred to

ourselves, all of us in the kitchen that morning excluding Shawn Anderson, met in the same kitchen to try to devise a plan.

Jebongo met me excitedly at the door. "Check this out, I just got off the phone with A.J. Paretti, you know, the American Formula One driver. He has dispatched his personal helicopter and pilot to Ozone for us to use as we see fit. Isn't that a trip?"

Bingo, I had a plan. "Listen up." I had everyone's attention. "Does everyone see that we have to get Bob away from here as quickly as we can?" followed by a consensual nod from all in the room.

"Remove the queen from the hive," Bosmittytania said.

Bo's father continued the analogy, "But won't the hive follow?"

"I'm counting on it. My gut feeling is that the government would like nothing better than to have Bob out of the public's attention. We've seen what has happened here. I say we do the opposite. We need to thrust him right before the public eye. Let him draw all the attention away from here. I think the more we do to keep him in front of the cameras, the safer he will be. Now with a helicopter available, we can airlift him out safely and get him to the airport if need be. We will be offering Bob to the media. I've already been contacted by people working for the Daily Show, Oprah, Face the Nation, Entertainment Weekly, you name it, they all have been beating our door down to get some air time with Bob. I say let's do it."

Rogerdonia asked, "Do you think Bob will do it? Have you talked to him about this?"

"I'm fairly sure Bob is willing to go along with just about anything as long as he gets to eat when he is hungry and to sleep when he is tired. Beyond that, I don't think he has an agenda." I hadn't figured out if Bob was good for the Revolution or not, but I knew that this was the time to take the next big step and to see if we could pump it up.

Bob voiced no objections to our plans. All that he asked was whether I would be going with him and whether he could be brought back to Ozone within the week. The plan was to get him to New York and make the media talk show circuit. If they wanted Bob, we were going to give him to them. All the networks offered to fly us to New York via private charter, but after some discussion among the Founding Fathers, we decided that flying commercial would be the

most secure way to get around. Our safety lay in being in front of the public.

By the following evening, we had transported our entourage via the 222 helicopter, now nicely painted to match the website's logo, to Memphis and from there a direct flight to the Big Apple. We took several of Uncle Leo's people along for personal protection. I recognized Richard among them. I was introduced as a stranger to him, and he introduced himself as an owner of a private security firm that provided security to celebrities and rock stars and that he was sympathetic to our cause. I never did know whether any one of the Founding Fathers had any connection with Uncle Leo and his movement, or whether they were aware of Leo's men not being who they said they were; regardless, we all felt safer with them watching out for us. We knew for certain that we were being watched closely by the powers to be, and that any place we stayed would be bugged and video recorded. Despite of all of our fears, our trip to the city was uneventful.

Limousines met us at the airport. We turned them down for taxicabs. We rode to the Waldorf Astoria where the networks had reserved several suites for us, but we 'traded' down to smaller rooms nearer the first floors. I'm not sure whether any of this helped in securing our privacy, but at least it made whoever was watching us know that we were, at the least, aware of them. Not that it mattered if we really were being spied upon or not; we seldom talked about anything that could be construed as conspiracy or illegal. The only plan we had going was to put Bob before the public and then let the chips fall where they may.

Bob left it to me to deal with the studios and the media. Countless messages flooded into my inbox at the hotel: movie contracts, book deals and enticements to be on this or that show. I was in as much of demand to appear on TV as Bob was, but I did not take advantage of any of the offers. Bob left it up to me to guide us through this mess. We decided that Bob's first media appearance would be on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart, being that his program was the only news program that was fair and balanced in our minds. I did let Bob make up his own mind as to which late night show to go on. He chose Letterman over Leno because Dave was a fellow Hoosier. Oprah was pissed because we would not go to Chicago to be on her show, so she had to settle for a live feed from New York. We debated going on NOX News, we suspected that they would be anti-Bob, to

say the least, but we went ahead and agreed to appear on the Will O'Neil's Spin Factory. Larry King gave all of us the creeps, maybe it's his suspenders, I don't know, but we all were in complete consensus on not wanting to appear with him. Sixty Minutes wanted their ten minutes with Bob, and we gave them the time they needed; and finally, we decided that if Face the Nation wanted to interview Bob, we would oblige. So, our New York itinerary was pretty much set the first day. I wanted to get as much settled as quickly as I could to have some alone time with Bob. Our first night in New York, Bob and I shared dinner in his hotel room.

"Tomorrow afternoon we will be taping the Daily Show for their evening broadcast. Leno wanted to come to New York to tape a special show with you, but since you want to go on Letterman instead, we will be shooting with Dave right after we are done with Jon Stewart. I still think it would be good if you let us trim your hair and beard just a little; but at the very least, will you wear this new robe and sandals we got for you?" I really did not care about how Bob looked on television; I just wanted to see what he might look like groomed a little better. I knew there was a handsome man under all that crazy facial hair from seeing the pictures on the news of how he looked before he became famous.

"I think I will keep this look for a while, but a new robe with lots of inside pockets would be nice," Bob replied.

The rare moments of the last few weeks when I found myself alone with Bob with so many things on my mind and so many unanswered questions always seemed to have been reduced to small talk, polite and informal, but without much being said about anything specific. It may be that I was afraid to ask him personal questions because I had grown comfortable with my pretending that I knew what he felt about me and that he felt like I did about him too. Things left unsaid are easier for me to deal with, and when words are necessary it's best to use them sparingly and to be right to the point. "I want you to make love to me tonight." How's that for being to the point? Bob finished chewing his food before answering.

"I like having you in charge of my itinerary," he smiled.

That was all that was said about that. After dinner I had to meet with Jebongo and make some calls so we could finalize our plans for the next day. As anxious as I was to get back with Bob, I still was tied up for several hours taking care of business. It was late by the time I got back to his suite. All the lights were off in the room. It

took a moment for my eyes to adjust enough to be able to see Bob's silhouette framed by the lights of the city through the open window behind him. He sat in a lotus position on a cushion on the floor. He was silent except for the low steady rush of his deep breathing. He did not seem to notice me, so I slipped off into the bathroom. Surprisingly to me, I took a long luxurious soak in the tub and let my mind empty out. It was the first real moment of peace that I had in a long while. I had envisioned an evening like this. I had packed a sexy negligee and flannel pajamas just to cover my bases. Which one would Bob be most comfortable seeing me in? With little thought, I rose from my bath and dried myself all the time looking at myself in the mirror. This is how I'm most comfortable with myself, no makeup, no sexy gown, just Jasmine in the flesh, Jasminica unaltered and unadorned. I quietly slipped into the room where Bob sat still meditating. Silently, I stood in front of him letting myself tune into his vibration. I kissed him gently on his forehead and then seated myself directly in front of him in a full lotus posture. With my eyes closed, I listened to his gentle breathing matching mine with his. A chant rose in his throat, first nearly inaudibly then more pronounced. I felt as if a door had opened inside me. My soul and all my love for him and the world poured out as tears. I think we made beautiful love that evening. I have many erotic memories of that night, but to say I know for sure he held me in his arms, I can't say. If our bodies didn't physically join, at least I know our minds had traveled together as one in my dreams ...the best sex I ever had.

I awoke to a knock at the door. I wanted to remain wrapped in the comforter as I lay on the divan in order to linger a little longer in my sweetheart's arms. Then as the knock repeated, I became aware that Bob was sitting across the room writing in his notebook and not embracing me. I realized I had been dreaming. I slipped on a bathrobe and opened the door to Jebongo.

"I know it's early, but we need to get the day started. The concierge was able to get a new robe tailored with the pockets like Bob wanted. We can pick it up on our way out." I followed Jebongo's eyes down to my legs and up the split in my robe and over to where Bob was sitting watching us. "The studio would like to pick us up at eleven for the Daily Show," he added.

"It's a beautiful morning. Can we walk there from here?" Bob asked.

“I think so. I will let Richard know. We can meet in my room in an hour,” Jebongo said on his way out.

The next hour was a rush getting dressed, returning calls and trying to get a quick bite to eat. Soon, we were all heading out of the lobby onto the street. The concierge met us at the door with Bob’s newly tailored robe. Bob slipped into his new garb and placed his old robe over his arm and we followed him outdoors.

The beautiful thing about New York is the nonchalance of the man-on-the-street. We moved along with hardly a notice or nod of recognition for far stranger sights than our entourage abound in this city, not the least of which was a scraggily bearded man dressed in only a diaper following alongside us beating out a syncopated rhythm with two drumsticks. He frantically pounded out the beat on the sidewalk, curb, trashcan, lightpost and whatever else seemed handy. Bob stopped for a few moments stooping next to the drummer as he rapped on a sewer grate. After a short but animated conversation whispered in the old man’s ear, Bob handed his old robe to the drummer who thanked Bob and then headed back up the street in the direction from which we came. Other people drew Bob’s attention too. He never passed a panhandler or a street vendor without making a donation or a purchase. The positive energy exuding from Bob was very apparent. A simple good morning and a smile left people seemingly radiantly happy, beaming huge grins and laughing. Before long we all were loaded down with mustard pretzels, hot dogs and sausages that we just passed along to anyone who wanted them. As we came around the last corner before the studio, we saw a large crowd of Boblovian supporters milling in front. Their attention was focused towards the black limos pulling up at the entrance. The excitement in the crowd increased as they expected Bob to be in one of the cars. A chant of 222 rose up and people starting pressing closer to the cars for a better view. This allowed us to work our way in unnoticed from behind. We almost made it to a side door before we were spotted. In masse, the throng of supporters stampeded toward us giving our security only a brief opportunity to hold them back until we made it safely into the building.

Richard was the last to get in the door, “We probably should ride next time,” is all he had to say. We killed the next hour in the greenroom exchanging pleasantries with the different people who came in to greet Bob.

Transcript from the Daily Show with Jon Stewart

Jon Stewart: Welcome. We are happy to have you here, Bob.

Bob: Thanks, Jon. It is good to be here.

You seem to be having a very interesting year.

That's what I have been told.

For the last few weeks, we have seen you in the news, to say the least, but this is your first interview with the media, isn't it?

This is true, Jon

(Jon sat up straight in his chair and ran his hands along the lapels of his jacket, spent a moment looking over his finger nails then to the camera, thumbed his nose and said, "Na na a na na," then he continued.)

We at the Daily Show are honored to be the first with the privilege of talking with you. So let's get straight to it. What the fuck is going on with you, Bob?

I'm not really sure, Jon. A few weeks ago I was walking through the woods, and now I'll be in New York for a few days.

You have come to New York to be a guest on our show, and I understand Leno and Letterman are duking it out right now to see who gets to have you on their show.

I hope I'm not wasting everyone's time. I don't have a book or movie to sell, and I'm not running for any office.

By the way, I wanted to talk to you about the movie rights before you leave the studio.

Did you notice I put on a new robe to come here?

Our guest's wardrobe was provided by our friends at Rabbi-wear on 82nd St. If you make it down there be sure to go around the corner and get your menorah polished. It's cheap, twenty bucks...I don't know what that means...Now let me see if I have this story straight.

(John looks at Bob who is smiling at the audience and focusing on the camera more than the camera is focusing on him. Bob checks out the couch, running his hand over the smooth fabric, looking up at the lights and off stage)

You have never really been normal, have you?

(Bob smiles at Jon and laughs with the audience.)

But yet, your bio says you lived a typically normal life for the most part. Born in Indiana, some college early, married, raised a family, divorced, and worked for a manufacturer in the same town you were born in for nearly twenty-five years, and then what the fuck happened to you, Bob?

I was hoping you could tell me. I'm not sure what you mean by normal. However, my first grade teacher gave me a question mark for behavior on my first report card.

Okaaay...so, let's try to run through this again quickly. Normal for forty-five years (Jon makes a face while doing the finger quotation mark thing for normal) and then, it says here, you painted your house in military camouflage and decorated your car with presidential markings and declared your independence as the sovereign state of Boblovia. What the hell was that all about?

I was hoping to get on the Daily Show. I guess it worked. No, really I had a political epiphany when I realized I could step out of the current state into a new state called Boblovia that I ran as I saw fit.

I think that new state was the state of insanity.

No, but that's right next door. I guess it makes sense to say that the Independent State of Boblovia is between this current state (gesturing with a wave of his arm) and the state of insanity.

(Jon reading from his notes) So you managed to get an op-ed piece, your declaration of independence, published in your local newspaper...And that was picked up by the wire services, correct?

Yes, from that point on I became a victim of circumstances. (doing a poor impression of Curly of the Three Stooges).

Well, you knucklehead, did you know this was going to bring in the end of the world? I mean, do you have to fuck it all up now? I've got a pretty nice gig going here, and don't forget, I still want you to think about giving me the movie rights.

Yes, now is the time. (Bob pushes up his sleeve and looks at his wrist as if he was wearing a watch)

Okay, so you were noticed by the press, didn't the government notice you too?

My neighbors noticed me first. They sued me for creating an eyesore so, as part of my defense, I claimed it was all part of my comedy act. I put together a standup comedy routine around life in Boblovia.

I heard you nearly died on stage.

Yes, almost. After the third week of attending open mike night at a hometown nightclub, I had developed quite a following. Indiana is in the heart of the red states so the following I had then was not all that supporting.

Let me see if I'm clear on this. You say your followers were not very supporting. Jesus Christ man, someone tried to gun you down on stage.

I got the hint. Some people are just not very good at standup comedy.

Yeah and when we find them it's our duty to take them out.

I wasn't aware that one of the college kids in the audience made a recording and put it on the internet. That's when everything picked up speed.

Those rat bastard bootleggers. I knew they would bring the world to an end. I guess the FBI tried to warn us. You know the FBI copywrite warning....anyway....so what happened after that?

That's the craziest part. When I was working on my Declaration of Boblovian Independence I had started my own little free website, just some place to rant and rave, and I had it linked to my girlfriend's pornographic website. Well, once the standup routine made it onto the net, it wasn't long before they found my girlfriend's website and my link, and from there, my message went viral.

I've seen her site...actually; those are the movie rights I want to talk to you about. So, then suddenly, your message was all over the web.

All over the world, it seems.

You can tell me, might there have been something on your site that maybe, you know, have incited a few mobs and caused all of us to fear the world will end next February?

I did provide a few suggestions for self-liberation. If you think about it, I created the mother of all Ponzi schemes. In my standup routine I encouraged each person who adopted the philosophy of individual liberation to persuade at least two other people to follow suit, and then for those people to encourage two more to do the same. It didn't take long for it to spread, and it seems to be gaining momentum every day.

You called for the making of a confederation of other independent states, is that right?

Yes, each of us is a free and sovereign republic of one. I'm Boblovia; you could be ...Jonomy? The Confederation is just a system that allows free and sovereign individuals to enter into any mutual voluntary agreements they wish to have.

So what can we expect to happen next February 22nd?

Nothing.

That's your call to action for the Couch Potato Revolution? Do nothing?

It's my idea of a do nothing revolution. It requires active non-participation, but nothing short of that to be successful.

Successful in what way? What do you expect to get from this?

Nothing other than having everyone take a day and sit still and look around themselves and see what is there, right there in the moment. It seems to me that all of us have been careening along collectively long enough. If we are to change the direction that we are going in, then we first have to stop. Then we can move on to where we each want to go. It becomes a personal responsibility to set the course for ourselves, both individually and as a confederation of independent entities.

I'm afraid we are running short on time. I wish you success. I'll try to wrap this up. Bob has called for a revolution from the couch. Everyone sits on the couch for three days and does absolutely nothing. February 22nd, 222 is the date. Don't miss it. The rest of the world will be doing nothing those three days too, so mark it on your calendar. After modern civilization screeches to a halt....we'll see what's left.

He has no book, he has no movie, this is just Bob. A most remarkable man. Thank you Bob for sharing time out of your busy schedule sleeping under bridges and wandering the countryside. Bob everybody. (Applause, chants of Bob, Bob, Bob)

We sat amused and amazed watching Bob on the television monitors.

“He handled that very well,” I said. “That’s about as verbal as I have ever heard him. This might all work out.” We’ll get through this all right, I thought then. We did make it through New York okay, but it wasn’t easy.

After the taping of the Daily Show, we had to hustle to get to the David Letterman Show. Each appearance Bob made in some way added a piece to the puzzle of what he was all about. Not that that made it any easier to understand him; nonetheless, we did come to always expect the unexpected from him. He seemed very lucid and intelligent at times, but at other times they may have well have been interviewing the drummer man we saw on the street.

Once again we found ourselves waiting in a greenroom watching the monitors. Letterman was presenting his top ten list of Indiana’s Hoosier Gifts to Humanity.

- #10 Larry Bird
- # 9 Axel Rose
- # 8 Dave’s Mother
- # 7 David Letterman
- # 6 James Dean
- # 5 John Dillinger
- # 4 Dan Quale
- # 3 Jimmie Hoffa
- # 2 Michael Jackson
- # 1 Boblovia

David introduced Bob. “In keeping with this fine pedigree of Hoosiers, we are delighted to have with us tonight Bob of Boblovia. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome Bob.” The band played “Back Home Again in Indiana.”

It was like old home week between Bob and David. Bob soon got David talking about racecars and the Indianapolis 500. Letterman is a race team owner. They covered other Hoosiers not on Dave’s top ten list. Bob mentioned Kurt Vonnegut and how much he admired his views on politics. They reminisced about growing up in Indiana and how it has been a fertile ground for producing people who think outside the box.

Bob seemed to deftly steer Letterman away from talking about Boblovia and the 222 Revolution. David appeared content on being humorous and getting the laughs. David introduced his next guest and invited Bob to move down a seat. Red Bludgett, the outspoken gun rights activist and heavy metal rock star, entered giving the audience a thumbs up, a quick smile and handshake to David. He then walked over to Bob and, by his arm, pulled Bob up to his feet alongside him.

“Man, I’m so glad to meet you.” Then Red gave out a big hillbilly hoot. Red raised Bob’s hand clenched in his high above their heads, “Bob, Bob, Bob,” he yelled, and the audience exuberantly joined in. It was a bit weird seeing Bob dressed in his brown robe next to Red’s six-foot plus camouflage-clad physique.

Once seated, Red went on. “Finally, someone with the brains and the balls to kick this country in the ass. Man, I’m all for what you are doing. Anything that can bring back a sense of our duty to stand tall and strong as independent minded individuals is fine by me.”

The rest of the program consisted of Red and Dave discussing what they thought the impact of the 222 Revolution might be, and Bob implied his agreement by his silence. The show ended without Bob ever mentioning Boblovia, 222, or the Revolution. Red had successfully spoken for Bob in a way that no one had before. He made it clear to his fans and the audience that it was their patriotic duty to do nothing, to rise up and lie down, if you will. Red encouraged a call to arms in the name of the 222 Revolution, a call to sit and examine what a blessing it is to live free. It may not have been exactly what Bob would have wanted to say, but it impressed upon those watching that support for the 222 Revolution was extremely fervent in some camps.

The Sixty Minutes film crew awaited us at the hotel that evening. A set had been hastily erected in the hotel where Bob could be interviewed. I was asked to look over the outline and a list of questions for Bob, but I declined. Up to now we had been flying by the seat of our pants, and I saw no reason for that to change. Looking back, I’m sure if I had reviewed the script I would have raised many objections because it was clear from the start of the interview that they were going on the attack. It was incredible that the angle they took with Bob was to try to portray him as some sort of a cult leader, swaying young people to his side using the internet and pornography to grab hold of their interest. You would have thought it was

television sweeps week with all the emphasis on Bob's relationship with his girlfriend Natascha and her adult website. They painted Bob as a non-conforming degenerate preying on people's weak minds and trusting hearts. Bob stuck to his guns the best he could reminding the interviewer that the Boblovian Revolution was, for the most part, arising spontaneously and that the media themselves had a tendency to sensationalize the means of distributing his message, namely porn and the internet, and the media should accept the responsibility of their actions in exactly the same way that each individual should accept their responsibility for their own actions as well. At the time, it seemed Bob had managed at least a stalemate. Bob successfully deflected the criticism while staying on message; however, once the interview aired that Sunday, and all of the graphic images and sound bites were edited in, Bob appeared exactly like they had wanted him to appear, dangerous and slightly deranged. None of that mattered by Sunday though, for Bob by then had already Faced the Nation.

It was hard to see the exhaustion in Bob's face, but it clearly showed in the faces of the rest of us. The first full day in New York had been exhilarating, a roller coaster ride of high emotions that left us each crawling off to our respected beds to rest so we could do it again tomorrow.

I swear the wakeup call came only a minute after I lay my head on the pillow. The plan was to do three shows today, first Oprah via video teleconference in the morning, followed by a live appearance on the Nox News' Spin Factory (more like Spit Factory as it turned out), then topped off with an unprecedented live appearance on a special weekday evening broadcast of Face the Nation.

Background music and the voice of Bob Jamison, the commentator for the program, Face the Nation.

"This week our guest is Mr. Robert Windowmaker, the de facto leader of the 222 Revolution, Emperor of Boblovia, Founding Father of the Confederation of Independent Individual Republics, among many other labels given him. Mr. Windowmaker dropped from public view earlier this year just as his notoriety and fame was exploding into the American consciousness. He reappeared only weeks ago at a large 222 Jamboree staged in Arkansas,

one of many such gatherings of the Confederation held last month worldwide. Robert Windowmaker has championed an ideal of individual sovereignty that supports the notion that each person, once they have declared their own individual sovereignty, is solely responsible for providing for all of their own needs including all the services our government currently provides. Windowmaker encourages a coming together of these individuals into a loose knit organization called the Confederation. What does this mean to America? Is this representative of a new mood in the country? Is it a second American Revolution in the making? What can we expect to come out of Robert Windowmaker's call for a 222 Revolution, the Do-Nothing Revolution for next February 22nd? We hope to have these questions answered, and more, when Mr. Robert Windowmaker faces the nation."

BJ: "Welcome, Mr. Windowmaker, to Face the Nation. Thank you for taking the time to be with us."

Bob: "I'm very pleased to be given this opportunity to speak to your audience."

BJ: "How shall I address you, Mr. Windowmaker, Bob, or Emperor of Boblovia?"

Bob: "Please, Bob is fine. May I also call you Bob?"

BJ: "Please, indeed. It has been difficult to sort out exactly what you represent and what role you have in this 222 Revolution movement. You have been referred to as a cult leader, giving your movement an almost religious tone, others make mention of you as a political revolutionary in the vein of Che Guevara. I have read that some consider you the Antichrist while others dismiss you as an irreverent media created figure just getting a moment of fame before the novelty of your movement fades. How would you describe yourself, and how do you address all of the different facets that have emerged that are attempting to describe what is transpiring around you and your message?"

Bob: "How to describe myself? That could take a while. It suffices to say that I'm not much different from anyone else you might meet. I don't believe I'm the Antichrist, that I'm pretty sure of. From what you have said, I think I have

had more than my share of fame to this point. Cult figure? I guess the robes and my appearance could lead someone to infer that, but how large of a following does a cult leader have to have before it's no longer a cult? Again, you described it as this phenomenon, let's just call it that, a phenomenon that exceeds being a cult and does not offer any salvation other than personal salvation brought about by consciously taking personal responsibility for everything. This is what I have done, and all else has just naturally evolved from that."

BJ: "That seems a bit perplexing. Are you saying that you have not taken an active role in what is transpiring? Explain to us, if you will, what exactly your message is for the people."

Bob: "Sometimes it's too simple for some to understand. Taking responsibility for everything is meant literally. For a long time in my life I felt much of what went on in the world was not my responsibility. I felt I had no control and no opportunity to affect world events, much less effecting change in my own personal life. Then one day I awoke to the fact that I have created all this. Everything. It's not easy to explain, and for some that may seem egotistical or whatever, but I learned to see the world, this wonderful creation that exists for each of us, as my responsibility. I've been given the complete awareness that each and every one of us shares in that same personal responsibility, and collectively, that is what shapes our reality, and our reality is what we make it. It's still a simple message, and once you grasp it, then the world literally does change in a very physical sense. Once life is approached from that angle, then the feelings of powerlessness and the suffering this manifests ceases. We all have full responsibility for creating reality not c-r-a-t-i-n-g crating, carrying around a burdensome reality laid upon us at birth and handing it off at our death. As I said, it is hard to describe this simply when too many words are needed for understanding, but by asking whether I'm taking an active role or not points us back to the simple understanding that, yes, I am taking an extremely active role in all this by assuming all personal responsibility for everything. Blame me if you want;

however, with this acceptance of personal responsibility each of us is no different than I. It's only a matter of whether any particular individual chooses to accept their responsibility or not."

BJ: "Therefore, any individual accepting this responsibility, as you have defined it, is responsible for participating in your 222 event. Am I correct on this?"

Bob: "Not necessarily. Any free and sovereign individual is completely free to do as he or she wishes as long as it does not infringe on any other's right to be free and sovereign as well. Participation in the 222 Revolution next February 22nd is a matter of personal choice only."

BJ: "Participating by not participating, as such, is the call for the couch potato revolution?"

Bob: "That's correct."

BJ: "Do you see yourself as a patriot, perhaps a revolutionist? What do you see happening leading up to and immediately after February 22nd?"

Bob: "More of the same leading up to, and after, meaning that we have reached a tipping point. We have had our fill of the old ways and now we have the opportunity to explore new ways of governance, new ways of living together on this planet. Perhaps what I have done, at most, is to plant a seed. So far, the media attention has watered it and is providing the nourishment for the seed to grow. The people stand to benefit from the harvest, so they protect the garden in which the seed grows. Our old governments are like the compost. For generations they have been spreading the necessary manure in order to build the fertile soil that is required. It is now up to each of us to see that this young seedling doesn't get uprooted in the name of weeding. As I look at it at this moment, it may be safe to say that what I may have planted has already propagated many other healthy seedlings that guarantee enough surviving so that there may be many more successful harvests in the years ahead."

BJ: "I'm sure many of our viewers share in your analogy regarding fertile ground. Dissatisfaction with our country's leaders has never been so high. The economy's woes continue to elevate fears of social unrest worldwide. Are

you concerned that your actions will fan the flames of violent social upheaval?"

Bob: "You express fears of social unrest. I am proposing social rest, not unrest. Let's give it all a rest. It is important to understand that there is more than enough wealth in this world for everyone to meet their personal needs. Jobs are created around work, and there is a great deal of work that needs to be done. Take the personal responsibility to identify the work that needs done to assure you are a free and independent sovereign individual. Enter into agreement with others who have identified similar needs for themselves. Organize around the work you have mutually committed to do. Remember the shift that we are experiencing, this current phase where we are witnessing firsthand the transference of wealth and the destruction of production, as measured in the old way of seeing things, no longer applies. Identify what your wealth really is; contemplate ways to increase that real wealth measured within the context of a new world comprised of millions of free and sovereign individuals. Violence on a small scale will always be with us, however, organized violence is a different matter. Organized violence, whether it be nations at war, criminal gangs, or political uprisings are dependent on the relinquishing of individual responsibility over to others. Collectively, security comes through force, but not necessarily violent force or the threat of it. Security can come as easily from the force of love, of peace, of individual responsibility for following the Golden Rule. On February 22nd, let us all take time to reflect on this. Let the force of love manifest itself within each of us. Let the force of a new dream take hold, a new dream that takes hold once we become still enough, long enough, to know it's time to move on."

BJ: "What immediate plans do you have, and what will you be doing between now and the 22nd of February?"

Bob: (laughing) "I didn't get to where I am today by having a plan. I'll be returning with my friends to Ozone, Arkansas, and I will make myself available to the manifestation of a new dream."

BJ: “Mr. Windowmaker, Bob, on behalf of Face the Nation, I thank you for appearing here with us this evening.”

Bob: “Thank you, Bob. I’ve enjoyed this very much.”

BJ: We will return with our learned panel to recap our conversation with the remarkable Robert Windowmaker.”

We did not wait around to watch the panel of talking heads analyze Bob’s comments. We all were brightened by the message Bob was able to communicate. We agreed that we had accomplished what we had set out to do, which was allowing Bob to have a public forum and in elevating awareness of the 222 movement. Nonetheless, the exhaustion of the last few days was wearing on us. Tomorrow morning we would be retracing our steps back to Ozone.

Bob awoke with a stomachache. He spent the first hour of the day in the bathroom. Everyone gathered in our room before heading to the airport. Jebongo had watched a recording of the Face the Nation panel discussion.

“You have to watch it. They were all over the place. *Washington Times* editor Loyd Williams was calling for Bob’s head. He said the network was playing into the hands of a dangerous adversary who should be arrested for inciting the American public. This led into a shouting match between those agreeing with Williams and those agreeing with Annette Peters’ supporting Bob and the need for new leadership from the people.” Jebongo went on, “If Williams is any indication of how our opposition feels, then we need to really be on our toes and make Bob’s security our top priority.”

He spoke what we each had come to realize. We had succeeded in getting Bob before the public eye; however, we also accepted the fact that we had put a target on his head, and we should be very cautious from this point on.

We reached the airport with little time to spare. The ride over was delayed by throngs of people gathering at the terminal, from the best we could tell, all in support of Bob. Fortunately, everyone was orderly, and we ran the gauntlet of supporters and media persons without incident. We cleared airport security and finally found a few minutes of peace as we waited to board. Bob complained about his stomach and retired to the restroom. He returned moments before we boarded and rode in silence on the flight back to Memphis oblivious to all the gawks and chatter from our fellow passengers. He kept his

head buried in the pillow during our helicopter flight and slipped off to bed once we arrived at Ozone. It wasn't until late the next evening when he responded to my knock at his door that I was able to see him.

"Are you feeling better? I think we all slept most of the day ourselves," trying to sound my cheeriest best. "Do you feel like eating? I can get you something that would be easy on your stomach."

Bob rolled over on the bed to face me. "How about some meat and potatoes? I haven't had a good steak in ages."

"Stand up!" I commanded.

He stood before me, in underwear and a t-shirt. I looked him over from top to toe. "Who the hell are you? Where's Bob?" I could feel the panic gripping me.

The man before me grinned broadly. "I'm Bob's stand-in double. I'm here because that is what he asked me to do for him. I fooled all of you," he trailed off with a cackling giggle. "I'm the guy you met on the street playing my rhythm sticks. Bob and I made the switch at the airport right before we got on the plane. It was his idea, and a pretty funny one too. Do I get to have my steak dinner?" he added.

Stunned, I found myself feeling all the emotions of a mother having lost track of her child. My first impulse was to scream, but I held it in. "Where is Bob? Do you know where he is?"

"No, Missy. He never told me what he was going to do after we switched."

"My name is Jasmine, call me that. What is your name?"

"Badger, everyone calls me Badger."

"I'll get you some dinner. Do not leave this room until I return."

"Yes, Jasmine."

Bo was in the kitchen. "Bo, Bob is awake and feeling much better. He wants steak and potatoes. See if you can get someone in the kitchen to cook up something for him, but first I want you to call an emergency meeting of the Founding Fathers." Bo sensed the urgency of my request.

I hurried back to the imposter's bedroom door guarding it from inside and out. I took the few moments I had before the others would rush here to let the situation sink in. I didn't see this coming; this being the second time he has slipped out on me. This time I had no time to be angry or feel sorry for myself; I had work to do and not

much time to think it through. Jebongo arrived first with Roger on his heels.

“What’s the emergency? Is Bob alright?” Jebongo was the first to ask.

I started to tell them the story, but out of me somewhere came, “No, he is sick and exhausted. Bob wants to give it a rest for a while. I’ll explain when the others get here,” which wasn’t long.

“Bob is on the verge of collapse. The New York trip took more out of him than he let show. His nerves are shot and he needs to convalesce for a few weeks without all of the hoopla that he has been subjected to. I’m going to be honest with you...” I heard the words I was speaking, but I felt disconnected from their meaning. When someone says to you that they want to be honest with you, you know you are dealing with a liar and a cheat. What was coming out of me qualified me for both. “...Bob isn’t acting very rationally; I mean mental issues. That may be hard to tell, being Bob and all, but I can see a change come over him. I think he will be okay with a little rest. He just wants to be alone and not to have anyone see him except me. He has asked me to attend to his personal needs and I agreed to do it. I don’t expect Bob will be of any help to us until he gets his feet under him again. So, that’s the news here. What are we facing out there? Let’s have everyone give their assessment.” It’s amazing how, in a group, they who speak as an authority becomes the authority.

Rogerdonia spoke. “Is Bob physically ill? What do we need to do to help him?”

“Bo is having steak and potatoes brought up from the kitchen for him, so his appetite is back. I think we should clear out the yurt for him and form a wide perimeter to keep it secure and quiet for him. Jebongo, can you and Roger take care of that?” A plan was finally coming together in my head.

“We can do that.” Roger continued, “This county, and the five surrounding it, have declared a state of emergency in an attempt to control our friendly hordes. So far, they are only stopping people from coming into or returning to the Jamboree. They have roadblocks up on every highway and cow path into this place. The locals are being issued a special ID to allow them in and out. That hasn’t set too well with some of them, has it Taylor? Let’s hear from Smittytania.”

“You’re right, the locals, especially those supporting us, which is just about everyone now in the state of Arkansas, see this as a direct impingement on their individual sovereignty. No one I know has knocked heads with the law yet, but it probably won’t be long before someone does.” Taylor added, “My guess is the Feds are just getting their siege tactics in place. Then they will see what we do next.”

Samania expressed his concern. “I don’t want them jack-booting all over my farm. Quite frankly, I’d rather they help me find a way to get these people to go home. Their work is back home, not here on my land.” Sam’s last words received an agreeing nod from the rest of us.

“Sheriff Fischer has always given us a heads up when we needed it. I will work to keep that relationship going for us, but he is under a lot of pressure too, so it’s best we not trust him with too much information.” Taylor made a good point.

Rogerdonia followed, “Well it looks like events are directing us to sit tight for a while. That is a good thing. Maybe we can defuse things around here while we watch what is happening in the rest of the world. If I’m right, events away from here will show us what we need to do next. The world will be clamoring for some news from Bob. I say we use our website to communicate all official news from here. Hopefully, Bob will dig into his notebooks some more and let us publish some of his Boblosophy.”

“What the hell is Boblosophy?” I had to ask.

“I don’t know who the hell Phil is, but I do know Bob,” Roger laughed.

Not very funny, but I saw a good opportunity to end our meeting and did. My next move was clear to me. I needed to meet with Richard. I paged him and asked him to come to Bob’s room. Bo arrived with the meal that had been prepared. I thanked him and waited for him to leave before going into the room. Badger was sitting at the table as if he were in a restaurant waiting for his entrée. He took the flatware in his hands and tapped out a little bouncing rhythm before digging into his meal. I sat watching him silently. He looked enough like Bob that I was sure we could pass him off as the real deal as long as we made sure he kept his mouth shut and kept his distance from anyone who was familiar with Bob. I wondered where Bob was and whether I would ever see him again. I answered the knock at the door and let Richard into the room.

“You needed to see me, Jasmine?” Richard’s eyes glanced around the room settling on Badger. “Good evening, Bob. I hope you are feeling better today.”

Badger responded with a mumbled grunt stuffing his face with scoops of mashed potatoes. “Sit down, Richard, we need to talk. This man you see here is not Bob. His name is Badger.” Startled, Richard sat up straight, stood and walked over to the table. Badger looked up with a big stupid grin on his face and giggled. “Okay, that sure as hell isn’t Bob. What’s the story?”

I explained what I knew. “The switch was made at the airport. It definitely was something Bob had planned on his own behind our backs. That’s all I know to this point, Richard. You’re welcome to question him all you want.”

For the next hour, Richard grilled Badger. As I expected there was not much he could tell us. He had followed Bob’s directions to the letter. Badger had taken the money Bob had stashed in the old robe he received from him on the street and used it to buy a plane ticket for a flight leaving near the same time and in the same terminal as our flight back to Memphis. Bob had instructed him to purchase a satchel and place in it: a mirror, scissors, shaving cream, and a razor along with a suit, shirt, tie, socks, and size twelve loafers. It was evident that Bob emerged from the airport restroom looking completely different from when he went in. Badger’s real name was Larry Bolen and he was originally from Charleston, West Virginia. He had been on the streets of New York City for the last ten years living off the tips he made from his street performance. No one was looking for him, that was certain. Bob had given him no further instructions nor revealed any indication of what his plans were for himself. Richard sorted through the contents of the bag that Badger had carried onto the plane finding only Bob’s notebooks and an odd assortment of rocks and crystals. I leafed through the notebooks hoping to find some pertinent information, but it was obvious there was nothing that helped shed any light on the situation.

“Who else knows about this?” asked Richard.

“We are the only two, besides, of course, Badger and Bob,” I replied.

“So, the others don’t know? That’s good, very good. So Jasmine, you are one who always seems to have a plan. What are you thinking?”

“I want you to find Bob. Get Uncle Leo to help.” That was the first time I had mentioned Leo to Richard, but he knew where I was going with this. “We need to assure his safety if nothing else. In the meantime, we are going to keep a tight lid on this. I told the others that Bob is in need of a long rest, and he wants to be alone for a while. We will put him up in the yurt, secure the area and keep him out of contact. The longer we can keep everyone believing that Bob is here, the safer he will be wherever he is. Don’t you agree?”

“I agree. I’ll leave you to handle things on this end. I have work to do. I’ll keep you posted on any news I find.” Richard left and I turned to Badger. “What do you think of all this?”

“What, that I’m now your prisoner?” The grin on Badger’s face had disappeared. “I’m cool with it as long as I can keep eating this good.” The grin returned.

“You know, Badger, you are now doing your part for the Revolution. Do you know about the 222 Revolution?”

“Naw, that stuff doesn’t concern me much, but I like Bob. He has a real good vibe, so I don’t mind doing what you want me to do.”

All this subterfuge did not sit well with me, but I was confident that even if I had truthfully informed the others we would still have taken this course of action. I felt I had bought some time, at least a week or two, that would give us the opportunity to manage the situation in Ozone while watching what direction things would move in next.

Chapter VIII

COLONEL LEO WAPPLE

(Part Three)

Richard flashed his identification at the police checkpoint outside the Jamboree in Ozone and made a beeline to the compound. He met me at the command center.

“We pulled it off. They don’t suspect a thing. Jasmine is sure that it was Bob that gave them the slip. How is our guest doing?” Richard asked.

“He seems to have accepted the fact that he is in our custody. I haven’t started working on him yet. We will give him another day to chill, then we will start our arm-twisting. We will have our staff briefing at 22:00. That gives us an hour or so for you to fill me in on our Jamboree friends.” Richard went on to give me the update on how Jasmine dealt with her discovery, and that Badger had played his role perfectly.

“Your plan, Richard, was pure genius. You saw the opportunity and went for it. There will be a promotion in all this for you. Of course you know that if it had gotten screwed up, our entire operation would have been compromised.”

Richard smiled broadly, “It was worth the risk, don’t you agree?”

22:00 Briefing: “Status reports, Steiner first,” I barked out.

Steiner: “We have begun the redistribution of our armory. In a few weeks, we will hold only what is necessary for our contingent here, Commander. All communication channels are still secure. Our first responders have reported that all units are on high alert and await further orders. So far, we have prevented any unit from acting independently; however, there have been rumblings that unit six, the Americong, are chewing at the bit again to take action on their own. General Mac says he won’t be able to hold on to the reins too much longer.”

Coffington: “Our intelligence reports inform that the G-10 has called for a meeting of top military and state department officials for next week. The meeting’s agenda reveals a growing concern of

widespread social upheaval. They fear the 222 Revolution will severely cripple the already damaged world economy, but most of all they fear that people will no longer look to the government for leadership. They fear the masses will rise up and push them out of power. Opinion is divided on whether to make a move to begin physically suppressing all major demonstrations, or whether to wait and see if they can use the media to marginalize the 222 message. They hope to elevate the fear level among the populace convincing them that participation in the Revolution would cause great hardship to each person individually, and to the country itself. As for the 222 movement, the momentum has grown exponentially, especially since Bob has made his appearance on the scene. The Justice Department is wringing their hands trying to come up with an angle for Bob's arrest. The difficulty for them is, it is hard to make a case against someone that advocates doing nothing. The Confederation is still without any formal leadership and will probably be that way for a long while, so there aren't any revolutionary leaders for them to go after either. The spontaneity of the movement has caught them off guard leaving them unable to discern a head to cut off. If there is a head for them to go after, it is here in Ozone where Bob is. Any move made by the regime will most likely be made here first."

Donaldson: "Our funding from our benefactor continues, but at a decreasing rate. Pressure from her internet providers to remove all revolutionary content is increasing and has forced her to switch providers several times, all of which has caused considerable downtime. The same can be said for the major 222 sites. They have come under attack by government hackers and have had their service interrupted too. Our monetary reserves are already adequate, so even if our funding is extinguished, we will be able to fund our endeavors through next February, including Operation NewVision."

Then I spoke, "Gentlemen, the information I am about to reveal to you is of the utmost secrecy. We have been given an opportunity that will impact every aspect of our current strategy. Richard will give his report then I will give you my assessment."

Richard: "We have Bob Windowmaker in seclusion here at the compound. Two days ago, we successfully switched him with a look-a-like double. Jasmine Hardy is the only other person other

than our double, my New York detail, and those in this room that is aware of this. Unlike us, she is not aware that we have possession of Windowmaker. Our plan succeeded in making it seem as if Bob engineered his own disappearance. As of yet, our guest has not been interviewed. The Commander will be conducting the questioning to determine what value he can provide us.”

I finished the meeting with new orders for my staff. “We are heading quickly towards the end game. We must remain flexible while we assess the importance of this new development. Our strategy remains essentially the same; however, the timing may change for its implementation. Remain vigilant, Gentlemen, for we may need to spring into action at any moment. Richard will continue monitoring events inside the 222 Ozone organization, informing us of any new developments. That is all.”

Interrogation, Day 1

“Good morning, Bob. I hope you have been resting well,” I began. “Make yourself comfortable, and if there is anything you need, just ask.” Bob sat silently looking out the window. I continued, “We felt it necessary to bring you here for your own safety. We think the Feds are ready to make a move. We believe they plan on taking you into their custody.”

“Like you’ve taken me into your custody?” Bob stated calmly.

“I think you will soon realize that we are both on the same side and we do concern ourselves with your security.”

“Which side is that, Leo?”

“The 222 Revolution side, Bob, your side.”

“Certainly if we are both on the same side then I’m free to come and go as I please. Someone on my side would not lock me down with an armed guard at my door.”

“For now, we can’t allow you free movement. Your being here is a secret shared only by a few.”

“Does Jasmine know I’m here? Can I see her?”

“Of course Jasmine knows you were substituted with a double, but she doesn’t know you are with us here. So far as we know, she is the only person down at Ozone that knows...”

“That I have been kidnapped?” Bob interrupted.

I continued as if I had not heard, “Her plan is to keep this fact from the others. Jasmine thinks you gave her the slip and are out on

your own. She has asked us to help locate you. She fears for your safety too.”

“It is so nice that everyone is so considerate of me. I liked that Badger guy. He should be able to do a bang up job replacing me.”

“We know that he can’t play the role that you have in the Revolution.”

“Oh, I disagree. I think he will do just fine.”

“Bob, you are leader of the 222 Revolution. No one can replace you. We need you to lead this thing and to allow us to help support you.”

“Once again, Leo, thanks for your support.” I could tell Bob was being sarcastic. “Let’s cut to the bone, Leo. What is it that you want from me?”

“Your cooperation, Bob.”

“Cooperate or else. Is that it?”

“No, of course not. We aren’t threatening you. We just want to be sure our efforts and yours coincide.”

“So I may leave now.”

“No, not at this time.”

“I see. So explain to me how I can help you, Leo. I’m sure, as the commander of this little operation, you have a plan. What is your plan, Leo?”

“We have prepared for an armed rebellion in this country for many years. A long time ago, we recognized the direction this country was going in and now our concerns are confirmed. We foresee our citizenry will soon reach a tipping point where they will finally have had enough of the lies coming from the government, forcing them to react first by demonstration, then by active opposition to the powers to be. The stage has been set via the lies, abuse, and economic ruination directed against the poor and middle class. What we did not foresee was someone like you, Bob, putting a new twist to things. You have an advantage over us in that you and your Revolution are in the public’s eye. We have to remain hidden. You are able to control the revolutionary message through the media in a way that is not available to us.”

Bob sat relaxed, fixing a steady gaze on me. “I have already had my revolution; now it’s everyone else’s turn.”

I returned Bob’s stare. “We can’t afford to leave it at that. We need your cooperation to help guide the 222 Revolution to the end.”

Bob rose and faced the window. "To the end, hmm. Maybe you don't understand the power of this thing, Leo. There will be no end to this. It's just the beginning. This revolution does not need an army; it doesn't need a leader either."

"I don't agree. Someone will always have to assume a leadership role. Someone has to give definition to the events as they arise."

"Someone has to put their own spin on things so everyone else can follow? I believe in letting the people lead then the leaders will follow."

"It is hard to disagree with you given the success you have achieved thus far, but I think you greatly underestimate your adversary."

"That adversary being you?"

"I mean the government and the military. They will not sit by idly and watch their control wrested from them. We need to move beyond the fairytale of personal empowerment that you have created and take on the responsibility of informing the people of exactly what they will be up against when full martial law is declared and the military moves against them. We need you to be the one to sound the warning. If you don't help us in that, then the blood will be on your hands. It's as simple as that."

"Frankly, Leo, I think you would like to see that. I think you would enjoy leading an armed rebellion. It would give you the justification for all these years spent in preparation."

"We would not have succeeded in our preparation without your help, Bob. Believe it or not, you've made it possible for us to rise up to a new level of activity, a level that now allows us to move forward with our plans. You have directly financed our operation, like it or not."

"That seems to be quite a stretch, Leo. I don't have a penny in my pocket, or the resources to fund anything."

"No you don't, but your friend Natascha does. She has channeled a huge sum of cash directly to us for our cause. She supports us. Will you?"

"Natascha is a free and independent sovereignty. What she does with her resources is for her to say. I'm not surprised that she has chosen to help in your cause. I'm sure she has a lot to fear from the government. Even if I said yes to you, and agreed to support you, what exactly do you believe I can do for you?"

“We need your help in warning people of the violent reaction that lies ahead. We need you to inform them of the preparations that are needed immediately. We need to make sure everyone has a personal security plan. An armed populace is a secure populace. We need to have everyone prepared to take action.”

“You are forgetting one thing, Leo. The 222 Revolution is completely about the opposite. It’s about inaction; it’s about doing nothing, but doing it well. It’s my opinion that an armed resurrection would play right into the government’s hand. They would like nothing better than to have the 222 Revolution directly linked to a violent revolt. It sounds corny, but the 222 Revolution is really all about peace, love, and understanding. It’s about overcoming fear, including overcoming the fear of any military reprisal against the people.”

“Like I said before, the blood will be on your hands. A lot of people will suffer from your unwillingness to lead.”

“And as I said before, let the people lead and the leaders will follow.”

“I’ll leave you now to mull that over. Think about what we have discussed. Weigh it carefully in your mind. We will talk again tomorrow.” Then I left to meet with my command team.

Bob’s attitude mellowed over time, which made gaining his cooperation even more difficult. We kept him lodged in a suite that was quite comfortable. He never watched television or listened to the radio. He was allowed time walking the grounds with an escort. I thought that prolonged isolation would make him willing to come around to our plan. I was sure that he enjoyed the limelight so much that he would not be able to stay out of the loop no matter how determined he was to not give us what we wanted. Our conversations were usually brief. Mainly, I would check in to see if his demeanor had changed. We continued his isolation for over a month before Bob and I had another long eye-to-eye.

I walked in with a stack of newspapers and magazines. Bob sat at the dining table. I fanned the magazines out in front of him, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *US News and Report* ...all the major periodicals.

“You are on the cover of all of them,” I said and then I took the remote control and turned on the television leaving the volume on mute. “Look what’s on the news. All of the news channels are constantly carrying stories on you. All this is happening without you.

I guess I wouldn't blame you if you felt a little left out. After all, it's your party and you aren't able to attend. That can change if you would just read this aloud." I laid the script to Operation NewVision in front of him.

Bob never gave it a glance. Pushing it back to me, he said. "That isn't going to happen, Leo. You can count on that."

"Can't you see you are a figure of destiny? I can't believe you would let an opportunity like this pass without having done all the work you set out to do." I knew there was no way to bully him.

"The world can take care of itself, Leo, just like you are taking good care of me. So what's next? Torture me, lock me in a cage, tie me up and beat me?" There was no sarcasm in his voice now only a quite resignation. "It doesn't matter what happens to me now."

I tried to keep my voice neutral, but I'm sure my exasperation was evident. "I will read this to you." I picked up the script and read. "I am appearing before you, my friends and supporters of the Revolution, to tell you what many of you plainly know. We are at a dangerous crossroads. Our movement is transforming the world. Every day brings us closer to February 22nd and the taking back of our government. Each and every one of us needs to be on extra alert. The powers in charge have already shown us that they will not let go of their control without a fight. Until now, our Revolution has been peaceful, but I come here to warn you that that may change soon and suddenly. We must stand guard for our individual liberties. We must be prepared to sacrifice more than our time. We must be willing to support our cause with our blood if need be. We have come too far to be turned back now. We have much to gain..." Bob cut me off.

"Please, please stop. I won't hear any more of that! I will never have my name on that piece of propaganda - that's what it is, propaganda. Propaganda is the art of making people believe in things that you don't believe in yourself. Don't you see how putting something like that out there, especially with my so called blessing, would guarantee the spilling of blood?"

"Then help us. Help us put out a statement that communicates this intent. You can shape it as you see fit. We will work with you to come up with a message that will help prepare people for what we see is coming. You have a duty to fulfill, can't you see that? The world has come unglued, thanks to you. You have to have a hand in putting it back together. It's your responsibility, don't shirk away from it."

Bob sat still for a moment, and then rose from the table. He walked behind my seat and placed his hands on my shoulders. Leaning down to my ear, he said softly. "That isn't what I see coming, Leo, not even close. Let's not pretend anymore. You know we have no right to try to steer this in anyway, none of us, least of all, me. Now can I go?"

"Damn you, Windowmaker. You can rot here for all I care. If you don't do this for us then I will damn sure make sure you will be here a lot longer than you can imagine. We will get what we want. You can count on that," I threatened then I stormed out.

After that meeting, Bob had nothing else to say to me or anyone else. He would sit quietly at the window looking out into the woods. He would take his hour of outdoor exercise, eat his meals, sit, then go to bed, the same routine daily. Every day I would beat him over the head with the latest news. He may not have wanted to talk to me, but he sure as hell couldn't ignore what I was showing him. Each day new reports came in over the media describing another country on the brink of chaos, another city locked down by martial law, another demonstration brutally confronted by the growing military reaction against the Revolution. Regrettably, Bob remained nonplussed.

Bob remained completely uncooperative the whole time he was with us. Our organization remained underground that summer. We were active in that we reallocated our resources from the Ozone compound to more secure locations. Ozone was getting too much attention and I felt it was jeopardizing our operation. By the end of August, we had moved the armories and most of our troops to other cells further west where we would make our presence known when the opportune time came. Only a skeleton staff manning the communication center and I remained. Events in the world continued at breakneck speed in that much of the massive discontent directed against various governments had turned against the international corporations and showed no signs of subsiding. Even before the whole 222 thing, and Bob's appearance on the scene, a huge ground swell of violence and mass demonstrations had begun. Attacks against the bankers and financiers responsible for the economic crash had become more frequent. Voter turnout was at unprecedented lows for the mid-term elections. Only thirteen percent of eligible voters bothered to go to the polls. It was becoming clear

that the disenfranchised populace had started turning their backs to the system. One trend that was readily apparent was that, as the Boblovian Revolution became more widespread, more and more people were also turning their backs against making any kind of organized armed defense of their liberties. The promise of hope, hope that next February 22nd would usher in a massive change, seemed to have created a bubble of passivity that now encompassed the whole globe. The attitude seemed to be that everyone would just sit and wait and see what would happen then. This definitely was not playing into our design of an effective armed populace taking the fight to the street; nonetheless, we had to be patient ourselves until I could figure out how to make all this work to the advantage of our cause. That opportunity came to us unexpectedly in the first weeks of September.

Chapter IX

JASMINE HARDY
(Part Four)

I had Badger comfortably settled in the yurt. Richard and I took shifts being with him making sure he stayed out of trouble. I had Roger and Jebongo erect some privacy fencing to establish a little courtyard next to the yurt so Badger could spend some time outdoors hidden from prying eyes.

I once read a quote that said patience was a minor form of despair disguised as a virtue. How true. I really had no idea what to do next so I told myself to just sit and be patient; nevertheless, I couldn't numb myself to the despair I was feeling and of how much I missed Bob. I had stopped taking any calls from the outside concerning Bob. The media was still clamoring to get in and interview him. I issued my first official statement via the 222 website stating that Bob had entered into seclusion for the time being and was not available to anyone. I instructed all of our supporters to continue monitoring the website for further communication from Bob. Days turned into weeks. The crowd around us dwindled to just a few thousand people who felt it necessary to remain as long as Bob was still here. They were peaceful and helpful in bringing Sam's ranch back to some resemblance of order. They also helped to provide a buffer around the yurt. Even though things were quieting down at Ozone, every day brought new information to us that indicated that the 222 Revolution was gaining worldwide momentum. Reports came to us of more mass demonstrations in Europe, South America, and Japan. Rumors of support for the Revolution leaked out from China and other places less open to uninhibited freedom of press.

Jebongo had it right. Even though things had quieted down considerably in Ozone, the Feds still had essentially barricaded us onto Sam's farm. We weren't necessarily under siege, but slowly bit by bit they circled in closer. We all sensed that at some point they would make their move.

I spent my time reading through Bob's journals that had made it back with Badger. It was an interesting mix of things, some of it nearly incomprehensible, but informative nonetheless. It was my way of feeling connected with my Bob. I flipped to the back of the

first notebook and read the last entry that had been hurriedly scrawled.

Scratch claw sick to my stomach fever for the last three days constant diarrhea it must have been some bad water or something. Yesterday I stumbled around almost in delirium was stampeded by a herd of killer mosquitoes swarming so thickly that I ran blindly into a thicket of thorns and nettles. The horse nettles stung so badly I threw off my clothes and jumped up to my neck into the river to soothe the pain. Afterwards I rolled in the smelly black muck on the riverbank, smearing the mud all over me, face, arms, legs everywhere. Now I sit, the mud has dried. Not sure of anything anymore. God help me.

222 don't forget the dream 222, the sign, the dream 222

I am not sure how I got here. I awoke to the early birds squawking in their morning revelry. No fire, covered in dry mud sitting up against a big sycamore tree alongside a bridge spanning the river. I can hear the whoosh whoosh of cars and trucks whizzing above my head. I don't know how many days have passed since then. I feel so much better, the fever has broken, but I'm a mess. I'm headed for the river to bathe.

That was refreshing the air is warm but the water frigid. I feel so much a part of nature standing in the Wabash as the morning mist wafts along the shore. I'm famished.

I just read my last journal entry. The dream, was it a really a dream 222 the sign? Look for the sign. Woke up and my cell phone was ringing and I'm sure the battery had been dead for days. The time on the phone read 2:22 and I know I was not dreaming then.

I cried and prayed to God for a sign, I was sure I had lost my mind.

I had my first 222 dream four years ago. I was sleeping in a soft bed in an apartment that I lived in several years ago nothing special about that place. I had one of those lucid dreams where

you seem to be awake even though you know you are still dreaming. It is almost an out-of-body experience. I was drawn to the window and looking out I saw a tremendous flood rushing by. I remember thinking that I don't live close to a river or anything like that and I'm on high ground so it should not be flooding like this, but rushing violently by was turbid brown water carrying along with it all types of debris imaginable. It was as if the whole world was washing away right in front of me. Then my eyes were drawn to the digital clock. Usually in a dream, and I have had lucid dreams before, it is impossible to read any kind of printed word. I have had dreams where I'm reading a newspaper and have been aware enough to try to catch what is printed there hoping to get a glimpse into the future or some winning lotto numbers at least, but this time it was very clear. The time read 2:22.

Now it gets stranger. I remember falling back to sleep even though I'm sure I had never awakened to begin with, but later in this sleep/dream state I dreamed I had gotten up to use the bathroom, again still in the dream. It's weird, I was standing there dreaming I was peeing in the john and I remembered the flood dream I had earlier and the clock reading 2:22. I leaned my head, still dreaming, into the bedroom and saw the clock and it read 2:22. When I did actually awaken in the wee hours of the morning, of course, it was at 2:22 am.

I have had many dreams about the number 222 since.

Then last night my phone ringing at 2:22am was that in the dream? The battery dead for weeks. There it is in the call log, unknown caller, 2:22am. All right, what the fuck does 222 mean? 222, is it a date? February 22nd? A street address? A room number? Wait, I did stay in room 222 awhile back. Nothing that significant was there. I did talk to that maid, her name? I will have to look at my notes. 222 February isn't that George Washington's birthday? I think it is and I remember something about it on the back of a hundred dollar bill I think that shows the time on the clock on Independence Hall as 2:22 when the declaration of independence was signed. The 222 Revolution I worked that into my comedy routine. Quick, don't just do something, sit there. What are the chances of that catching on? What a waste of my life

thinking like that. I don't know what the hell to do now. Go home or wander on. Where is my sign from God? My dreams don't help; maybe the phone call is a sign. Well, if it is a sign I guess God will find a way to confirm it. I sure am hungry for some real food. I'm going to mosey up to the top of the hill, maybe I'm close to a town or something. I think I have had enough of this walking meditation for now. 222 222 222 222 222 222 222 my mantra. 222 222 222 222 222 222 222 222. It's great being crazy, 222 222.

Written on the next page were the words Thanks, God, I owe you one!!!! I realized Bob had written this entry riding in my car the same morning that the tornado had hit and he and I had crossed paths. Having read the last journal entry, I now began reading from the front.

Every so often, a mood hits me. It is terrible. I awaken and look for my non-existent gun. If there were an on/off switch for my life next to the bed would I flip it? Most assuredly. There is really no reason to feel this way. My suffering is definitely less than most. My basic needs for now are met; so, I don't have to deal with the day-to-day struggles that most people have to face. So, what's up with this emotion? It feels just like being tired, not being able to enjoy the things that make most of the people around me happy. I wonder, are they faking it too? Is this feeling a curse for knowing too much, for having too much information? I can't help but think that may be the case. Ignorance is bliss, well piss on bliss... Too much of my time is taken up with just explaining things to people when they don't really want to understand...they have their own trials and tribulations to deal with. But, the beating of the time drum pounding out the seconds keeps this dreadful rhythm running.

It certainly doesn't help to have accurate premonitions constantly. I know what comes next, but I have yet to decide whether my premonitions are actually the cause of the things to come or not. Is accuracy driven by thought? The deeper the thought the more certain are the feelings of accuracy, then the more likely the future unfolds as we predict. I have to find a way to stop thinking. Maybe then,

the future can take care of itself and I won't have to be responsible for all this. Please, don't ask me what is to come. I only see it too clearly; believe me, you don't want to know. Suicide takes too much effort, it is too active...I rather just not bother with it because I know we all are dead already. It may take a few more hours, or days, weeks, months, years, but the death pale hangs in the air. Not the quiet natural death, the just and peaceful sleep we have before us - this is a checking out of the species, by design, that's coming. We won't be asked if we want to go; we will be told we have to, and most will oblige because the alternative of not checking out will be so horrible that we will volunteer to go out ahead and even be exalted for doing so. Fuck them, I would rather sit here and make them miserable, spit in their eye, go down shouting, laughing at the misery surrounding us. We all deserve better, but you get what you think...so goddamn it, think of something better than this dream we have been sharing. I would rather we all decide to go out in one giant fucked-up mess of revelation of primordial urges that sophistically accepts our fate, then die praying. Bang, Blast, Blow the motherfucker up! Don't look back; don't shed a tear, just blow, motherfucker blow. This is the end of the book, figure out the rest and then go fuck yourself. Bye, Bye.

This was followed by the Boblovian Address written nearly word-for-word as Bob had delivered it to the Jamboree. Now I was getting a feel for how Bob's mind worked, a bit disturbing, nonetheless, enlightening. Bob is a work in progress. I turned to another page.

Born - indoctrinated - conditioned - educated - programmed - inundated with ads - consume, consume - get married or go to college, can't afford it? Join the army. It's not their fault the economy fries with New World Order. The goal is to get into debt, spend, consume on credit hooked now feed the tax machine of the 2 party system, no two parties just the JUSTICE party....it ain't you, it's just us. Join the work release forced labor swamp. Be the useless feeder producing all the useless items that we

needlessly consume. Always promised more than what we can have, never satisfied, always wanting bigger and newer. Never ever questioning who it is that put that ball and chain around our ankles. We work. We go home too tired to do much of anything, and if we wanted to do anything, we would not have the time to do anything anyway. Fall asleep in front of the TV. Let the sublime become our reality. Face the flicker of the screen; soak in her comfort. I watch TV; therefore, I am. Let's let ourselves find who we are by transfixing our attention to the flashing of phosphorous bathing in a stream of electrons imbedded in a controlled pattern by all of those we trust: Corporations and our Government. Work, eat, and sleep, just enough time each week to spend what the government did not take even before we saw our money. And, when we spend it, they take some more. Hell, they even charge us for giving us our money. The corporations are so very caring and they understand that we need their help in setting aside a little in their 401K plans. It even has your name on it and they claim it is your money unless of course you want to have it, then you, at the minimum, must pay a penalty to have your money, that is unless you are retiring. Have we used you up yet? Maybe we can get a few more years out of you. You know, if you are still productive at 55 - if we can get you to stay for a few more years, then you won't have to pay as big of a penalty to get YOUR money. And if you can still produce (if we still have a need for you ...you are still value added vs. non-value added) for ten or twelve more years you can get all of your money, please still keep in mind assorted fees and income tax. Please don't be concerned about the pension we promised you. You know the small print says we don't really have to give to you. Oh, you didn't read the fine print? Let me explain it to you. Basically, it says that if we tell the court that by paying you your pension that we promised you and that you traded wage increases for our promises of increased pension, - if paying YOU YOUR money will even give a hint that we will lose money over it then, of course, standing by our obligation to our shareholders, (even though you may own shares you are just a holder of shares not a shareholder) we

will forego paying you YOUR money. After all, how can we remain competitive in this new global business environment if we are paying out on employee pensions when our competitors have already bailed on their pension plans? Maybe you are lucky to still be on the hourly payroll; well don't worry, the government insured pension fund will cover a small part of paying you YOUR money that is unless every other company dumps their pension plans onto the insured fund then most likely you won't get any of YOUR money that is unless Congress bails out your pension by raising your taxes. So don't worry, you get to pay yourself over again to get a pittance of your money. Again, please forget that even before you reached retirement age we had you sacrifice income and benefits not to mention work harder and longer for less money to help us cover our payments into the pension we promised you. So in essence, we got you to forego immediate income in replacement of future pension rewards at our contract negotiations, which, by the way, the courts say we don't have to honor any of the contract if it might mean we can't fulfill our obligation to our shareholders and we all know how health care cost are cutting into what we can pocket - I mean distribute to our investors and in no way could we hold ourselves accountable to our moral standards and values if we put the money in your pocket because it is never really your money. We keep it for you ...whether in a bank or private or employment account so it is really up to us to determine if or when we might consider distributing you YOUR money. That being us, (again, the JUSTICE party...it ain't you it's just us). Ain't Amerika great? Of course all of YOUR money that you paid into YOUR social security well it ain't there either, I mean we are really sorry, but we already spent it; however, we are going to keep asking you to pay us more to cover the IOU we wrote to you.

This was followed with:

There is another way to look at all this. When I was young, I would listen to my Mother's parent's talk about

life during the Great Depression. I'm not sure if I understood exactly what that was, but it sounded pretty great, and really depressing. Grandpa talked about having to travel afar to find work and selling apples. All familiar stories of those times, but what stuck with me, all this time, was his description of the company town owned by the mining companies in West Virginia where my mom's folks came from where basically all there was of any kind of law and government in many parts of Appalachia was the company. Grandpa worked in the coalmines for a while with his father and uncles. They all were aware of the dangers involved, not the least of which was black lung disease, which they called the "lucky man's disease," because a man was lucky if he lived long enough to die from black lung. But it wasn't the work itself, or the dangerous conditions that got Grandpa riled up, it was what was waiting for them once he left the mine, the company town. Grandma said that Grandpa's paycheck was picked clean before he even got to see his money. Every house in town was owned by the company. The company owned the only store. The company owned the pharmacy and the hospital; Grandpa said they even owned the church. That may be exaggerating a little, but it is certain that the company owned all of the local politicians and many at the state capital. However, the worst, Grandpa said, was that the company owned the local law enforcement and had more than one judge in their pocket. "Hell," Grandpa would say, "most people ended the week owing the company money." I think he felt a little like an indentured slave. It really made all the hard work he would put in pointless. As long as you kept handing over your paycheck, and kept taking on more debt, they would leave you alone, but if you tried to hold back a little, or found work elsewhere, they would find a way to run you out of their privately owned little town.

"Hell, it's bad enough I have to work for the bastards when I'm in the mine, but I'll be damned if I'm going to work for them when I'm in my own living room," he said.

There was more:

Waking up in the Company Town USA.

Maybe it's a good thing Grandpa died before he saw what we have done to ourselves today. Folks, I have news for you. We live in a Company Town.

A Company Town. Think about it. You own your home you say. You choose where to work, you can shop wherever you want, spend and save at your will. Really? Do you own your home or are you just carrying the mortgage for a lender? Have you done the math on the interest you'll pay? Do you realize that on average everyone works the first five months of the year just to pay taxes? Follow the money. What bank do you use? Who owns the bank? Where does the money come from? Where does your food come from? What choices do you have at the supermarket? Globalization is really a centralization of production, power, and wealth, much like Communism. Things are being single sourced, workers are just-in-time, only needed when production demands labor and idled when the demand decreases. Look how many contract and temps there are in the workforce. Workers shuffled from one position to the next not knowing where their next paycheck will come from. Every penny spent for necessities, and with the brain washing of corporate advertising, our luxuries have become our necessities too. No one seems to question that we shop at the same stores; we watch the same news and entertainment; we occupy ourselves with the same thoughts and fears as everyone else to a greater degree than ever before. We have freedom to spend our allowances at the corporate store of our choice. We have the freedom to send our children to the cookie cutter, state regulated, school of their choice. In short, what real personal choices do we have when any choice we make directs us through the omnipotent corporate state that no matter what name is manifested to identify it - it is driven by the same thing, making money off us. We are nothing but tools for them to be utilized to their maximum efficacy and then discarded without incurring any additional costs such as healthcare, social security, and pensions what have you.

We believe we are a free society, but who controls the police, those dedicated to serve and protect, to protect us from ourselves? It seems to be that we all are terrorists, each of us under constant suspicion. We have choices when it comes to voting? Get real ...do a little research and you will find that all politicians play for the same team and feed from the same corporate trough. Laws are made by lobbyists who hold their interest above the interest of the common good. It's obvious, but most people don't see how that translates to their personal life. We the people need to wake up. We need to understand that a structure has been put in place that defines everything we think and do. Awakening comes once the structure becomes visible and we understand how our unquestioning participation gives strength to the structure. We support it and call it freedom and democracy because that is the lie that they sold to us. The power of that lie comes from the collective buy-in of that dream and the acceptance of the belief that we couldn't change things even if we wanted to. How much more does it take before enough of us finally give up and chuck it in and tell the corporate bastards to go fuck themselves? What about food and water? What about my kids? How will I be able to afford a roof over my head? How can my kids ever make it to college so they can have a better life for their selves?

Isn't there anything we can dream together that is better than this? Couldn't we dream of working for peace, for each other? Can't we come up with a better system that would allow us to collectively come together for the betterment of every human being on the planet including ourselves? Damn right, we could. So what is stopping us? We are stopping ourselves. The old dream demands that we believe it will take a whole lot of us to get the job done. That's where we are wrong. It only takes one of us to manifest the dream. Just one, YOU. That's all. So how many you(s) are there? Just one. There's one there and right over there, look there's a bunch of you(s) walking over there. You see it demands that each of us make that leap into the new dream, the new dream of individual limitless possibility. We can't wait any longer for everyone else to

show signs of awakening when we have not awoken ourselves. Do you see how this works? There doesn't have to be a signal given before we dare awaken. Just wake up.

So how is this done? Stop, sit still and look around you at what is right there in front of you.

Below this was another short entry:

Working in a corporate environment for as many years as I have, you notice things after a while like: when did condition of employment and condition of citizenship become the same thing? What's next? Condition of citizenship will be the condition of whether you live or die.

Being an ex-corpobot, I have no limit to the exhaustive problem solving tools available to use. All of the models have intriguing buzzword labels intended to mystify the mystified, but my favorite is the systematic problem-solving model I call DUMBASSIC. (Define Unreasonable Measurements Before Assuring Stupid Solutions are Implemented Cluelessly).

I have seen this model applied countless times over the years to varying degrees of effectiveness, and it is very good in creating an illusion of activity while at the same time assuring that what has always been screwed up, will remain screwed up. Is that just by accident?

Well, there you have it. There is plenty in these notebooks for us to post on the website. That and the several videos Rogerdonia made of Bob giving his lectures from the grove should be enough for us to carry on the illusion that Bob is still here in Ozone.

Day after day, my routine became the only way to maintain my sanity. I would awaken, stretch, do some yoga and take a walk in the woods. I had the night shift and Richard, or one of his people, had the day shift. After my walk, I would go up to the farmhouse and have breakfast. People would drift in and out of the kitchen, but it wasn't the nerve center it once was. That had shifted over to the 222.com website trailer where I would take over Rogerdonia's second cup of coffee for the day and we would look over the latest news on the net. I always hoped that Bob would pop up in the news even if it

meant exposing my lie. I usually spent the remainder of my day reading and re-reading Bob's journals. I wished that we had been together long enough for him to have written something in them about me. If Richard was on watch for the day, I would try to pump him for any news of Bob too. I thought Leo and his organization was my best chance of tracking Bob down, but my disappointment grew into a constant melancholy that, as summer turned towards fall, left me feeling tired and alone.

Everyone could see that I was moping around like a schoolgirl with a broken heart, but only Richard understood why. The others thought that Bob and I had a falling out, but they never seemed to suspect that Badger was anything other than Bob. I did have one frequent visitor though. He called himself Trenland. He seemed harmless enough. Young, under thirty and was about as geeky looking as you could imagine. He was a bit of a computer whiz so Rogerdonia let him help with the tech end of things. Trenland would come by and visit with me nearly every day. Usually we had lunch together and talked about what material I was gleaning from Bob's notebooks for publishing on the website. He never met Bob, only showing up at the farmhouse after our return from New York in May. From time to time, Trenland would press me to let him in to see Bob, but he seemed content with just being able to get close to him through me. Richard was suspicious of Trenland from the start.

"I don't like that guy, Jasmine. We can't find any dirt on him, but that doesn't clear him from being a plant," warned Richard.

"Oh, I don't think it really matters does it? We know the Feds have people on the inside. It might as well be Trenland. Besides, I think you don't like him because he is gay. He is gay isn't he?"

I remember Richard always got a laugh out of that. "You know that doesn't matter with me." Richard would get a serious look on his face then joke. "That's why I always have my eyes on him."

That was about the only time I would see Richard smile, but I knew he was right. I should not let my defenses down.

By the end of August, Ozone had become a seemingly quiet backwater compared to what was happening elsewhere.

The day began like so many others. It was a beautiful morning, crisp and clear. For the first time, there was a hint of autumn in the air. The locust and walnut trees had already started their turn to brilliant yellow and their leaves glided down lazily around me. This

morning, for some reason, I decided to take a walk in a different direction cutting out over the huge meadow that still had lingering clouds of early morning mist drifting in wisps around my legs as I gradually made a line towards the forest on the far edge of the property moving from one patch of fog to another. I love the fog. The whole world and all its worries seem to disappear together leaving me feeling alone, but comforted by the fog's gentle embrace. I knew there was a trail that started near the main gate that followed the ridge that encircled Samania's farm, and I expected to spend my day exploring it and keeping away to myself. I had all of Bob's notebooks with me to keep me occupied, as well.

The first indication of trouble was the distant wump-wump of helicopter blades –many of them. I instinctively moved over the fence and slipped in under the leafy canopy. Six military choppers, from three different directions, buzzed in at tree top height. Two passed directly over me. They had no visible markings. As I watched several of the helicopters landing, a convoy of police and military vehicles rushed through the gate. They finally made their move. It seemed like overkill from the start. It was quite the operation for just one man. I wondered how long it would take them to figure out that Badger was an imposter. Poor Badger, he seemed like an innocent scapegoat headed for slaughter, but he was always free to go if he wanted to, but he was certainly the sort to go with the flow and to be contented with a good meal and a soft bed. The thought also crossed my mind that if they were coming for Bob, they might be coming for me too. I know if my Bob had actually been there, I would have rushed back to him, to his side. Be that as it may, I decided the safest place for me was at Uncle Leo's.

I cut through the woods coming out about a half mile up the road from the gate where several of the Feds' vehicles were parked. I immediately recognized Trenland's pickup with the camper on the rear. He had just gotten out of his ride and was walking towards a group of uniformed goons setting up a roadblock just a little further down around a curve in the road. Trenland was wearing a black shirt and black slacks. It looked like a uniform, but I wasn't sure of that until he was saluted and he saluted back to the men he approached. Then I knew Richard was right. Trenland was a snitch. I could see enough to notice that Trenland's effeminate mannerisms had faded completely away. So that must have been an act too, the sneaky little bastard. I decided then to take a chance and made my way

undetected to Trenland's pickup. The keys were on the seat and when I saw Trenland and the others move a little farther up the road, I took the liberty of slipping in behind the wheel and hauling ass up the road towards Uncle Leo's. I drove like a bat out of hell with my eyes glued to the rear view mirror. I zipped through the little wide spot in the road called Ozone. All there is there is a tiny hamburger shack and a post office box for mailing letters alongside the road. That's where I almost ran over some poor soul who managed to step out of my way at the last possible second. I could see his surprised face receding in my mirror. He struck me as being vaguely familiar, but before I could get a good look at him, I was far up the road.

Soon, I was at the turn into Uncle Leo's compound. I noticed that all evidence of a gate had been removed, so I drove on. Suddenly, out from the bushes four heavily armed men moved out onto the drive with guns pointing right at me. Of course I had to stop. I quickly explained who I was and that I needed to see Uncle Leo immediately. They recognized me and made a quick search of the truck and camper to confirm that I was alone, as I had said. They told me to drive on and that an escort would be waiting for me to take me to Uncle Leo.

Two armed soldiers in a quad led me to the command center, and once again, Uncle Leo was waiting for me inside.

"They are busting Sam's farm, Uncle Leo!" I blurted out. "I was lucky that I was on my morning walk and I was able to get away before they nabbed me. I guess they will find out soon enough that Badger isn't Bob."

"I'm glad you made it out, Jasmine. We are just getting intel on it right now. Come on in to our communications room."

Leo asked as he walked into the room. "Give me an update."

"All we have at this moment, Colonel, is what's been posted on the 222 website this morning right before the site crashed. A message was posted saying that the Feds had everyone surrounded and that they had a list of names of the people they were there to arrest. Nothing has been reported in the mainstream media as of yet."

Leo turned to me and said. "I have a staff briefing to attend. Why don't you wait here? It will be about an hour." Leo then told one of the men there to keep a live link to the command channel and to report any news as it came to them.

I sat in the darkened room watching all of the flickering monitors on the wall. One screen showed a live view of Sam's place from what I supposed was a hidden surveillance camera. The view was from a distance, but I could see the cops were crawling all over the place. News was coming across many of the other independent 222 websites. The speculation was rampant. Bob has been captured, one said, another site was calling for mass demonstrations –take the fight to the streets, now is the time to make it known that we will not tolerate this or any other infringement of individual freedom. Not long after, Nox News, and the other networks were breaking in on their broadcast to announce that Bob of Boblovian had been taken into Federal custody along with many other leaders of the Boblovian 222 Revolution in Ozone, Arkansas. Many confusing and conflicting reports streamed in over the next hour as I waited for Uncle Leo to return.

Soon after, someone came to fetch me back to Uncle Leo. Leo and I sat alone in a side conference room.

“Any leads on Bob's whereabouts, Uncle Leo?” I asked.

“Yes, and no, Jasmine. Bob left here early this morning on foot.”

“What? What are you saying? Bob was just here? What the hell is going on, Leo?” I was about to burst upon hearing this bit of information.

“You are family, Jasmine, and a major part of the 222 movement now, so I need to come clean with you. Bob has been with us since the New York trip. We are the ones that made the switch at the airport.”

I started to say something in protest, but Leo held up his hand for me to remain silent. He continued, “We brought Bob here to try and coerce him into helping our cause. I know you don't agree with this strategy, Jasmine, but this is the course we chose to pursue. He never would cooperate with us, but he eventually gave us what we needed even though he never suspected it. He provided us with enough dialogue for us to use his voice and image for our Operation NewVision which we will broadcast to the world in his name.”

“I can't believe you would let me sit around all these last few months agonizing over Bob. That was so cruel.”

“Jasmine, I know this is hard for you to swallow, but you know better than most that Bob represents something much greater than any single one of us; nonetheless, I too respect the rights of the individual. That's why we allowed him to leave on his own volition.

I wish you would stay here with us, for your safety, and to help us, but if you feel you need to be with Bob; you need to go now. He shouldn't have made it very far. Just remember that if you leave you will be entirely on your own. You won't be able to contact us again, at least not until the Revolution has taken over."

I suddenly flashed on the face of the man I nearly ran over in Ozone. Now I knew why he seemed familiar. "I'm out of here. If you want to help me, give me some cash for the road." I had mixed feelings of being totally pissed off and relieved that Bob was nearby and that he had never intended on abandoning me. Leo offered up nearly a grand from his pocket and told me, "Good Luck."

If I had been thinking clearly, I would have asked for a different ride, but the fact that I was driving a stolen vehicle never crossed my mind. All I wanted was to find Bob. Within minutes, I was back in Ozone and there at the hamburger shack was Bob sitting at a picnic table eating a burger. I wheeled into the parking lot and rolled down the window.

"Hey stranger, do you need a ride?" I yelled out the window. "Hurry up, get in."

Bob broke into a smile of recognition. "Hello, Jasmine. You are a sight for sore eyes."

Bob jumped into the cab and I wheeled the truck around and headed the way I had come looking for the turnoff I had taken with Jebongo and the others on my first day at Ozone. I knew enough to hit the back roads before anyone spotted us. My heart pounded as I raced ahead. I couldn't think of anything to say. I tried to keep my eyes on the road, but I couldn't help taking a long look at Bob who was still beaming his beautiful smile.

"You have my notebooks. That's wonderful. I thought I would never see you or them again," he said.

I thought Bob was reaching for his stack of notebooks; instead, he put his hand on my thigh and repeated. "I thought I might not ever find you again, Jasmine."

Now my heart was pounding twice as fast. "I thought I had lost you forever too, my Dear. You look quite handsome. Do you know this is the first time I have seen you clean cut and shaven? Well, not exactly the first time, I almost ran over you earlier today. Did you see me behind the wheel?"

"I thought my mind was playing tricks on me. Just the same, I decided to wait here awhile to see if you would come back for me."

Bob's hand started to rub my thigh a little higher up and I felt everything coming alive in me that I hadn't felt since our night together in New York City.

"You had better quit that or we may have an accident." I took his hand and squeezed it hard.

I found the turn I was looking for and soon we were heading up into the mountains into the national forest. I headed up the first dirt service road we came to and pulled into the woods and out of view from the highway. I turned off the motor, threw myself across the seat, and held my lost lover in my arms. I don't remember if I dragged Bob, or Bob dragged me into the camper. During the next hour, we made up for all the time we spent apart. For a long time, I rested wrapped in Bob's arms. The world seemed so distant again, like in the fog I had walked through that morning. Then the reality of our situation slowly started to return.

"It's not safe for us to be here. We need to keep moving. Where should we go?"

"Oklahoma City." Bob said.

"Well, all right, but why Oklahoma City?"

"I am meeting my friend Mike there on the eleventh. That gives us four days to get there. Hopefully, he will get the letter I sent asking him to meet me there. You almost ran me over before I could mail it." Bob laughed softly into my ear and started nibbling on my neck again. I whispered to him. "We will have quite a bit of time to kill along the way won't we, Darling?"

It was at least another hour before we got moving from the spot; so much for my sense of urgency. I felt like I was on my honeymoon. We meandered our way through the countryside stopping when we felt like making love, staying off the roads during the day as best we could, and driving mostly after dark. I told Bob all about what went on over the summer at Sam's, and how Badger made a good effort in being his replacement, doing what he was asked to do by staying out of the limelight. Most of what I had to tell him he already knew. Uncle Leo had kept Bob well informed on what was going on in Ozone and elsewhere around the globe; although, it was news to him that the Feds had rolled onto the farm to arrest him the same morning he had left Uncle Leo's on foot. None of this seemed to concern him that much, not even the thought that they might be looking for him once they knew Badger was an

imposter. Of even less concern for Bob was Uncle Leo's plot to get information from him for Operation NewVision.

"That explains why Leo let me walk out of there. I guess I should have known better than to have been used that way." Bob shrugged and went on, "I'm not used to being used. I guess it was my turn. At least they didn't get these," he patted the bundle of notebooks on the seat next to him.

I nodded, "I had them all summer. Pretty weird stuff in there. I am sure it would have fueled Uncle Leo's fire. A lot of what I read didn't make sense at first, but once I started to get it all in the right order I could see where you are going with all this."

All Bob had to say was, "Yeah, life is always a work in progress."

For the next four days, we kept the radio off. We had made a silent agreement that we did not want to know what was happening with the Revolution or if the Feds were in hot pursuit of us. Frankly, I had enough of being a celebrity and I think Bob had too.

We rolled into the outskirts of Oklahoma City on the morning of the 11th. I was looking forward to meeting Bob's friend Michael. It would be interesting to finally meet someone who had known Bob since before all of this had started. We had spent the night before in the parking lot of a truck stop where we again made love in the camper and had taken advantage of the facilities to shower and freshen up. I was all ready for the day. We had until noon to get downtown to the Murrah building, so I decided we would stop for breakfast and have a real meal. I wheeled the pickup into one of those tourist trap restaurants you used to see while traveling west across the Great Plains. It was on Route 66, near the old downtown, and had a giant Indian teepee on top and gas pumps out front. I pulled up to the pumps to refuel.

"I need to use the restroom," Bob said, then added, "I'll run the money in for gas, get us a table, and order us some coffee too."

I handed Bob the wad of bills in my pocket. He then gathered up his notebooks and headed inside. I watched him enter the service station side of the restaurant and he gave me a wave through the window once the attendant had taken the money and reset the pump for me. My back was turned and I didn't see the two highway patrol cars roll up on me.

From behind me I heard, "Ma'am, please turn and put your hands on the hood." Fear shot through me, but I tried to remain calm. "We need your driver's license and registration."

One officer stood alongside the open driver's door as I was allowed to reach for the glove box to see what papers were in there. I moved slowly, not making any sudden moves. I glanced up and saw Bob through the window in the restaurant watching all of this go down. I shook my head slowly, turned back to the officer and said. "This isn't my vehicle and I don't have my license on me."

Another officer came up to us. He said, "This vehicle has been reported stolen. Put your hands behind your back please."

For the first time in my life, I was arrested and handcuffed. They put me in the backseat of one of the cruisers. I wanted to cry, but I knew I had to keep myself together. The officer in the front seat was calling in on the radio while his partner sat next to him typing on the laptop mounted in between them. I saw my picture flash on the computer screen while at the same time a voice coming back on the radio was telling them that I was Jasmine Hardy wanted by the FBI for unspecified charges.

The radio blared. "Hold her there for Federal backup, secure the area and confirm whether anyone is traveling with her. This is a code red, secure the area immediately."

The two other officers were busy searching the back of the camper. Already, a crowd of onlookers was gathering in front of the restaurant and around the pumps. I saw Bob off to the side of the group of spectators giving a young man some money. The fellow was on a bicycle and quickly Bob had donned the riding helmet and was rolling out on the bike. I could see that Bob was making his escape and I wanted to give him as much time as I could to get away.

I started to scream at the top of my lungs. "I am Jasmine Hardy! I am the Free Republic of Jasminica! I have diplomatic immunity! You can't hold me; I am a free person!" I rolled on my side and off the seat onto the floorboard trying to make the biggest scene that I could. Behind my back, under the seat, I felt a bundle of wires. I yanked them as hard as I could and several came free.

"Goddamn quiet her, will you? We need to lockdown the area," said the officer on the right. "She's pulled out the wires for the computer, damn it," said the other officer. "Get back, everybody get back." More people were drawing in closer. "She is Jasmine Hardy, look they are going to Taser her!"

I kept screaming, “I am the Free Republic of Jasminica! I am Jasmine Hardy!” at the top of my lungs, all the while trying to focus on the scene as it unfolded. Somehow, I managed to wiggle back onto the seat and to get a glimpse out the window. The last thing I noticed, before I was Tasered, was Bob had made it out of the parking area and was heading towards a residential neighborhood behind the restaurant. Also, I saw more police cars arriving, both marked and unmarked, and lastly; I saw a black suburban with one of Uncle Leo’s men behind the wheel. He looked right at me with a nod of recognition as he drove out the same way Bob had left. I knew immediately that Uncle Leo had us under surveillance the whole time. Before I could decide whether that was a good thing or not, the shock of the Taser hit and it was lights out for me.

Chapter X

COLONEL LEO WAPPLE (Part Four)

The call came in that Jasmine had been arrested and that Bob had managed to get away. It was September, 11th. I couldn't let the day pass without reflecting on 2001. The anger I hold against those responsible for that false flag operation is palatable. Clearly, the secret government would go to any means to advance their plans of total domination over the hearts and minds of the American people. The war machine was now being fed by the contrived hatred generated against a false enemy. After 9/11, the door was thrown wide open for perpetual war overseas and for the continued reshaping of our society into a fear driven herding of people into tighter confines, both physically, and spiritually.

My first action was to direct Richard to notify the 222 movement that Bob was not among those arrested in Ozone. The Feds knew this already, of course, but they were still keeping quiet the fact that Bob had eluded them, just as he had eluded us. I felt it was necessary to take the lead on this. Anything that we could do to disrupt their operation was to our advantage.

Our man had followed Bob on the bicycle to downtown Oklahoma City, to the Alfred Murrah Memorial, where he observed Bob meeting with another man on a park bench. It was obvious to our agent that the two were friends and that the meeting had been arranged. Our field report described Bob as laid back and relaxed while the other man seemed to be keeping a diligent watch over the comings and goings around them. It became obvious to our agent that he had been detected because the meeting with Bob and his friend ended abruptly without so much as a hand shake between them. In our agent's attempt to follow Bob, the man had purposefully dropped the stack of notebooks that Bob had given him in his path. The man bent down to retrieve them and caused our agent to fall to the ground delaying him. Our agent, in the confusion, was able to retrieve a small notebook and conceal it under his shirt. By the time the agent got to the far corner where Bob had been, Bob was nowhere to be seen. He had given him the slip. The report was

frustrating, but there was still a glimmer of success. The notebook that we recovered was titled 'Boblovian War Plans.'

That afternoon my nephew Tim arrived. I had sent a detail back to Indiana to retrieve him in the middle of the night. There was no longer any need for him to be there and skipping out on his parole had become irrelevant. I needed him by my side. The time had arrived for us to abandon our Arkansas compound and move to another secure command center we had established in New Mexico.

Before leaving Ozone, I had Richard arrange for our lawyer to start working on Jasmine's release. Hopefully, we would be able to get word to her to let her know that she had our support. I knew that sooner, or later, the Feds would be making a connection between her and me, if they hadn't already. The Feds have some quite imaginative means of coercion that I was certain would be effective on Jasmine. Even at that, there wasn't much that she could reveal that they wouldn't find out on their own soon enough.

Richard, Tim, and I arrived in Oklahoma City in the early hours. We met with our agent and he handed off the notebook in his possession. We didn't waste any time. Soon, we were heading west to our new command center.

As Tim drove, I read through Bob's war plans. "This is all great stuff. Our buddy Bob has detailed a whole operation of non-violent resistance events that can clearly be feasible. I guess Bob will be cooperating with us without him knowing it."

Richard took his turn looking over Bob's notes. "I know what we should do with this. MacFarlane," he added.

"MacFarlane." I echoed. "That's exactly what I've been thinking. Mac and the AmeriCong have been itching for action. This will keep them occupied for sure."

"So you guys haven't said what's in that. Are you going to let me in on it?" Tim had been silent while Richard and I perused the notebook.

"Sorry, Tim. This is now classified for top command eyes only."

I could hear the disappointment in Tim's voice. "Aw come on, aren't I part of top command, Colonel?"

"You are, Tim, but I'm afraid this is on a need to know basis only. You will become aware of this once it is put into action, not before then, understand?"

"Yes, Commander," I could tell Tim was still a little hurt.

“I do have a critical mission for you, Tim.” I saw him perk up a little.

“This will be placed in a sealed attaché and you will be responsible for delivering this in person to General George MacFarlane in Idaho. You are to set out as soon as we get to the new headquarters. You can handle that, can’t you?”

“Aye, aye, Sir.” Tim smiled and seemed satisfied that I still considered him a trusted asset.

Chapter XI

JASMINE HARDY (Part Five)

I regained my senses in the back of a padded security van. My advice to anyone who is about to be Tasered: do whatever you can to avoid it. My body was racked with pain from head to toe. I hoped it had been worth it and Bob had found a way to escape.

“Who are you and where are you taking me?” I demanded of the two heavily armed uniformed men in the front seats.

“Shut up. You’ll know soon enough,” barked the goon in the passenger’s seat.

There were no windows in the van. I tried to rise up to see through the security cage separating me from the driver, but being handcuffed, and shackled; I could only lie there trying not to think about what might be in store for me. It wasn’t long before the van stopped and I was led shuffling through a back door and into an interrogation room. I was left alone at first giving me time to check out my surroundings. I sat on a hard metal chair at a large wooden table. At the far end of the room, the bright lights reflected in a huge mirror covering nearly the whole wall.

A man and a woman entered the room. “Welcome to our world, Miss Hardy.” The woman said grimly. She wore a white blouse, a dark navy-blue skirt, and glasses. She looked to be in her mid-thirties. She took a seat across from me. “You are in very serious trouble, Hardy.”

“You can call me Jasminica, thank you.”

“We will call you whatever we like, Hardy.” This came from the man in the dark suit with a crew cut. “We need information. Cooperating with us is the only chance that you have of us going easy on you.”

“I’m sure I’m not the first person who has ever stolen a car.” I snapped back sarcastically.

The woman spoke, “You know what this is about, Hardy. Grand theft auto should be the least of your worries.”

“Fuck you and the horses you rode in on.” I was determined to resist. “I want my phone call; I want my rights read to me. I demand to see an attorney.”

“There’s no one here to help you, Hardy. You’d better get that through your head. Where is Bob Windowmaker? We know he was with you.”

“You don’t know shit!” I yelled. A wave of relief swept over me. Bob had made his escape.

I looked up as the six-feet, four-inch, monster of man moved towards me. He gave me a violent slap across the face. “It’s only going to get more unpleasant for you if you take this attitude, Hardy.”

“Oh, I see. You’ll beat it out of me.” I could taste blood in my mouth.

“That’s one way, but we have many more sophisticated means to get you to talk,” he said.

It was the woman’s turn to speak. I could see the good-cop, bad-cop scenario emerging. “We want to know where Bob is. We know he was with you. We have the video from the gas station showing him inside paying for fuel. We can show that to you if it will help to refresh your memory.” She gave me a mean smile.

“Maybe it’s your memory that needs refreshing, Darling. You fucks arrested him four days ago remember?” I returned a mocking smile.

The man moved towards me again, raising his hand causing me to flinch. “There’s no need for that.” The woman said then continued. “There will be plenty of time for that, and much more, if Miss Hardy doesn’t cooperate with us.” She topped my smile with her own evil grin.

“Didn’t your mom teach you not to hit girls?” I said staring at him through clenched teeth. The next blow was with his fist, right to my eye, which started to swell immediately.

I spat blood out onto the table, “You miserable little cocksucker.” I braced myself for another blow, which didn’t come.

In the sweetest voice I’m sure she could muster, the woman said, “Here’s the deal, Honey. Like it or not, you will tell us what we want to know, so you might as well make it easy on yourself. You were with Bob. Do you know where he was going? We need to know where that is.”

I sat silently for a long moment going over in my head on how I should respond. Do I remain defiant claiming to be the independent Free Republic of Jasminica risking more blows, or do I change my tactics. My right eye was swelling shut. My teeth ached where they

had bitten into my cheek at the first slap. I started to cry. "Please don't hurt me anymore, please don't hit me." I had decided to seek sympathy from them, rather than their wrath.

"Help us find Bob, Jasmine. That's all we are asking from you." The woman seemed touched, but I calculated it was just a ploy. They had their tactics and I had mine.

"He never told me where we were going. He had only asked me to take him to Oklahoma City." I realized I was telling the truth, but I wasn't sure that would satisfy them.

"Do you know why he wanted you to bring him here?" this from the man still standing over me.

I thought it over carefully before I answered. If they didn't know where he was then they probably didn't know about his friend Mike being here to meet with him. "He never said," I sobbed.

"You're sure about that?" He raised his hand again to hit me.

I turned my face away and whimpered, "Yes, yes, I'm telling you the truth." I was full of burning rage, but I didn't allow them to see that in me.

The woman reached across the table and patted my hands. "Take the cuffs off, Will. She wants to be helpful now, don't you, Jasmine?"

Will removed the handcuffs and I felt my face. It was hot and swollen. I couldn't open my right eye. "I don't know what else I can tell you," I cried with tears running down my face.

Taking my hands again into hers, she looked into my eye. "Let's back up a bit. We both know that we arrested the wrong man in Ozone. Badger has confessed the whole story of how Bob was able to use him as his replacement. We also have our account from our agent that was with you on the farm in Ozone. We have most of the missing pieces; we just need you to help us fill in the last few."

"Go ahead. What do you need to know?" I tried to sound cooperative.

"You were able to escape the roundup at the jamboree. We know that you stole the agent's truck. We know you left with Bob Windowmaker. Jasmine, tell us where he hid all summer. You were in on his plot to have Badger switch places with him, weren't you? You helped him hide out in the crowd all summer, didn't you? It was a secret that only you and Bob shared, wasn't it?"

I was eager to answer. The agent had given me a story to tell, one that I could use to cover Uncle Leo's tracks. I held back until the

woman asked me again. "You and Bob had a little deal worked out so he wouldn't be subject to arrest. Our agent informed us that the whole 222 organization anticipated the day of mass arrest. You and Bob did too, right?"

I sighed a deep breath, "Yes, you have it right." I sounded sullen. "He knew that eventually the Feds would try to take him so we had a plan to protect him. We had it all worked out where to meet when things went down."

"So when things did go down, Jasmine, the plan was for you to go to Oklahoma City? Who was he meeting here?"

I knew the agent was fishing again for information. "Bob never said he was meeting anyone here. I picked him up on the road at the post office in Ozone as we had planned. It was only then that he told me that we had until the 11th to be here. He never said anything about where we would be going next, or what his plans were. That's the truth. That's all I can tell you." I gave her as an honest and sincere look as I could.

There was a knock on the door and Will answered. I could hear a man's voice. "They're here for her now. You better hurry up." Then I saw the man's face. He looked at me. "Jesus, Will, they're not going to like that." Then he left.

Will looked at my interrogator. "She's not telling us what she knows."

The woman looked at me. "Lady, you don't have a clue of what's in store for you. You need to give us everything you know about where we can find Windowmaker. We're the FBI, with us you still have some rights remaining to you. The people waiting for you out there are the military, and CIA. I'm sure you have heard of Gitmo and the things they do there. You will be facing a military tribunal. You will be charged with treason, Jasmine. It carries the death penalty. Is protecting your friend Bob worth dying for?"

There was no way for me to know if what she said was a bluff or not. I couldn't believe that anything I had done warranted treason, but there have been enough reports the last few years of people disappearing and being tortured for lesser things.

I was very matter of fact, "I guess I'm screwed then. I've told you the truth. I have no idea where Bob is, or where he is going. I wish I did, I really do. If you don't believe me, then I guess I'll have to take my chances with whoever is out there waiting to torture me." I was

prepared to sacrifice myself to the 222 Revolution. What choice did I have anyway?

“We are wasting our time here,” said Will.

The woman rose and looked at me hard. “You poor thing,” she said. “You’ll confess to things that you don’t even know. They will make you tell them whatever it is you think they want to hear, even if you know it’s not the truth. That’s how it always goes down. I wish you luck, Hardy; you’ll need it. Cuff her, Will.”

I glared at them as they left the room. I was left alone again for maybe an hour. All I could do was pray that this wasn’t really happening to me. I broke down and cried. My head pounded and my eye throbbed with pain. I wasn’t afraid of what may be ahead; I was just so disappointed that Bob and I had been separated again. Even in my despair, I resolved myself to be being strong and determined. I may be sacrificing my life for all this, but I absolutely refused to sacrifice my dignity.

Two men entered the room. One was Trenland, the other a dark haired, casually dressed, well-tanned man who looked at me with a big Hollywood smile as he sat down across from me.

“We meet again, Jasmine,” Trenland said. “It looks like you have been having a rough time of it.”

“No thanks to you, you little weasel. We knew all along you were an agent, but since we had nothing to hide we didn’t call you out.”

The other man spoke in a smooth relaxed tone. He seemed very comfortable with himself. “You said we, we - meaning Richard Alstott, and you, of course.”

“We know Richard works for your uncle Colonel Wapple.” Trenland added.

A chill shot through my spine. Here we go, I thought. I’m in trouble now. If they were going to get me to tell about Uncle Leo, they were going to have to beat it out of me.

“I don’t know what the hell you are talking about. Richard was working for us. He was heading up our security at the jamboree. Ask him yourself. If you arrested Badger, then you probably got Richard too.”

“We made a visit to your uncle’s compound, Jasmine.” Trenland was clearly checking for my reaction. I sat unmoved and silent. “Tell us about your visit with him, the visit you and Windowmaker made before arriving at the jamboree. What did Windowmaker and you discuss with Colonel Wapple?”

“You know, you guys kill me. I don’t have a clue what you are after. There is no mystery except the mystery of why you are going so far out of your way to fuck with me.” I didn’t give a rat’s ass anymore. It was obvious they were clutching for straws.

Mr. Hollywood, that’s the name I made up for the CIA guy, leaned forward and said, “There’s no mystery, Jasmine. It’s very clear to us that your uncle was running a neo-military operation nearby in Ozone. We know that you made a visit there after leaving Indiana. We also know your brother Tim is a part of that operation. Windowmaker’s girlfriend was funneling her profits from her porn operation through Tim to Colonel Wapple. All we need to know is what Windowmaker’s involvement with the colonel was.”

“Oh I see, let me get this straight. You don’t have Uncle Leo, or Richard, in your custody. If you did you wouldn’t be asking me these questions.” My brain was in overdrive. I was able to think clearly and rapidly. “I’m going to lay it all out to you. I’m only going to tell you once. So listen, for what I am telling you is the truth, but you won’t like it and you probably won’t believe me, but this is it. Are you ready?”

“The truth would be refreshing, Miss Hardy, proceed.” Hollywood settled back in the chair keeping his eyes locked on mine.

“As you already know, I met Bob the day the tornado hit the 222 Diner. I felt sorry for him and I took him with me to my mom’s house so he could get himself together. I had a few days off because of the storm and I decided to take a little road trip to get away for a little relaxation. I invited Bob to go along. Keep in mind I didn’t have a fucking clue who he really was. I thought he was just a lost soul in the world like me. We did go to visit my uncle. I don’t believe there is any crime in that. We drove straight to Uncle Leo’s place. My uncle and Bob did not seem to get along at all. The only time the two of them spoke was over lunch.”

“Tell us about that. What did they discuss?” Trenland was up pacing the room as I went on.

“Not a hell of a lot, to be frank. None of it made much sense to me. My uncle invited us to stay there for a while, but Bob was in a hurry to leave as soon as he arrived. I was a little put out that Bob wasn’t showing any interest in being with me and that pissed me off. You know, it’s a woman thing. I was starting to like his company, but when I got up the next morning, my uncle told me he had left at

dawn, on foot, and was heading down the road to this jamboree thing. I didn't care about that. All I cared about was hooking back up. I was horny, you know, and I was quite attracted to him for some fucked up reason. This whole 222 thing meant nothing to me at the time, and I still didn't know who Bob really was, not until Uncle Leo and I saw the breaking news over breakfast."

"You say Bob Windowmaker had already left your uncle's before the colonel knew who Bob was?" Hollywood wasn't smiling any more.

"That sure as hell seemed to be the case." I slipped in my first little lie. "He acted as surprised as me, but he didn't seem concerned about it. I left in a hurry to go find Bob, not because he is this Boblovian guy, but just because it gave me something to do with my life that didn't involve living in a crummy little town slaving for pennies at a shitty little job. I wanted adventure; I guess I've found it."

"Go on," Hollywood said.

"I think you know the rest. There isn't anything else to tell you."

Trenland huffed in annoyance. "I told you that's what she would say."

"You did, agent." Hollywood nodded. "However, I think there is much she isn't telling us, but there is no rush. We will find Windowmaker. Besides, we have time to get the whole story from her - plenty of time after she takes a little trip with us. It's such a shame; you are a very attractive woman, Miss Hardy. It will be such a shame." Hollywood repeated with obvious malice.

The whole time I had been afraid to look in the mirror. I wasn't looking very pretty at all. I could barely recognize myself with the whole right side of my face red and swollen. Everything in me released at once. The wave of despair I felt was overwhelming. It all was too much for me and I cried bitter tears. I knew there wasn't anything else I could say to them that would help. I realized they didn't care if I was telling the truth. I was going to get the full treatment regardless of what information I gave them. Then I heard loud voices and shouting from outside the door.

As Trenland started for the door, it burst open. In masse, four Oklahoma state troopers accompanied by a short, stocky, long white-haired man and another black suit behind him poured into the room. The little guy in the flamboyant sky blue suit introduced himself, although I recognized him immediately.

“I’m Dallas D. Duncan. We are here with a warrant for the arrest of Miss Jasmine Hardy,” he said loudly.

The man in the black suit looked pleadingly at Hollywood. “We tried to stop them, Dexter, but there are another twenty state troopers out there.”

“Gentlemen, read the suspect her rights.” D Cubed, the name the media had given Dallas D. Duncan, had everyone’s attention. A trooper stepped forward and stated they were arresting me for grand theft auto then he read me my Miranda rights.

Dexter rose from his chair in complaint. “You can’t come barging in on our investigation. We have detained this woman for questioning.”

“Since when did the CIA have domestic enforcement powers?” As Dallas Duncan spoke, he took my picture with his cell phone. “The great state of Oklahoma has issued a warrant for Jasmine Hardy’s arrest. It supersedes any authority that you believe you possess, agent Dexter.” Speaking into his cell phone, D Cubed then said, “Yes, your Honor, we have the suspect in our custody. As you can see from the picture I just sent you, she appears to have been subjected to undue brutality. Yes Judge, within the hour.” Then he ended the call. In what seemed to be an exaggerated drawl, he went on, “You boys know your job. Get those restraints off and put yours on her. We have to meet with the judge.”

I was quickly hustled out of there and into the back of a patrol car. Dallas D. Duncan rode beside me. “My God, where did you come from? You probably saved my life back there.” I would have hugged him if I hadn’t been handcuffed.

“Plenty of time to explain it later, little lady. First we’re going to have you arraigned and your bail set.” He patted my arm. “You have some very powerful friends, my Dear. They were very worried about you.”

We were soon in a courtroom in front of a very cooperative judge. D Cubed stood in front of the bench and talked to the judge as if they were old buddies. In minutes, the judge had me rise and informed me that bail was set at five thousand dollars and that I was to remain in the country until the date of my trial set for next March, three weeks after the 222 Revolution day of February 22nd. Then the judge apologized profusely for the beating I had undergone and wished me well. I thanked him with grateful tears running down my cheek.

“Take good care of her, Dallas. I’ll see you both next March.”

Dallas Duncan gave a little bow towards the bench and said, “Thank you, your Honor.”

My head was spinning from this latest turn of events. D Cubed stood next to me as the handcuffs were removed. “We will go down and post bail together. As your attorney, I advise you to stay with me until we get you to a place of safety. My private jet is waiting to take me back to Chicago. I suggest you travel with me, Miss Hardy.”

“Why of course, Mr. Duncan. I will certainly follow my attorney’s advice to the letter.”

A nurse was waiting in Duncan’s limo. She worked on my face and then gave me an ice pack to help with the swelling. “Who sent you? Was it my friends in the 222 Confederation?”

“I’m on your uncle’s retainer, Miss. It’s my job to do these things. Your uncle has wasted no expense in order to have the best legal advice on the planet available to him. I’ve never met him and I don’t know what he does for a living, and I never ask. This is the first time he has called on me for my services, Ma’am.”

“Please call me Jasmine, Mr. Duncan. Can I call you Dallas?”

“You, my Dear, may call me what you will. Would you like a drink?” He pulled open a side panel and poured a double bourbon for himself, the nurse, and me.

The booze was like a tonic. I had two more before we got in the air aboard Dallas’ private jet. I slept all the three hours it took us to land in Chicago. A forty minute drive in another limo, and we were at Dallas’ penthouse looking out over the downtown Loop and Lake Michigan. What a day it had been. The nurse, her name was Lily, did some more treatment on my black eye and then, after a long soak in the Jacuzzi, I was given a wonderful massage before I went to bed.

I awoke more exhausted than when I went to bed. I was so stiff and achy that I had trouble sitting up. I felt what I thought was a bruise on my left side which upon examination, I saw were two big red welts where I had been Tasered. My jaw gave a loud pop when I moved it side-to-side. That was new, but at least the swelling in my right eye was gone just leaving a big nasty black bruise all around my eye socket. I took stock of my surroundings. So this is what luxury feels like, I thought to myself. I could get used to this. The maid brought me breakfast, then Nurse Lily came to check on me. She told me that I would be sore for a day or two and that my jaw

still had some swelling that would keep it sore for a little longer, but other than being electrocuted, and beaten, I was going to be fine with some more rest. I wanted to rest, but I kept thinking about Bob. If they would do this to me in order to find him, what would they do to him if they caught up to him? I dressed and went searching for D Cubed. I found him on the phone in his office.

Chapter XII

COLONEL LEO WAPPLE (Part Five)

The call that I had been anticipating came in on a secured line. It was from D Cubed. He updated me on the status concerning my niece. For the most part, it was all good news. D Cubed was worth the quarter million a year retainer we paid him. He briefed me on how he was able to call in some favors with the folks in Oklahoma to obtain Jasmine's release before the Fed's had their chance to put the screws to her hard.

"Is my niece there? Let me speak to her. Hi, Jasmine. I guess you could call Dallas a knight in shining armor. Like I said before, Jasmine, you are one of us. We take care of each other, family, or not. D Cubed says you are going to stay with him for a while. I think that's a very good idea. You need to lie low and stay out of sight for now. Honey, I don't want to dash your spirits, but no, Bob isn't with us. Frankly, we don't have a clue where he is. I was hoping you could tell us. I see, Bob didn't tell you where he was going. Yes, he met with a man in Oklahoma City, but Bob gave us the slip soon after the meeting. With a friend named Mike? No last name? I'm sure we will find out. Did he let you in on any plans he had? Do you know what his next move was going to be? You don't know. Well, we have a lot of things on our plate, and trying to find Bob isn't one of them. I know, Dear. You miss him, I'm sorry, but try to stay put and maybe he will turn up. I'm sure he will. Jasmine, I'm sorry they got physical with you. I never wanted any harm to come to you. I know I would have done the same for you too. Yes, we already know the Fed's made a visit to the compound. We cleared out completely before they arrived. I can't tell you where we are going. I know you can't go back to Indiana, I understand. Just sit tight and let us do what we need to do and I will have some instructions for you soon. No, they're not orders. I will make sure we do what's best for you. You hang in there, okay? Don't worry about anything, Jasmine. Hey, there's someone here who wants to talk to you." I handed the phone to Tim.

"Hi, Sis. Yes, it's great hearing your voice too. No we haven't seen the news; we're on the road. Mom's fine. She has been a

different woman since meeting Bob. She is going to church every Sunday and has almost stopped drinking. I know, I'm amazed too. She worries about you and she prays for your safety. Yeah, she is almost a celebrity herself, but she has decided it isn't anyone else's business. She keeps to herself, just her and Gordy. Yeah, the Colonel will fill me in. You take care of yourself, Jasmine. I love you too. Tell Mom I'm fine and it will all be okay. Bye for now." Tim handed back the phone. "Dallas wants to talk to you."

"Yeah, she is something special. Very brave girl, yes. Do take good care of her. Let her heal up and get some rest. That's very generous of you, Dallas. No, keep the retainer, you earned it. I'm glad you can see it's for a good cause. That will be fine. Yes, I'm sure there will be others who we will need to help - you can count on that. That's your choice; I'm sure they could use your help. Remember, dispose of this phone, you have others to use to get ahold of me. Use them just once; only to call me. That's right, you too. I hope we get a chance to meet in person someday. You do good work. Thanks again. Take care, bye."

I was pleased. "That was a close call for her. D Cubed is the right man for the job, that's for sure. Duncan wanted to return his retainer. When did you ever hear a lawyer say that? The old boy is totally onboard with the Revolution now. He is going after Badger and the rest of the people that the Fed's corralled, to get them released, if he can. It is all pro bono from here. Jasmine must have made quite an impression on him."

I filled Richard in on the rest of the conversation. He asked, "So she can't give us any leads on Bob? I should have put more men on that detail. I'm sorry, Sir."

"Don't be, Richard, I think Bob has served his purpose for now. He isn't really any use to us for the time being. I think he will have enough to worry about once we go forward with this." I patted the notebook. "Make several copies and get them ready for distribution as soon as we get to Shadow Command. Pick someone to send along with Bobcat." Tim always liked it when I used his code name. I wanted someone going along that could keep him from screwing things up. I hated the fact that Tim was always a little too eager to please. "And get a file worked up on Bob's friend Mike. Let's find out all we can about him. He may be a critical key to all this."

Chapter XIII

JASMINE HARDY
(Part Six)

I watched D Cubed pull the Sims card from the cell phone, and using a pair of needle nosed pliers from his desk, break it into small pieces. He took the rest of the phone and crushed it under the leg of a heavy chair. It all went into a wastebasket.

“Your Uncle Leo is quite the mysterious character, isn’t he?”

“Let’s just say he is a very careful man. He has a lot on the line. I wish he had more information on Bob. I’m really worried. I don’t think Bob knows he is in danger. I wish there was a way to get a message out to him.”

“After what they did to you, Jasmine, I believe you are still in peril. I think it is best that we have some security assigned to you. I don’t think you should do anything that may make you available for them to pick you up again. It’s obvious these people are not playing by the rules. I don’t think they were through with you.”

“You are probably right, Dallas. It’s pretty frightening. I heard you talking to Uncle Leo, so you are going to seek the release of my friends from Ozone? What are they being charged with? Do you know if they have been through what I went through?”

“I’ve got some people working on it already. I’ll be flying out this afternoon to go see what I can accomplish in getting them out. I want you to stay here and get some rest. Let me do what I do and we will figure out a plan when I return.” D Cubed came around the desk, took my hand, and gallantly kissed it. “My Dear Lady, I am at the service of the Revolution, and at your service, too. Please accept my hospitality while I’m away.”

For the next four days, I remained in Dallas’ penthouse glued to the computer and the television trying to find any news on Bob and my friends. For two days, the mainstream media ignored the fact that Bob wasn’t one of those arrested in Ozone, even though the 222 sites all gave a description of Badger’s arrest, and stated that Bob had not been in Ozone when the Feds made their raid. None of the news had any accurate information as to what charges were being levied against those in custody, or what laws, if any, had been broken. All the government would reveal was that several people

were being held in Arkansas for questioning. It was very obvious that the media had been gagged. The best information came from the local Little Rock newspapers. They reported that several thousand people were gathering outside the federal courthouse in Little Rock, in an around-the-clock vigil, in support of my friends. It was peaceful so far, but for each hour that passed, several more hundred people took up position with the others in the still silent protest. On the third day, D Cubed made an appearance before the supporters assuring them that everything was being done to secure the release of Badger, Jebongo, Rogerdonia, and Smittytania. By this time, Shawn Anderson was on the scene, and he, at least, was trying to report the facts. He was the first to report, for the mainstream media, that Bob Windowmaker was not one of those arrested. He also said that he had been allowed to see the detainees, as he called them, but had not been allowed to speak with any of them. One story ran nearly continuously though, that was about me, and my arrest in Oklahoma City. You would have thought I had robbed a bank, or something worse. A big deal was made that Dallas D. Duncan had taken my case, and that he was also in Little Rock, working for the 222 Revolution. Each time the news piece ran, I felt my heart sink when they said –and once again, the whereabouts of Bob Windowmaker, the leader of the Boblovian Revolution, are unknown.

On the fourth day, the news broke. D Cubed had successfully secured the release of the Little Rock Four, as they were being called. All charges had been dropped; although, no one ever said what those charges were. They all made an appearance at a live press conference on the steps of the Little Rock Federal Courthouse along with D Cubed.

Dallas spoke to the throng of nearly twenty thousand. “These are some of the darkest days of our nation. When the voice of the people and the rights of the people are no longer cherished and respected by those who have been entrusted to defend them, we are left with no other choice but to remove them from their ivory towers. We see here before us today the power of a common voice of the people. These four souls, who stand here with me, were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice of their freedoms. We stand with them today as individual free and sovereign people in support of the ideals of the 222 Revolution; the Boblovian Revolution. I am proud to be here

today to lend my support to the cause of the people in our fight against tyranny and oppression.”

Rogerdonia was next. “We are eternally grateful for all those of you that have bravely gathered here today. Each, and every one of you, face the same risk that confronted us here. No longer will we tolerate injustice, no longer will we sit idle allowing our right to be fully expressive individuals on this wonderful planet of ours denied with hostility. We stand together as independent free sovereign individuals, collectively ringing in a new destiny for mankind. The fact that this protest has remained completely peaceful is a testimony to the Boblovian Revolution. Despite the agitation directed towards this fine gathering by those in uniform who are heavily armed - and heavily armored - you have found that by actively remaining passive, but no less determined, we can make the powerful powerless. Finally, my thanks go out to Dallas D. Duncan, who has so wonderfully illuminated the injustice that was ready to befall upon us.” Roger gave Dallas a hug then Taylor stepped to the microphone.

“My heartfelt thanks to all of you, and those around the world, who have given us their unwavering support. To my family, I am fine and I look forward to being back with you soon. Our cause will go on, and will get stronger, by the hour. We are at the final tipping point. The balance of power is now in each and every one of us’ hands. We gladly take up the banner of individual self-governance. Mr. President, make plans to step aside next February 22nd. We invite you to relinquish the reins of power in exchange for a place beside us, as your own free individual republic. Come join us, you, and all the others in Washington, and all the capitals of all the nations around the world. Join in with us, not against us, and add your voice to the collective Confederation of free and sovereign individual republics. God bless all of you.” Taylor pumped both fist in the air and gave D Cubed and Roger a hug.

Badger stepped forward. Looking at D Cubed, he said simply, “Thanks, Man. That was a close shave.” Badger looked out onto the crowd, “Wow! You guys are great! Hey, Bob, wherever you are, watch your step. Those guys in there mean business. I don’t know what they woulda done if they had gotten their hands on you, but it sure as hell scared the crap outta me. I ain’t gotta a whole lot else to say.” Then he shouted, “Long live Bob of Boblovia!”

A chant of 222 rose in unison from the crowd. Then Jebongo, still in his homemade tied-dyed t-shirt, took the final turn at the podium. He motioned for the crowd to quiet.

"I look out there and I see thousands of individual free and sovereign republics, each one of you exercising your personal initiative in being here. Those folks, in this building behind me, thought that they had arrested the leader of the 222 Revolution. Fortunately, Bob was not one of those arrested. There is no doubt they consider Bob to be our leader. Knowing Bob as I have, I know he does not consider himself a leader any more than each, and every one of us, leads ourselves. It soon became evident to them," Jebongo gestured to the courthouse, "after hours of questioning, that there is no organization in support of the 222 Revolution. As frustrating as it was to them, they finally awoke to the fact that we sometimes choose to come together collectively, around a common cause or goal, with each one of us as their own leader. Our mere presence here together is an implied contract to collectively support whatever we wish, however we want, by any method we choose. The fact that collectively, we have chosen to support non-violent passive means in protest, is a testament to the vision we share. Bob Windowmaker, you said it best in your Boblovian Address – 'We dream of a world shaped by our common sharing of the idea that we each need to take care of ourselves, and the only way to do that is by taking care of each other.' Thanks for being here to help take care of me, and my brothers. I promise that the Free Republic of Jebongo will do everything in its power to do the same for you." All five men, with D Cubed in the middle, joined hands high above their heads while the crowd cheered.

I was thrilled with the news. My friends looked none-the-worse for the wear. I thought about how different it would have been for me if I had been arrested along with them. Then I would have been part of the Little Rock Five, but I wouldn't have traded anything for the four wonderful days Bob and I had together. Badger had it right, and it made me worry more. Bob was in great danger. If they somehow managed to pick him up without anyone else knowing about it, then he could disappear forever. Before I could work myself into a complete ball of misery, the phone rang. It was D Cubed.

"Hello, my Dear. I'm sure you saw it all on TV."

"I had no doubts whatsoever that you couldn't get the job accomplished, Dallas. Tell all of them Jasminica sends her greetings," I laughed.

"You can tell them yourself, Jasmine, in about three hours. I'm bringing them back with me. They all want to see you too, and we all need to come together to compare stories. We'll see you this evening, Jasmine. Bye."

That gave me a little time to prepare myself. I went to the mirror and saw how bad my face looked. Even with dark sunglasses, the bruise on my jaw stood out. I tried some base cream makeup and worked to conceal my beating, but after messing with it for an hour, I gave up and decided I shouldn't be embarrassed or ashamed. These were my battle marks given to me by my enemy for standing up for myself. My attitude changed at that moment. I would do whatever I could for Bob, but he was his own self-governing entity and there was not much I could do for him now; however, there still was plenty of work ahead for me, and the Founding Fathers.

To my surprise, not only did D Cubed and the Little Rock Four roll in; they had brought along Samania and Ivania who had been at Little Rock in support of the others. I asked Sam who was minding the farm and he told me that his buddy Roscoe Fischer had hanged up his badge in support of the cause and he was staying at the farm keeping an eye on things. Over a few celebratory drinks, we caught each other up on the news.

Rogerdonia described the morning of the raid. "The Feds poured out of the helicopters and quickly secured a corridor around the farmhouse, the yurt, and the 222 trailer. Perhaps fifty people were held until the little weasel Trenland showed up. He pointed out the people that they wanted to detain and the rest were set free. We were kept at gunpoint while they searched everyone being forced to leave Sam's farm. That took several hours. We kept wondering who the hell this guy was," Roger grinned at me and pointed to Badger. "We knew as soon as we saw poor old Badger that you and Bob must have given the Feds the slip. We figured Richard had hustled you guys away from there."

I said, "I don't think Richard was on the grounds that morning. His man Ed was at the yurt on the morning shift. I was lucky enough to be out on my morning hike in the woods when I saw it all go down. I guess I should come clean now. Bob never made the trip back from New York City. Isn't that right, Badger?" I wasn't sure

what information Badger had revealed about Bob being abducted by Leo's men.

"I told them about Bob making the switch with me, Jasmine," Badger kept that stupid grin of his plastered across his face as he snuck a wink at me.

Seeing that it wasn't necessary to reveal everything about Uncle Leo and his operation, I let the ruse go on. "I have no clue where Bob was all summer, but when I stole Trenland's camper, I ran into Bob, of all people, eating a hamburger at the burger shack in Ozone. Bob asked me to take him to Oklahoma City to meet a friend there on the 11th. He never told me where he had been, or why he happened to be in Ozone on the day of the bust. I guess you all know about my arrest and that Bob managed to avoid capture. That's when it all got ugly. That FBI had the first go-around with me. I was interrogated by a woman, and a man, who took great pleasure in beating on me. They were determined to find out what I knew about Bob's whereabouts and where he was going. I only had the truth to go on. Bob never told me what he had planned after Oklahoma City, and the last time I saw him, before I was Tasered into oblivion, was Bob pedaling his ass off on a bicycle, going away from the scene. After the FBI finished with me, I was handed over to the CIA - an agent named Dexter, along with that little cocksucker Trenland. They threatened me with treason and the death penalty, and all that bullshit. That's when D Cubed interceded on my behalf. Bless him." I smiled at Dallas and he raised his glass to me in acknowledgement. "Did they threaten you guys too?" I asked.

"They slapped me around a little," Badger said, "But I couldn't keep from laughing. That really pissed them off - that and the fact they soon figured out I wasn't Bob. They thought I was some sort of idiot, imagine that!" Badger giggled and helped himself to some more bourbon.

The others said that no one had gotten physical with them, but they all were certainly threatened, in one form, or another.

Jebongo spoke. "There is no doubt that it was Bob that they were after. They came in to cut the head off the 222 Revolution and they still think that Bob is some big mastermind orchestrating everything through us. We might have convinced them otherwise, at least a few of them, but Trenland, and his buddy Dexter, were obviously taking a lot of heat from their superiors for screwing up the whole

operation. Dexter was a trip. He was like someone out of a James Bond movie.”

“Yeah, I had a name for him, Mr. Hollywood.”

“That’s good. I can see that.” Jebongo continued. “Damn, Jasmine those bastards got one coming to them for what they did to you.”

“I’ll be fine. It could have been a lot worse. So what happened to you guys at Ozone?” This I directed to Samania and Ivania.

Sam responded. “Pretty much the same. They threatened to take away my farm and all my property if I didn’t cooperate. Roscoe was there, but he wasn’t arrested. I think he went the extra mile in making sure that that didn’t happen. After your arrest in Oklahoma City, we were set free. They kept a handful of agents around the place watching for anyone coming or going, so we just sat tight and watched the news. Then Duncan here sent a limo right up to the front gate and here we are now.”

Taylor Smith stood up at the end of the table. Raising his glass, he said, “I purpose a toast. To Dallas D. Duncan, hero to the 222 Revolution!” We all threw back our drinks.

Jebongo poured us all another round then addressed us, “To Bob Windowmaker and the Founding Fathers.” A round of here-here followed then Jebongo soberly added, “Now let’s get down to business.”

We talked through most of the night discussing all of our options. Even Badger had his contribution. He felt like I did. The first and most important thing was to get a warning out to Bob, wherever he was, that he needed to be on his guard and to avoid getting captured. For the time being, we agreed to continue with doing whatever we could in advancing the Revolution. Rogerdonia and Smittytania would pump up the message on the internet. I suggested that we get in touch with Bob’s old girlfriend Natascha to see if she had any information on Bob. Badger and Jebongo agreed to follow up on that. Samania, and Ivania would return to Ozone to keep things together there and I said I would remain in Chicago with Dallas and keep my brain working on overtime trying to put together an action plan for the movement as the calendar wound down to February 22nd. I knew what the others didn’t know - the fact that Uncle Leo and his organization were preparing to wage a rebellion on behalf of the 222 Revolution. I also knew that Dallas was now my only contact with Uncle Leo. I still held out hope that Uncle Leo would

find it within himself to track down Bob and do what he could to help him, if for no other reason than he knew that is what I wanted and that Bob was special to me.

The last business of the day was getting a warning out to Bob over the internet. Against the advice of my attorney, I let Rogerdonia video tape me warning Bob that he was in eminent danger. D Cubed was concerned that I would draw too much attention to myself, and by going online, I would be singled out by the Feds as the leader of the 222 Revolution. My concern was whether I could keep myself together enough in order to get the message out without getting too emotional. It wasn't easy for me, but I owed Bob at least that much.

Over the weeks and months that ensued, I remained pretty much a bystander to the Revolution. Eventually, Badger and Jebongo were able to meet up with Natascha. She said she hadn't heard a word from Bob since he left on his walk last spring. Jebongo headed back to Arkansas, but evidently, Natascha took a real liking to Badger and had asked him to stay with her. That was better news for me than if Bob had hooked back up with her.

By the end of October, so many things were afoot in the world that it was hard to tell whether peoples' actions were being driven by the 222 Revolution, or by just the simple fact that enough people had finally had enough of the old ways, and were desperate to hang on to any hope for something better. The major world media outlets had very little to say about the Boblovian Revolution. It was evident that a news blackout was underway. The lies coming from the government, via the press, reached staggering proportions. If you believed what was being reported, we were on the verge of a full economic recovery. The story on the streets though, gave the real picture.

The stock market crashed on the last day of October adding to the increasing woes brought about by an ever-deepening economic crisis. Unemployment reached record highs with every monthly report. Home foreclosures became epidemic, and more and more people were being forced out onto the streets. Food shortages and hyperinflation followed. A gallon of gasoline neared eight dollars in some places, but people didn't have jobs to drive to anyway. Throughout the world, governments were finding that they didn't have the means to cope with this worldwide crisis. Everywhere people were taking it to the streets in protest, however, almost never

violently. It seemed as if the world had pinned its hopes on what was to unfold on February 22nd. The new dream of a peaceful resolution to all the mounting problems was giving everyone enough hope to hold on to.

Increasingly, stories came in of one person helping another, of one community coming together to help another cope the best they could while rejecting any of the government's feeble attempts to exert their control via the federal aid they offered. People were willing to go it alone and with the help of their fellow citizens. All the while, in the back of my mind, I could never forget that Bob was out there somewhere in danger, if not already in custody.

I was able to see much of this myself first hand on the streets in Chicago. Dallas had bought me a wig and I would dress down and roam the streets checking out the mood of the people I would meet. In Jackson Park, a massive tent city had arisen. Every day, the police would try to move in rounding up whole families and relocating them to the western suburbs. The relocation camps were nothing less than massive holding pens, surrounded with fences topped with razor wire. The media never reported on the government camps, but everyone knew they existed and that, once you were placed there, you were not allowed to leave. Nonetheless, the daily roundup was met with passive resistance forcing the police to physically pick up people and remove them. For each person taken away, two others took their place. How long would it remain peaceful, was anyone's guess. I knew the same scene was playing out all over the country, but none of it was being reported. It was a slowly evolving nightmare.

Even within a passive revolt, there were means to deter the authoritarian grip of the powers to be. Huge numbers of people took to surrounding many of the precincts that were conducting the relocation operation, hindering the police to such an extent that they couldn't get to or leave the precincts to conduct their roundups. Across the board, citizens were finding new ways to avoid participating within the old system. Enrollment in the public schools declined dramatically for the fall term. Collective home schools were becoming the norm even though the government went to great lengths to root them out. Folks faced with loss of custody of their children bravely united forcing the government to back down. It wasn't anarchy; it was more as if every person was deciding for themselves which laws they would choose to obey. All through this,

the 222 Revolution became the focal point for resistance. Soon, law enforcement became ineffective in singling out specific individuals. A huge wave of litigation hit the courts. A massive number of people, following the recommendation of the 222 Movement, had declared their individual sovereignty and were using the same laws and rules afforded to the multi-national corporations to swamp the courts. If a corporation was an individual, then why shouldn't the same laws apply to an actual single individual? The courts were jammed, no legislation was passing; everywhere you turned there was new evidence of the complete shutdown of the government looming on the horizon. It was beautiful. Everything was slowly coming to a showdown, but again, people remained patient in their despair awaiting the 22nd of February. Everyone I talked with confirmed their participation in a total worldwide strike for next February. An informal consensus had emerged that come 222, we all were going to stop, sit and look around us and use that time to collectively dream a new and powerful dream. I could see it in their eyes, hear it in their voices, a new energy was emerging, a driving force that would finally get everyone on the same page. Change was coming. Revolution was in the air.

How long would it be before Uncle Leo and the underground showed their hand? On the first of November, I couldn't take it anymore. I persuaded Dallas to let me use one of Uncle Leo's cell phones to contact Uncle Leo.

Chapter XIV

BOB WINDOWMAKER

It was no more than five minutes after leaving Mike sitting on that bench in front of the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City, that I first met Asia; the most amazingly beautiful young woman I had ever come across. For the first time, in a long time, I wished I was twenty again. I fell in love with her the moment I saw her.

My intention after leaving Mike was to walk the few blocks to Interstate 40 and thumb my way west. Mike had spotted a man lurking nearby who had evidently tailed me from the restaurant where Jasmine had been arrested.

Our meeting was cut short. "You need to get out of here now!" Mike said, "I'll try to meet up with you, in February, at the cave. I'll take care of this guy."

I only made it around the first corner when I heard a young girl shout. "Bob! Get back here! Don't you run away from me!"

Hearing my name, I stopped. I looked down quickly enough to see a blur of a pup, dragging its leash, racing across my path. I reacted by quickly stepping on the trailing chain and bringing the creature to a halt. I bent to pick up the leash and saw that I had captured a small, silver-gray pit bull, weighing no more than twenty pounds I estimated by his tugging against my grip.

"Hold on there, Bob," I said getting ahold of his collar. "Where do you think you're going?"

"Bob, you're being a bad dog," The young lady, with the most striking deep green eyes, picked up the pup and held him close to her breast. Surprisingly, the puppy had matching green eyes too; however, it could have just been the light reflecting off the green bandana around his neck that matched the one she wore on her head. They made a remarkable pair.

"His name is Bob? So is mine." I said.

"This is Bob, Bob Barker, and I am Asia. Thank you for corralling this little rascal. He is a hand full," she replied while struggling to offer a handshake and keeping hold of Bob.

"Bob has never ridden in a taxi before. I think it kind of freaks him out."

This brought my attention to the taxi waiting at the curb.

"Where are you headed?" I asked.

"We're going to pick up my car. It broke down on the interstate yesterday and we got a ride back into town and spent the night at a hotel."

"Interesting, I was on my way to I-40 westbound to try and hitch a ride."

"You don't look like a hitchhiker; in fact, you look a lot like my dad."

Asia gave me a good looking over. "I guess it's my turn to do a good deed," she went on, "Do you want to share the taxi with me?"

"That would be fantastic." I replied.

As the taxi driver and I helped to get Asia's bags into the trunk, I could not help being a little amused to see the driver wearing a t-shirt that read F.R. Gomezania. I settled into the back seat alongside Asia. Bob immediately made himself comfortable in my lap.

"He really likes you. He's usually not too warm to strangers."

"We aren't really strangers are we, Bob? After all, we have already been introduced. Bob Barker, that's a clever name. Did you name him that?"

"It was either that or Bob Poophead." Asia affectionately rubbed Bob's head. "Are you really hitchhiking, or are you just pulling my leg?"

"No, I am not kidding, that's the way I have been getting around for a while. It's really a great way to meet people. Everyone has such interesting stories these days."

"What's your story, Bob?" Her gaze tore right through me.

"There's not much to tell really. I'm heading to New Mexico to meet some friends." I did not want to say too much. I thought the truth might be too unbelievable at this point.

"New Mexico? That's where Bob and I are headed, north of Albuquerque. You are welcome to ride along with us, if you'd like."

"I would like nothing better." I had come to expect things like this, stuff coming at me from out of the blue.

Shortly, we made it to a repair shop west of Oklahoma City. After a few minutes of taking care of business, we were on our way in a vintage Volvo station wagon covered in an assortment of bumper stickers, Grateful Dead, and Phish decals.

"This car looks like it's seen a lot of the road." I observed the Get U.S. Out of Vietnam sticker on the dashboard covered over by the

Ronald RayGun sticker which was under the “Y2K Who the Fuck Cares???” label, that was now partially concealed by a bigger sticker that just read “222.”

“This was my Dad’s car. It’s been in the family since he was in college.”

“I see you have a 222 sticker there. What does that stand for?” I started to enjoy hearing what other people had to say about 222.

“My brother put that there. He is all ate up with this 222 thing. My friends back home are all excited about this 222 Revolution stuff too, but I really haven’t paid much attention to the news. We grew up without television, and frankly, I don’t care to know what is happening in the world. My world is what is here today right in front of me; beyond that, everything else is just someone else’s dream. That’s what my dad taught me.”

“Your father sounds like a very interesting person. I would like to meet him.”

Asia turned her attention from the road and placed her hand on my arm.

“My daddy passed away just over a year ago.” The sadness in her voice made my heart ache.

“I am sorry, Asia. I’m sure it is a great loss for you.”

“Dad was a man way ahead of his time and now my brother Chandler and I have to continue what Dad started,” she went on, “He left this world on his own terms, awake and very lucid even though his body was weak and frail. At the end, his mind was sharper than ever. Chandler and I had his vision passed along to us and we plan to keep building on it. That’s why Bob and I are headed back to New Mexico to be with Chandler and the family. Where in New Mexico are you going?” she inquired.

“I’m looking up a friend of a friend who lives south of Santa Fe, in the mountains.”

“Really? That has to be close to our compound. What’s your friend’s ...?”

I interrupted before she could complete her question. “Tell me about your father’s vision. What kind of work was he in? What was he like?”

Asia adjusted herself in the seat, sitting up more erect. A big smile broke across her face.

“Dad was a sort of renaissance man. He was very smart and well-read. He wrote poetry and amazing short stories that he would read

to us when we were little. He was also very good with his hands. He kept this car running for over 300,000 miles and built the house we grew up in, in Wisconsin. A long time ago, he purchased some land in New Mexico. Mom never knew about it and Dad never mentioned it until about three years ago. Several years before that, he had started to take a few weeks off every summer from his job at the post office to travel west. At first, Mom was okay with him going on vacations alone, but Dad was always so mysterious about what his trips entailed that he and Mom would go around about it. He would never tell us exactly what he was up to on those trips. I remember he would come back burnt-red and dog-tired. Chandler and I imagined he was doing something crazy, like prospecting for gold or something, and didn't want to tell us about it. This went on for quite a few years, and my mom gave up trying to pry out of him what was behind the mystery. Then, three years ago, around Easter time, Dad gathered all of us together and said, 'This year we are all going to New Mexico for a vacation.' As soon as school was out, my parents, along with my brother and I, packed ourselves into the car and headed west. I remember not being all that excited about cramming into a small SUV for a long road trip. I had planned on being with my friends over the summer, but we could all see how excited Dad was and we definitely wanted to see what the heck he had been doing in New Mexico all those summers."

Bob Barker took this moment to stretch and sit up between the two of us in the front seat. He had been taking a little snooze, and now, after a big yawn, climbed onto Asia's lap and began licking her face.

"Well, hello, Bob. You have a nice nap?" Asia was leaning her head from one side to the other trying to avoid Bob's affectionate tongue. "I bet you need to potty, don't you?"

I don't know if it was by accident, or that Asia was already familiar with this area of Oklahoma, but she drove off at the next exit which was just an off ramp for an isolated highway. There were no buildings, or information signs, for that matter, just a two-lane blacktop heading north over low rolling hills lined in the far distance with giant wind turbines for almost as far as the eye could see. After about a mile or two, just before a dry creek bed, she turned off the road onto a dirt lane and pulled up to a grove of shady trees that protected the only green patch of grass that I had seen for many miles. We stepped out into the warm late summer sun.

"This is a nice spot, Asia. Do you come here often?" I joked.

Asia gave me a little smirk and flashed those gorgeous green eyes at me.

"I need a break, don't you?" she replied.

Bob had already taken care of his business and was out exploring along the creek bank. Asia took a blanket from the back seat and spread it upon the grass.

"I have some water and a couple of Cliff bars in here," she said as she rooted through her backpack. "Chocolate, cranberry, or lemon?" she offered. We sat quietly for a while enjoying the peace.

"Like I said earlier, Dad was a man way ahead of his time. He would talk with us about what he thought the future held for this country of ours and how we should be working to prepare for what lie ahead. I was too young to really understand exactly what it was that he was trying to get across to us, and I always thought he would be here to make sure that whatever it was that would come about, he would be around to make sure we all were safe."

As she talked, she picked a small bouquet of white and yellow daisies.

"My father had a vision for the future. He believed it was everyone's personal responsibility to become informed and to accurately gauge current events, so as not to be left in a position where one would be dependent on others, mainly the state, to provide for the basics. I remember listening to Dad and his friends as they worked on this old Volvo in the garage, talking about how the time was coming near when we all would have to pull together and pool our resources to be able to get by. He talked about how our modern society had evolved to where we all shared a common illusion created through television that made everyone feel connected and a part of a greater whole, when in fact, we were being compartmentalized, sitting alone in front of the boob tube mesmerized by the message being pounded into our brains. He used to always say, 'It takes vision, not television.' He pointed out how the modern American family unit was divided out with grandparents in nursing homes and children booted from the nest as quickly as they became of adult age. 'We ride around in our compartmentalized cars, not even having to get out of them to get our food.' He would always point out in amazement the people who would go through a drive-through window than sit in their cars in the parking lot to eat alone. Divide and conquer he would say. 'They divide us out from

amongst our own families, taking our kids away from us and forcing them into public schools and away from the culture of the family unit.' Dad's ideas always revolved around creating a future where everyone could be together to celebrate life in a way that allowed all of us to be available and responsible for each other. Little did we know how serious he was about all this until we all made that first trip to New Mexico."

As she talked, Asia deftly braided the daisies into a chain and made two loops with them. She placed one around her dark brown hair and the other went around Bob Barker's neck.

"Dad was always taking what he called 'short cuts,' which annoyed Mom to no end. But, since none of us had a clue to where we were actually going, every time Dad turned up a deserted back highway, or cut along some long dusty stretch that went on for miles, we felt that we must be getting close to our destination. In fact, it took us the better part of three days to get there."

Bob, the dog, came back to us and sprawled out on the blanket taking up more than his fair share of real estate. He rested his head on Asia's leg and she softly stroked his brow while she continued with her story.

"Finally, as the sun was casting long shadows on the peaks that we had been driving through for the last hour, Dad turned up a road that looked to be nothing more than a wagon path that was marked by an old weathered sign that read Stony Road, which as it turned out, was a very descriptive name for it. We bounced along this poor excuse for a road for a couple of miles that ran right up to the steep slopes of the peaks ahead of us. Mom had just about enough of this. I remember she said, 'This better not be another short cut.' Dad laughed and said, 'We're here.' He jumped out and opened a gate then climbed back in. 'This is our driveway to our one hundred and forty acres of desert paradise.' Dad was really beside himself with excitement. Paradise! It looks like just a bunch of rocks and dirt to me.' Mom complained. As far as we could see were scrubby pinion pines amongst some juniper trees with an occasional cedar mixed in, with the ever present prickly pear cacti growing everywhere between.

'Have I got a surprise for you.' Dad was bursting with energy, but the rest of us were too worn out from our journey to feel anything more than relief that we had gotten to wherever we were going, wherever the hell this was."

I watched the light soften around us as the late afternoon was drawing nigh. The sunlight, dappled by the locust trees over us, made the daisies in Asia's hair look iridescent.

"We reached the end of the drive, and Dad told us we had to get out here and we would have to walk a little ways. Immediately, I noticed the difference in the air. We were much higher and the air felt cool and thin. The fragrance of the pines and of the desert filled us and seemed to reinvigorate us. You could feel the ground giving back to the sky the heat of the day, while off the mountains behind us a cool steady breeze began to pick up. About a hundred yards along a sandy path we came to the edge of a huge arroyo that started on our left, and then, opened out in front of us into a small canyon that descended to the right and eventually opened onto a vast flat plain that receded into the distance.

'That goes all the way to the Rio Grande River. Those are the southern reaches of the Rocky Mountains over there and the Jemez Mountains beyond the Cerrillos Hills.' He indicated to each with a sweep of his outstretched arms. 'And this,' gesturing to the canyon, is our new home. What do think?" He asked proudly.

"We were all a little confused. New home? Chandler was the first to see it. 'Look there!' Our eyes followed his and for the first time, on the opposite wall of the canyon, we saw what Dad had been doing the last several years. There was our new home."

Asia rose to her feet and started to do some simple yoga stretches. She reached both arms high above as if reaching for the sky. "Have you ever seen pictures of the Anasazi Ruins at Mesa Verde?" she asked me.

"I've been there." I replied.

"Well, there before us on the cliff face, across from where we stood, was a collection of adobe dwellings that looked just like that. They blended in so naturally that, at first glance, they were almost invisible. Dad said to think of this as an adobe condo. 'There is room for all of us' he said. It really looked like something out of the ancient past. With the exception of the glass windowpanes, one could imagine Native Americans living there from long ago. It was the coolest thing.

'Come on. Follow me,' he said. Dad led the way. We backtracked a little and wound around to the other side of the cut and started down some wide steps carved into the sandstone cliff face. They were made so that, unless you knew exactly where they were, you

would not have found them for fear of getting too close to the edge of the drop. The trail led us down to the adobe condo. One room led to another. Sometimes you would have to climb up a wooden ladder or down a twisting stairway. Some rooms were set back into the rock face, and others seemed to hang out over the canyon floor. Several had flat roofs sheltered by short walls, and it all seemed to go on forever. Dad let us soak it all in for a few moments and then said, 'Check this out!' He opened a door into a foyer that had a beautiful atrium with a stunning mosaic floor that surrounded an open pool of water accented by an amazing waterfall that reflected the light onto the walls.

'This leads into the bathhouse and laundry - real running water and toilets that flush.' It was obvious that he was delighted with himself. We all were a bit flabbergasted to say the least."

"Wow, how exciting it must have been for you to see this for the first time." I said.

"I'm still awed by how Dad was able to bring his dream alive. We should probably get back on the road. Do you mind driving awhile?" Asia asked.

I got the car underway. "Please tell me more about this place. Did your dad have a name for his creation?" I pulled up to where we had turned off the highway.

"Go left." Asia said.

"But the interstate is back the other way." I said pointing to our right.

"I know a short cut." Asia said with a smile.

I drove on not having any idea of which way to go, but at each tee in the road, Asia would tell me which way to turn. We seemed to be traveling west north-west paralleling the Canadian River, which we just crossed for the second time today.

I started to muse aloud, "The Canadian River flows all the way from the Sangre de Cristo mountains near the Colorado, New Mexico border. It runs over nine hundred miles all the way to the Arkansas River. No one knows for sure why it is named the Canadian. Some say it is because the early fur trappers thought it ran from the north up in Canada. I think it is a beautiful river, even though out there on those sandbars, you may just as likely find yourself stuck to your waist in quicksand as to be walking on solid ground, not to mention the nice assortment of venomous snakes and other creepy crawlies to contend with." I went on, "Once it crosses

into the Texas Panhandle, it starts its cut into the sandstone as the land rises up to the mountains farther west. By the time it meets up with the Cimarron River in New Mexico, it is a raging white-water torrent during the rainy season.”

“Texas, ugh. Nothing good comes out of Texas. That’s why we’re taking this shortcut. It will take us up and around the panhandle. Dad always told me to avoid Texas, if possible. He said the whole state is the fascist poster child for the New World Order.”

I remembered one of the bumper stickers on the back of her car that said ‘Don’t mess with Texas or we will send you another one of our village idiots.’

“You know a lot about this river. Are you some kind of geography whiz?” Asia asked.

I know more than I spoke about. In my mind, I had the Canadian pretty well mapped out. When I started my walkabout, God that seemed so long ago, my plan was to follow the Canadian on foot across Oklahoma barring any adventures with the quicksand.

“No, rivers just interest me, I guess. I remember reading about the Canadian once. You didn’t tell me what name your dad gave to the place he built.”

“Grayson Canyon, Pueblo to the Stars, his name was Grayson Clayton Connell. Dad even had a small observatory on top of a tower that sat above the top of the canyon enough to see the entire horizon. The first time I saw the stars from there, it blew me away. The Milky Way looked like a bright cloud that touched the ground at both ends. I have slept in the observatory before when there was a new moon and watched the grand show. Dad knew all of the constellations and most of the major stars, but I would make up new names for them. He liked that.”

“I’m excited about seeing it. Did he build all this himself?” I asked.

“No, Dad had a couple of friends that he had stayed in touch with since his college days, and they both worked with Dad on the project, but it was Dad’s dream and his design that was the force behind it. Rick and his wife live there now, and they were the caretakers when Dad was back in Wisconsin. Rick is really cool, and he grows some kick ass smoke too. Do you get high?”

“Not anymore, I mean I haven’t for a long time. To me life is pretty much an acid trip on its own without having to take the acid.” I said laughing. “Besides, the last time I checked it was still illegal,

isn't it?"

As we drove west, the sun dropped for the last time behind a line of distant thunderheads giving them a bright orange outline that we quietly appreciated together.

"So your dad's plan was to build a dream home in the desert and retire there?"

"Yeah, but that was only a small part of it. He really had a greater plan than that. He built what he thought was a model home; if you will, a model for the way we are supposed to live on this earth. The whole place was totally off grid. He had some solar panels for electricity and all the water he caught from the sky. His design recycled everything. Dad said the technology was readily available to let nearly everyone be self-sufficient. To him it was important to know where his food and water came from and to be able to provide it for himself. Chandler can tell you all about it when we get there. Mainly though, his dream was about replicating his model. Dad envisioned Chandler and me carrying on his dream of bringing select others into the group and teaching the teachers who could help spread his dream. That's what Chandler and I are trying to do now."

Again, I detected a great sadness as she spoke.

"Rick and his wife Anna are also trained in holistic medicine and are very tuned in on herbal treatments and crystal therapy and stuff like that. Even Mom has gotten into the game. It was hard at first because she felt that she was not included in the plan at the beginning, but she has found her voice in the world through her art that she is exploring. It is helping her to heal, but it is still really hard for her sometimes."

I noticed Asia fishing in a pouch she had tied onto her belt around her waist. I could not tell what it was she took out. It looked as if they were a couple of stones. She placed one in each closed hand and turned to me.

"You haven't told me hardly anything about yourself, Bob. What's your story?"

My mind's eye flashed back to last spring. A clear picture came into my head of me, long-haired, sandaled, and robed sitting in the grove in Ozone before my flock of followers responding to a similar question from one of the Confederates. "What's the real story, Bob?" I was asked back then.

"We all like a good story. Well I have one for you today. It's

called His Story. History is His Story. It used to be Her Story, but no more. The story became His Story over six thousand years ago, but we have already covered that. What is important today is for all of us to understand what is coming. That would be Our Story - the new history manifesting in our times that is no longer dominated by His Story. We have created a new story that encompasses both earlier stories.

We know that for thousands of years, in prehistoric times, we lived much as we do today, just as civilized, refined and as cultured. Back then, we were able to express ourselves creatively much the same as we currently do. That is why we say there is nothing new under the sun. We now know that prehistoric only means the story before His Story - the story of the feminine, of companionship with the planet that celebrated life and fertility and the natural cycles of things coming, and things going. Her Story has been lost to us until recently. His Story shapes our world today. A story that tells us we were given the planet to shape it as we see fit. Natural cycles were replaced with Man's so-called improved cycles measured by the clock, not the seasons. The material world we surround ourselves with today has replaced our place in nature.

Now the interesting thing about His Story is that it is really two stories. The apparent His Story is what we are conditioned to believe. We have talked already about the depth of that conditioning - the power of how generations upon generations have been conditioned to believe, or buy into, a specific story that has been presented to us as the true story, basically, as The Truth. The Truth explains everything. It tells us why things are the way they are, everything, no exclusions. This is the story that blares from the loud speakers, from the talking heads, from the printed page. We can research the story and it always confirms itself. The Truth stands alone, or does it?

The Truth has a shadow, and in the shadow we can find the other truth. In those places, out of the lights, we find the motivations and intentions for what passes as the Truth, again, commonly called history. We live in an age in which the story is being written, and much more importantly, RE-written each day. This is by the very admission of those powerful people who have assumed the role of His Story makers. Do we know them by name? Perhaps we do, but my guess is we don't know most of them. For this story is hidden in the shadows along with those that create it. Nevertheless, for those

who seek the Truth, the shadow story seems shrouded in the mystery that obscures the truth from our conscious understanding. No, I will not refer to it as the Mys-Story ...although tempting, rather we will leave it as the hidden half of His Story. There isn't a mystery in the shadow story. There are no great conspiracies, as we normally think of them. Rather, it is more as if the ability to write, to actually record and to hand down the story, had created a mechanism and a method to create myth as we go, and our myth today is that the myth we create through writing (and re-writing) is the Truth. His Story is indeed the Truth, firm and rigid casting its shadow, not dependent on the Truth as we think of truth, but only dependent on the story being told, and believed, without question.

Our wisdom shows us that both stories are interdependent. One supports the other. Without our unquestioned predictable response to the story being fed to us, the forces exerted from the shadows would have no hold over our world. For a long time, we seemed all too willing to play our role as Sleeple, Sheeple, whatever you would like to call us. We were the un-awakened, asleep and dreaming dreams with our eyes open, but with our minds closed.

Let's recap. For a very long time man lived in prehistory, in Her Story, a time that, although no records exist, we feel in our hearts existed all the same. We can listen to what our heart and soul's intuition tells us. That this was a time we became human, when we became families, when we found how to live together and when we found love. Then, His Story blew away Her Story in short order. We are now enduring a long period in which this constantly accelerating His Story rides roughshod over that which preceded it. Her Story has been replaced with a new story that serves as a cover for those that are in position to dictate what is recorded. Once this power was discovered, that being the ability to precondition future generations to react in predictable ways by simply assuring only one story survived, freedom for the masses to participate in the creation of history ended. For all practical purposes, history had ended.

That which remains is the story in front of the story. The false TRUTH in front of the LIE. The SHADOW obscuring the real MOTIVATIONS and INTENTIONS of those who feed us His Story."

I heard Asia say, "He seems to have left the planet. I hope he is still capable of driving the car." I looked to my right and saw that

she was talking to two dark round rocks in her hand. She was smiling and cooing at them and stroking each gently with her fingertip.

“What are those?” I asked.

“Moqui marbles. They are my friends and protectors.”

“Where do they come from?”

“Uh uh, I asked you a question first. What is your story, Bob? I’m starting to think you are hiding something from me.”

“No, not at all, it’s just that I’ve gone through such a transformation myself lately, so it’s not such an easy question to answer anymore.”

“Well, that sounds like a story to me.”

“Okay, I see you are going to pry it out of me,” I chuckled.

“Once upon a time ...they lived happily ever after, the end. No? That’s not enough is it?” It was almost nighttime, but her green eyes still shone at me in the gathering darkness. “My story, well, my story has all been a lie for all my life until just recently. It really doesn’t matter what the details are, my story is just a movie in my mind. I’m the lead actor and all of it has been a lie in the same way all of our stories have been lies, more or less. My story has been a journey towards the truth, but truth is a hard thing to define and even harder to find if you go looking for it. It seems the harder you look for it the more elusive it is, the more it slips away. It is only by my having stopped looking for the truth have I been able to find it. Does that make any sense?”

“Absolutely not, it sounds pretty crazy doesn’t it?” She said to her Moqui marbles.

“Okay, I’ll try to explain it this way. Until very recently I had a story about myself. I was this thing or that thing, a father, a diligent worker, a thinker, a friend; all the normal things that most of us share, but I can see now that all of that was a lie because I was never truly in the moment, in God’s creation. I was always thinking of what to do next, or reflecting on what I had done and that I never was able to just exist in the moment. Being in the moment is living in the light of the truth. The truth is that there never has been a future or a past, only us, only me thinking about the future while missing the moment, or remembering the past, again missing the awareness of the present moment. It’s pretty hard to explain. Does any of this make sense?”

“It’s starting to, a little bit.”

“Yes? So when I was very young, just a toddler, I did not have a story. Everything I encountered was just what it was with no judgment. What it was, is what it is. Then, as I started to learn about life from Mom and Dad, from my siblings, from school, from television and all that, I started to create a story for myself, a story of who I am, or who I thought I was. In many ways it was more like I was as much as who I thought I wasn’t as who I thought I was. Are you with me?”

“Yeah, Dad always told us we had a choice between believing in what we could become or what we couldn’t become. Either choice would come true, so focus on what we could become and don’t give power to what we feared, or what we thought we could not be. Is that what you mean?”

“Your dad was a very wise man, Asia.”

“Yes he was, wasn’t he, Bob?” The pup had crawled into the front seat to put his head on her lap.

“So, you see, my story is this right now - just what is here, you, me and Bob, driving along somewhere in Oklahoma, I think, heading somewhere to do whatever, I guess. I really don’t know who I am, or what my story is anymore. I do know I have to pee and we need to stop for gas. How about you, Bob, do you need to get out and stretch?” Bob Barker made a sound that sounded just like yup. “There you go. Bob’s finally learned to talk.”

We gassed up the car and drove on into the high plains night with Asia again behind the wheel. Ahead on the horizon, the lightning danced from cloud to cloud, but I was too exhausted to stay awake to enjoy the show. I curled up in the passenger’s seat and fell sound asleep. Sometime later, I don’t know how long I had slept; I awoke to a still and silent car. Clearing my head, I first noticed that big drops of rain were starting to slap the windshield and the roof of the car. Next, I noticed Asia was not in the car. I peered down the road and just coming into the range of the headlights was Asia running hell bent toward me with Bob close on her heels. Just as she threw herself into the car, all hell broke loose. A gust of wind slammed the car rocking it side to side and the rain, mixed with hail, hammered us from all directions.

“Wow! What a storm! Watch this.” Asia nodded towards down the road from which she had come.

Shuuuuu-craaaack! A bolt of lightning hit not more than fifty yards ahead of us. The car shook with the rolling thunder. Another

flash, and another, and another bolt blasted the road in front of us. Each time the lightning flashed, night turned to day, and like a brilliant strobe light, the lightning illuminated several giant wind turbines sitting high above us on towering stalks imposing a surreal presence on the scene. Wham, Boom, an especially large rope of large energy slammed the road leaving balls of wiry blue light bouncing in the distance. All over the road, red sparks swarmed and swirled around the spot Asia had just been. We both sat there stunned into silence. What a show. I had never seen anything like it. Slowly the storm subsided.

“What were you doing out there? Good God, girl, you could have been fried out there.”

“I know.” She gave a goofy laugh. “I’m recharging my Moqui marbles.”

“Oh, well that makes sense.” I said not trying to sound too sarcastic.

“If they aren’t charged up after that?” Asia exclaimed.

She started the Volvo up and let the car creep forward in gear. The spot where the lightning had struck was fully illuminated in the car’s lights.

“Look at that!” We both got out of the car and walked up to the two blue, glowing, round stones. A nearly perfect circle had been burned into the asphalt around each Moqui marble. We could smell the acrid bite of smoldering tar. Around us, the sky was still flashing a brilliant daylight white, all too frequently for my nerves.

“Let’s don’t stand out here. Find something to pick them up with,” I could feel my hair prickling on my neck, but I couldn’t tell if it meant another bolt of lightning was on its way, or I was just scared.

Asia bent over and gingerly placed a finger on one of the marbles then swiftly scooped both up with her bare hand and said, “They are not hot at all. Look, Bob, they are still glowing.” She turned back to the car, “You take the wheel. Come on, let’s go.”

I was very glad to be back in the relative safety of the car. I quickly put it into gear and got us rolling back down the road. “That’s sure some heavy mojo. Did you know that was going to happen?”

“No way. I think these guys communicate to me telepathically. The idea just popped into my head. I guess they knew what they were doing.”

“What the heck are those things again?”

“They are called Moqui marbles, sometimes thunderballs, or shaman stones. They’re found mainly around where the Moqui Indians lived in southern Utah. They are a hematite crust formed around a core of sandstone. There are many theories and legends associated with how they were formed and what types of powers they hold. I think of them as my friends and companions. They keep me safe when I am traveling, both in the physical, and in the spiritual realms. After tonight, I think I believe the theory about how they formed from the thunderbolts of the gods when a long time ago, plasma energy danced across the heavens and huge charges of energy were carving out the canyons and craters on the planet. I believe these boys here were reborn tonight. Weren’t you guys?” Asia was stroking them again like little pets held in her palm.

“They’re alive then?” I already knew her answer.

“Of course they are alive. You are really alive now, aren’t you guys? You’re getting your color back.” The glow had faded and the stones returned to their original dark brown.

“I’m amazed by what I just saw and amazed that you know about the universe being wired. I have had that realization myself. There is some form of energy that connects everything. Call it electricity if you want. Names mean nothing, it is what it is, right?” I went on, “Or call it God if you want, they both exceed our total understanding don’t they? I bet those stones have a life force of their own just like us. Those are some special rocks you have there, Asia.” I was driving on motor relay with my mind abuzz over a new idea stirring from the depths of my mind.

I looked over at Asia. She had the pup on her lap wrapped in her arms and the Moqui marbles clenched tightly in her fist. She was smiling brightly at me.

“Sorry. If I start to ramble, please tell me to stop.”

“No, it’s fine. I like to listen. My dad always talked like that. Don’t stop if you don’t want to. I have been feeling the energy changing for quite some time now. It’s as if everything is coming more alive. The energy between things sure is changing.”

“I agree, Asia. I sure felt the energy change back there. I have been watching the energy shifting in the world for a long time too.

I guess it’s all of our jobs to figure out how we fit in with this new energy. At least that’s what I’ll be doing once I get back home. I need to find out how I fit in. So, you were saying?” She released the

shaman stones from her fist and placed them on the dashboard. "My friends will want to hear this."

"So how do you fit in to all this, you ask? This is what I think. I once wrote some notes about the theory of Evolution. Ask yourself this. Is everything that is, all that is here and now, a result from what has come before this? If so, how far back do we need to go to see how all of this has come about?" I waved my arm taking in the road and the horizon.

"What terms, ideas, definitions and agreements are necessary to be able to understand the concept of Evolution that we each hold today? There first has to be a common agreement concerning a few key points. The first agreement has to be a definition on what we mean when we talk about Evolution. Oh, what a hot button word it is, this word Evolution. Immediately, we think of division when we speak of Evolution. Somehow, in the course of a nearly two hundred year old dialogue, we have reduced the argument for, or against, the idea of evolution, to a conflict between two opposing views." I saw that she was listening intently.

"Don't let me make a wrong turn." As my mind lit up from the energy around us, I drove on unconscious of the car being in my control.

"This is the question. Is God's hand the driving force constantly moving the universe forward as it evolves and manifests itself in our present moment, thus making Evolution dependent on a Creator, or is it the belief that evolution results from statistical probabilities of nearly infinite combinations organizing themselves in ever more complexity resulting in the most complex life system so far: man. Trying to understand this in light of the fact that we exist as individuals on average of eighty laps around the sun, give or take twenty years, seems at first, to handicap us. Science to the rescue, right? We now have developed as upright, thinking, conscious beings. We have the faculty to look around us and to consciously develop ideas, words, and meaning to aid in describing what we see taking place in the world around us. We now have so many sophisticated instruments, complex theories, and concise arguments to support our current conclusions that we believe science has discovered the answer, but the closer we examine things, the more clearly we see the divine hand behind it all, while at the same time, the more obscure our place in all of this seems. The arising of a conscious, reflecting mind is a new phenomenon when compared to

the long road of life that extends back into the unknown darkness of the earliest arising of life on our world and the eons of pre-life that existed for millions of years before the first organic life forms ever came into being.”

“Evolution –is it necessary in coming to agreement on the definition of Evolution to accept that man has evolved from some primordial soup? That our living ancestors were microbial slime, walking fish, furry, tiny mammals, and so forth? Not really. The key is, and has always been, the bridging between believing and knowing. In many ways, the whole dialogue concerning Evolution is a moot point. In talking about Evolution, are we not led down the same path as those that, because of their system of beliefs, view Evolution as a slap in the face of the creative force of God? Are the two views in direct opposition? Does the conflict between the two signify that only one position rings true? Is there something we are missing in our understanding of this problem, the problem of why all this? Does there exist a common framework between the two opposing views? Let’s look for that commonality. Let’s find the truth.”

Asia knew that these were questions I had been asking myself and she remained silent.

“One of the first things we need to agree upon is the limitations that language imparts in our attempt to define anything. So many of us see this limitation when we try to describe God. No one seems to be so individually grandiose as to think they can, through the use of language, accurately define God. Up until now, we have relied on blind faith in order to place God in our realm of existence. Without nailing down a definition for God, we are nonetheless able to experience God in our lives based on our beliefs. But, what do we know of God? How do we see Him manifest in our lives? I contend the same thing can be asked of the word Evolution. How does Evolution manifest itself in the here and now?”

“A common truth that we all should be able to accept is the fact that we do exist. We are here, are we not? That we exist does not seem to be in contradiction to any opposing views. Can anyone honestly argue that we do not exist? We exist. That is Truth One. We don’t believe we exist; we know we exist. Knowing of our existence does not require believing in obscure concepts, in convoluted distortions we call definitions, or in relinquishing our own personal powers of observation. I am, therefore, I am. This is all that there is,

and it gives all of us a common foundation, a common fundamental truth.”

“The apparent question that arises next is - have we always existed in the same form as we exist today? Has humanity existed without any measurable change in its existence all along through the course of time? How can we know the answer to this? Is there any experiential evidence to support either conclusion? Again, our brief individual existence prevents us from seeing a bigger picture that is obscured by our need to believe, not based on knowing, but on the need to have something to hold on to; whether this manifests itself in believing in God, in whatever form we can imagine, or believing in the idea of Evolution as an ongoing continuum of change over the course of time. Can we only believe in Evolution, or is it possibly to actually know of it.”

“As hard as we try, we cannot totally accept that science, through continuous observation and experimentation, can adequately move us from merely believing into the realm of knowing the fundamental truths, if indeed any exist at all. We may come to an understanding if we can agree on defining the word Evolution to mean no more than we are here, right now, and before we were here, right now, something else came before us.”

I took a swig of water and continued. “Has our current beliefs, our current understanding of our existence been constructed on a foundation placed in a time prior to our own individual existence? I argue that it has been; therefore, is it a leap in faith to believe that, as individuals, and as a collective of humanity, we owe to what has previously arisen for what defines our existence today?”

“I can see that at least from my perspective.” Asia said which encouraged me to go on.

“That’s right, Asia. We each have an individual perspective, as if we each stand on individual pedestals. I contend that if we can find a common platform for our observations then we will see we are really talking of apples and oranges, but where is that platform? Where is the foundation we need to build upon in order to clearly know the fundamental process of our very being? A basic platform for us consists of a vantage point far enough removed from the process that we are able to see the big picture. It’s not too unlike the first astronauts on the moon, whom upon seeing the earth from afar, achieved a perspective that was inclusive of all that exists on our world as an interconnected whole. They were able to see the truth

apparent before them that no divisions, other than the divisions constructed by the divided understanding of mankind, existed. When seen from afar, as a whole, they were able to move from believing into knowing that all life shares a commonality of its existence by merely being on the same ride at the same time. Around and around we go, where we land no one knows. Where are we going? What is our destination? What do we believe, what do we know? We all can't go to the moon, at least not yet, so how do we gain the necessary perspective in order to gain a deeper understanding of Evolution? What tools are available to us? When tools are mentioned it is easy to start looking again in the direction of our science. They certainly have the coolest tools. Science, after all, got us to the moon. One of my favorite Homer Simpson lines is: 'you can prove anything with facts,' meaning facts can easily overwhelm us into believing anything belying their true nature. Facts change as more information is available, so they are a poor support for our observation platform that we are attempting to build on the foundation of the truth that seems unchanging and that we can agree upon; the simple truth that we exist."

"Another tool that is available to us is our brains. When we think of our brains as a tool for analytical observation and measurement, we somehow place ourselves 'outside' ourselves, outside our brains. We commonly use phrases like our powers of observation, or our powers of reasoning, as if we look at our brains as the receptacle for amazing powers that are exclusive to man. But, who is doing the looking? Who is at the command of this tool? This opens another rabbit hole that eventually leads us nowhere. Trying to describe the inner observer, the driver at the wheel, is not at all unlike trying to describe God. We seem to be inadequate, lacking the tools, or skills, necessary in finding a platform for observing ourselves, our inner nature. Whatever we construct internally, we succeed in only creating the need for a higher observatory, an observer of the observer, if you will. How do we get out of this rabbit hole? We need a second agreement."

"The second agreement –our brains, our minds, all that we are, exist within the encompassing first agreement, Truth One –we exist. Truth Two –we exist completely within existence."

"What does this mean exactly, we exist within existence. Truth Two enables us to move beyond the search for some ultimate promontory from which to observe. Our existence is totally

encompassed by all that exists within the same frame of time. Quantum physics has confirmed that all things are interconnected at the quantum level of matter and energy. Nothing can exist completely independently. Everything is one thing. What's true at the quantum level is, by default, also true at our macro level, so the facts may claim."

"Nonetheless, what is this longing we share, this searching for something above us, and beyond us, that we can only intuitively understand? We believe that we are limited by our senses, and perhaps, by our faculties; and therefore, we are unaware of the hidden aspects of our existence that although hidden, leaves us with a sense that if we were only able to develop a means to see into this hidden side of existence, we could, as if evolving a completely new sensory organ, finally move from believing into knowing. It would be as if somehow man devised a way to broaden the spectrum of visible light, then we would be able to sense with our eyes the colors that we know through experimentation exist above and below the narrow range of colors that we currently perceive. This would certainly open amazingly new vistas for us to explore. What else lurks beyond our perceptions? I don't expect that humans will be evolving another eye capable of seeing infrared and ultraviolet soon, but does that mean we have stopped evolving? Are we at some static pinnacle in time? I doubt it. Again, if we look at what we know – Truth one, We Exist. Truth two, We Exist Completely Within Existence we get a clue as to where to look."

"So, this points to the idea that everything is still evolving. Therefore, we should be able to get a sense of what we are evolving into. Again, we can agree that everything existing in this moment is shaped by what precedes it. And, to go further, we can agree that what is to come is shaped by this moment as well, and what is to come will be different from this moment and different from what has come before it. In a way, you could say we exist in the moment within existence, but existence isn't what it used to be. Existence is in a state of flux, ever changing. That is probably as good as our language can describe our existence for now."

"Okay, everything exists within existence. In this model, we can't exclude humanity. Humans are part of the whole system, interconnected, and interdependent. Right, so then anything evolving that takes place in any one part of the system has an effect on all the rest. Using this as a given, then we see that the evolution of human

self-awareness, and consciousness, isn't reserved to human beings alone. The change in energy that is becoming so apparent to us is a sign that points to the fact that consciousness is evolving into something different. Is it a progression forward to something more profound, towards something that will enable us to sense the whole - the complete interconnectedness? I believe it is. We may be right at the edge of a leap forward in Evolution that will enable all things that exist within existence to vibrate at a higher energy. Your friends, the Moqui marbles, have probably evolved a higher Moqui marble consciousness. They are more alive than ever before. Maybe we are just about to move into a new world that will allow for a new way for communicating with everything around us."

I had been staring straight ahead at the road. I turned my head to see Asia, and Bob Barker, fast asleep. I didn't know how much she had heard, but it didn't matter. I wanted to kiss her forehead. The love I felt for her, and the whole universe, was overwhelming me towards tears. Instead, I patted Bob on the head, picked up the two Moqui marbles, and told them I loved them before placing them in my pocket for safekeeping. It was late into the night and I didn't even know if I was on the right road, or not, so I pulled off to the side of the road in a tiny town named Slapout, Oklahoma, and went to sleep in the back seat.

I'm not sure if it was the morning sun pouring in that awakened me, or the vibrating sensation I felt from the Moqui marbles in my shirt pocket. I took the pair out, told them 'good morning,' and set them back on the dashboard. Asia and Bob Barker were strolling through the intersection in the dusty little crossroads where we had spent the night. I got out and stretched.

"It's a fine morning. Smell the air; it's so clean and fresh. It's a beautiful day to be on the road." I said.

Asia came over to the car. "We will make it home before dark. I'm so excited. I can't wait until they meet you, Bob," she said as she reached down and scratched his ears. "And you too, Bob. I think my family will like it that I have such a fine person tagging along with me."

"So are we still on the right road? I just kept driving after you fell asleep. I just kept heading west."

"We are right where we are supposed to be. I guess you can say that no matter where you are," she laughed. "We stopped here in Slapout on the first trip west with my father. They have a café in

there. I just talked to the owner. He said he would open up a little early for us, just for some company.”

Asia, Bob and I hung around outside for a half hour looking over the dilapidated buildings. The old grain elevator sat on a rail spur that no longer crossed over the highway. Next to it was an old general store long abandoned. Out of the half dozen houses, only one seemed occupied.

“You folks come on in and get yourself some breakfast.” A spry looking elderly man in overalls stood at the door of the Slapout Mercantile and Diner. The place was like a museum inside with an old counter, wooden cash register, and a set of big brass scales brooding over the dark room. The walls were covered in old merchandise the kind you see from the 1800’s. One side of the store was set up for seating and that is where the wonderful aroma of strong coffee and fried bacon emanated.

“That smells great. I’m famished.” I realized I hadn’t had a meal since the night before yesterday when Jasmine and I were still together. Her face arose in my mind’s eye. I knew in my heart that she would be fine and that we would be able to meet up in the not too distant future.

“My name is Otto, and I will be your waiter,” the old man cackled as we took our place at the table. “Not much on the menu, I’m afraid to say. Just bacon, eggs, and fried potatoes, for now. I’ve got some orange juice too, if you would like some, Ma’am.” Otto poured us coffee. “We don’t get many folks stopping here anymore. It’s nice to see some new faces. I don’t suppose you want to buy this place. No I don’t suppose you do,” He said more to himself than to us. “I’ve had it for sale for darn’t near thirty years or so. Never had a serious offer. Well, tell me how you like your eggs and I’ll have Chef Otto rustle you up some grub.”

Soon Otto was back with two huge country platters. “Don’t mind if I pull up a chair and sit a spell with you, do ya?”

“Please do, Otto.” I could see the twinkle in old Otto’s eyes. He was as charmed with the pretty, young lady as was I. As we dug into our grub, Bob Barker playfully nipped at the old man’s shoelaces. Otto went on to tell his life’s story and the history of Slapout. He took us from 1845 when Slapout was on its way to becoming a trading outpost, first with the Indians, and later with the ranchers and farmers, and all the way through until the Great Dust Bowl and Great Depression in the 1930’s.

“Right up until then there were two general stores. Slapout here and Hawlson’s over yonder. We had some fearsome competition back then, but we managed to outlast old Bull Hawlson, even though back in them days, we were always slapout of darn near everything. That’s how this town got its name, Slapout.”

“You sure have seen a lot happen over the years, haven’t you Otto.” Asia said exuding a warm smile.

“I’ll say I have, but I ain’t never seen the things that are a happening now. That’s for sure. Folks all over the world are hungry for change; I can tell you that. Even way out here in the middle of nowhere, we can feel the change a coming. I was ready to pack it all in a year ago after my wife Lolly died. I didn’t think I could go on another day without her in my life, but now I’m gonna do my damned best to hang in to see how this 222 thing works itself out. They said this morning, on the internet news, that this Bob fellow gave the Feds the slip. They thought they had corralled him, but they got the wrong guy.”

“Did they say anything about anyone else they arrested, anything about a gal named Jasmine?” I had to ask.

“She was the gal hooked up with that Bob fella, huh? Yeah, she was picked up yesterday in OK City for auto theft they say. She got this big time city slicker they call D Cubed to get her out on bail. He’s something else, boy. He gets all the big cases. He’s real good too.”

“That’s interesting.” I mused. “Did they say if they were still looking for that Bob guy?”

Otto shook his head. “No, they haven’t said anything official yet. It was the news from them Confederates, you know the 222 people who said that they arrested the wrong fella, some guy named Badger who looks just like that crazy Bob guy. I’ll say this though, ol’ Bob has gotten everybody stirred up and crazy and it’s about time, if you ask me. We need to all get ourselves right for the Lord, ‘cause the change is a coming.”

Otto got up and went in the back coming out again with a bowl of dog food for Mr. Barker. “Here you go, pup. Eat up.” Then Otto set his eye on me. “You are a spittin image of that Bob fellow as I recall. You ain’t him, are you?”

I matched the smile on Otto’s face. “What if I was?”

"Well, I would have to shake your hand young fellow. I would shake your hand and thank you for waking up all us folks outa this bad dream we've been in for so many years."

I had to do it. I stood up and offered my hand. "I'm Bob Windowmaker. I'm very pleased to have met up with you, Otto."

Otto slapped his thigh, let out a sharp, low whistle and sprang to his feet. "It's sure good to meet you too, Mr. Windowmaker. I'll be damn, so you're really him, huh. Hell, you look just like him 'cause you are him." He cackled again showing a pearly white set of dentures. "Well, the breakfast is on me folks, on the house. If there's anything else I can do for you, just ask."

"We could use some gas, Otto. I don't know if we can make it to the next gas station." Asia seemed completely nonplussed over this revelation concerning my true identity.

"You got it, little lady, you got it. Heck, I'm not even going to ask for your autograph, Bob. I don't even want to know where you are going or nothing like that. I'm sure you already got a plan figured out and I think I had just better keep my mouth shut and let this here little meeting be a secret, don't you think?"

"Otto, you are a real delight, and very wise old soul, I can tell. Let's keep this our secret for now. I think that is for the best."

"Well you can't be a running a revolution from this here diner. Let's get you two on the road. I'll watch the revolution on my TV, that's good enough for this old man."

Otto told us to pull around back so we could gas up the car. He went inside and came back with a wicker basket.

"I packed a little something for a picnic. There's some fresh baked bread and smoked ham in there. I threw in a couple cans of dog food for the little fellow." Otto got down on one knee and let Bob lick his face. "I put a can opener in there too. Come back and see me if you ever get along this way."

"Don't be surprised to see me again soon, Otto. I know my friends would love to hear all your stories." Asia gave Otto a peck on the cheek. I'm not certain, but I believe he blushed, though it was hard to tell behind the weathered lines of his face.

In no time, we were back on Highway 325 heading west through the Oklahoma panhandle with Asia behind the wheel. She had remained quiet until we were on the move. She reached over and took her magic marbles from the dash, and held them in front of her.

“Hey guys, we have a celebrity with us.” She put them by her ear. “Yes, you may be right about that - a celebrity and maybe a fugitive too.” She turned towards me with a questioning look as if waiting for a response from me, but she didn’t wait for one. “I don’t care who you are, Bob. It’s cool you are this Boblovia guy and I understand why you didn’t tell me before. It’s okay. Boy is Chandler ever going to be surprised. I can’t wait to see his face when he finds out.”

As the night before, I did most of the talking while Asia drove. Soon, we crossed over into New Mexico and were heading south towards Clayton. I recounted all that had happened since I had started out on my journey last spring. She especially liked the story of how I met my friend Mike and the party at the cottage.

“You are a good storyteller, Bob. I feel as if I know those people. I would like to meet Tonto someday. He seems to have a wise heart. So did you ever make it back to your high school buddies? Did the girls ever show up?” she asked.

“Well, like I was saying. I went down the long hallway in the cottage and found myself in a room all alone. There was a black light in there, and the only thing glowing in the room was a bottle of wine on a table in the middle of the room. I picked up the bottle and carried it out through a backdoor into the cool of the night. I drank from the bottle as I walked around the cabin hoping to find Jill and Mike back at his car, but before I went very far I heard voices up the hill above the cabin. There was this strange glow filtering through the trees. I thought it was a bonfire and that the party had moved out into the woods, so I started up the trail alongside the river. I still remember thinking I could see Judy, the fairy, flitting along ahead of me, so I picked up my pace to try to catch up.” I paused to let the sensation I had then sink into me now.

“Don’t stop now. Did you catch up to her?” Asia was hanging on my words.

“It all gets a little weird from here. I still swear that someone dropped some LSD into the wine, but everyone later swore there wasn’t anything in it. Anyway, I kept moving farther up river until the path leveled out following a very steep bank over the Tippecanoe River. The glow in the woods seemed to be always just beyond the next bend in the trail. Just as soon as I thought I could see a fire surrounded by a beautiful violet light, I found myself in the dark. I moved a little farther along doing my best to stay on the trail, then I stopped. I heard a giggle that seemed to be moving all around me. I

yelled ‘Who’s there?’ but got no answer. I took another swig of the wine and turned to try and find my way back the way I came. That’s when I bumped into something, a piece of furniture, a chair. I still couldn’t see shit, so I sat down on the chair and drank some wine. Then I heard giggling behind me, and then, more laughter next to me. Suddenly, like a switch had been thrown, the woods lit up. I found myself sitting in a tall straight back chair at a long wooden antique table. Across the table sat Jimmy with Judy, still a fairy, behind him. While I was still too stunned to speak, Jimmy lit a candelabra sitting on the table between us. Now the only light I could see was from the six candles burning in front of me.”

“You guys were playing a trick on me. Very nice. I thought I heard a party going on up here and that I might be able to find Mike. I still seemed to have my head on straight.”

“How do you feel, Bob?” Jimmy asked.”

“I feel fine, never could be better.’ Then the first body rush swept over me. I felt a hint of paranoia, a feeling that not all was right.”

“How do you feel, Bob?” Jimmy’s voice echoed in my head.”

“I said, ‘I feel fine, a little buzzed I think, but I feel okay.’ I was starting to feel less okay by each passing second. My paranoia turned to fear - a fear that I was losing control. I could no longer feel my body. It wasn’t like it was numb; it was more like the sensation I was feeling wasn’t known to me, as if my brain had no interpretation of the sensations that my nerves were sending.”

“How is it that you feel, Bob?” The candlelight danced shadows across Jimmy’s face making it look like the wax melting from the candles.”

“I feel through my senses. I feel with my sense of touch. Right now I can’t feel anything I’ve felt before.””

“Then Jimmy yelled. ‘What time is it, Bob?’”

“I nearly startled out of my chair. ‘Right Now!’ I shouted back.”

“‘Wrong,’ Jimmy drew out the word low and long. ‘There is no time, Bob, remember?’”

“My brain locked up, not only could I not feel as before, I felt as if I couldn’t speak either. For that matter, my sight faded to the point where all I could see were the flames of the candles reflecting in the dark round lenses of Jimmy’s glasses and nothing else. It was very strange. It’s not like I had lost all my senses, it was more like all my senses were more attuned than ever before.”

“Sounds like quite the trip.” Asia interjected. “Sounds like an out-of-body experience to me.”

“No, it was an in-the-body experience. I never felt more in my own body than I did then.”

“What happened next?” Asia was all ears.

“The fairy princess came to me and I sensed her presence moving around and through me. It felt like something was tickling every cell of my body.”

“Bob is ready for us now, Jimmy.” I heard her say. “His soul is still, and opened for our message.”

“We send this gift to you, our Brother. We have the gift of stillness for you. We give you the truth of being in the moment by obtaining complete stillness.” I heard Jimmy’s voice not through my ears, but through my very being. It sounded like he was speaking from inside me.”

“One can only obtain the state of stillness by doing nothing, nothing else, and it takes great effort to do nothing well. Nonetheless, the effort necessary to do nothing well is, in itself, very active, and by its nature, ineffective in doing nothing. So how do we do it? How do we achieve the stillness that our soul desires without effort? Only by not doing anything can we do nothing. To go on would be silly so I stop here.”

Asia said, “No you can’t stop, tell me what happened next.”

“Those were Jimmy’s words and I thought the same as you. Don’t stop, tell me more. Then he continued.”

“Okay, I guess I can go on. Forget being still for a moment (alas another paradox for to forget about stillness one has to have had experienced it, and once it is experienced, it goes on forever) nonetheless, let’s pretend we don’t have any knowledge of the eternal quiet pool from which all things emanate. Action, both physical and mental, are only the wave forms that once perceived from a perspective of stillness collapses into the quantum singularity of eternity. Oh my, we are getting deeper, and that indicates that the depth of the quiet pool is unfathomable. Only by breaking out through the surface of this immeasurable pool are we able to find action; again, contrasted by the unlimited depth of stillness. Are we talking in circles? I hope so. After all, we are talking about death and no death, the pattern of being and not being, the wheel of life that encompasses everything.

Why the circle? Why the wheel? Because the turning of the wheel transcends time and embraces all action and inaction simultaneously. Think about it. The farther out to the edge of a rotating wheel the faster one travels, the more action if you will. Moving towards the center of the very same wheel, rotating in space and time, do we not find ourselves approaching stillness? We conceive that once we reach the very essence of the center, we would find ourselves in a motionless dimension that transcends the movement of the wheel. Our soul is the axis of the activity we manifest in our lives. Our soul stands motionless at our center. Again, to go on would be silly.”

“Jimmy’s words, not mine.”

“But, go on I must. Truth manifests from this quiet center existing in a dimension outside of our normal understanding of space and time, nevertheless, it exists within each of us and is an undeniable truth that is the basis for our souls’ existence. Now think what the world would be like if we all operated from this perspective. How different would things be upon the mass realization of this truth that endures in eternity existent in each of us? Fear is about as active as one can get. Overcoming fear is to find stillness and, as we see, stillness lies at the center of us all. So don’t just do something, just sit there quietly, effortlessly and all fear subsides. The closer we are to our centers, the less grip fear holds. It’s pretty damn simple. Action, initiated from the center of the soul, becomes purposeful and finds its support in the framework that stillness provides. Anything we add to the quiet pool is only what we desire. Desire becomes the root of suffering only when we are unaware that we possess the tool, the gift, of stillness.

The pool is the void. It’s nothing, no thing, it is pure zero. It’s not the negative of anything, for negative denotes other, or something outside the void. The still pool is prior to the arising of other, of anything that comes before, or after it. Death is the nothing of the negative that comes after being born, but it is not the void, pure zero, total stillness. This quiet pool is the nothing of not having been born. Within this calm pool, there is no individual, no thing, no compulsion, nothing inward or outward, no law, and no truth. It is the storehouse of all things imaginable, all things to be manifested, as such, it is beyond definition. From this pool, this void, all things are possible. From this deep calm fathomless pool, freedom abounds. Okay, now I can really stop.”

“Again, his words. I sat still for a long time letting everything sink in. The voice in my head was now only mine. This is what being in the moment truly is. It’s a place transcendent of time; a place of constant becoming; a place of eternal being. I don’t know how much time passed before I actually spoke. I said, ‘What am I to do with this gift?’”

“‘Share it!’”

“Those two words faded out as I drifted out of consciousness. I awoke with the dawn, alone in the woods, as the miracle of the day unfolded around me. There was no table and chairs, no candelabra, no wine bottle, just me sitting up against the fallen trunk of a great oak tree. That’s it, that’s all there was.”

“Wow, that’s pretty powerful. What a trip. So you never made it back to the motel and to your friends, huh?”

“Later in the day I did. The girls did show up. They weren’t working girls, if you know what I mean. That’s why Mike had us ask them to come to our motel; Mike didn’t even know them. They just happened to be shopping in his store when we came in. My friends didn’t miss me. They had their fun, in fact, Wally ended up marrying one of them a couple of years later. There’s yet more to the story though, Asia.”

“Hear that, boys? There’s more!” Asia gave the Moqui marbles a kiss.

“I made my way back to the cabin and found Mike and Jill. They had spent the night together. I told Mike where I had been and what had happened to me. Tonto, and a few other people that I had met the night before, listened in. They all had strange knowing smiles on their faces. ‘Why is everyone smiling?’ I asked. It was making me a little uncomfortable. Tonto put his huge arm around my shoulders and said. ‘You see, my little Brother, Jimmy and Judy have been gone for over a year. They died together not far from here, up there in the woods. They had made a campsite up the trail on the bluff above the river. Jimmy had carried the dining table and chairs up into the woods to their camp. Then one night, a terrible storm arose, and before they could get to safety, a giant oak fell on them killing them both. Others have seen them since, but no one has had an experience like yours. They surely have come to you to give you guidance. You have received a powerful gift from beyond, my Brother. You must never waste it.’”

Asia drove with one hand on the steering wheel and held her magic stones to her heart with her other. "That is so sad and at the same time so wonderful. No wonder you wanted to go back to that spot when you started your walkabout along the river."

"Yes, I needed to get back in touch with myself. I realized that for so many years, I had been forcing myself to forget all that had happened there, but the more I tried to bury it in the past the more power it gained. I finally allowed myself to give into it. I remembered Tonto had told me about Siddhartha and how I was like him and how I would one day come back to the river. For most of my life, out of fear, I denied myself the truth that I knew was right there in front of me. I started my walk in order to find myself once more, and I knew that I had to start my life's journey over from that very same place."

"And look at you now, spreading your gift to the world. That's what 222 is all about, isn't it? Becoming still enough to let the energy come into us, isn't that what the Revolution says. Quick, don't just do something, sit there. That's really brilliant. What better way to have a revolution. Damn, Chandler will freak when I roll in with you."

"You know, Asia, like I told you, I had a lot of time to sit and think it all over this summer. Colonel Wapple did me a big favor kidnapping me. I was really starting to get a swelled head over it all. I went on my hike trying to get out of the rat race and away from my incessantly chattering mind. I was successful as long as I was on foot, alone, following the rivers. I wonder what would have happened to me if I had stayed to my plan of following the Canadian River all the way out here. I still want to find Zeph's cave and be alone. I think I have a lot more work to do on myself before I can offer any gifts to anyone else. As for my part in the 222 Revolution, I think I'm done with that. Whatever it becomes, it will be without me. You know the whole idea I put out there was for everyone to take their personal responsibility for their own happiness and well-being. The fact it has gotten to this point is a testament only to the power of an idea, not a testament to me."

"So, I guess you don't see yourself as any kind of celebrity then, but you are to folks like my brother. So do you think the government is out there looking for you too?"

"I kind of doubt it. I haven't broken any laws that I know of. I think when they arrested that Badger fellow instead of me, they were

just trying to quiet things at the jamboree in Ozone. The crowd was still a bit out of hand. Anyway, I don't feel like anyone is after me at this moment."

"You mentioned Zeph again. Is his last name Huntley?" asked Asia.

"Yes it is. Do you know him?"

"I know who he is. Chandler does too. He will be able to put you in touch with him for sure." She replied.

We were passing through the town of Logan, New Mexico. "I'm getting hungry. Let's find a place to have our picnic. We'll be hitting the interstate south near Tucumcari and then, in another three or four hours, we will be home." Asia perked.

For the last time, we crossed the Canadian River and turned at the sign for Ute Lake State Park. We pulled into the picnic area just above the dam. Otto had packed us a very nice lunch of delicious ham and cheese sandwiches, fruit, and rosehip iced tea. Asia spread out the fare on a picnic table and fed Bob Barker a can of the dog food Otto had packed.

"I never met my grandfather," Asia said, "But I bet he was just like Otto, sharp as a tack. You know if people like Otto, stuck way out there on the plains, can see the energy waking everyone up, then it really must be happening. I guess there is hope for all of us yet. It's like everyone is getting a new consciousness that helps to add to the momentum of change sweeping over everyone else."

I took a swig of the iced tea. "I think that's right, everyone seems to be affected more and more by what is emerging. I think it's a self-reinforcing feedback loop. As more people awaken and consciously evolve, it strengthens the noosphere."

"You said noosphere. I've never heard anyone mention that other than Chandler and his friends. They have been measuring the noosphere for a longtime. It's some kind of project they have been working on. I'm sure they will show you when they meet you. All I know is the noosphere is the collective consciousness of man and that somehow it is alive, I think."

"Not just man's collective consciousness, but the collective consciousness of everything on the planet. I guess it's the Earth herself that is conscious." I added.

"It's Evolution manifesting in our lives. I guess we are developing a higher more evolved awareness to all that we are a part

of. That's why your idea for the 222 Revolution has been able to take root."

"So you didn't sleep through my little dissertation after all, Asia. I'm glad."

Asia and I relaxed in the warm sunshine. We waded on the beach and let Bob splash around in the crystal, clear water. I finally got to put my feet into the Canadian River without worrying about quicksand and snakes. A wave of weariness swept over me. The events of the last few months fell away into the distance. I knew a new chapter was beginning, maybe the last chapter. I looked forward to meeting Asia's people, but I was already wanting to be away from everyone and the world. In Oklahoma City, Mike reminded me of the cave and suggested I should find my way there as quickly as possible. He said he would do what he could to be there in February on the 22nd. I told Asia that I didn't think the Feds were after me, but deep inside me I knew that at some point, either the government or some of Leo's people would be seeking me out. I'm not a leader by nature, and I sure didn't want anyone thinking that I had any specific role to fulfill in the Revolution. I remembered when the Dali Lama retired to become just a simple monk. That's all that I desired. Just to become a simple person with time to reflect deeply on life.

I took my turn driving. We hit westbound I-40 west of Tucumcari rolling through the mesa lands.

"If I fall asleep, Bob, we want to turn north on Highway 14 a few miles past Edgewood." With that, Asia and the pup napped.

The highway rose and fell with the contour of the land. I got a glimpse of the Pecos River near Santa Rosa. This was my first time in New Mexico and I was absorbed by the subtleness of the land unfolding around me as the desert high plains did their slow climb towards the mountains barely visible ahead. The air already felt different, a bit thinner and clearer. The miles ticked off and, at Cline's Corner, I saw the first sign for Edgewood, sixty-four miles ahead. Asia and Bob stayed cuddled up together snoring softly in unison. I felt blessed to have bumped into her when I did. I had stopped taking for granted anyone who I met along my path. Everyone came into my life for a reason. Everyone has a gift to give to me. I hoped I had something of value to give to them, but still, I knew my time for giving was coming to a close for a while. I needed to find the stillness in my soul in order to do the best I could to be able to focus on the new energy afoot in the world. If I wanted

everyone to receive the gift of stillness on the 22nd, I would have to be in that quiet place well ahead of them.

The mountains now loomed above me as I passed the exit sign for Highway 14 one mile ahead.

“Wake up, Asia, we are at our exit.” I gave her a gentle nudge.

“Already there? That was quick.” Asia yawned, and then her dog. I couldn’t help from yawning myself. “Let me give you a break. The drive north from here is spectacular. You’ll want to take in the scenery.”

A sign read National Scenic Byway Turquoise Trail. The two-lane highway wound around the eastern side of the Sandia Mountains and along the San Pedro Mountains. The sun had started its descent to the west coloring the landscape in a golden glow. Passing through the tiny town, appropriately called Golden, another sign indicated Needless twelve miles ahead.

“Just over the pass in the Ortiz is Needless, and just a few miles more, then we will be home. I’m going to make a pit stop at the store in Needless and get ol’ poophead here some food and see if any of my old friends are hanging out. I love coming home on this road. It’s so cool being in the mountains again after all those empty miles of plains we went through.” Asia adjusted herself in her seat and placed her shaman stones on the dashboard in front of her. “Almost home, boys,” she giggled.

We came through a hairpin turn and before us opened a vista all the way to Santa Fe thirty miles away. Down below, in a narrow dry valley, lie Needless, New Mexico. For fun, Asia let the car coast down the last six miles never having to touch the accelerator.

“Needless is a weird little place,” she said. “Dad loved it. He made a lot of good friends here. The town’s motto is, ‘In Us We Trust,’ that’s what makes it special. The whole community supports each other. Everyone you meet here has some special talent or unique story. Many are authors, artist, musicians, or just folks who had enough sense to know a good thing when they see it. A lot of folks up in these hills live off-grid like we do.”

We coasted into town dropping down to the speed limit of twenty. The main drag was lined with shops and galleries. Nowhere were there any corporate signs, not even so much as a coke machine.

“This is cool, Looks like they have managed to keep out Wal-Mart.” I joked. “I could live in a place like this.”

We crawled through the village letting the many dogs take their lazy time to clear the road. On the north end of town, we stopped in front of an old wooden two-story building with a high covered porch.

"This is the only store in town. They have a little bit of everything. Do you mind watching Bob for a minute while I go in?"

Bob and I got out and sat on the front steps. It was easy to tell the locals from the tourists. A few folks stopped and said hi and talked to Mr. Barker. No one asked any questions other than wanting to know the pup's name. I remembered that Asia had told me you can't judge anybody in this town by their looks or the way they dressed, but in everyone that came by I could see the light on inside them, and I knew she was right. The tourists, on the other hand, are like tourists everywhere, inquisitive, nosey, and sometimes a little rude without being aware they were being annoying. I saw a group of tourists taking pictures of the few locals sitting on the porch. I could tell it made them feel uncomfortable. One guy tried to tell them that it wasn't polite to take their picture without asking permission first, so the lady with the camera asked if she could take his picture and the gentlemen emphatically said no. That seemed to piss her off. She turned the camera on me, and Bob, and quickly snapped the shutter.

"There! I took your picture. I suppose you don't want me to take yours either."

I said nothing.

"You people are just afraid I'll put your picture on Facebook, or something. You all act like a bunch of criminals, if you ask me."

"Nobody's asking you anything lady. We just expect people visiting our town to show a little respect, that's all. Like we tell folks like you; welcome to Needless, now get the fuck out." The fellow took off his leather broad-brimmed hat and used it to shoo the tourist away.

Asia came out of the store. "Hi Boz." She gave him a hug.

"Well looky there. Hi Asia. You're looking good. Back for good this time?"

"I think so. I sure missed this place."

"We always miss a pretty face like yours."

"Bob, come meet my friend Boz."

"I climbed the steps to the porch to shake Boz's hand."

"I'm Bob, pleased to meet you, Boz."

“Well, duh.” Boz shook my hand and then pointed to the bulletin board next to him. “You look just like your picture.”

I looked to see a big wanted poster someone had made up with my face on it. It said, Wanted Dead or Alive for preaching love and peace.

“Very nice, I guess I do look like him.” Boz saw me give Asia a wink.

“Uh huh, the resemblance is uncanny,” he winked back.

“Gotta run, Boz. We’ve been on the road and need to get to the house.”

“Okay then, I hope to see you both again soon. The harvest party is this weekend. You guys be sure to come.”

“I wouldn’t miss it for the world, toodahoo.” Asia bounced back to the car with me in tow.

“He recognized me for sure, didn’t he?”

“I’m sure he did, but it’s no big deal. We are used to seeing celebrities in town all the time. Everyone is drawn here eventually, it seems.”

Highway 14 rolled downhill out of Needless towards Santa Fe. The Cerrillos Hills dominated the view. The autumn sun resting on the horizon lit the hills a fiery red.

I commented on how they looked like their own little mountain range.

“My dad loved exploring in there. He used to bring us bits of turquoise and stuff that he found there. That’s why we thought he had been out here prospecting all that time. I’ll take you there some time, if you like. I know some really neat old mines where you can still find cool stuff.”

“It will be nice to have you show me around, Asia.”

At the bottom of the long hill, just before a bridge that crossed a dry riverbed, we turned right. We drove up a paved road that climbed back up towards the Ortiz Mountains that we had passed through coming into Needless. The road turned to gravel and then to dirt as we made several turns that took us closer to the green slopes hovering ahead. The road started to rise steeply, and now it was rock covered with big protruding stones, that Asia navigated carefully, at a crawl.

“That’s our gate!”

No sign marked Grayson Pueblo. The gate was no different than the many we had passed coming off the pavement.

“That’s new. I haven’t seen that before,” Asia said. “Chandler said they were building a carport.”

The drive ramped down to a roofed parking area that provided shade for at least five vehicles. It was built into the ground. The sides were stacked stone and the roof was dirt covered and had grass and cacti growing on top. “It looks like part of the landscape, like it’s been here forever.”

“That’s the way Dad would have wanted it. He built everything to blend in with nature. Come on, we walk from here.”

I followed Asia along a broad footpath that, for the most part, traversed beautiful soft rounded sandstone formations. We wound around through huge ancient junipers, gnarled oaks and cedars. Bob Barker hung at her side.

“How do you find your way in the dark?” I wondered aloud.

“Duh, with a flashlight. You have to keep an eye out for rattlebugs too.”

“Rattlebugs?”

“Rattlesnakes.” Asia looked at me over her shoulder and made her eyes wide in mock fear. “Really big rattlesnakes!” She laughed, then said, “They usually hear us coming and move off the path, but there is one big old boy that likes to kick up a fuss sometimes, but he was here long before we were, so we named him Methuselah and we just stay out of his way.”

My attention now turned to watching for snakes, so I didn’t see that we had come to the rocky ledge of a canyon.

“Watch your step,” she said, as if I hadn’t already been watching where I was placing my feet.

Asia disappeared around a large boulder that looked as if some giant had placed it delicately balancing on a smaller rock teetering on the lip of the precipice. I hurried to catch up. Wide, smooth, beautifully carved steps led down to a landing. In front of me was a hand-hewn, oak, double door with black wrought-iron hardware made in old Spanish style.

“We’ll surprise them.” She scooped the pup up and, as Asia reached for the handle, the doors flew open.

“Welcome home, Sis!”

“Chandler, I was going to sneak in and surprise you.” Her brother gave her a huge hug with Bob Barker sandwiched between them.

Chandler held her out away from him, arms straight, by her shoulders. “Who have we here?” he asked.

“This is Bob,” and looking over at me, “and this is Bob too,” she giggled. “This little guy here is Bob Barker,” she ruffled up the pup’s ears, “and this fellow here is Bob Windowmaker.” She giggled louder.

“What? Say that again.” Chandler looked at me perplexed.

All this was starting to wear on me. Again, I found myself having to live up to someone’s expectations when all I really wanted was to be left to myself, but I felt I owed it to Asia to once again be the charming celebrity. I stood there looking at my feet trying to find within myself the enthusiasm that was missing. “Yes, I’m that Bob, the 222 guy. Asia has told me a lot about you, Chandler. You have a very special sister, you know.” I forced a smile and extended my hand to Chandler.

Chandler returned the handshake and said, “What a pleasure to have you here, Bob. I want you to feel at home. You look tired; I can only imagine the wear and tear all this has had on you. You don’t have to be anybody but yourself here. If you have been looking for a sanctuary, you have found one. Come on inside, my friend; let me show you around.”

Chandler’s sincerity and warmth immediately dispelled my fear of being overwhelmed by attention. I already felt a deep connection to him. He put his arm around his sister and I followed them inside.

Chandler stopped inside the foyer, “I’m sure Asia has already told you about Grayson Canyon, Pueblo to the Stars. It’s a realization of our father’s dream.”

I wondered how much Chandler was like his dad. Chandler was about my height, five-nine, shoulder length, light brown hair and baby faced. He didn’t look as if he could be any older than fifteen, but Asia had already told me he was soon to be twenty-nine. The place was every bit as beautiful as I imagined it, especially the atrium with the water feature. The sound of water gently tumbling over the turquoise colored rocks, accented by the light dappling on the walls from the sun shafting in through the opening above, gave the feeling of being in a magical grotto.

Chandler said, “You know there is plenty of time for you to take the tour. I wanted you to see this room though. It is really the heart and soul of the place. Have a seat and relax. Asia and I will go fetch Anna and we’ll be back in a few.”

I sat relaxing appreciating the quiet moment. I studied the details of the immaculate dark brown flagstone floor. It was obvious

everything had been done as a labor of love. The center of the floor was dominated by an intricate mosaic of the sun and moon. Bits of jasper, and opalized, petrified wood provided the red and yellow warmth of the sun. The moon was defined by the cool colors of turquoise, green variscite, and chrysocolla on a field of dark blue lapis lazuli flecked with silver. It was a masterpiece without a doubt. Three large potted trees towered to the ceiling. One was in full fruit heavily loaded with figs. Another had unripe tangerines and the third was a palm. In around the room, raised beds overflowed with flowering plants and herbs. The lushness of the room was in stark contrast to the high desert fauna beautifully landscaped across the patio that opened out from the atrium. I could definitely be at peace in a place like this. I stretched out on my back on the beautiful bench made of a solid piece of smoothly weathered sandstone that looked like the room had been built around it. I lay there staring out at the deepening blue sky through the naturally shaped opening in the ceiling. How long had it been since I left Indiana and started my walk along the river? Only six months. In that time, the world had taken the first steps in realization of a new dream. I allowed myself to accept my part in all that was unfolding. I knew I was responsible for making the world a better place, but I had an uneasy feeling that I may not have done enough to see that everyone fully understood the need to find the stillness necessary in order for this new dream to become a reality. I worried there was still too much fear afoot in the world and that too many would fall back into the old habits of looking for answers from outside themselves, rather than seeking solutions from within their own souls. I tried to think what I should do next. Do I follow my heart and work from inside myself, or do I need to suck it up and put myself out there in front of the big light again and take an active role once more. I decided I could wait at least a few days before I would decide.

Asia and Bob Barker came for me. The pup ran across the room and jumped onto my chest frantically licking my face. "Get down, Bob. He loves you so much, Bob, can't you tell? Anna has supper waiting for us. I bet you're hungry too."

I followed Asia down a meandering hallway softly lit with stained glass sconces that, I found out later, her dad had made out of cheap solar landscape lights. Chandler introduced me to Anna. She was a slender blonde woman in her forties with medium length hair

and glasses. She had the same bounce in her step that Jasmine had and I liked her immediately.

“Asia has told us how you bumped into her at just the right time in Oklahoma City. Thanks for helping her get back here in one piece. It’s quite an honor having you as our guest, Bob. I hope you enjoy your stay with us. We get quite a few guests through here and we make sure everyone has the privacy they need. I don’t want to impose on you; although, I’m dying to hear from the master himself how you have been able to make such a big splash without getting all caught up in the whole celebrity thing. We have been following all of the 222 stuff since we first heard about it. For us, it was affirmation for the things we have been trying to do here, you know, how to model a better future, a new dream, if you will, in order for people to see the light and know they no longer have to be slaves to the old dream and slaves to the system. Asia said you don’t meet people by chance alone, nor do we. It is poetic justice to have you here. I know it was meant to be, and if there is anything we can do to help you in your endeavors, we will do all we can to support you. Asia says you were looking forward to some solitude and time alone. She mentioned a cave and Zeph. If that is what you decide you want, we will help you do that too. Listen to me; I’m doing all the talking. Excuse me, please.” Anna blushed delightfully.

“Anna is our chef. We all take turns, but she is the one who is in charge of the kitchen,” Chandler passed a bowl of fresh fruit to me. “We grow nearly everything we eat and what we can’t provide for ourselves, we trade for with our neighbors up the hill. They have a beautiful greenhouse complete with a fish farm that is part of a self-sustaining system that is quite remarkable. We aren’t strict vegetarians. We don’t eat much meat with the exception of fish and fowl on occasion. Have some of this, it’s a Greek salad with goat cheese. The olives are from our trees. When we finish here, I would like to show you our workshop; it’s sort of a laboratory and I’m pretty sure you will find it interesting.”

“All this is so perfect and so interesting. How many of you live here?” I asked.

“Usually just me, and Mother, Anna, and her husband Rick, and now Asia. Rick is our horticulturalist and is busy up on the slopes tending to some medicinal crops.” Chandler smiled, “It’s his thing, and he is good at it. Rick has developed some sativa strains that are adapted perfectly to the altitude and the shorter growing season at

these higher elevations. He is running his harvest seminar now and is also out recalibrating some special instrumentation we have throughout the area, but we will get into that when we finish dinner.”

Asia must have done a good job of relating my story, for Chandler and Anna had only a few polite questions, and made no big deal about me being the famous 222 guy. We finished eating and helped clear the table and then Chandler couldn’t hold his excitement. “Let’s go see the lab. I can’t believe I get to show this to you of all people, but I know you will be as excited as we have been lately.”

The house was like a labyrinth winding this way and that, across terraces, and up and down ladders finally to the lab. “This is it!” Chandler said proudly. “I know it looks a mess, it always does. We usually have several projects going at once.” He pointed to the right side of the room, “That’s our alternative energy project. We have nearly perfected zero-point energy motors, over there we have our water splitter; it pulls hydrogen out of water. That’s replaced all our gasoline and propane needs, but this is what we are so excited about these days.”

Chandler took me over to a small desk with a computer wired to a black box and a large flat-screen monitor mounted on the wall above. This is our own little global consciousness measurement system. We are using it to measure the local effect on the noosphere. Asia said that you know about the noosphere and believe it is a factor in how the 222 Revolution will play out.”

“I remember saying that, but truthfully I’m not all that informed on what it takes to measure it; although, all this looks pretty simple, but I’m sure there is much more to it.”

“On the top left of the screen is Princeton University’s GCP – Global Consciousness Project. Below that is the location of all their ‘eggs’ - their measuring devices. On the right is our instrument readouts and below that, the location of our ‘eggs,’ as well. I’ll do my best to explain.”

I interrupted. “I’m somewhat familiar with the Princeton project. Let me see if I have any of this correct. The noosphere is the name for the collective human consciousness that supposedly encompasses the whole globe. The premise is, if it really exists, then there should be a means for measuring it and determining what external effects influence the noosphere, for instance, things like 9/11, or the Indian Ocean Tsunami, and other events that humans may respond to collectively. The eggs are random number generators that, on

occasion, produce nonrandom sequences that can, at times, be correlated to changes in the noosphere. Am I right on any of this?"

"Spot on, Bob. So, what we have done is create our own local egg grid. We are exploring the noosphere on a much smaller scale and are trying to determine what things in our local environment play a part in affecting the local noosphere. The really cool thing is we believe, along with the researchers at Princeton, that there has been a shift in the noosphere brought on by the 222 Revolution. That is almost without question. Now the really amazing thing is that our measurements have gone off the charts the last two days. We have had a remarkable string of nonrandom sequences starting last night and that has continued to increase right up to you and Asia arriving. It almost seems as if your physical presence has a direct influence on the local noosphere. That is why we have the system in diagnostic mode at the moment while Rick gets around to recalibrating all twenty-five eggs that we have within a thirty-mile radius. He can do it via his laptop, so we should have the system up by noon tomorrow. We hope you can help us with some basic experiments that we want to try out. We have a couple of theories to put to test."

"So, you have developed a Bob detector," I laughed.

"God only knows, but something is happening and we think we know what it is, but enough of this for now. Let's get you settled in. Asia said you had to make a quick getaway from the law and you don't have any bags or anything, but Anna will make a trip to Santa Fe tomorrow so we can get you resupplied. Let me show you to the guest room."

My room seemed to be carved out of the face of the canyon wall. A pair of small windows recessed deeply in the wall provided a vista of the canyon, which now looked bottomless in the gathering darkness. A small door, so low that you had to bend at the waist to pass beyond, opened onto a small balcony barely big enough for two people. Like the room itself, the balcony looked to be a natural ledge that formed a secure pocket to safely sit and take in the night air. The furnishings were Spartan, but elegant in their simplicity. The platform of the bed melted into the floor, and a bench for seating formed part of the wall. Chandler showed me the bathhouse down the hall where I could shower. Like everything else in the house, the shower was designed to be part of the natural theme. Great ferns placed on stone ledges protruding from the shower walls, along with the ceiling mounted shower head, made it seem as if one were

standing under a tropical waterfall. I felt very grateful to have a place like this to recollect myself.

It felt good to be refreshed. I was fatigued, but my mind felt especially awake. The cool air beckoned me out onto the balcony where I sat on a cushion set on a low platform breathing slowly and deeply, focusing with my eyes closed on the movement of the air and the night sounds around me. I felt that I was alone in the world meditating in a private hermitage. This was nice, I thought. Perhaps the cave might not be necessary after all.

Unlike back in the Midwest, where the late summer evenings are a cacophony of night sounds, here above the canyon each cricket expressed an individual voice. The soft sound of the beating of wings came from the swifts nesting above me. A nighthawk made a visit and startled me back to the moment with the deep vibration of its wings as it pulled up from a dive. I sat on the edge of darkness; that's how I felt then. I tried to imagine what role, if any, I had yet to fulfill in bringing the world to its knees. I knew that is what I had intended from the outset. I had understood the power of an idea and had utilized the common nature of man to bring it into each and everyone's mind. That seemed easy, and it was. Mix sex, mystery, and a little danger with any story and people take interest. Leave it up to the media to be the messenger. That's the advantage of everyone being plugged in at the same time. Now, I saw that I wasn't the only person with a vision and a plan. Grayson Canyon, Pueblo to the Stars was someone else's vision backed by the love and determination to see it come to fruition. That made me realize that I was not the first, the originator, of the new dream; rather, I was building on a common theme that others had before me. I knew I was in the right place and that whatever decision I needed to make would be made here, but not tonight. As I stretched out on the bed, a sweet, almost sorrowful melody of a cedar flute from somewhere in the house accompanied me into my dreams.

The first thing I did in the morning was to go onto the balcony and give a prayer of thanks for the wonderful gift of another day on this remarkable planet. I slipped on a soft, brown, guest robe and a pair of flip-flops and started to make my way to the bathhouse. I stepped out onto the patio and was greeted by a woman's cheerful voice from inside the door of the atrium. She sat on the stone bench that I had sprawled out on the evening before. The sunlight haloed her reddish brown hair and put a warm glow over her skin. "Good

morning, Mr. Windowmaker. I hope you slept well.” Her voice added a melody to the sound of the water.

“Yes, thank you.” I was struck by the charming and beautiful smile before me.

“We haven’t met. I am Mrs. Grayson Connell. I am Chandler’s and Asia’s mother. When you’re ready, please come and join me for some coffee, would you?”

“I would be delighted, Mrs. Grayson,” and I shuffled off towards the bath.

Don’t ask me why, but for some reason I had pictured Mrs. Grayson as some poor, frail widow, gray-haired and feeble. I found myself primping in the mirror trying to look my morning best. I got a little chuckle out of the fact that once again, I was in a brown robe and sandals, but now without the beard and long hair. I quickly rejoined her.

“I should probably get dressed before I join you, Mrs. Connell.” I felt a little embarrassed in just my robe for some reason.

“Quite the contrary, Mr. Windowmaker. You look just fine. I’ve seen plenty of pictures of you in a robe, my Dear.” She tapped the seat next to her. “How do you take your coffee?”

“Black’s fine, please.” The sweetness in her voice more than made up for no sugar.

I sat down next to her. “This is such a beautiful spot; how wonderful.”

She handed me a coffee mug and said. “Yes, my husband and I always came here in the morning to enjoy the new day together.”

I couldn’t help but to look at the beautiful woman next to me. “I see where your daughter gets her good looks, and Chandler his baby face.” I felt myself blushing.

“That’s so sweet of you, Mr. Windowmaker. Why, I do believe you’re a little flushed. Is everything all right?” she smiled as if she could read my mind.

“I just mean that you have two very beautiful children and that you are...” I lost the word and my tongue locked up.

She saved me, “Thank you; that is so nice of you to say that.” She smiled and looked away. I think I saw her blush too.

I sipped my coffee and felt this incredible energy emanate from her. “I had a lovely two days traveling with your delightful daughter. I wish all kids her age had her wisdom and light.”

“Asia came to my room at first light and told me all about you, Mr. Windowmaker. May I call you Bob? You may call me Brooke; it’s short for Brooklyn.”

“Brooklyn. That’s a nice name.”

“My dad was a Dodgers fan. I guess I’m lucky he didn’t root for the Pittsburgh Pirates.” She flashed another smile and laughed.

“You must love it here,” I said, “It must be so nice being surrounded by your family.”

“Surrounded is a good way to put it, Mr. Windowmaker. It seems as if I’m the only old person around, sometimes.”

“Don’t say that, why you must have had children at a very young age.” I wanted to bite my tongue. I couldn’t help myself from trying to flatter her.

“My you are quite the charmer, Bob.”

I sat in awkward silence feeling that familiar heat rising in me.

Again, she rescued me, “Perhaps, after breakfast, you will allow me to give you the tour of our home.”

“I would like that very much.”

She stood and reached out and picked two figs from the tree. “They are very delicious, try one.”

Just watching her eat the fig made it necessary to tighten the robe around me to avoid embarrassing myself. She had swept me off my feet the moment I laid my eyes on her.

I joined Brooke, Anna, and the kids at the breakfast table. Anna served a simple fare of fried corn cakes with homemade hummus, fresh melon, and strawberries. We topped off breakfast with pinon-flavored coffee and homemade rice flour cinnamon rolls. I saw Asia smile at me. She could tell that I couldn’t keep my eyes off her mom. “I’m going to town with Anna this morning. We will be back by lunch. That should give you time to get to know Mom a little better,” she grinned.

“Ready for the grand tour, Bob?” Brooke’s blue-gray eyes sparkled at me.

Brooke led me through the maze of their beautiful home.

“It would be easy to get lost in here.” I said.

“Grayson liked it that way. Most of the house was carved into the cliff face. He took advantage of what Mother Nature had created for him. He was good at finding uses for recycled material too. The windows up there are old windshields from the junkyard.” They

were set into the plastered wall in curvy free form openings that collected the morning light giving warmth to the room.

“The windows serve a dual purpose of letting in the light and for providing passive solar heating. All the electricity comes from the sun, at least for now. Chandler and Rick are working on some new inventions that will replace the solar system completely. They are like two mad geniuses in that laboratory.” We moved on, “You have seen the bathhouse. Our water is heated by the sun. Even in the winter, we have hot water because he insulated everything so well. Grayson designed the water catchment system to collect the rain runoff from the roof and from the sandstone rock faces around the house. It all collects in three, ten thousand gallon water cisterns. The rainy season is almost at an end for the year, but we always have been able to top off the tanks and this year was no exception. It only takes a couple of good summer cloudbursts to do the job.” She opened another door, “Here is the mechanical room.”

I could tell that all the systems were laid out by the hand of a fine engineer. I traced the water lines through a simple filtration system that used sand and activated charcoal before passing through an ultraviolet light that purified their water. One wall had all the electrical components with a charge controller, inverters and a bank of batteries. Large ducts ran to a heat pump that transferred air from the warm areas to the cooler areas in the house, and vice a versa, if needed. A swamp cooler, which was essentially a large insulated box that opened to the outside, was equipped with a fan and filter media that held the water that trickled through it cooling the air by evaporation.

Brooke pointed these things out. “As a matter of principle we try to conserve as much as possible. We recycle all the gray-water; that’s water from the kitchen sink and the shower, to use for watering the gardens. The septic is exceptionally amazing. Grayson was able to incorporate nature into that system as well. He reformed the floor of the canyon below the house so cattails, and other marsh plants, would grow. They clean the water naturally over time. Chandler is always taking water samples, and he says the water comes out clean enough that we could actually drink it if we had to. It has created a beautiful wildlife sanctuary that is a gorgeous green oasis of flowers and birds and everything else that lives out here.

Our next stop was the greenhouse and Brooke explained in detail how easy it was for them to grow more than enough food for

themselves. “Rick is the master gardener. Have him bring you down here. You can learn a lot more from him.”

“You have done a fine job giving me the tour. I am so impressed, Brooke. I can only imagine your surprise when you first saw all this.”

“Yes, it really saddens me that we had so little time to share it.” The cloud quickly lifted from her face. “Come on, there is one last thing I want to show you. Follow me.”

We passed through the atrium again and out to the patio. Narrow steps led up the rock wall into a small cave opening. Inside, it widened into a small chamber with a ladder leading up. “This is the way to the observatory.”

I followed Brooke up the ladder not being able to ignore her lovely, firm figure. She was so youthful in her graceful movements.

“We very well couldn’t call this the Pueblo of the Stars without this.”

We had reached a dark, domed room dominated by a large refracting telescope. Brooke started to turn a hand-crank on the wall and the cover to the dome opened like a clamshell.

“We usually keep it closed in the daytime. It’s the only part of the house anyone can see from a distance. The shell over the dome is made of foam and it matches the natural sandstone of the house. Grayson learned how to make it from a friend who made props in the movie business. Isn’t the view breathtaking?”

We stood side-by-side taking in the panoramic view. “This is where I was last evening when you arrived. I spend the nights up here alone sometimes when I need to feel close to my husband.” I saw her sadness return. Brooke put her arm around me and leaned her head on my shoulder. “I am so glad I’ve been able to share his dream with you, Bob.”

I held her in my arms and placed my hand to the back of her head feeling her soft beautiful hair and the closeness of her body. “Thank you, Brooke. You are such a lovely person. Thank you for sharing a part of you with me.” I felt her body gather into mine.

“I’ve been feeling quite sad lately. I’ve been feeling so alone and sorry for myself. I am so glad you came along. I feel I can open my heart up to you, Bob. It’s been so hard for me to get over my husband’s death. If it wasn’t for the kids, I don’t know if I would have kept on living.”

"I'm glad you did." I lifted her chin towards me. I saw my soul reflecting in her teary eyes. For a moment, I thought we were going to kiss; instead, I released my embrace and she gathered herself.

"We should close this up." She cranked the dome's cover closed. "I could use some tea. Anna always has some delightful herbal tea." Where we had been so close, now a distance separated us.

In the kitchen, I noticed how she moved as if in a well-rehearsed routine. I knew it was the simple movements of someone still feeling the loss of a loved one. Grieving people often become lost in the little routines of their habits. It's a mechanism for surviving from one moment to the next. My heart bled for her.

I pulled her back from where her mind had drifted. "I can't understand why living this way hasn't become the norm. Just think, if more people had the foresight that Grayson had, the world would be a much better place. There would certainly be a lot more to go around."

"Grayson was good at getting his ideas across and in getting others on board with his plans. Honestly though, I still resent it a little that he did all this without me. It was a wonderful surprise seeing it all completed, but looking back, I know it would have given us so much more time together. However, no one knows how long they have to live, and I am sure if he knew that God was going to call him back so soon; he would have done things differently. I guess it all happens like it should though, but that doesn't make it any easier to accept."

I tried to change the subject. "You know, I worked at the same job for nearly twenty-five years and I was always trying to get my friends to pull together to build a dream like this. I would point out the fact to my co-workers that we spent more time together than we spent with our families. We worked hard and produced a lot, but we didn't get to enjoy the fruits of our labors. Many of us were friends, and we would spend time outside of work sharing each other's company, drinking beer, playing ball, or fishing and stuff, but when it came around to discussing pooling our resources and our labor for some grand common ideal, no one wanted to commit to any such idea. Somehow, I wasn't able to communicate the vision. It was as if my friends had some mental block against seeing how free and simple life could be if people would only choose to come together and cooperate."

“I believe it’s all part of their conditioning, Bob, especially people of our generation. I think sometimes that we all felt deflated after the rush of togetherness we enjoyed in the sixties fell away to the struggle of just making it by, raising families, paying taxes and mortgages, and all the other have-to things we found facing us. It’s hard for people to see a new dream, especially when they get sold on believing they are living free, with freedom of choice. It takes years to come back to the realization that all our hard work and sacrifices were for no better reason than just holding out until retirement. By then, many feel it’s too late and they are too old to do anything other than coast to the end.”

“Grayson wasn’t like that. What made him different?”

“He saw himself trapped in the Great American Dream too. I know I was mostly responsible for that. I wanted a life that was comfortable and secure. I always knew the things stirring in his heart and I felt they threatened my peace and security. I suppose that is why he felt he had to do it alone. I guess I was like your friends you described. I didn’t see a need for change; I wouldn’t allow a new dream to manifest within me. You could say that Grayson was listening to the beat of a different drummer. He saw things in the present that clearly gave indications of how things were going to be in the future, and he was determined enough to take the responsibility on his own to see that we were provided for when all of the old ways crumbled around us. You know that better than anybody from what I understand about you and the Boblovian Revolution.”

“Grayson and I are alike in that way, for sure. I see our goals are a little different, and certainly, our methods, but we both were striving for the same results, a better world for everybody. Grayson modeled his new world through activity, well planned and executed. Me, I model it in my heart and my head, in my soul, and I’m sure he did too, but I focused on bringing my new world about by working on people’s minds and finding a way for communicating a new message that gives hope for the formulation of a completely new dream we all can share.”

“You are a man for the times, Bob. The world is ready for the gift you are giving. It is getting much harder for people to deny that the old world is falling apart. As harsh as it is, we can’t turn our backs on the fact that our government has been working against us and that they don’t have the peoples’ best interest at heart. Everyone

now has to ask themselves - do I hide my head in the sand and go on feeling helpless and powerless, or do I take up the idea of rising up and assuming my own personal responsibility for reshaping the world in a new way? You, Bob, have given them that; it can't be denied, and it has gone too far now. There is no stepping back from the edge. We all are seeing how we have to pull together. We need to take the Boblovian Address and make it our mantra; Don't be Afraid to be Happy. I cried when I saw you deliver that. It was as if you were searching my soul, speaking directly to me. Thank you for that."

"Brooke, you are so beautiful. I feel as if I have been searching for you my whole life." Love powered my next words. "You honor my reality with your presence. You are a light shining in my darkness too." The memory of holding her in my arms rushed back to me. "I love you, Brooke."

She held back the tears flooding her eyes, her chin quivered perceptibly. She said nothing and went back to her routine of clearing the table and tidying up the kitchen. After several moments, she said without looking at me, "It's been a very special morning for me, Bob. Thanks for putting up with me. Excuse me," she said, as she hurried out of the room.

My heart sank. I felt as if I had hurt her. The last thing I wanted was to do more damage to her broken heart. I heard Asia and Anna returning, so I slipped out of the kitchen and tried to find my way outside, but I ran into Chandler who had come looking for me.

"There you are, Bob. I was coming for you. Rick is on his way back. We are getting ready to fire up the GCP again."

Once we were in the lab, Chandler flicked on the monitor and booted the computer. Chandler explained to me that the Princeton project had spat out a bunch of non-random numbers during my Boblovian Address, which gave a strong indication that the collective consciousness of the planet had in essence, lit up, because so many people tuned in at the same time. The monitor showed a real time bar graph for each egg around the globe. If an egg started issuing nonrandom sequences, the bar would move and a tone would sound. If the nonrandom sequence maintained any length of time, the bar flashed red and made a gong sound. If several eggs did the same simultaneously, then the monitor would light up and make a lot of racket.

“It seems that whenever anything major happens with the 222 movement, we see the effects on Princeton’s GCP, and ours, too. Now the really crazy thing is that six of our eggs, all to the north and east of us, ran a three second string of two’s the night before last. It blew our minds. Since that moment, our eggs have produced many more nonrandom sequences and with the frequency increasing, we thought we had a software problem, so we shut it down for recalibration. I really don’t think we have a problem. I think the system was running fine, but in the name of good scientific procedure, we have to make sure our system doesn’t have any glitches causing false readings.”

An instant message from Rick popped up on the computer – Ready when you are. Turn it on. With that, Chandler brought their GCP images up which were of the same format as the Princeton project’s. The red bars of all twenty-five eggs climbed and fell almost in unison. Every five seconds, or so, they all rose, turned red and gonged. It was a steady pulse, almost like a heartbeat. Each time they peaked, the Princeton instruments peaked too.

“Unbelievable.” Was all Chandler could utter. “What the hell is going on?” He muttered, as he sat at the computer fiddling with the program. “It’s working fine. The diagnostic showed no problems. Do me a favor and place your hand on this box.”

“This is one of the eggs?” I put my hand on it, and according to the monitor, nothing changed. It continued to gong with the same rhythmic beat as the others.

“No effect, okay. Maybe we need a little more distance. Do you mind walking out to the carport? That will put a couple of hundred yards between you and this. I doubt it will make any difference, but it’s easy to check out.”

“Not a problem,” I needed a little time to think over my feelings about his mom. The sun was up bright, and I was sure I would meet Methuselah somewhere on the path, but not this morning as it turned out. It was silly for me to be so expressive of my feelings. I hoped Brooke didn’t confuse me saying I love you with saying I’m in love with you, but I was fooling myself; I was falling in love with her. I hate that romantic rush of giddy feelings I get when I come across that seemingly so right person who clouds my reasoning. It’s a stage that is best passed through as quickly as possible or you can get stuck in romancing, and not ever move beyond it. I thought of Jasmine. She loved me, and I was a little bit in love with her. She

caught me with my guard down, and in a way, she managed to take advantage of me. I knew her feelings for me are stronger than what I felt for her, but the feelings I had for her, nonetheless, were strong and I liked the energy that flowed between us. Maybe it's because I pick up on Brooke's loneliness and her heavy sorrow that attracts me to her and makes it so easy for me to feel what's in her heart, that and the fact I think she is so damn sexy, I suppose.

As it ended up, I didn't have much time to sort it out. I ran into Rick as he was pulling into the drive. I watched as a tall, lean, beanpole of a man hurriedly parked and jumped out of the pickup truck. He had a long, gray, ponytail, a tied-dyed t-shirt and ridiculously short shorts that made his legs look even more spindly.

"You're Bob! Damn it. Good to meet you. I'm Rick. Anna told me on the phone all about you. There is a whole lot I want to talk to you about, but it can wait. Let's see what's up with the eggs."

It was hard keeping up with his long strides. I wondered if he was always this fired up. Rick shouted hi to Anna in the kitchen and told her he had to check in on the lab. Asia followed Rick and me back to Chandler.

Asia playfully poked me in the back as we made our way. "Did you and Mom have a nice morning together? Isn't Mom beautiful? I hope you two become really good friends."

I held the door of the lab open for her and said, "I do too. I may need a little help from you on that though. We'll talk later, okay?"

"Now look at it!" Chandler was all excited. "We are getting 222 sequences again, just as you guys came through the door. This is weird."

Rick sat at the computer typing while Chandler hung over his shoulder. "I tried that, that too, it's still reading the same," he said.

I think it's working fine," added Rick. "I guess it's time we get ahold of the professors at Princeton and see what they are making of it all."

Then I flashed on a thought. "Chandler, you said you started getting 222 sequences the night before last, up here in the northeast quadrant, right?" I pointed to the map on the monitor with the location of their eggs.

"Yes, that's right. What are you thinking?" Chandler knew I was onto something.

"Asia, give me your pouch." It was hanging on her belt loop.

I removed the pair of Moqui marbles and placed them on top of the egg unit. Immediately, the representative bar graph on the monitor shot up and sustained its bright red color, and below it, a continuous string of 2's displayed. "There's your answer," I said proudly.

"I'll be damned," Rick said softly.

"Tell them the story, Asia, about the lightning storm."

Asia related the whole story of that remarkable moment. Chandler and Rick looked at each other in amazement. "I see we have some more work cut out for us," Chandler said. "Can you leave these with us for a while, Asia, while we run some different tests?"

Asia agreed, and said "Let's leave the boys with the boys, Bob. They will be busy for hours. Come on, let's go tell Anna. She'll want to see this for herself."

We found Anna in the kitchen preparing lunch. Asia excitedly told her what we had just witnessed and offered to finish making lunch and to bring it down to the lab for the mad scientists, as she referred to them.

"Anna picked out some clothes for you and some other stuff you might need. We put them in your room. She is pretty good at picking out the right sizes, and don't worry, she didn't buy any of those old silly shorts that Rick wears," she laughed.

"Thanks, I appreciate that. I have some money to pay for it all." I still had a few bills left over that Jasmine had stuffed into my hand back in Oklahoma City.

"Oh, no need for that, but we always keep a cookie jar here for any donations. You are welcome to contribute if you like."

I stuffed the remaining wad of cash in the jar and had a seat, while Asia continued with making lunch.

"Mom is usually here to help with lunch. You didn't scare her off, did you, Bob?"

"I may have at that. You didn't tell me you had such a beautiful mother. I think she caught me with my defenses down. She isn't anything like I expected her to be."

Asia stopped chopping carrots long enough to turn and look at me. "I knew the two of you would find a connection. Mom needs to start reconnecting with herself and the world. She needs to have something to look forward to again."

“I may have come on too strong. I couldn’t help myself. I think I made a bit of a fool out of myself, Asia. I told her that I loved her. I can’t believe I actually said that.”

“You do work quickly, but you know, if you meant it, and it came from your heart, then I’m sure it was exactly what she needed to hear from you. Mom can’t go on living in the past. She is ready to move forward, and I know she was very excited that you found your way to our door. I went to her room early this morning and broke the news to her. I shouldn’t say this, but she got all giddy and started to do her hair and make-up, asking me all the time if she looked pretty and presentable. I watched her try on several different outfits before we decided on a beautiful silk kimono that, at the last second, lost out to a pair of tight jeans and the simple white blouse you saw her in. She said the kimono hid her figure and that you might think she was hiding a big fat butt or something. Mom is so cute, isn’t she?”

“Way beyond cute, Asia. She is drop dead gorgeous. So, do you think she is going to hide in her room all day?”

“Here, you take this down to the lab and I’ll take lunch up to Mom and see what state of mind she is in. I’ll meet up with you later in the lab.”

When I got back to the lab, Chandler, Rick, and Anna were conferring excitedly.

Chandler looked up as I came in. “Anna has a theory, and we think she is on to something. Tell Bob what you were telling us, Anna.”

“Okay, this is what I think. You know I am a crystal therapist. I do spiritual healings and physical alignments with all sorts of crystals. Each type of crystal has its own specific energy. I think of crystals as the highest evolved forms of minerals. Like people are to the animal kingdom, crystals are to the mineral kingdom. I believe that rocks and minerals have a consciousness that, though it may be below our level of self-awareness, they do have a spirit all to themselves. Crystals are known to have various vibration patterns that have effects on other life forms. We live in the age of crystals, you know. Most of our technologies still utilize crystals in one form or another, from silicone computer chips to intricate instruments for measuring all sorts of things in our universe. Some crystals even create their own measurable electrical fields. Some even put out more energy than they receive. I think it is a safe assumption to say that just as human consciousness has its own collective noosphere,

crystals and minerals share a common noosphere of their own. All combined, there is one unified field of consciousness for the whole Earth, which, in itself, is a part of an all-encompassing universal field. Does all that make any sense?"

"I'm right there with you, Anna," I replied.

"Great, now it seems to me that this unified Earthly field has recently elevated in intensity. Chandler and Rick's instruments seem to confirm this. Now your Boblovian Revolution has allowed a coalescence of attention by an ever-increasing number of people. This amounts to an elevation in consciousness across the board. The Princeton folks have been measuring the noosphere for many years and they have evidence that when a large number of people are focusing their attention on the same event, it causes a measurable ripple in the noosphere. There is one major difference in all this. Your message goes beyond a singular event. Having nearly everyone focusing on achieving stillness within themselves amounts to an evolutionary raising of the unified field of consciousness. It's as if finding stillness within each individual has allowed for the dissipation of many of the interference patterns that, up to now, dominated our collective consciousness."

Rick interjected, "It's clear that when a person obtains a personal state of stillness, it has a physical effect on them. This has been verified by experiments that measure brainwaves, heart rates, and other physical changes that result from deep meditation and quieting of the mind. The studies done on Tibetan monks, for example, who have been able to use their minds and altered states of consciousness to manifest radical changes in their physiology supports this. Through their minds, they can control their heart rates and body temperature, to name only a few. I'm sorry, Anna, go ahead."

"My theory is that each individual, upon discovering that place of stillness within his or her soul, adds to and reinforces the universal field of consciousness. This represents a huge shift for the planet. It is an evolutionary leap forward. Now the question that comes to my mind is - does this elevation in awareness affect all matter; does it raise the level of consciousness in animals, plants, and minerals? If everything is a small piece of the unified field, then it goes to say that even the smallest change in one individual manifests a change to everything else to some degree."

Anna paused long enough for me to ask, “Does the raising in masse of human consciousness result in an elevation of the collective consciousness of everything else, or might the raising of consciousness of, for instance, the mineral realm result in a reinforcement of human consciousness?”

“That’s a wonderful question,” Anna replied. “From what Asia told me about these Moqui marbles, I think we may be able to find the answer. To me, it’s obvious that these beautiful magnificent mineral specimens have somehow elevated into a higher realm of existence. What remains to be discovered is whether they were pulled up to a higher level by the realignment of the noosphere, or did their elevation create this new alignment. My guess, it’s a bit of both –the self-reinforcing feedback loop. As one field becomes better organized and strengthens, then all the other fields are positively affected and vice versa.”

“All things exist within existence.” Asia had come into the room. “Isn’t that what you told me, Bob? Truth One, we all exist. Truth Two, we all exist within existence. Isn’t everything connected to everything?” Asia picked up her pair of marbles and stroked them with her finger. “You guys like attention, don’t you?” The monitor responded with a loud gong. Asia then sidled over to where I was standing and whispered, “Mom is waiting for you in the atrium.”

I didn’t wait to eat lunch, “I’ll leave it to you guys to figure this stuff out.” I excused myself and rushed to the atrium.

“Come sit by me,” Brooke said sweetly. My heart was beating so hard I was afraid she could hear it. She put her hand on my knee. “I’m sorry if I got a little upset this morning. I still have a lot of work to do on myself. Every so often, my grief comes pouring over me. I know I need to move forward with my life. It isn’t easy, but I’m getting there.”

“I’m sorry too, Brooke, if I came on too strong. I have never been as attracted to someone as I am to you. It’s a little confusing for me too. I have felt for a long time that I didn’t need a partner in life. I’ve gone through many, and I swore to myself that I wouldn’t break any more hearts. But, I also realize that is the selfish side of me. It’s my heart and my feelings that I am trying to protect, and this self-denial trip I’ve been on isn’t working out for me.”

“I don’t understand. How can you feel that way after all the things you have given to the world this last year? Your Boblovian Address was a gift to us all, especially to me.”

"I guess I don't see it that way. All I've done is share an idea, a different way of looking at things."

"You shared a new dream. I'd say that's a pretty big deal, Bob. You have given a great deal of yourself in doing that. You have sacrificed your privacy, for one, and you have revealed what is in your heart and shown that we all have the same desire for peace within ourselves. Not only that, you have been able to express what we all feel in a new way that gives the world hope for a better future. I say that's doing a lot of giving and sure doesn't seem very selfish to me."

I took her hand in mine. "You are so beautiful. Thank you for seeing it that way, but I'm a selfish bastard pig, there is no denying that." Her eyes met mine, showing confusion and hurt.

"Don't say that. How can you think that?"

I laughed, and that brightened the look in her eyes. "I know it sounds screwed up, but you see the whole individual sovereignty thing is completely selfish. To be truly selfless, one has to be completely selfish. Look at it this way. When someone does something good for another, what is their motivation? I think we do good for others because it makes us feel good about ourselves. That's putting the self first, you see. Even sacrificing one's life to save another is a totally selfish act."

"I suppose that's true. Deep down we all want to do good, taking and giving are two sides of the same coin. Both are motivated by selfishness, I guess. Only by putting ourselves first can we be in a position to help others. We must take care of ourselves first in order to take care of others. I can see it that way."

"And taking care of ourselves first can be putting ourselves second. We have a need to be giving. We need to be able to express our love for others by caring and showing concern, but we must not get lost in the fog. We all are motivated by our desire to do good in order to satisfy our self and to feel good about ourselves."

Brooke pulled me to her and kissed me on the lips, "You are one charming selfish bastard pig," she said sweetly.

"I'm glad you see that." I returned her kiss with another that sparked with the desire I felt for her.

We sat quietly for a while in each other's arms enjoying the connection we had made. Softly she asked, "What's next, my Dear?"

"You tell me. I didn't plan for this. I think we have plenty of time to figure out where we go from here, don't you? I've stopped being

in a hurry. I'm happy just being a victim of my circumstances. It all unfolds the way it's supposed to. For me, plans seem to get in the way of what I should be doing, which is staying open for new and unexpected delights. If I had any kind of plan, I probably wouldn't be here holding you in my arms now."

"There's a full moon tonight, Bob. Would you like to watch it rise with me from the observatory? Be there right at sunset, okay?"

"I'd like that very much. It's a date." We sealed it with a kiss and I left feeling as if I was floating on air. I made my way back to the lab and found Chandler and Rick absorbed with news coming across the internet.

"You need to check this out, Bob." Chandler moved over so I could have a better view of the screen. "Dallas D. Duncan, they call him D Cubed, just had a press conference in Little Rock saying that he is working on the release of the four people that were arrested in Ozone. He is the same guy who got your friend Jasmine out of trouble in Oklahoma a few days ago."

"What's the news on Jasmine?"

"The 222 website said she was interrogated and roughed up by the CIA they think, but D Cubed managed to get her out on car theft charges and pushed the court date ahead to next March. She seems to be safe now, by what the reports say."

"Who are the four they're holding in Arkansas? What charges do they have against them?"

"They arrested Jebongo, Smittytania, Rogerdonia and a guy named Badger. He's the guy they arrested thinking it was you. Nothing has been said about why they were arrested or what they are being charged with"

"Poor Badger, what else are they reporting?"

"People are pouring into Little Rock to give their support. They estimate at least twenty thousand so far. The police have set up barricades in front of the federal courthouse and, so far, there hasn't been any violence."

"That's all good news, I guess. What are they saying about me?"

"Not much except that your whereabouts are unknown."

"I think we better keep it that way for now, don't you?" Rick and Chandler nodded in agreement.

Rick went over and fiddled with the Moqui marbles still resting on the egg. "Our GCP seems to be indicating a fluctuation in the noosphere. It would indicate a massive tuning in on what's

happening in Little Rock. We put a call in to Princeton to give them our latest theory. Hopefully, they can corroborate our findings.”

“So, you’re planning on staying with us for a while, Bob?” asked Chandler.

“Yes, if you don’t mind. This seems to be a good place for me to keep abreast of what is going on out there in the world.”

Chandler and Rick smiled at each other, “That’s what we wanted to hear,” Chandler said.

The news from back east might as well have been from another world. All I could think about was Brooke and the evening we would be spending together. It was late afternoon and I went back to my room to get ready, which consisted of me pacing the floor trying to quiet my excitement. I answered a soft knock at the door. It was Asia.

“Big date tonight, huh?” Her mischievous smile radiated. “Here, I brought you a bouquet of flowers to give Mom. That’s what a proper gentleman would do.”

“Why do I feel like I’m being set up?”

“Oh, I don’t know, maybe because you are? Really, it only took a little push to get her moving in the right direction.”

“And the right bait?” I added.

Asia laughed, “And that, too. Did you see all the things we bought for you?” She opened the closet and I had a full wardrobe before me. “I think you would look very handsome in this sport jacket.”

“That’s not something I usually wear.” I said.

“Neither would Dad, but I know Mom always liked it when she saw a handsome man in a jacket.”

“Get out of here, I need to dress and get ready,” I acted annoyed, and that made Asia giggle.

“Well, I’ve done all I can for now. The rest is up to you. Bye, bye,” and she went out the door.

I was showered and dressed a good hour before sunset. With time to kill, I went out onto the terrace with pen and paper. Something inspired me to write a poem for Brooke. It was a way for me to get back in touch with myself. It was either that, or start getting the cold anxiety sweats. The words came easily. I copied the poem as neatly as I could and tucked it in with the flowers.

The canyon walls were draped by the evening shadows as I told myself, here goes, and made my way to the observatory. At the

bottom of the ladder leading up, I paused and listened to the sound of the native cedar flute coming from above. The tone was gentle and happy, not sad and sorrowful like I had heard the night before.

The cover to the observatory was open just enough to let a narrow band of bright light play through. Brooke sat on the floor with her back to me playing her flute. The swath of light cut diagonally across her accenting her beautiful auburn hair, a bare soft round shoulder, and one delicate thigh. Brooke seemed unaware that I was standing behind her listening to the soothing music. Her song ended on a long low note that tailed off into silence.

Before I could speak, she said. "Come sit with me, Bob, and I'll play another song for you."

I sat across from her and let myself relax. All the nervousness I had earlier melted away. I said nothing, and she broke into a new tune that conjured up the spirits for sure. Sitting in the dome, I felt like I was in a kiva tucked away in the ancient days of the pueblo people. The brilliant gash of light put a mystical quality to the scene, dividing the darkness as it cut the room in two. As the sun slowly made its way to the horizon, the beam of sunlight traversed her brow, igniting her eyes with fire, transforming her soul before me. With each change in the angle of the sunbeam, the room took on a different hue, ever deepening from yellow, to orange, and finally a ruby red. I was so captured by it that I didn't notice when she had finished playing.

"Are those for me?" She reached out to the bouquet of flowers in my hand.

"Wow, that was remarkable, Brooke."

"Thank you, and thank you for the flowers. That's so kind of you. Oh, and here's a note." She began to unfold the poem I wrote for her.

"It's a poem for you, Beautiful."

Brooke handed it back to me and said, "Please read it to me." So I read.

My Cave

Each day runs over me
Water droplets over a great stalactite
Hidden in my cave
In perpetual SILENCE

Each day like each droplet
Leaves its trace behind
Layer upon layer
Hardening over TIME

Creating rings within rings
Of individual experience
Colored by pale shades of
LONELINESS

I'm left clinging to the hope
Of a pillar below
Growing upwards towards me
Slowly through the DARKNESS

Each day, each drop
Holds the dream of our meeting
Lover's passion, lips touching
Joining me in my solitude
For ETERNITY

Brooke moved forward on hands and knees then took my head in in her hands and kissed me softly and deeply. "Your poem is a gift I will always treasure. It's time." She rose and cranked open the dome. The world slowly revealed itself again. The last ray from the sun poured up to the clouds above the purple horizon. The sky paled from blue to indigo eastward. The first star hovered high above us as I stood behind her holding her in my arms. My lips moved gently over her hair and neck. Neither one of us spoke; our love combined couldn't be measured in words.

"Just a few things to do," she whispered. Brooke moved around the room lighting several candles and incense. She took a bundle of dried sage and smudged the room releasing its fragrance that blended with the night air. All I could see was an angel before me. Brooke poured two glasses of wine and offered one to me. "To the new dream arising," she said, and we toasted to the direction of the rising moon that was just below the eastern horizon gathering light like the sunrise.

A finger of the northern lunar limb spread outward across the edge of the plains, quickly ascending, revealing its familiar face bathed in orange. Again, our eyes locked in a sharing acknowledgement, both of us understanding our place in heaven.

Brooke brushed back my hair looking up at me, she asked “Isn’t this the way it’s supposed to be, Bob? We both have been hiding in our caves for much too long, haven’t we?”

I reflected on how I felt when I went on my long walk along the river. Then, I needed to find myself within myself; now it was the opposite. I found myself through another who had been searching too. I saw through the veil that had kept me separated from others even when I was on stage surrounded by thousands. I came from a place of solitude, never really connecting with what was around me. I thought it was my lack of discipline that kept me from connecting to the moment that I so desired. Now I knew that my connecting to the moment had to be through another soul. To be completely here and now, I needed someone to share the joy with me to make the moment come alive.

“You are the only one who could have got me out of my cave, Brooke. You have been there all along, growing towards me waiting for this moment. We kissed again and held each other tightly.”

“Neither of us will ever be alone again.” Brooke pulled away from my embrace, “I’ve got a surprise for you. I’ve been saving this for a special time.” She fetched a small box from the table next to the incense. Brooke opened it in front of me and inside was four neatly rolled joints. “Asia rolled them for me. It’s been so long I had forgotten how.” Brooke let out the same little giggle that Asia had. “It’s been, god, I don’t know, I guess maybe twenty-five years since I smoked any pot. Will you join me?”

“I would be more than delighted, my Dear.” I took the fattest joint from the box. Brooke held up a candle and dazzled me with her smile. My hand held her hand and the candle between us. I looked at her through the flame as I lit the joint inhaling as deeply as I could. I made my eyes go crosswise as my cheeks puffed big letting out all the smoke in a huge bilious cloud. Gasping for air, I laughed, “Your turn.”

Like two kids behind the barn, we smoked our brains out. Everything was funny, me coughing up a lung and Brooke burning her tongue trying to give me a shotgun hit. That, and the wine, and we soon were rolling around on the floor intertwined in passion. I

kept trying to get her out of her clothes, but she kept playfully wiggling away from me. I finally pinned her down by getting on top of her and holding her wrist firmly to the floor.

“You’ve got me right where you want me, I see,” she said.

“You got that right.” I started giving her little nibbles on her ear. My lips followed the curve of her neck down to her breast where I did my best to unbutton her blouse with my teeth.

Then in a tone that I knew was serious, Brooke said “Not tonight, Bob. Not here, not like this. We have the rest of our lives ahead of us. We have plenty of time and I want it to be special, my Love. I don’t want to miss a thing and I’m so fucking stoned that I know I won’t remember a thing in the morning,” she laughed. “It doesn’t help that pot makes me so damned horny!”

“You are so right; we have lots of time for the good stuff.” I started to tickle her until she pleaded for me to stop.

Through the night, until the mountain peaks begged for the dawn, we talked. Brooke led me through the retelling of my tale. She questioned me specifically about the other women in my life and was particularly interested in my relationship with Jasmine. It was hard for me to relate everything that had happened between Jasmine and me because I really hadn’t taken the time to sort out my feelings for her. All the time Jasmine and I were together had to be taken within the context of the situation, which was changing continually. I summed it up by telling Brooke that with Jasmine that it always seemed as if life was trying to keep us apart, unlike with her, where life had drawn us to each other. I remarked that to me, it seemed to be a good omen. I told her it indicated that we were supposed to find each other in this life, and that we were meant to be together.

Brooke and I parted lovingly at first light, making our way through the silent house trying to be quiet, but the harder we tried not to disturb anyone, the more we found ourselves giggling and laughing. She walked me to my door then gave me the best first date kiss I ever had.

“Thank you, my Love, for a wonderful evening. I’m going back to my room and I will be thinking about how wonderful you are and how much I’m falling in love with you, Dear.” Brooke gave me one last hug and kiss.

“We’ll have to do this again soon,” I laughed. “Sweet dreams, my Love.”

I slept well into the morning until a loud rapping at my door awakened me.

“Bob, are you awake? It’s Chandler. We need to talk.”

My first thought was that he wanted to talk to me about his mother, but the urgency in his voice let me know it was more serious than that. His first words were, “We have a situation, Bob, that we need to deal with. It’s about whether we can have you staying here or not.”

“Sounds like an emergency. What happened? Is this something to do with your Mom?” I felt stupid, but I had to ask.

A very brief smile crossed Chandler’s face, “Strange question. No, you need to see a bulletin issued on the 222 website. Jasmine Hardy has put out a warning, a message for you, Bob. She said... well, you’ll see for yourself. There’s more, too. Get dressed and hurry down to the lab. We’ll be waiting for you.”

On my way to the lab, I met Brooke as she was leaving the kitchen. She held two big mugs of fresh coffee. “Fancy meeting you here, stranger,” she kidded. “Here handsome, I was bringing you your coffee. After last night, all I could dream about was being in your arms. I was hoping to find you in bed and I would be able to snuggle up with you, Love.”

“I would love to take you up on that, but Chandler has some news that’s urgent. I’m meeting him in the lab. He has something to show me. I guess there is some breaking news I need to see.”

I followed behind Brooke admiring how gracefully she moved. Everyone else had arrived in the lab before us. There was Asia, Chandler, Rick, Anna and a man I hadn’t met.

Chandler introduced me, “Bob, this is Zeph.”

My hand met his iron grip. “I’m a friend of Mike Wayne’s. I’ve been expecting you.” Zeph’s intense eyes blazed from under his shaggy dreadlocks. He reminded me of Bob Marley when he was fully bearded. “There have been some new developments, Bob.”

“Come see this, Bob.” Chandler had the internet up on the big monitor.

Unconsciously, I put my arm around Brooke and we put our attention to the video playing on the monitor.

“Let me play this from the start.” Chandler clicked back to the beginning of the clip.

We watched the report about the release of the Little Rock Four including a replay of the live press conference from the steps of the

courthouse held earlier that day. I heard Badger say “Hey, Bob, wherever you are, watch your step. These guys in there mean business. I don’t know what they woulda done if they got their hands on you, but it sure as hell scared the crap outta me. I ain’t gotta a whole lot else to say. Long live Bob of Boblovia!” His words didn’t give me much concern.

“Is that what you wanted me to see?”

“Keep watching, there’s more.” Rick said.

“It’s not good,” added Anna.

I clutched Brooke tighter to me. I could feel her squeeze me back. Jasmine appeared on screen. She stood in front of a blank background wearing large dark sunglasses. My first impression was of those phony CIA videos of Osama Bin Laden after 9/11.

“Bob, if you are still out there you need to listen to me. You are in great danger. The FBI and CIA are trying to find you. I have already had my brush with them.” She removed her sunglasses and turned the right side of her face towards the camera. “They did this to me and there was a lot more to come. The others in Little Rock were threatened too, especially Badger. They are not messing around. I was threatened with treason and execution if I didn’t tell them where you were. I wish I knew where you were; I would be rushing to your side. You know that, don’t you?” Jasmine’s feelings for me came through clearly. “Please take this seriously, please do that for me. I don’t want anything to happen to you. I don’t know what they want, but you need to do everything in your power to avoid capture. I love you, Bob. Take care of yourself. I’m okay; please don’t worry about me, just take care of yourself.” The tears ran down Jasmine’s cheek and the video went on with more news on the 222 Revolution and the thousands that had gathered in Little Rock.

Brooke saw the tears in my eyes too. It hurt me to see that I had been responsible for what Jasmine had endured. I felt really bad. Brooke read my body language and she pulled away from me. I felt her stiffen up and sensed her spirits dampening.

“That’s not the worst of it, Bob. Tell him, Zeph.” Chandler saw his mom was upset and went to her.

“I was at the store this morning in Needless. I ran into Boz. He said you two met the other day. There were two plain-clothed cops there earlier this morning. Boz said it was easy to spot them, a little weasely guy and some type of glamour cop. They had a picture of

Asia's pup." Zeph pointed to Bob Barker in Asia's arms. "They said they were looking for a lost dog, but Boz recognized the picture and said it was taken the other day when you and Asia stopped in. He said a tourist took both yours and the pup's picture so they have a shot of your mug too. He said the tourist lady said she was going to put the picture on her Facebook page. She must have, and they probably used their face recognition software to find it. They definitely are hard on your tail. It may only be a matter of hours before they find their way here and start crawling all over this place."

Chandler looked at me and said, "It's important that you remain free, Bob. I believe your girlfriend when she says that you are in serious danger. Look at what they did to her, and she was only in their custody for a few hours. I don't think they had any intentions on releasing her, or they wouldn't have beaten her like that. If it wasn't for Dallas D. Duncan, she may have disappeared for good."

I watched Brooke. Just the word girlfriend sent a tremble through her body and I could tell she was trying her best to control her emotions. Rick picked up where Chandler left off. "You being here puts all of us at risk too. We have worked hard to stay low-keyed about this place. We've managed to keep under the radar so far. The last thing we want at this stage is to have Grayson Canyon confiscated by the Feds. They might do that for harboring you here. It really hurts me to say this, but I think Zeph's plan is the best one for all us at this moment."

"You mean the cave, right?" I said.

"Listen, Bob; this has been the plan Mike and I have discussed all along - for you to be able to have a secure hiding place if it came to that. I thought we had a little more time before we would have to implement the plan, but if I'm right, we will have the cops and the military combing the hills looking for you soon, if they aren't already. We all talked it over and we agree that we need to move you to the cave immediately." Zeph looked at the others in the room, "Isn't that what we decided?"

Anna spoke sadly, "We all think it is for the best for everyone if you go with Zeph, Bob. You will be safe there."

"You need to decide right now what you want to do, Bob. The cave is available, but like I said - it may not be accessible for long without us being tracked getting there. I don't want to compromise

its security, so if you decide on that option, we need to go now.” Zeph emphasized his words by pointing at his watch.

So many things raced through my mind in that instant. Maybe I should go away somewhere, anywhere, in order to avoid putting these wonderful folks at risk. I could try to hook back up with Jasmine, but I had just seen what happened to her because of me. The same fate was in store for anyone else who had the misfortune of coming too close to me. Uncle Leo would take me in, but that was taking a risk of getting caught up in his trip and I had already seen how he wanted to use me. I could take up the fight again; raise the flag of Boblovia, and go before the people, but my instincts told me that the last thing the 222 Revolution needed was a *de facto* leader. The Revolution had to be a peoples’ revolution, not one guided by me, or anyone else.

“I don’t know what other options I have. I know I can’t stay here and put all of you at risk.” I remembered how I used to say the only time it was necessary to make a decision was when the option of doing nothing wasn’t available, and doing nothing now was certainly not an option available to me.

Brooke’s voice was tinted with jealousy. “Your girlfriend needs you. She said she wanted to be with you. That sounds to me like where you should be, with her.”

Her eyes refused to meet with mine. “I know who I want to be with, Brooke, but I refuse to put anyone of you in danger. You saw what happened to Jasmine and the others. They didn’t do anything wrong other than associate with me. I can’t let anything like that happen to any of you. Do you understand?” I pleaded. “I’m going with Zeph; I’ve decided it’s the only option that makes sense. Even if I go somewhere else on my own, whoever is around me stands to go through hell eventually because of me, and I can’t have that.”

“We will have to take the dog too. They have his picture same as you, Bob. Don’t worry, Asia, I know a good foster home for him where you can visit him from time to time. You are sure about this, Bob? Once I put you in place we won’t be able to come and retrieve you until we know it’s safe. That could be until after February 22nd, unless there is some dramatic change beforehand.” Zeph was serious and was offering me a last chance to reconsider my decision.

“I’ve made up my mind. I’m going to do what’s best for you all. How much time do I have before we need to leave?”

“If we leave right now, we’ll be pushing it to get there before nightfall. I have an empty backpack ready for you. You have only enough time to get your personal things then we need to go.”

“Come with me, Brooke, and help me get my things.” I wanted a few minutes alone with her.

“I think you can manage that on your own.” Brooke brushed past me. Anger flashed in her eyes. “Poor Bob, we will miss you.” She said this to Bob Barker, not to me. “Asia, don’t be sad,” Brooke told her. “Poor Bob was just an innocent victim of circumstances; he can’t help it that he got too close to Bob. He didn’t know he would get hurt too.”

As happy as I was when I went to bed that morning, I now felt completely deflated, sad to the core of my being. The fatigue that I had been feeling over the whole 222 thing when I first arrived at Grayson Canyon returned ten times over.

Zeph saw the wave of emotion hit me. He stood next to me and put his hand on my shoulder. “You need to say your good byes now, Bob. I’ll go with you to get your things then we must hurry on our way. It’s a pretty good hike getting there.”

Rick and Anna both gave me a hug and told me to hang in there. “Don’t worry, we will be okay. We will see you again before you know it.” Rick tried to sound encouraging, but it didn’t help my sudden depression. I felt as if I would never see any of them again.

Chandler patted me on the back and shook my hand. “I guess it’s supposed to be like this, or it wouldn’t be happening. Right, Bob? We will hold down the fort here, and don’t you worry about us, we’ll be fine.”

Asia put Bob Barker down on the floor. “We will miss you, Bob,” she said then she broke down in tears and hugged me. Over her shoulder, I could see her mom crying too. Releasing my hold on Asia, I reached for Brooke, but she turned away from me.

“You had better get going, it’s getting late.” I heard the bitterness in her voice.

I wrapped my arms around her from behind. “Come with me,” I said softly in her ear. She shook her head and sobbed louder. “I will come back for you, I promise.” I tried to kiss her neck, but she pulled away from me.

Zeph was already holding the door open for me to follow him. It was too hard for me to linger, so I left with him. We went back to my room where I stuffed a few things in the backpack and we

slipped out of the house. Asia waited for us on the path. She had Bob Barker in tow. She picked Bob up and let him lick her face for the last time.

“Both of you Bob’s will be fine. I know that for sure. My buddies here have been sending me some super comforting and positive vibes today.” Asia had her pair of Moqui Marbles in her hand. “They seem to be happy, so we should be feeling happy too. Everything all happens for a reason, doesn’t it, Bob? Take your pick!” She giggled. Asia had taken a Moqui marble, one in each fist, and put them behind her back.

“That one,” I said, and I couldn’t help smiling a little.

She held the stone out to me. “How cool, you took the girl. I’m giving the other one - he’s a boy, to Mom. They will find their way back to each other, you can count on it!” Then with a sympathetic look, her gorgeous green eyes held mine. “Mom will be okay, Bob. She took a big blow today. We all did. I’ll help Mom get through it. Leave it all to me.”

I didn’t need to say anything except, “I love you, Asia.” I gave her a hug, picked up the pup, and followed Zeph up the trail.

In only a few minutes, we were bouncing up the road in Zeph’s old truck with Bob Barker between us on the seat.

“We will drop the little critter off at Doug’s up the road. I’ll park away from the house and you’ll stay in the truck. Don’t let anyone see you. Since I can’t risk parking on the closest road near the cave, we’ll have to park at my house and hike from there. You look like you’re in pretty good shape, so I know if we hurry, we can get there before dark.” Zeph didn’t bother trying to avoid the many boulders strewn in the road; he poured on the gas and heaved his truck onward.

It was all I could do to hold on to the dog and the oh shit handle mounted above the passenger door. Soon, we stopped and Zeph grabbed Bob Barker and hurriedly ran up a dirt lane. In a blink, he was sprinting back to the truck and again we roared off up the mountain. By the time we stopped in front of an old school bus tucked off the road, my brain had beaten itself senseless rattling about in my skull to the point that I was on the verge of a migraine headache. I realized I hadn’t yet eaten that day.

“See where that shadow is up there near the second tallest peak on the left? We have no more than six hours at a fast walk to get

there. Are you feeling up for it?" I think Zeph could see how sluggish I was feeling.

"I need something to pick me up; I don't want to try it on an empty stomach."

"Here, stuff these in your pack, and here's something to drink. It should be enough to get you there." Zeph had several candy bars, a bag of nuts, two apples and orange juice that I started working on. "I could use a pick-me-up too," he added.

In the time it took me to stow away the food in my pack, Zeph had downed two tall cans of warm beer. With a huge belch he said, "Try to stay up with me. Let me know if you need to stop or start to fall behind. Otherwise, try to keep as quiet as you can; sound really travels far up here."

Fortunately, I carried only a few pounds in my pack. If I had anywhere close to the weight that I carried at the start of my walkabout back in Indiana, there would have been no way that I could have matched his pace. Our course followed a deep arroyo that as we climbed higher, narrowed until the rock walls rose up on either side keeping us in constant shadows. When the trail became too steep, we climbed up and out then wove our way upslope using the trees as cover. After about an hour of steady progress, Zeph stopped abruptly and held his hand to his ear.

"Listen!" he paused. "Do you hear that?"

"Sounds like a helicopter." I said.

"We need to take cover." Zeph and I crawled under a grove of junipers that blocked our view from above. A pair of military choppers passed us from almost directly overhead. "I'm not sure if they are patrolling for us or not. It's the time of year when we see a lot of chopper activity. They're maybe scouting for marijuana, or just heading back to base, it's hard to tell. I think it's safe now; come on. We still have a long way to go."

The thought that the Feds might have been searching for me already helped me feel better about leaving Brooke and the others. In the back of my mind, I was holding out hope that after a week or so, they would stop searching and I could be back in the arms of my new love. We didn't stop again until we had made our way up into the tall ponderosa pines.

"How much farther?" I asked. "I don't know how much longer I can keep up at this rate." I added breathlessly.

“You’re doing great, Bob, especially since you have had only a couple of days to acclimate to the altitude. It’s slower going from here because it gets a lot steeper. We are making good time though, so I say another hour and a half should get us there. Ready to move on?”

I struggled to my feet. “Let’s go,” I said determinedly. My chest felt tight and my lungs burned for air. As I did long ago last spring, I forced myself to focus on my breathing, blocking out the pain in my knees as each step seemed to become more difficult than the previous one. In a way, I enjoyed it. All of the emotions of the day, and all of the trials and tribulations of the last few months, were forgotten as I remained aware of the moment I was in. I took notice of my surroundings, feeling a part of nature - a part of the planet. My eyes stayed focused on the back of Zeph’s boots as I mimicked each step he took.

Just after sunset, we reached the end of a steep canyon that met up with a towering cliff face. We moved in under a shallow depression in the wall.

“Wait here a few minutes. I want to backtrack our trail and erase any tracks we made.” And with that, Zeph disappeared back the way we came. I sat in the soft sand and thought that this couldn’t be the cave. It was nothing more than a cutout of maybe ten feet into the cliff face. Soon, Zeph was back beside me.

Zeph pointed to the ceiling “We go up through there.”

There was a small opening, above me, that I had failed to notice. In nearly complete darkness, we climbed many more feet until we made it to the cave. Zeph flicked his lighter and lit a couple of candles and the whole cave unfolded before me. Proudly, he gave me the full tour. I was amazed at what I saw. Like Grayson Canyon, Zeph’s cave was another work of art. It had everything I needed to be comfortable for a long stay.

Zeph gave me the rundown on how it all worked.

“There are no electronics here at all, not even a radio. We made sure there isn’t anything here that can be detected by a remote sensor picking up an electrical signature. You have enough supplies for one person to live here for at least a couple of years.”

“I hope it won’t be that long.” I joked.

“Like I said, Bob, we will come for you when the coast is clear. I don’t know how long that will be. My guess is they won’t stop looking for you until after the 222 Revolution goes down. You’ll be

fine as long as you stay in the rock. Don't go wandering outside though, even at night. They have many ways to detect movement and heat signatures of humans. Besides, at night you are food for bear and mountain lions."

"I sure as hell don't want to end up being eaten. So when was the last time you talked to Mike?"

"I've only talked with him once since he was last out here about two years ago. That was sometime after Labor Day. He gave me a heads up about you and said that you might be heading out here at some point and asked if I would let you use our sanctuary."

"I saw Mike last week in Oklahoma City and he told me I should come here and find you. He said he would look for me here on the 22nd of February. Mike always was talking about how there would be a need someday to dig in somewhere. He has seen a lot of things go down in his life. I know the war had a lot to do with how he felt. He always acted as if someday someone was going to come looking for him. It's his post-traumatic stress syndrome that, I guess, makes him a little edgy, even border line paranoid sometimes."

"Yeah, Mike and I would talk about that. I always said I had PTSD too, but for me it meant pre-traumatic stress syndrome, not post. I know things are going to get fucked up and what you see here represents that. Mike and I make a good team. He may look to the past and see how it shapes his thinking, while I look to the future and am shaped by what I believe is going to happen - none of which is good in the short term, but I really believe that a new world will rise from the ashes of the old world, and it will be people like us that will be left to create a new way to live."

I thought about what Zeph had just said. I have both forms of PTSD, pre and post-traumatic stress, which only leaves me the moment to exist in. "I appreciate the risk you have taken to get me here, Zeph. I know that this set up was for you and your friends, and now that I'm here, it won't be available as a refuge like you planned."

"That's what friends are for, Bob. Besides, I know how important it is that you avoid capture. I have watched your 222 Revolution grow from its first inception and I believe it is our best hope for a better future. So, to me, you being here is a validation of the work it took to create this. Enough said, let me show you how the compost toilet works and where you get your water."

Zeph gave me instructions on cooking and keeping the food stores secured, and told me to make myself at home. “There’s a library in here to keep you from getting too bored, also some art supplies and writing material to occupy your time. I think you will find that time will pass pretty quickly once you settle in. We won’t be able to communicate, but as soon as I think it is safe, I will come for you. It may only be a week or two if it looks like their search for you moves away from here.”

“Or a lot longer if it doesn’t,” I added.

Zeph left the next morning at first light. I spent all day trying to write down everything that had happened since Oklahoma City. I’m tired of writing. It makes me feel more isolated than ever before. All I can do is think about things that I have rehashed a million times over and over in my head. I guess I’ve come to realize that to find the complete stillness that my soul desires I have to stop trying to put my experiences down on paper. All this reminiscing, and storytelling, amounts to nothing more than living in the past. At least I’m in a place where the only distractions are of my own. I’ll try to write again when I find the time...ha ha.

Chapter XV

COLONEL LEO WAPPLE (Part Six)

Once at Shadow Command Headquarters, we began reassessing our position, confirming our assets, and mapping out our new strategy. First order of business was contacting MacFarlane. Tim led the team that delivered Mac's marching orders. I calculated that Mac would get the job done as planned. We knew what we were about to implement would force the government to show its draconian side. We expected that upon implementation of the Boblovian War Plan, which we designated Operation Blowback, everybody would have to decide on which side of the line they stood. The longer we waited for the implementation, the more support we expected to gain for the Revolution. The government was already playing its part by increasingly using its iron fist in an attempt to alienate our citizens from due process and their constitutional rights. We were correct in our assessment that, as people awakened to the fact that the government could no longer lead us forward, then someone else would have to fill the void, and that is where we expected to step in.

In a few weeks, we located the man Bob Windowmaker had met with in Oklahoma City, Michael Colton Wayne. I assigned Richard to visit with him in order to determine if Wayne could be of any use to us. Richard reported back to me late in October.

"Michael Wayne and Bob Windowmaker have been friends since the early seventies. Wayne pretty much lives as a recluse. We observed him for a week before we made any contact. We approached him as FBI agents, like you had ordered. He was somewhat cooperative, definitely not intimidated in the least, but not forthcoming with any information of value. I don't think he is much use to us, Commander."

"Did you get a read on him?" I asked. "Was there any indication that he is active in the 222 Movement? What about Windowmaker? Did Wayne have any clue on what Bob's plans were?"

"Wayne admitted that he met with Bob in Oklahoma City, but he said he had no idea where Bob was headed, or what plans he had. His body language, and all that, seemed to indicate he was being truthful. It was obvious that he was being very cautious, but I really don't think he was hiding anything from us. We did enter his home

while he was at work. We went through the whole house and found nothing on the Revolution, or anything tying him in to Bob. I left a team to keep him under surveillance. That's about the best we can do at the moment. The last day I was there, we saw that the Fed's had located him too, and they were setting up their own surveillance, so we had to back off. No doubt, they were able to locate him through his travel records. He used his real identity when he went to Oklahoma City, so it does appear as if Windowmaker and he are just old friends."

"Wayne is a Vietnam War veteran. He really should be on board with us. My instincts tell me that he would do whatever it took to protect his friends. Have your team keep me updated. I want to know every move he makes, Richard."

"What's our next move, Commander?" Richard asked.

"We have Operation NewVision in the can. It's ready to be aired whenever we decide the time is right, but it will have to wait until General Mac is ready to implement Operation Blowback. The timing for all this is critical. I think we are still a few months away from showing ourselves. In the meantime, we will be stepping up our recruitment. We have tens of thousands of our troops returning stateside. With the drawdown going on in Africa and the Middle East we have thousands of disillusioned, well-trained, military men that we feel we can approach. I've scheduled a senior staff meeting for 09:00 tomorrow. We will go over everything then."

Senior Staff Meeting - 09:00

I began my opening address. "Gentlemen, we have been fortunate, to this point, in that we have been able to keep our organization intact. We know that we dodged a bullet back in Ozone. The government is fully aware that we exist, but they have not been able to fully assess our capabilities. I'm sure they see us as the wildcard in the whole 222 Revolution. They have made the connection between us and Bob Windowmaker through my niece Jasmine Hardy and my nephew Tim. Our organization remains secure at this point, but from this moment forward, it will be necessary to take some calculated risks. You all have had time to review Operation Blowback, and I appreciate the honest concerns and feedback you all have provided me. We will hear from General Steiner first."

Steiner: "Commander, I am pleased to report that we have secured several extremely valuable assets in the last few months. OVK has become highly organized and we feel we have made great progress there. We can add to our list of valuable assets the following: Three tactical air wings based in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. Two air National Guard reserve units, one in Indiana and another here in New Mexico. Six redeployed infantry divisions, two at Fort Carson, two at Fort Bliss, and one each at Fort Sill, and Fort Dix. We expect to be adding several more to that list. The key factor in being able to secure these assets is the government's move to keep our troops on active duty upon their return to the states. It isn't sitting well with many when they learn they are being retrained and kept on active duty status in order to be redeployed against their fellow citizens, and against the 222 Movement."

Coffington: "It can be said the world is in decline. We don't expect the hegemony of the U.S. dollar to last much longer. World financial markets are jittery, to say the least. We expect this recent financial bubble to burst at any time. This will result in a rapid devaluation of the dollar, followed by rampant hyperinflation. This will deplete what cash reserves are now held by individuals putting even more stress on the government to maintain its control. We expect real unemployment numbers to reach forty percent by year's end. This will undoubtedly send a shockwave throughout the world resulting in a dramatic increase of support for the 222 Movement. Our sources in the government report there is major infighting amongst the legislative and executive branches. A rift has opened up unlike before. The debate is divided between continuing the current effort of trying to inhibit the progress of the 222 Movement, or whether to make motions of embracing the movement, thereby, attempting to remain in control, at least through some sort of transitional period. Extreme pressure is being placed on the Department of Justice to arrest and prosecute the leaders of the 222 Revolution, but as we have seen, there isn't a figurehead for them to go after. Still, Mr. Windowmaker is seen as the principle leader of the 222 Movement. We are confident that he is still at large and at great risk. Meanwhile, the 222 Movement, with its encouragement of passive non-violent resistance, has done a great deal towards keeping the lid on people's anger and resentment directed towards those now in charge. It seems

that the only thing preventing a massive violent uprising is the hope of this coming February 22nd bringing about a profound change. It will be interesting.”

Donaldson: “The 222 Movement websites have had to resort to using multiple hosting servers, from all around the world, to stay ahead of the efforts to shut them down. Thousands of people have provided mirror servers that are still allowing the movement to stay on line. The internet police have not been able to eradicate the message. Their efforts to shut down the 222 websites have only increased the outrage against the government as people see this as a direct overt attack on their freedom of expression. Funds from our benefactor have been redirected to our legal aid funding. We now have Dallas D. Duncan working for us pro bono, which has enabled us to redirect legal funds towards assisting our prior benefactor in her legal battles, which have greatly hindered her ability to channel money to our cause. Nonetheless, we are well in the black and our other revenue sources continue to increase as support for the 222 Revolution grows.”

I went back before the podium, “Gentleman, thank you. Let me add that our sources have also communicated to me that the government is conceiving a plan to completely disrupt our populace. They are considering using biological weapons, as well as, formulating some type of natural disaster, which they think will draw people’s attention away from the Revolution forcing them to capitulate to the whims of the government. We don’t have detailed information, but we can feel guaranteed that they will use every weapon available to them to sway people back to their side. We must remain vigilant. We will be taking the fight to them soon. Our efforts will be rewarded over the months ahead.”

On the first of November, I got a call from my niece, Jasmine Hardy from Chicago.

“I can’t take it anymore, Uncle Leo. I can’t just sit here wasting my time. You told me that you would have some orders for me. I need to be doing something.”

“You have already done enough, Jasmine. I feel responsible for the beating you took in Oklahoma and I don’t want to do anything that will put you in danger again.”

“To hell with that! If you just keep me sitting here I’ll be in danger of losing my mind! It seems as if I’m the only one not doing anything. I feel like a kept woman. D Cubed has been wonderful, but the world is swirling with news on the Revolution, and I’ll be damned if I’m not going to be a part of it!”

“Listen, Jasmine. I have offered you more than once to come join us, and help us, but you made your choice and stuck with Windowmaker. I don’t have an assignment for you. I just want to make sure you stay safe. I owe that to your mom and Tim.”

“Damn it, Leo. If you don’t have anything for me then I guess I will do whatever I desire to do on my own. I was hoping you would help me though.”

“It sounds like you have a plan. Tell me what is it you think you can do?”

“I want to find Bob. I’ve heard rumors that he is in New Mexico and I want to try and track him down.”

“See, there you go again, Jasmine. You are trying to hook back up with him again. Don’t you realize how risky that is? The next time you get picked up, we probably won’t be able to help you.”

“I know that, Leo, but listen; I’ve been on the streets all over Chicago. No one has recognized me. I know I can change my looks, my hair and all that. Just the wig alone, that D Cube gave me, makes me look like someone completely different. I can pull it off. Just get me to New Mexico and I’ll promise you, if I get in trouble, I won’t hold it against you. Remember, I am the Free Republic of Jasminica. I’m not asking for your permission, I’m just asking for your help, that’s all.”

“I guess you are too much like me, Jasmine. I wouldn’t expect anything less from you. Is D Cube there? Let me speak with him.”

“Hello, Leo, I heard all that. You know she will just walk out my door if you don’t do something. She is a stubborn woman; I’ll say that much for her.”

“I know, Dallas. Okay, here is what we will do. Can you get her to Aspen, Colorado? Good. Make it look like you are taking a weekend skiing trip. I will have someone pick her up there. We will swap her out with an impersonator. Can you do that for me, Dallas?”

“D Cube is always at your service, my friend. I will have her in Aspen, at dusk, on Friday. Do you want to talk to her again, Leo?”

“No, that’s okay; I’m trying not to get pissed off at her. Just tell her she’ll get her way and that I will see her on Saturday. Thanks

again, Dallas, and don't forget to destroy this phone, all right? Later, goodbye."

The following Saturday morning, Jasmine joined me for coffee within Shadow Command. She came into the room smiling from ear-to-ear.

"Are you happy now, Jasmine, now that you have gotten your own way?"

"I always do, don't I, Uncle Leo?" Jasmine gave me a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. My fellow officers in the mess hall weren't accustomed to seeing me getting kissed.

"I owe you big time, Uncle Leo. I promise I'll be careful."

"You don't owe me a thing, Dear. You already took one for the cause, so I guess we can call it even. So tell me, what is it you think you have to do."

"I heard through Rogerdonia that the Feds have been looking for Bob down around Needless. I want to go there and see if the rumors are true."

"We have confirmed that rumor. Evidently, Bob was spotted there last September, but there is no reason to believe he is still in the area. We know the Feds are still crawling all over the place looking for him, but if they can't find him, I don't know what makes you think you can."

"He seems to have a way of finding me. Anyway, it sounds like you could use a good person like me out in the field gathering information."

"Ah, I see, now you do want to work with us."

"Whatever it takes," Jasmine looked around the room. "I see that you are still planning on fighting your war. When will you ever get it, Uncle Leo?"

"Get what?"

"Get the fact that the Boblovian Revolution is so far from what you're doing that you may end up on the wrong side when it all comes down on 222."

"We don't see it that way at all, Jasmine. We only want to serve and protect the people. Just because we see the need to be organized about it, doesn't make us the bad guys."

"What I see it is that you are trying to do, is provide leadership. You plan on taking over the reins come the 22nd. That is definitely the wrong approach. Bob told me all about Operation NewVision,

and how you worked on him all summer, and that you tricked him in order to make the words you will use sound as if they are coming from him. I think that's pretty dirty and too much like the methods our asshole government uses."

"You and Bob have never understood the seriousness of all this. We know what we are up against, and we know what it will take to combat the evil we will be facing. You've seen enough of what's going on. You're a smart girl. Do you think those concentration camps are resorts? You witnessed yourself some of the brutality perpetrated by the government. You received enough of it firsthand to know they mean business."

"Yes I have, but that only reinforces for me the importance of following the Boblovian Way of turning the other cheek. We can only defeat them if we all chose to stay true to the message of sitting down at the same time and beating them back by not resisting them violently. It's only through love, compassion, and stillness of the soul, that we can shape a new future, and a new dream together. No one is asking you to do any of this for us. Everyone is becoming like me and Bob, and they are awakening to the power of elevating our consciousness collectively, believing in something new, and manifesting a new reality. I know Bob better than almost anybody. I had all his notebooks over the summer. I know how his mind works and what he went through in order to come to the conclusion that once everyone makes the choice to become, what he called enemy non-combatants, then the powers against the people will become ineffective. None us can be controlled if we finally recognize how the government has used their fear tactics against us, and that by being afraid, we gave our own personal power and our freedom over to them."

I couldn't help from smiling when I asked, "So, you've read the Boblovian War Plans?" Jasmine looked at me with shock and disgust.

"Come on, you know that was just a joke. It was going to be part of his comedy routine. He wrote those a long time ago. No one could take that seriously." Jasmine paused and wrinkled her brow. "Wait a minute. Oh my god, how did you get those? You bastard! You are going to use that? That's really fucked up. They'll blame Bob for that shit. They'll pin it all on Bob because of you." Jasmine glared right through me. "You are a sick son-of-a-bitch!"

“I don’t want you to feel that way about me, Jasmine. I know we don’t see eye-to-eye, but remember; I know Bob pretty well myself. We spent a lot of time together last summer. I know how his mind works too. You say it all was a joke, well I think ol’ Bob has a lot more on the ball than you think. Yes, we have his notebook, and now we have our Operation Blowback. You’ve said it yourself many times that nothing comes our way by chance alone these days. We have been given a gift and an opportunity, and we intend to make the most of it. What’s to say that Bob didn’t plan on implementing his war plan himself? I still think there is a lot more to that man than you think.”

“My god, if you do that, they will hunt him down and destroy him. What are you trying to do, make a martyr out of him? You just don’t fucking get it, and you never will, Leo. You military fucks are all alike. You want a fight. You want to go down in a blaze of glory, don’t you? You’ll take all of us down with you, if you have to. You will be worse than the evil fucks in our government. Will you ever wake up? Don’t you have a heart? Every one of us, those of us who have taken to heart the Boblovian message of love and compassion, will fight against you.”

“Fight against us, how, by lying down and rolling over?”

The tears flooded Jasmine’s eyes. I reached for her hand, but she pulled it away. “Jasmine, we may never agree on any of this, but I’ll help you find Bob. Is that enough from me to show you that I care?”

Jasmine nodded and wiped her eyes with a napkin. “That’s all I really care about. Please help me find Bob.”

Chapter XVI

MICHAEL COLTON WAYNE

I have been paranoid for most of my life. It really started in Vietnam and seems to have always been necessary for my survival. Last weekend, I finished scanning in most of Bob's papers, letters, and documents, along with what I have written, and mailed a copy of the CD to a post office box under an alias that I have in New Mexico. I truly believe there must be an unseen hand behind all that I do, because yesterday I got a rude visit from the Men in Black again. I wasn't at all surprised when they showed up at my door the first time late last October; although I was surprised they had not come to interview me as soon as I had returned from Oklahoma City the month before. They were very polite and I treated them as if I had nothing to hide except my stash of pot and my little garden way out back behind the house, but I knew they were not after my dope. Nonetheless, ever since Bob started to get attention from the authorities, basically after that wacko took a shot at him on stage, I had been keeping reign on my phone conversations and my conversations at home, too. I lived alone, so every time I left my house, I would trick out the doors so I could tell if anyone had been around. I suppose it's not that much more different than the perimeters we would set up around our position in the war. I didn't have the trip flares and the bouncing Betties, but I had my way of knowing if anyone was getting into my shit, and they were going through my shit about once a week.

Natascha, thank you for the cash; all it would take is one swipe of my credit card and they would be on me like stink on shit. Thanks, Auggie, for your SUV. All I had to do was ask, and you gave me your legal ride to make my break, no questions asked. If I am right and I shake my tail, I should have the head start I need. I'm sure Big Brother had gotten tired of watching me go to work every day and coming home to sit all night in front of the television. I tried to make my life appear so boring and routine that they would let their guard drop, even though on occasion I would allow myself to be paraded out on the front lawn for some picture op with either some young wannabe journalist or pilgrim of the Confederation looking for another piece to the puzzle. My story was always the same - yes, I have been interviewed by the authorities; no, I don't know where

Bob is. No, I am not worried about him; he will show up sometime, I'm sure of that. As long as I was visible to the public, the media's attention was my protection and I remained relatively safe from 'alien abduction.' I'm sure they would have gotten around to shoving something up my ass sooner or later, but I wasn't going to hang around to wait for it to happen.

If the men in black were waiting for a tell, then they were looking in the wrong place. I wasn't going to show my cards, not just yet. I have plenty of cash. Natascha is in great demand these days, and just to show how fucked up all this is...she's turning tricks with the agents that are constantly on our tails. I don't know if they are jumping her bones just to get closer in, to get more information, or whether they can't resist such a delicious dish like Natascha, but it sure is nice of them to help finance the Revolution. Bob would be proud of her; she knows the score. That's why she had the picture that Bob took of her holding a big sign that said, 'Fuck the military industrial complex, we choose to work for peace' hanging above her bed. It used to be on the home page of her website before porn became a hate crime punishable by life imprisonment. Funny, that happened right after Bob's politics and Natascha's over the top X-rated website started getting giga-hits per day.

I have no doubt that the Feds know where I'm heading. When I saw that the manhunt was centered in New Mexico I immediately knew where Bob was; and I'm sure the Feds knew I knew, as well. As far as I know, they may have let me slip away thinking I could lead them to Bob. So, this is the first time I have driven from Indiana to New Mexico via Montana, in the winter no less, but that helps me stay disguised with my Eskimo parka. Still, just to be safe, I wore a wig and a fake beard every time I stopped for gas or anywhere else there might be a camera.

Undoubtedly, the Feds have checked me out well enough to know that I have traveled to Santa Fe a number of times; but also, I'm sure they don't know about Zeph or the cave. It's good to have friends in high places because, for sure, Zeph was always high and the cave overlooked the broad Rio Grande Valley from high in the Ortiz Mountains.

Another irony in all this is that I wrote the book and compiled all of this at work. Again, I don't know if it was my paranoia, or just blind luck, that made me take the box with all of Bob's notebooks to work. Really, all that stuff was in the car after I had dropped Bob off

for his walkabout, and since I have one of those great jobs where all I have to do is pretend I give a shit, act like I know something, and promise to do things that never get done, I had no problem adding writing to my to-do list. My job was to meet the bullshit corporate expectations, which was to try and not moo too loudly when I got to the front of the slaughterhouse line and saw the man swinging the sledge hammer. Given this, and the fact that my job dealt with maintaining our hardcopy records retention process, boxes upon boxes of paper and files, slipping in a box full of personal stuff was not a problem. All I had to do was stack a couple of dozen donuts on top to sneak past our security, and that was that. My days were spent a little bit like Winston Smith, in *1984*, shuffling bits of paper and filing them away most likely never to be seen ever again until it was time for the memory-hole incinerator. Before I started this book, I would sit at my terminal and surf the net or play solitaire. So writing on company time gave me an appearance of activity and effort, which led to the highest performance rating of anyone in our department. Every day, I would upload what I had written or scanned in, and put it on a small jump drive that was even easier to hide than the things in the box.

On my last day in the old world, all I had to do was stowaway in the back of what we called the Hot Parts Van that made trips nearly every hour from our plant to a contractor's warehouse only a few blocks away. I made sure that everyone that I worked with knew that I had come to work that day not feeling well, so when I disappeared after lunch, no one thought much of it. I knew that the van driver would drive to the warehouse and break for lunch before unloading his truck. From there, I could easily sneak out the back and pick up Auggie's ride parked around the corner. The neat thing was it was really just like making a jailbreak from work. By my best estimate, I was getting a three and a half hour head start on my pursuers.

I didn't stop driving until I reached my friend Jade's house in Minnesota. Jade was surprised when I called her from a phone booth a few blocks away. We had lost contact over the years, but luckily she was still in the phone book. Jade was never one to keep up on current events, but she, along with the rest of the world, had been watching 'The Countdown to 222' as CNN called it. Funny that the greedy corporate media could not resist broadcasting continuously with the latest developments, analyzed incessantly by the pundits

assigned to the case who, on one hand, were whipping the general citizenry into a fearful panic and, at the same time, working to assure that all is well and that there is nothing to fear. I believe the bastards can't resist making a buck and boosting their ratings, even though, without the media focusing its attention on Bob, he would most likely have remained relatively harmless, or even more likely, would have just disappeared.

"My God! What is going on?" was Jade's greeting to me at the door.

"It's nice to see you too," I joked. "We need to hide my car tonight. I don't want you to get dragged into this by having some local yokel spot my out-of-state plates."

"You can park in the barn. I'll put on some coffee and put the kids to bed."

I parked out back and took a few minutes smoking a cigarette and watching the droopy stars in the coal black sky. The cold air caused my breath to freeze in frosty billows as I exhaled. The snow, now brightly lit by a waxing moon, sparkled like diamonds. The moon had a bright halo encircling it, and I knew this meant more snow was on the way. I had better get on the road before sunrise, I thought.

I crunched my way through the yard to Jade's back door. She was in the kitchen preparing coffee. The warm incandescent glow, the warmth of the oven, and the aroma of the coffee lingering in the air reminded me of earlier times when in many a kitchen we all sat talking about everything and anything. Even back then, we knew our government lied to get us into a war. It was clear to us that we had moved into a world where business dictates everything, and making money from war and suffering was good business. But, sitting at those kitchen tables for the last forty years, we never really could make ourselves believe we would see all of the worst case scenarios we predicted come into being.

After removing my coat and shoes, I sat at the table. Jade poured us both a cup of coffee and sat down across from me. We sat there for a moment and looked into each other's eyes.

"Mike, how have you been?" She asked softly.

I let out a deep breath, "Incredible, really. I feel more alive than I ever have before. I finally have taken the next step and jumped into life with a new understanding and a new purpose. You look terrific, by the way."

"You know they are looking for you."

“You know that?”

“It just came on the news right before you called me.”

“About me?”

“By name.”

“Christ, I guess I’m not all that surprised.”

“They say you are involved with the airport lockdown. The news is saying you and Bob are terrorist suspects, armed and dangerous. They say you are probably heading for New Mexico since that is where they think Bob is, and then you show up at my door.” She rose and came around the table and gave me a big hug from behind.

I asked, “You haven’t had any trouble from all this, have you? I don’t want to get you mixed up in this too.”

“No problems. I’m not worried about that. If they knew where you were, they would have been here already.” Jade answered.

“I’m pretty sure I slipped out safely. God, I freaked out when I saw that airport thing going down. I knew I had to get out fast, except where the hell do I go? So, I decided to try to get to New Mexico and see if I can help out Bob. It’s like it’s become a big game now. I know they will catch up with me sooner or later, and if they think I had anything to do with 222 and this latest shit, then you can pretty much figure they will McVeigh me straight to the electric chair.”

“I don’t understand what the shutting down of the airports has to do with you, Bob, or 222.”

“Hell, I’m not even sure, but I remember when Bob first got fired up about the Boblovian thing he had written his declaration of independence, which was part of his comedy act, and he also wrote a declaration of war, as a joke, and it contained a bunch of nonviolent, crazy shit someone could do to fuck with the system. Although, the only one I remember him talking about was a way to shut down all the airports simultaneously.”

“Was he serious?”

“Hardly, but he had thought up a bunch more crap, and if the rest of it works as well as this, then the shit will really hit the fan.”

“I still don’t quite understand. What was his plan for closing down the airports?”

“It was brilliant in its simplicity, but it took having a group of trustworthy people working together.”

“Well Bob seems to have that.”

“I really don’t think Bob looks at it that way. He treats everyone

around him the same, as friends, but he never seemed to be trying to organize them. I think they did that to themselves. If Bob was behind the airport thing I would really be surprised, but that's not to say he didn't raise the suggestion."

"How did they pull it off?"

"I think it's better if you don't know –for your own good."

"Yeah, you may be right, but I have to know, is this 222 thing for real? Is everything going to shut down on February 22nd?"

"I'm beginning to believe it myself."

"I'm really scared, Mike, not just for you and Bob, but for me and my kids and the whole planet. Things have been pretty fucked up for a long time and it seems to be getting worse, but there have always been things you can count on, like money, having food, water, electricity, but now some are saying it's all signs of the end time, and even a guy on the religious channel was calling Bob the Antichrist. They were telling viewers what to have to prepare for next February 22nd. They're saying everyone should have water filtration, solar devices, batteries, dried food, and a bunch of stuff like that on hand. I know a fellow at work that bought a bunch of hand-cranked radios a few years ago. He's a kook and thought the country was going to revolt when Bush stole the first election. He told me he was making a hundred dollars on each because you can't order them now anywhere. I mean, I hear things like that and I can't believe it's Bob, and now you, that everyone is talking about."

"I know what you mean; all this is so fucking unreal. I sometimes wonder if I'm losing my mind, but I just figure I'm an old fart and I might as well have some fun before they take me out. You know the toothless do get ruthless when they have too. When was the last time you heard from Bob?"

"I was just going there. I got a letter from him quite some time ago. It was a beautiful letter, but he said some strange things that, until now, did not make any sense. I am so glad that I did what he told me to do."

"What was that?"

"For my family's safety, never mention knowing him - no matter what I may see or hear about him. It was hard keeping quiet when he was on Oprah. I wanted to tell my best friend so badly, but I remembered his letter. Do you want to read it?"

"I'm beat. You can read it to me in the morning. I'm going to have to get some sleep then get back behind the wheel before dawn."

“What can I do to help?”

“Some of that pie would be great. I’m famished.”

“Have some pie while I fix you a care package for the road. You need to keep moving as much as possible.”

“If I beat the weather, I should get there in a couple of days. I need to hit it early though. What time do you get up?”

“I have to go in at seven, and the kids get on the bus about a quarter till.”

“I’ll be gone before they get up.”

I awoke startled by the thumping of helicopter blades rattling the windows in the house. I had been dreaming of being back in country, in Vietnam. The dream was one that I had experienced many times over and seemed to occur most often when the pain in my right leg flared up. Even after forty years, the bits of metal from the claymore mine that I stepped on in the Mekong Delta would work their way to the surface of my skin becoming inflamed and painful. In my sleep, I was being air-vacced out, strapped to a stretcher mounted to the skids of a Huey, all feeling strangely perfect doped up on morphine.

I sat straight up on the couch. Jade had rocketed out of bed too. She turned on the hall lights and headed for the kids’ bedroom.

“Turn out the lights, quick!” I shouted over the noise of the helicopter.

In a moment, the sound receded.

“I thought it was going to land in the yard,” exclaimed Jade. “Do you think they have tracked you here?”

I pulled back the curtains and peered out.

“It looks like it’s landing near the exit at the interstate.” I could see across the open fields, about two miles distant, many flashing red lights and what looked to be a couple of military helicopters landing.

“Look at this. What do you think is going on there?”

“I could be a wreck, but I don’t think you want to go that way. It looks as if they have the interstate closed. I know of a better way to get back on the highway. I’m scared, Mike.”

“I think we are fine for the moment. I need to get on the road right now though.” I said trying not to show how equally unnerved I was.

“Let me get the food I made up for you. I want a hug before you go.”

I held her in my arms for a long moment; then I kissed her on the

lips.

“You are a remarkable person, Jade. Everything will be all right, but if the Feds show up here, tell them the truth. That should be all the protection you’ll need. I love you; now give me those directions.”

Jade hurriedly scribbled down the directions on the back of an envelope and slipped them into my jacket pocket. “Now hurry before I change my mind and go with you.” Jade smiled, but it did little to hide her sadness.

Waiting for the truck to warm up, I sat looking over the map Jade had put in my pocket. Just a few twist and turns on some county roads then a long shot back over to the highway. I noticed she had written the map on the letter from Bob that she had failed to read to me last night. I placed it in the backpack that Auggie had readied for me and headed down the narrow road in the opposite direction of the flashing lights. I drove the first two miles without headlights, thankful for the nearly full moon lighting my way. I was glad I had topped off both gas tanks before stopping at Jade’s. I should be able to get a long way down the road before having to refuel. I was able to slip back onto I-94 a few miles west of where I had spent the night. A light snow had started to fall and there was virtually no traffic. In another two hours, I was slipping through Fargo, North Dakota, as the sky was starting to lighten behind me. I had thought hard about getting off the interstate, but as the snow started falling more heavily, I decided it would be best to stay on the main road. Reluctantly, I turned on the radio.

“KFND morning reportFederal authorities are continuing their manhunt for the suspects in Tuesday’s terrorist attack on our nation’s airports that resulted in the shutdown of all domestic air travel for the last two days. Authorities believe that this attack is the responsibility of Bob Windowmaker, the alleged leader of the Boblovian Revolution, which evidently, has taken on a new and disturbing dimension.

“We now go to our affiliate station in Washington D.C. ...the Department of Homeland Security has issued this statement only a few moments ago.”

“The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has reason to believe that Bob Windowmaker is the person behind the

attack on our air transportation system. We believe Mr. Windowmaker, who has not been seen since early last September, is somewhere in the Northern New Mexico area. We have initiated a comprehensive manhunt in that region. We have also identified, as a person of interest, a Michael Colton Wayne, who we believe is in route to New Mexico. Both Windowmaker and Wayne are considered to be extremely dangerous and should be approached with utmost caution. We urge all citizens to stay alert to this developing situation by tuning in to their local Homeland Security broadcasts.”

“Our President has already gone on record stating that all resources are being made available in order to find these domestic terrorists. That point was confirmed and elaborated on by the secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security as including the support of the Pentagon and all other national agencies. ...Kenneth Taber reporting from our Nation’s capital.”

Well shit, that’s pretty much it, I thought. They could be on my ass at any time.

“KFND’s Jackson Mitchell has this report from the Fargo Community Emergency Management Command Center. ‘We have been told that Sven Thurmond, the FCEMA manager, will be conducting a press conference this morning around 9:00 a.m. I have learned that our local authorities have been desperately trying to get more specific information from both the state and federal authorities, but so far all that has been released are the names and pictures of the two suspects. However, we are trying to get confirmation of the establishment of roadblocks on all major highways throughout the western states. Right now, the weather may be the biggest factor in determining how effective the search for these two suspects will be.’”

“Thank you, Jackson. Stay tuned to KFND for more on this breaking news story. We will be right back.”

I started thinking aloud. “I have got to stay cool and think about this. They don’t have much to go on. If they knew what I was

driving, they would have broadcast a description of my truck. The weather has socked the roads in, so I don't have to worry about their air support. That was definitely a major checkpoint they were setting up back there at Jade's. They must have thought they had made it out ahead of me. I guess I just barely made it far enough the first night. I wonder where the next roadblock will be."

The signal from KFND was fading rapidly. As I drove west, the static rose. I barely made out the words: blizzard warning, 60 mph sustained winds, eighteen inches of snow.

"What are my choices? Stop and hide? No, in this weather I have to stay with the truck, and I'm sure everything with Indiana plates will get a hard look. Get off the interstate? Maybe head south from here? That may be my best choice, but as fast as this storm is building, I don't think I'll make it very far. Fuck it. Keep on driving and see how far west I can get, and from the looks of all this snow, that may not be all that far."

By now, the road was snow covered with only the right hand lane showing any tire tracks indicating any traffic out ahead. I settled in and drove on into the fury of the storm.

It's no use worrying about anything at this point, I told myself as I reached into the bag to feel for another sandwich that Jade had made for me. Hanging around Bob all these years had had its affect. Life is just about dealing with what arises in front of you, whether that is the bars of a jail cell or creeping along I-94 in a blizzard eating a chicken salad sandwich. It is what it is, and this is what it is until I run out of gas or into a roadblock or a snowdrift too large to bust through. It may be better to freeze to death out here on the great prairie than to rot away in a federal penitentiary, that is, if they don't torture me to death first. I have a suspicion that the truth won't be good enough for those bastards. Are they really going to believe that all this started as a joke? The airport thing was just some crazy whiskey, brainstorming on what someone could do to fuck with the system in a non-violent way.

"Take these bomb sniffers," Bob said. "Imagine if you had a couple of packs of firecrackers, took the black powder out and filled your pockets up with it. You could have a small hole in your pocket and, as you walked through the airport, you could be spreading it where other travelers would track through it. Mosey through the breakfast lounge and casually touch peoples' coats on the backs of their chairs with the gunpowder on your hands. It would be a great

way to disperse it. It wouldn't even have to be gunpowder just as long as what you had, had a chemical signature of an explosive. For that matter, you wouldn't even have to risk going into the airport where you would be recorded on the security cameras. You could ride a few of the shuttle buses making sure you left some of it on the seats and floor, or better yet, just hang out at the Denny's across from the airport, or in the hotels where they are serving the continental breakfasts for those up early trying to catch the redeye. Imagine the fucking chaos at the airport with every damn bomb sniffer flagging red at the same time. Why, they would shut down the whole fucking airport and probably ground all departing flights. And, if one had, say, maybe another dozen friends doing the same thing at the exact same time in another dozen major airports, then you would probably effectively shut down the entire air transportation system until they figured out what the fuck was going on." Then he added, "If that same day each of those friends mailed a copy of a letter touting some bogus domestic underground resistance organization to the local media, then you have just created the appearance of well organized opposition to the status quo. And here is the real deal; if we are sitting here dreaming up stunts like this, what's stopping someone else who really is intent on getting a message like that out from doing such a thing?"

"I don't know, Bob. I really can't believe there are too many crazy fucks like you out there. You need another drink?"

That's how it used to be, the two of us sitting in the corner booth carrying on like that. We dreamed up so many schemes and tactics for defending ourselves from the New World Order. We both shared a basic distrust of the government, but I had given up a long time ago trying to do anything about it. Not Bob, however. While he was never accused of being a man of action, his mind constantly created, period. He would weave these great scenarios of how things would unfold and how we needed to react. Each weaving was like a mental net that he cast out into the world hoping to catch some of us little fishes. That's how the porn thing got started with Natascha. He had just met her near the same time when he had cast out a net baited with the possibility of how easy it would be to make a bunch of money in a fun weird way. This idea evolved out of Bob's observation that pornography is the only thing making money on the internet, and wouldn't it be great to have a lucrative business working from home that you could do from anywhere you wanted to

live. My first approach to this was that it would be fun, a bit kinky perhaps, but on the other hand, it felt motivated by the base nature of man that did not seem to go along with the notion of spiritual development and all that. Nevertheless, the idea was cast into the sea of infinite reality only to gather in Natascha, who just by chance, swam in the door catching Bob's eye.

It was rarer than it should have been to have a beautiful new face wander into the bar. We could only see her silhouette in front of the bright sun pouring in from the door behind her. I remember her beautiful figure poised as she allowed her eyes to adjust to the darkened bar.

"There's our star. Go get her, Mike." Bob prompted me.

Soon, I had her sitting across from me next to Bob. After a quick introduction, Natascha and I exchanged small talk while Bob sat there and checked her out closely. She began by explaining her current situation. She had just run into her ex-boyfriend at her usual hang out and had to leave because of the restraining order she had just put on the loser.

"I told him to leave, and the dumb fuck tried to choke me. You only do that to me once," and she added, "I've had it with men, I've had it with this whole fucked up world. It's no use trying to work to get ahead; every time you think you've got a handle on things, they come along and steal it from you."

"Steal what?" Bob asked.

"My money, my job, my time, my happiness." She expressed all this with a bit of a chuckle and a smile on her lovely face. "I'd like another drink," she said as she threw back the last of her rum and coke.

"We all deserve to live free. Our work should have more reward than just scraping by, don't you think?" Bob signaled the waitress for another round.

"I wish it wasn't so hard. I need to start looking for a second job just to be able to pay my bills. Tomorrow, I'm going to apply for a job modeling lingerie. I heard you can make good money at that. Hell, I might as well. I'm not getting anywhere giving it away." Her smile had disappeared.

"You know, Natascha, there is nothing wrong with taking control of your life. I think a lot of what it takes to be successful comes from recognizing your talents and utilizing your abilities. From where I sit, your abilities look damn fine, and I can only dream about the

talents they hide.”

Bob shifted right into how those talents could be put to work. Financial freedom in this society means freedom to have the time to be creative. He explained to Natascha how that once she was able to exceed fulfilling her basic needs she would be able to express herself more freely, and in turn, enjoy life even more. Over the next hour, Bob laid out the business plan for Natascha’s eventual million dollars a year internet business.

I drove into the raging snowstorm. I couldn’t pull off the road now if I wanted to. All the exit ramps were so deep in unplowed snow that I was sure I would become stuck. The snow was starting to change from falling vertically to blowing horizontally, making it nearly impossible to see the road. I had switched to the reserve tank about an hour ago, and by my best estimation, I had maybe another hour and a half before I would run out, which would leave me just short of the Montana border.

Now I wish I had tried the southern route through south Texas. I could have dropped below the border and then come back up through El Paso, but the horrors of a Mexican jail were enough for me to decide to go north. I really didn’t know what I could do to help rescue Bob, but if there was going to be a last stand before the end of the world, I wanted to make it with him in New Mexico, hopefully on February 22nd.

The miles slowly clicked off. It took intense concentration to stay on the road. I eyed the gas gauge. It now showed about an eighth of a tank left. I pulled my last, fat doobie from my pocket, lit it, and took in a deep toke.

“Damn you, Bob, I wish you were here sharing this joint.” I continued the conversation with myself. “You son-of-a-bitch, you have fucking pulled it off. I don’t know how, but you sure blew my mind the way you fucked with Oprah. That was beautiful.” I was laughing crazily. “Yes, oh my, yes. I am sure it pissed her off that you wouldn’t go to Chicago to appear on her show and did the interview via telescreen instead. When you drifted off to sleep for a few moments, that was the topper. I thought you were faking it at first, but when you woke up and asked where the bathroom was and never returned, she was flabbergasted.”

The road was climbing gradually, though it was difficult to tell in the near whiteout conditions. I was now running below empty on the

gas gauge and, for the first time, the engine sputtered. I pulled over to the shoulder alongside a sign that informed of a long downhill grade ahead. "End of the road, old boy," I said aloud. "Nothing to do but sit here and freeze to death." With that thought, I fished out the snowsuit Auggie had in the backseat and put on the boots and gloves along with it. I fell in and out of wakefulness listening to the wind whistling around me and feeling the gentle rocking of the truck when the gusts hit broadside. At one point, I awoke and noticed the wind had died down. I could barely tell that it was still light out through the snow piled on the windows. It took pushing the door open with both feet to get it ajar enough to squirm through so I could stand up and look out. From my high vantage point, I could make out a cluster of red flashing lights down in the valley. "Fuck, there's the roadblock," I muttered. "I might have to make it on foot, son-of-a-bitch, I hate snow." As I started going through my gear, and getting my supplies into my backpack, I turned on the radio and tuned in a local station. The news was not good.

"...The federal authorities report they believe they are closing in on the two terrorist suspects, Robert Windowmaker, the leader of the Boblovian underground movement, and his accomplice Michael Colton Wayne. A massive manhunt in northern New Mexico is believed to be centered on the capture of Windowmaker. An unnamed source, here in North Dakota, reports that the military, along with state and federal authorities, believe Wayne is one of many travelers stranded on I-94 due to the blizzard conditions we have experienced over the last twelve hours. Wayne is believed to be traveling alone in a 2005 dark blue Ford Expedition with Indiana license plates 79b7290. Wayne is believed to be armed and dangerous and should not be approached..."

Armed? I wish I had my piece, I thought. I could use it to shoot myself. Poor Auggie, they must have found out that he had helped me. Hopefully, he reported his truck stolen like we had planned, but nonetheless, I am sure they have him on the hot seat now.

Having gathered everything that made sense to carry, I switched off the radio and climbed out of the SUV. I waded through the crotch deep snow for about ten yards ahead of the truck. Looking down into

the valley I could make out a string of flashing lights slowly moving towards me behind what looked to be a couple of snowplows.

"Here they come," I said to the wind. "I'm not going to make it far in this shit." I plowed my way back to the truck. "I tried my best, Bob," I sighed wondering if I would ever see my friend again. I turned on the radio one more time.

"...the manifesto received by several of the major media outlets immediately following the closing of our nation's airports calls for a complete general strike for next month on February 22nd. Up until the attacks on the air transport system, the so called Boblovian Revolution was determined to be nothing more than an interesting amusement, the crazy rants of a man named Robert Windowmaker and a collection of similarly misguided, if not somewhat deranged, followers. However, the momentum that has emerged behind this idea of revolution has certainly given it much more meaning than many in our government would publicly admit. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Recent polls indicate that seventy-three percent of adult Americans favor an immediate change in government. Sixty-four percent say they will participate in the general strike on February 22nd, and now, nearly eighty-nine percent of those surveyed plan on making personal preparations for a massive shutdown of our country next month..."

I turned off the radio again, dug out the biggest roach from the ashtray, and took a big drag. Leaning back in the seat with my eyes closed, I focused on relaxing and being present in the moment. I could feel the cold chill around my feet, the nip of the air on my nose, and the total silence surrounding me under the blanket of snow that had drifted over the SUV. I managed to blank out my thoughts and focus on my breathing, letting all of my anxieties leave me. "Just deal with whatever arises in front of me," I thought aloud. "Everything will take care of itself just like it is supposed to."

Suddenly, my attention snapped back to the present by the sound of a motor running. They have gotten here pretty damn quickly. I felt as if I was floating on air. The thought flashed through me that I was dead already and that anything else to follow is just a movie playing out in my mind.

“Michael Wayne? Are you in there?” A voice thundered over the thumping of a fist beating on the back window. “If you value your life you better get out right now and come with me before the Feds get here. Come on, hurry up! I’m here to help you.”

I grabbed my pack and sprang from the truck. I glanced down the valley and saw that the rising wind was obscuring the advance of the Feds, but I knew they could not be too far away.

“Get on behind me, come on.”

I saw a tall figure astride a snowmobile garbed in a white hooded snowsuit and wearing dark snow goggles.

“Our only chance is to get some distance between them and us,” my rescuer shouted above the snowmobile’s motor.

I hopped onto the snowmobile and held tight with my cheek buried against the hilt of a high-powered, scoped rifle. Within moments, we were tearing off back up the highway. My rescuer yelled back to me, “We need to stay on the road a ways so the wind can cover the trail.”

Soon, we had dipped back down to where the interstate crossed a river and then we turned to the north and followed a tree line along a bluff for several minutes. Night was falling quickly, and it was difficult for me to see where we were heading; although, the driver seemed to know exactly where he was going. Far up along the river, the valley broadened, and I could see in the distance fencing and a small herd of cattle huddled up near the only tree standing alone in the valley. The snowmobile headed for a giant snow mound, and without hesitating, we plunged straight into it. The motor cut out and I took a second to get my breath back. I was sitting in pitch-black darkness. A click and the headlamp on the snowmobile came on and I realized I was surrounded by hay. A cave in the hay is what it was.

“We’re going to spend the night here.” I watched the man before me pull off his goggles and ski mask.

“My name is Merlin, Merlin Sego,” he removed his glove and stuck out his hand.

“Mike Wayne,” I replied shaking Merlin’s hand. “I guess I should be thanking you. You probably saved me from spending the rest of my life in jail.”

“I spent the last two days sitting in that damn blizzard watching the interstate from above where you pulled off. Lucky for you they had broadcast a description of your vehicle and where they thought you were. I was just about to give up when I saw you pull off the

road today.”

I studied Merlin’s face as he spoke. He appeared to be around thirty years old with short blond hair, blue eyes, and a crooked nose on a six-foot four-inch frame by my best guess.

“You were out in this weather looking specifically for me?”

“I watched the roadblock go up and I was hoping I could get to you before our friendly government swept you up.” He continued, “My family sort of has a history of helping fugitives. The FBI murdered my grandfather and my dad is serving life for trying to protect a man named Collier Ford, have you heard of him?”

“Can’t say that I have.”

“We have all night to talk about it. We need to get this place secured for the night.”

Merlin left the hay hideout, which gave me a minute to look over my surroundings. This place was surprisingly big. There was room for the snow mobile along with a place for a couple of people to bunk on top of some bales. A five-gallon pail had been rigged up with a toilet seat for a portable latrine. A Sterno camp stove, an electric lantern, some water, food, gas and oil for the snowmobile, it had it all for a completely safe hideaway.

Merlin came back and carefully pulled in place more bales to cover the entry.

“Do you have a cell phone in your pack or any other electronic devices?” he asked.

“No, I know I can be tracked that way,” I replied.

“No doubt they have found your vehicle by now and will be looking hard to find you.”

“I can’t believe how lucky I am to have run out of gas right where you were watching for me.”

“You ran out of gas? That’s good. That means your engine was cold so it will be hard for them to deduce that you had just been there. They might even think you tried to make it on foot so they will be concentrating their search in the immediate area, and with all this snow, they may think they won’t find you until it thaws. Just the same, we will take all the precautions we can.”

“This is a pretty nice set up you have here. A hideout in a hay mound, aren’t you afraid the cow’s will eat it?” I kidded.

“Like I said, hiding fugitives is a family legacy. This hay mound has a double heat reflector to hide our infrared signature and enough stores for us to stay in here for about a week if we need to. My

grandfather had several safe houses set up twenty-five years ago for the Posse Comitatus people. Do you know about them?"

"Only vaguely ...something about income tax evasion?"

"My grandfather, and several of the farmers in these parts, helped Collier Ford, his wife, and two sons hide out for three years after Collier shot his way out of an ambush over in Medina. Two police officers were killed and one of Collier's sons was severely wounded, but they were able to get away. My grandfather helped to establish a network that kept those folks hidden for nearly three years. Collier was public enemy number one just for not filing a federal income tax return. The ironic thing was that he virtually had no income to report."

"I do remember a little about that. As I recall, they made him out to be a dangerous, cop-killing fugitive. I don't think much was said about why they tried to capture him in the first place."

"Collier was very public about his views and had a great deal of support in our state. Do you know that the government has no legal right to levy an income tax? There never has been a law on the books allowing them to withhold money from us. They claim the constitution was amended back in 1913 at the same time the Federal Reserve Bank was created, but less than fifty percent of the states voted to ratify that amendment, which is required by law to change the constitution. Most people have no clue about this, just like most people don't know the Federal Reserve Bank is a private corporation that is allowed to print money as they please, and once we moved off the gold standard, our money has nothing of actual value backing it."

"I know about that. Money is supported only by a shared illusion of worth. It's only a piece of paper and represents little more than that roll of toilet paper over there, but I never have been able to pay my bills with toilet paper."

"That's where I think the Boblovian Revolution will come in. I see our current system heading towards the complete elimination of hard currency. It is not going to happen overnight, but it is happening quickly nonetheless. My niece works at Wal-Mart. She is already paid in plastic. Cousin Ed is on unemployment and he is paid with a plastic debit card too. If not the card, then it is a mandatory deposit." Merlin went on, "Soon, all transactions will be monitored, tracked and taxed. The government will not only be able to take their pound of flesh, they also will be able to gather a plethora of personal information that can paint a very detailed picture of each of us."

"I know, only drug dealers and terrorist will have a need for cash. Possessing cash will be a crime. You're either with us, or against us, and if you are transacting below the radar, using cash, then you will definitely be a suspect in the war on terror," I added.

"So, do you think that if everything winds to a stop on a 2-22, then we may be able to change the way we think about money? I think a new economy will come about based on individual liberty that allows open bartering and the trading of services without having to transact with cash; but hell, there really is no reason, and no actual law, that says you can't create your own currency just as long as you don't try to pass it off as so-called real money. The Federal Reserve definitely wants to keep their corner on the money making market. What do you think, Mike?"

"Merlin, I don't know, but I can tell you this. If what I have been through so far is any indication of what lies ahead, then hang on 'cause it's going to get ugly."

"It's been ugly for a long time for those awake enough to know what's at stake. I'd like a cup of tea before turning in. Would you like some?" Merlin poured some water into a pan and set it on the stove. The blue flame of the Sterno and the light from the two candles provided a warm comfortable glow to the inside of the hideaway. It was really quite cozy; and soon, we were enjoying a cup of steaming green tea and some homemade beef jerky.

"Not much of a dinner, but if we get up to the house tomorrow I'll have my sister cook us up a fine meal. So tell me more about Bob and what's going to be his next move?"

I spent the next hour, or so, telling Merlin how all this had come about. He sat listening silently, only occasionally shaking his head in disbelief when I touched upon the more bizarre aspects of this whole crazy adventure. In a way, he seemed a little disappointed that there wasn't more to the story than there was.

"Some revolution, huh? I guess it's not what you expected to hear."

Merlin leaned back against a hay bale and with a distant gaze broke out into a grin.

"Hell, it's better than I could have imagined it. It's all in their fucking heads, the Feds that is. They are making all this up as they go along; they don't have a clue, do they?" his eyes lowered and met mine. "This has taken on a life of its own. It's bigger than any one man. It doesn't matter if they get Bob, or you, or me, this will go on

until the end without anyone doing anything now ...I can see it all happening. Damn, let's get some sleep and see what tomorrow brings. Thanks, Mike, my granddad must be up there smiling about now."

I lay awake listening to the choppers echoing across the valley long after hearing Merlin's soft snoring.

I awoke to the sound of a skillet frying and the smell of hot coffee.

"I hope you like powdered eggs and Spam."

"I'll take some of that coffee. Did you hear those helicopters last night?" I asked.

"Yeah, not much doubt what they were looking for." Merlin handed me a plate of Spam and scrambled eggs. I passed on the grits.

"Shhh," Merlin put his fingers to his lips. We could hear a motor getting louder as it seemed to approach us. It sounded like a snowmobile.

"It sounds like my sister Colleen. She's probably coming by to check on the herd."

The motor revved a couple of times and then shut off, and then started back up and then shut off again.

"That's her signal for us to sit tight and not come out."

After several long minutes, a woman's voice muffled by the hay, asked. "Merlin, are you in there?"

"We're here, Sis. I have our man with me."

"Listen, the Feds were at the house yesterday even before I heard on the news that they found our man's car on the interstate. They were looking for you, Merlin. I told them you are up in Calgary for a couple of weeks to see a girl and that I don't know how to reach you. I think you guys better stay put for a few days. When the road gets cleared I'll bring the trailer up and take a couple of head into town and hook up with Roy. Have our friend ready for the road. The shit has really hit the fan, so please be careful."

Soon after, we could hear her leave. The two of us ate our breakfast in silence.

"Why were the Fed's at your house?" I asked Merlin.

"My guess is they are not leaving any stones unturned. No doubt, when they pulled out their North Dakota shit list, my family and I were on it, but don't worry; we have a plan to get you out of here.

Like I said, we have done this before. We smuggled Collier Ford out right from under their noses and we will do the same for you.”

“What ever happened to Ford? I don’t remember hearing anything about that.”

“The official story was he was killed in a shootout, along with his wife, in Johnson County, Arkansas, but the true story is the Feds came to the house that he was hiding in and murdered Collier and his wife and the couple that were harboring them. First, they executed Kenny and Rita Sampson, members of the Arkansas Rifle Company, a militia group in the Ozarks. They then shot Kathy Ford in the head while Collier watched. The sheriff, Billy Montgomery was forced to do all of the killing and told to lie about it later. He confessed all of this in a suicide letter a year later. Billy said he was ordered to shoot Collier in the stomach with his service revolver. As Collier lay dying a slow death, a couple of plain-clothed agents took an axe and cut off Collier’s hands and feet. Seeing this, Billy stepped up and put a bullet in Collier’s head. He said that really pissed off the agents. Then the bodies and house were doused with gasoline and then everything was burned to the ground. The Fed’s made out the coroner’s report themselves and threatened the county coroner forcing him to sign the bogus death certificates and that finished the business. This is who we are dealing with.”

“I really appreciate what you and your sister are trying to do for me, Merlin, but I don’t want anything like that to happen to anybody because of me.”

“Mike, I don’t think you completely understand what is happening. It isn’t your choice anymore and it’s not about you. All this is much bigger than you or me. You and Bob represent the last hope for the rest of us. You will find there are many people willing to fight and die for what the Boblovian Revolution has come to stand for. A window has opened up, yes a window of opportunity to take back this great country for our people and for our constitutional rights and values. There is no doubt that this is our last chance to get the job done. There are more people than you can imagine who have been preparing for this opportunity and waiting for someone to rally around and lead us in this fight. And you, my friend, along with Bob Windowmaker, have been bestowed with that role, like it or not.”

“Me, leading the fight? Hell, I don’t even have a gun.”

“I was going to ask you about that.” Merlin crawled around to the other side of the snowmobile, pulled back a straw bale, and opened

the cover on a crate hidden behind it.

"Take your pick. Make it a handgun, you won't have room for a rifle, but you should be carrying some protection."

"Sweet, this will do fine." I picked up and examined a nickel-plated, pearl-handled .45 automatic.

"Nice choice; that belonged to my dad. He would be proud to know that you are putting it back into action."

I held the piece in my right hand, checked the action with my left, felt the balance and noted that it was loaded. I raised the pistol with both hands, the barrel pointing up, and rested it to my forehead. I kneeled that way for several seconds silently with my eyes closed feeling the lethal energy of the killing tool in my grip.

"There's a holster for it in here too," added Merlin.

I opened my eyes, lowered the gun and slowly offered it back to Merlin.

"It's a beautiful weapon, nice engraving and it would be an honor to carry it, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to decline the offer. I've fought in one war already, and that was enough for me to learn that winning in war has nothing to do with killing and everything to do with loving and compassion. When I meet up with my pursuers I don't think I'll be in any position to shoot my way out anyway."

"Ok, have it your way. I think I understand." Merlin carefully placed the gun back in the box and closed the lid. "Maybe you are right, what we stand for is different from what they believe in. We want to live in peace even though they are constantly trying to provoke violence. Perpetual war, war on drugs, war on poverty, war on the middle class, war on terror, it's all the same when you really look at who they define as the enemy, it's you and me."

I had no idea that when Merlin's sister said to sit tight for a while that it would be four days before I would set foot outside the hay fort, and describing it as setting foot is a stretch; it would be more accurate to say I was parceled along my way.

On that fourth day, Merlin and I heard a truck bouncing up the road, and again, the motor stopped and started again before shutting off - the signal to sit and wait. I could make out the sounds of Colleen working the cows and I was pretty sure she was loading a few head into a trailer. Her voice spoke low and clear from immediately outside the hideout.

"Merlin, we will have to move him like we moved Collier. I have

the trailer packed already and all I have left is to get a few bales and your friend on board. I'm pretty sure they are watching the house, so they may have someone watching here too. How big is our friend?"

"You're in luck, Sis. He is probably less than one hundred and seventy pounds." Merlin looked at me and I responded with an affirmative nod.

"I'm going to break the ice off the tank and I'll be back to get some bales and our friend. Get him dressed and ready."

"Okay, here's how this works." Merlin then briefed me on the plan.

"We have a trailer for hauling our stock and it has a hidden compartment. You will be riding in it lying down on your back. It isn't heated, so we have to suit you up, and then bag you in this," indicating to a heavy sleeping bag inside a rough burlap cover. "But you will want to put on one of these first." From the bag, Merlin pulled out an adult sized disposable diaper. "The astronauts wear them, so don't think it's too silly, and it will be a little more comfortable for you. We will pack you with some water and juice boxes and some dry food because you may be in storage for at least two days."

"Jesus, you guys have it all prepared; it blows my mind. So where am I off to?"

"Colleen will take you over into Montana. It's about a day's drive. There the trailer will be switched and Roy will take you to his ranch farther west near Bozeman. From that point on, you are in the hands of the Freeman of Montana and we will have done our job. Mike, I wish you Godspeed and good fortune. Maybe I will be able to get to New Mexico in time to help, but I'm going to have to stay in here for a few more nights until I think the heat is off."

I shook Merlin's hand for the last time before the bag was zippered up over my head. A few minutes later, I felt myself being dragged like a sack of potatoes up a hard ramp and into the trailer. A wooden lid slammed on top and Colleen said to stay quiet. As she was buttoning up the doors on the trailer, she told me one thing that I would always remember.

"We are all riding in there with you, Mike. All of us who still have hope of having our beautiful country back, free and at peace."

With a violent jolt, the trailer lurched forward. Packed in straw and sealed in the sleeping bag afforded me some protection from the cold, but little protection from the bruising pounding and incessant

noise of the road rushing inches below me. I imagined this is what a worm must feel like inside a rotten apple. After several hours on the road, my head felt like it was about to explode from a severe headache. I vomited on myself inside the sleeping bag. Soon, I found myself drifting in and out of consciousness, unable to separate my waking moments from my disturbing dreams, all of which ended with Bob, and me, facing insurmountable odds against an entire army of black uniformed, heavily-armed men - more or less, a modern day Custer's last stand scenario of blood and screams amid merciless gunfire.

At one point, I awoke to the silence and stillness surrounding me. The vehicle had stopped. The sounds drifting in around me confirmed we had stopped for fuel. Colleen's voice was soft and distant.

"The folks here say there is a roadblock set up a few miles down the road and the Feds have been crawling all over the state. You stay quiet and we will get through this all right. We have about three more hours to go before we meet up with Roy."

Not long after leaving the service station I felt the truck stop and then after a few minutes, it would slowly roll forward then sit and idle again. It was apparent that we were in line, probably at the checkpoint. The exhaust fumes were overpowering and just before once again losing consciousness, I thought I heard a command to get out of the truck and put your hands above your head.

I was alone now, in my dream. The raucous gunfire and helicopter blades slowly diminished into silence. I was enveloped in complete darkness, feeling my way forward on my hands and knees. At one point, I collapsed into a tight ball with my legs folded into my chest and I sobbed loudly. Abandoned in my desperation, I felt like just lying there and dying. Shortly, the sound of my sobbing was replaced by the unmistakable cooing of a morning dove ahead in the darkness. This inspired me to begin to crawl blindly again towards this comforting sound. As I carefully probed the darkness ahead, I became more aware of a presence behind me - something to be feared, something in pursuit of me. The more I tried to hurry myself, the harder it was for me to move. Paralyzed now with fright, I could no longer hear the doves coaxing me towards them; instead, I heard the menacing barks and growls of dogs approaching me from the rear. I forced myself to turn my head and to peer into the black.

From the pits of Hell, the red fanged dogs of Satan lunged at my throat

Abruptly, I awoke banging my head above me in a startled attempt to sit up. The dogs were real, and they were right outside the trailer.

“For Christ’s sake, lighten up will you?” I recognized Colleen’s voice. “Ol’ Elsie’s gonna kick your dog’s head in if you ain’t careful!”

Clearly, the cows were agitated. The pounding of their hooves directly overhead confirmed that.

Colleen sounded as agitated as the cows. “You’re welcome to go in and sort through all that cow shit if you want, but I’m not taking any responsibility if you break any bones tangling with those two.”

I could hear the dog running up and down the length of the trailer barking wildly. The next sound I heard was the bashing of hooves against the sides of the transporter.

A man’s voice shouted above the din. “Call off Max and let her get out of here before they break a leg or bust out.”

“Go on, get out of here. You’re clear to go,” another voice commanded.

Soon, I was listening to the whine of tires on the highway again. Several more hours passed. I drifted in and out of sleep, but no more dreams tormented me. My body had become completely numb from my confinement; even the nasty odor from the cows, and by this time the smell of my own filth had faded. I had no idea what time of day or night it was, but when I noticed the pressure in my ears popping, I knew we were nearing the mountains and the end of my gruesome ride.

I heard the tires rolling over gravel, and soon, all became still.

“Good to see you, Colleen, any trouble along the way?” The voice was low and gruff.

“It was pretty hairy, Roy. We had a close call at a roadblock up near Big Timber.”

“Come on; let’s get some coffee while Caleb drops your trailer.”

“Okay, but let’s make it quick, I’m worried about Merlin.”

Nothing was said to me, not so much as a ‘hey, you okay in there?’ In a bit, I was back on the move bouncing again down a rough back road. A little later, I could sense the trailer backing up and heard the trailer gate slam the ground followed by the clomping

of hooves as the cows were led out.

Suddenly, I was lifted up and the rough voice of Roy said, "Hold still. We will cut you out of there, Mr. Wayne." He slit open the burlap bag I was in. "Like a stinky pea in a pod, wooo weee!"

The bite of fresh air filled my lungs; I slowly stretched my limbs, and finally, I was able to sit up.

"You'll feel a lot better once you get cleaned up and something hot in your belly, Mr. Wayne."

"You must be Roy, call me Mike." I offered my hand to a rough looking white-haired cowboy.

Roy smiled and replied, "That's fine, Mike. You don't mind if I don't take off my gloves?" Roy returned the handshake.

I looked myself over. "Christ, I'm a mess," I chuckled.

"Caleb, let's help our friend into the tack room. You can get cleaned up in there."

Roy and Caleb left me to clean myself in the makeshift shower in one of the stalls in the old horse barn. The water was barely warm enough to be able to stand in the flow for more than an minute or so, but to me it was just what I needed to clear my head and to be able to reassess my situation. Once again, I was dependent on the kindness of strangers, not a common situation for me. Already, I felt responsible for endangering innocent others and I thought back to Jade, Auggie, Merlin, his sister and the sinister men in black that had visited me before I fled.

"I'll leave your dinner in here, Mr. Wayne. Grandpa says you should eat and rest up in here tonight because you will be heading out again early tomorrow." It was a girl's voice, young and sweet. I caught a glimpse of long dark hair, as she turned and moved out through the door. A bed had been made in clean straw with some quilts and my dinner spread out on a table supported by a wooden crate, which made me feel at home. I couldn't remember a meal I enjoyed more or a night in which I have slept better.

"Wake up, Mr. Wayne. Grandpa wants you to come up to the house and have breakfast with us." This time it was Caleb. The kerosene lantern he held cast dark angular shadows across his features. "Gather your things and follow behind me, but stay out of the light. I'll leave the door open and you can follow in after me," he added.

I stumbled along in the dark, making my way up the back steps of

the farmhouse, through the mudroom, and into the kitchen illuminated by more lanterns and candles. The aroma of eggs, bacon, and ham, along with very strong coffee, met my nose. A woman with gray hair tied in a bun stood with her back to me at a fantastic old wood burning cook stove that warmed the room delightfully.

"Please, have a seat at our table, Mr. Wayne." Roy gestured to the seat across the table.

"Please, just call me Mike."

"Well, as you can see, Mike, the power is out."

"Really, I was thinking this was the way you folks normally lived."

"Oh, we can get along fine without electricity, and we have a generator I'll fire up later, so we are prepared for these things, but I'm not so sure the rest of the country is. Last night they reported on the radio that nearly half the country lost power, and of course you are to blame."

"Oh shit, what did I do now?" This got a laugh from everyone in the room.

"How do you like your eggs, Mike?" The woman at the stove turned to me. Her face was ruddy and worn, but her eyes shined as brightly as her smile.

"Over easy and staring you in the face, please."

"Wait until you try some of Sarah's biscuits. They're the best in the west," said Roy.

"Sarah is my daughter-in-law, you met my grandson Caleb, and here's my beautiful granddaughter Jessica." The young woman, who had brought me my food the night before, entered the room and gave grandpa a peck on his cheek before helping her mother at the stove.

"Well, Grandpa, he doesn't look very dangerous to me." Jessica had her mother's charming smile and lovely eyes.

"So I am responsible for shutting down the power grid, huh? Let me guess, Mylar balloons, right?" Another one of Bob's crazy schemes had flashed back into my mind.

"It was you!" Caleb exclaimed in amazement.

"Hardly," I replied. "Remember, I've been stuffed in underneath the cows for the last day or so. What are they saying in the news about all this?"

Roy spoke. "You know how the government controls what's reported, so it is hard to get an accurate assessment on what is really happening, but it's clear that old Uncle Sam has declared war on you

and Mr. Windowmaker. They are rounding up thousands of people who have spoken out in support of the Boblovian Insurrection, as they are calling it now. They have made you guys out to be the biggest threat to this nation since the civil war. There have been mass arrests and people herded off to detention centers that sound more like concentration camps to me. Other reports tell of foreign troops on American soil using deadly force on innocent citizens. Anyone with a 222 bumper sticker, flag, or any other indication of support, is at risk of being held as an enemy combatant.”

“I guess we all have seen this coming for a long time. What about Bob? Any information on him?” I shook my head in disbelief and began dipping the fresh biscuits into the warm, watery egg yolks before me.

“No one has seen him since last summer. There are all kinds of rumors circulating, especially since the Feds first reported they had arrested him; then, they had to admit that they had the wrong man. Now the authorities claim they are close to locating him in New Mexico, but the underground buzz says he is in hiding commanding a secret army that’s conducting these, so called, attacks.”

“And what’s being said of my whereabouts?” I paused with a strip of bacon near my mouth.

“As for you, Mike, it seems you have given them the slip again. They found your truck in North Dakota and are still searching there; but it’s only a matter of days until they broaden out again. You certainly don’t want to get caught, especially after what they did to Bob’s girlfriend Natascha.”

A sick feeling rose in me. I closed my eyes for a moment then I looked straight at Roy. “Tell me about Natascha, Roy.”

“She is being tried for treason before one of those bullshit military tribunals. Speculation is she could be executed by next week.”

“That’s after they torture her,” added Caleb. Roy shot Caleb a look of admonishment.

I dropped the fork and slowly pushed the plate away. The tears were welling up in my eyes. I covered my face and tried to hold back my tears. Sarah, sitting next to me, gently pulled my head over to her shoulder. She was crying too.

Everything was racing through my mind now. How had all this come about? It’s no joke, no game, this is for real. In an instant, a wave of despair and fear, fear for myself, my friends, my family, and

for my country swept over me. Where was I in all this? Then as suddenly as the tears began to flow, they stopped. This is the fight for our county, and for our freedom, that we undertook when we went off to Vietnam. These are the things that we had fought for, not the lies the false leaders of this nation had held high, but for the true individual freedoms expressed in the constitution. People suffer and die for those ideals. I am still at war. I guess it never ends. I felt my mind harden around this truth. I knew how bravely Natascha and Bob would face this fact, and I knew instantly, that I too, was up to the task.

“Why put yourselves at such great risk? You know the same thing will happen to all of you if I’m caught, don’t you?” I looked at each of them sitting around the table. Each one gave a solemn nod as my eyes met theirs.

Jessica spoke, “We are doing this for our dad.”

“We have to keep fighting for him.” Caleb added.

“My son sacrificed his freedom for this cause. He and many others are in prison for exercising their rights as sovereign individuals.” Roy swelled with pride.

“My husband Leroy,” Sarah said wiping the last tears from her cheek, “was the leader of the Montana Freemen Movement. Welcome to Justus Township, Mr. Wayne.”

“Merlin Sego told me I was being handed over to the Freemen. I wasn’t sure exactly what he meant.”

“Eat up, Mike. We have to keep you moving. The kids will tend to the horses while you finish, and Sarah and I will fill you in on why you have been brought here.” Roy got up and poured us another cup of coffee.

“First off, we know the Feds will be back around here soon. They came through here a few months back to assure themselves that we weren’t stirring up trouble again. Bob isn’t the first to awaken to the idea of declaring his individual independence. In the late 80’s the whole damned state of Montana was on the verge of doing just that. Leroy, Danny Fultz, and several others, organized their own sovereign government, complete with their own currency, constitution, and all other minimally necessary trappings, to become totally self-governing. They even took the U.S. Government to court. They tried them in the Freeman courts and found them guilty of all types of criminal activity, including, racketeering and treason. They really had the Feds over a barrel for a while until, after a three month

standoff, they captured Leroy and several others and put them all away for a long time. All they had against them were a bunch of bullshit charges, like passing bogus currency and bouncing checks, which in fact, were only circulated among other willing Freemen.”

“Oh yes, I remember it all was kept low key in the press. I think after Ruby Ridge the government wasn’t too keen on perpetrating any more violence on its citizens, until Waco, that is.” That was about all I could recall.

“You’re right about that, Mike. They kept it so low key because they did not want the idea to spread, and it never did.” Roy shook his head.

“My husband was sure that when the Feds closed in, many others from all over the country would come to their aide. Leroy was passionate about this cause, and he was positive it would take root in many people’s minds, and even though they may have been defeated, the idea was much too powerful on its own to die. But, die it did, until now, that is. Do you see, Mike? You and Bob represent the same principles that we fought for. Maybe we were ahead of our time, I don’t know, but damn it, the Boblovian Revolution has gotten everyone’s attention and we are going to do what we can to make sure it gets done right this time.” The steely determination of Sarah’s voice was just short of fanatical.

I looked at Roy and said, “I’m glad she is on our side. What is it that you need me to do?”

“Not get caught, that’s all. Bob’s disappearance, followed by your vanishing from right under their noses, has cranked up the whole 222 thing. People are expecting a lot on February 22nd; although I’m not exactly sure what, but the whole thing could lose its steam if you, or Bob, are apprehended. Ideally, we would put you in a safe place up in the mountains and keep you there until after 22nd, but by judging the kind of man you seem to be, I think we would have to put a gun to you to keep you there.”

“I think I can see why you might want to do that, but...”

“You feel you need to be with your friend Bob, don’t you, Mike?” Sarah’s voice had softened once again.

“Yeah, that’s where I need to be. I’m not sure if I can find him, or not, but I think I know where he will be; though I haven’t a clue as to what I’ll find there. The last time I saw him, I think he had taken yet another path. Be that as it may, what other choice do I really have?”

“You are a good man, Mike. You’d make a good Freeman.” Roy smiled at me.

“So what’s next?” I questioned.

“Can you ride?”

“Anything with two wheels and says Harley.” I quipped.

“What about something with four legs?”

“I can see I’m about to learn, aren’t I? Giddy-up.” It was my turn to smile.

It wasn’t long before Jessica and Caleb came back to the kitchen.

“We’re just about ready to go, Grandpa. We have to get Mike ready first,” Jessica announced.

“Christ, you aren’t going to pack me in a box or something, are you?”

“Not if you don’t want to,” Jessica went on, “We have to get you dressed to look like you belong out here, and on a horse, that’s all.”

Soon, I was looking at myself in the mirror admiring my tooled leather cowboy boots, silver belt buckle, and a big black, ten-gallon topper. The few lonesome clouds on the eastern horizon were a brilliant orange, giving hint to the sun soon to be seen. It was a short, but greatly heartfelt moment of goodbyes. Not much was actually spoken; however, everyone knew the danger. The three of us saddled up. Jessica took the lead with Caleb bringing up the rear. I immediately felt comfortable on my mount, a gentle, wide, mare named Sally, but after four hours on the trail I wished they had packed me in a box instead.

“I don’t know if I’m going to be able to walk when I get down off Sally.” I said over my shoulder to Caleb.

The three of us rode on silently following a vague trail through tall ponderosa pines. We steadily climbed out of the valley away from Justus Township. It was fairly easy going, especially, for the dead of winter. The sun was still warm on the skin; even though, the air held a nip that bit at the nose every time we passed through the shadows of the towering pines. Wildlife was everywhere. At one point, we rode up upon some mountain sheep, a ram with the classic curled horns, and three ewes alongside. The elk stood away at a distance, and sometimes followed along for a while, before disappearing into the woods. I found myself forgetting the urgency of the moment more than once. The natural beauty before me made me feel as if the world, and its troubles, were merely a dream. I thought if only I could give my ass a rest I would be much happier.

The width of old Sally made it feel like my crotch was about to split and sharp stabbing pains had me clutching at my lower back. I was just about to break the silence to complain about my discomfort, when I flashed on the image of Natascha in custody and the real horrors she may be going through. A sick wave of guilt swept over me again. I felt ashamed that I could have, only moments ago, felt free and at peace when so many of those I loved, and countless others, were suffering for the cause.

We only stopped twice for short breaks during the first day's ride, finally dismounting at dusk to make camp against a stony cove under a granite overhang.

"I think it will be safe to build a fire here as long as we keep it small," said Caleb, "We are lucky to have this mild weather, but up here, that can change quickly."

It was obvious that Jessica and Caleb were adept at life on the trail. Soon, they had a fire heating up some coffee and dinner. I helped them pile up some pine needles for a soft spot for our sleeping bags, and once the horses had been tended and fed, we sat down to our meal.

"I guess I never asked where we are going. I don't expect we will be riding all the way to New Mexico, will we?"

"I wish it would be that easy. No, we are taking you to meet some people that should be able to help you get to where you want to go. They are strange bunch, and I should warn you; you will need to stay on your toes around them. Some of these people have been isolated up in these parts so long that they are just a little bit on the paranoid side. They call themselves the Mountain Men Militia. They offered their aide to the Freemen cause during papa's standoff with the Feds, but he declined their help because they are very armed and quite prone to violence. Dad knew they were ready to take on the government in open war, if called upon." Jessica explained.

"They are more, or less, our standing army if we ever need them. It's that way around here. We watch each other's backs," Caleb continued. "These people have seen this coming for a long time, way before Ruby Ridge and that whole mess. We haven't heard from any of them for a long time, but it's a safe bet that they are prepared to help you in ways that we can't. George MacFarlane is whom we will try to contact. His cabin is another couple of days ride from here the long way, but we can get there tomorrow if the weather looks good and we shoot for Bolyard's Gap. It takes us up to ten thousand feet

and straight down onto MacFarlane's compound. It's very risky in the winter, but we haven't had the snow we usually get, so we might want to chance it."

"One day less on old Sally wouldn't hurt my feelings - no offense, old girl." I noticed Sally huffing and pulling at her line. The other two horses started doing the same and it became obvious that something was agitating them.

"They're acting scared, Caleb. Maybe it's a wolf." Both Jessica and Caleb picked up their rifles and moved out of the fire's glare to peer into the darkness. The horses were becoming even more frantic. Imperceptibly at first, then rapidly more pronounced, the ground began to shake. It started as a slight vibration felt only through the soles of the feet. Suddenly, there came a jolt that nearly knocked everyone down. Now the ground shook violently. A thunderous noise surrounded us. We were forced to drop down on our knees. Big boulders started crashing down from above and a terrible wind blasted us with dirt and grit. In a panic, we crawled to the relative safety of the cove. As quickly as it began, it stopped. We clutched each other breathlessly.

"So that's what an earthquake feels like? Good God!" I exclaimed.

Caleb made for the horses, who were still straining at their lines. "Jessica, help me with the horses! We need to get them under this ledge with us. No doubt, there will be some strong aftershocks!"

Once the horses were secured, we huddled under the granite overhang.

"Well, that was certainly exciting. I don't suppose you had anything to do with that?" Jessica was obviously poking some fun at me. "It shouldn't be too hard for a guy who blacked out half the country, and is bringing us to the brink of a revolution, to cause a little ol' earthquake."

"I don't remember earthquakes in Bob's war plan. The power grid black out was a pretty simple thing though. All it takes are some helium filled balloons, preferably the metallic Mylar type, and some light-weight, copper wire. A couple of bundles of balloons released under the right place, at the right time, in multiple locations, and you can easily cause a sequential collapse of the power grid. The hard part would be finding all the weak links, but probably any electrical engineer, with access to the internet, could devise a plan," I explained. "Anyway, I never thought of Montana as a hotbed for

earthquakes.”

“There has been talk of Yellowstone becoming active again and we have had an occasional small quake; although, I have only felt one in my life and it wasn’t anything close to this.” Caleb said then Jessica added, “I hope the folks at home are okay, I worry about Grandpa’s heart.”

“You haven’t said what you and Jessica’s plans are when you get back to the ranch?”

“We have our war plan too, or I guess you can call it that. We are going to see if we can bust Pa out of prison. We may not have a prayer, but it looks like we may have at least five hundred Freemen showing up at the penitentiary that day. If you do your job, Mike, and Bob does his, then maybe we can just peacefully go in and get him. At least, that is what we have in mind,” related Caleb.

“Good luck on that, I mean it. I have already seen so many crazy things that I don’t doubt that it may be that easy come February 22nd.”

“Still no aftershocks, I guess that’s a good thing. Let’s get some sleep and get back on the trail at daybreak.” Caleb studied the night sky. “The stars are still out bright and the wind is calm. We may be able to try the high pass tomorrow.”

The three of us spent a quiet night and awoke to a pale sky gaining light in the east. Overhead, the sky was clear, but in the southern distance, the horizon was dark.

“Is that some weather coming in?” Jessica asked Caleb.

“I can’t tell, it almost looks like smoke, but the wind is to the south so we should be all right. Let’s skip breakfast and get moving. I’ll feel a lot better when we get up over Bolyard’s Gap.”

The trail soon became much steeper and more rugged. Sure-footed Sally seemed to be having no trouble with her footing, which was a good thing, because, in more than one place, I found myself closing my eyes and hanging tightly onto the reins afraid to look over the sheer drops that edged the trail. Caleb was in the lead now, and I could see him nervously watching the horizon to the south. We were just coming out of the tree line and the pass lay before us void of any snow beautifully flanked by towering peaks. The air in the valley off to the distant horizon was dim and yellow, almost like smog.

“Do you still think that’s smoke out there, Caleb?” I shouted ahead.

“No I don’t. I think its volcanic ash, and it seems to be slowly spreading this way. At least we caught a break with the weather. I don’t think this pass has ever been snow free in the middle of winter. We should be able to get down to MacFarlane’s in another few hours.”

We rode along in silence with only the sound of the horses’ hooves pacing in step. I took note of the absence of any wildlife along the trail, no birds, no chipmunks, nothing stirring in the trees. Although the sun had risen to nearly directly overhead, it appeared pale and hazy. Soon, Caleb led us off the trail and we began a steep descent weaving through the dense growth. Occasionally, we passed through a clearing and then we could see the sky had a sickly yellow-brown tint, and soon after, it became obvious that the air was becoming thicker with volcanic ash. By the time we came to a seldom traveled lane, we were having to wear our bandanas over our faces to help keep out the fine dust.

“I’m pretty sure this leads to MacFarlane’s place. It looks like this road is still being used, so maybe we will find George up there ahead in his cabin,” informed Caleb.

I was just about to speak when Jessica pulled up her steed and told everyone to be quiet and to listen. Not far away, we heard a buzzing sound, mechanical for sure, almost like a gas powered weed eater, and it was getting louder. We soon determined it was something flying in the air above us. Then, just as I cranked my neck to look up, I saw the source of the sound, an unmanned aircraft with a six-foot wingspan flashing over the canopy of pines. It dipped its wing sharply and circled back towards us. Now we all could see the military markings on its wings and the surveillance camera pod mounted below its fuselage.

“Aw shit, I think it spotted us,” I exclaimed, but before any of us could make a move for cover, the unmistakable sound of gunfire rang out from very close by; simultaneously, the plane’s left wing folded back, and the remotely controlled aircraft abruptly tumbled from the sky.

“Take that, you motherfuckers! Ol’ George has got your fucking number!”

The voice had come from just ahead of us followed by a couple of war whoops and maniacal laughter. Jessica kicked her steed forward, and Caleb, and I followed. Around the next turn, we found George MacFarlane bent over his kill relishing in his glory. In the

next instant, he was up and facing us with his rifle taking aim at the lead rider.

“Who have we here? Speak, or die, stranger,” he commanded.

Jessica was first to speak, “Are you George MacFarlane?”

“I know who I am, who the fuck are you?” Shot back George.

“I’m Jessica Adams, Leroy Adams’ daughter. This is my brother Caleb,” pointing towards her brother.

As she spoke, George kept the rifle to his eye and pointed the barrel at each one of us stopping with me.

“I am Mike Wayne, Michael Colton Wayne.” I spoke with a wavering voice.

“Thee Michael Colton Wayne? The FBI’s most wanted man? Yeah, fucking right.” George lowered the gun slightly.

“I suppose you can say that. I am a friend of Bob Windowmaker’s,” I replied.

George raised the carbine and lined the sights squarely on my forehead. “Well hell then, I just got me a winning lottery ticket. Last I heard, you were worth a cool million bucks, dead, or alive.”

“I would prefer dead if you plan on turning me over,” I shot back.

Without taking his aim, or his eyes off me, George shouted back to Caleb and Jessica.

“I went to school with your daddy. He ran off with his high school sweetheart and got married, right?”

“That’s right.” Jessica answered. “He married my mother Sarah, right after his senior year.”

“Uh, not exactly,” Caleb followed up. “His first high school sweetheart was a little redhead named Beth. She was Dad’s first love. Beth dumped Dad right before he and Mom hooked up.”

Jessica glanced Caleb’s way and said, “Dad never told me anything about that.”

“Mom was crazy jealous of Beth, so Dad never talked about it much.” Caleb added.

George pointed the gun’s muzzle towards the ground, “Beth was my Sis’s best friend, and a wild little thing. Leroy tried to keep his feelings about her a secret. Not many people would have known about that. That’s good enough for me. If you are a friend of the Adams’ then you sure as hell are a friend of mine.” He walked over to each of us to shake our hands. “Come on up to the house, it’s not very far.” George motioned for us to follow.

George’s one room cabin was tucked in underneath the tall pines.

Behind, was an old military style Quonset hut of world war two vintage. Parked in front, was an old Land Rover with two bumper stickers fading away on the back. One read: 'No problem is too large that can't be solved with high explosives,' and the other carried a simpler message, 'One Bullet, One Vote – Vote early and Vote Often.'

Two bull mastiffs ran from beyond the cabin barking menacingly causing Sally to rear up.

"Gritz, Gravy, take the point!" George commanded.

Both animals turned abruptly running to George and stationing themselves on either side of him.

"These are my girls; it's safe now for you to come to them. Let them get a good sniff and they will be your buddies too," added George.

Caleb finished getting the horses settled in then joined the rest of us around MacFarlane's table. Outside, the air had thickened considerably with ash. The ash was starting to settle out on everything, reminding me of how the dust would settle out on the hedgerows along the dusty gravel roads back in Indiana. George went about stoking up the fire in his pot-bellied stove. Soon, we all were enjoying some stout black coffee.

"I'll put on some stew. I made it only yesterdee and it got cold enough last night that it shoulda kept," assured George. "So, you're Leroy Adams' kids? Your Dad's still being held hostage, isn't he?" Caleb and Jessica nodded in unison. "Your grandpa Roy used to take Leroy and me hunting. How is the old fart?"

"Grandpa is still riding tall in the saddle, but the trail is getting shorter, you know," answered Jessica. "I think his spite for the government has kept him kicking for a long time, but this Boblovian thing has him completely inspired again."

"Well, I hope he realizes that this time we need to be gettin' the guns down off'n the racks." George said, nodding his head and looking at me. "What's coming down the pike ain't gonna be pretty."

George got up and rummaged through a cabinet pulling out some old, beaten, tin dishes, and began ladling out some oily, greasy looking stew that despite its appearance, smelled really good to me. I hungrily dug into the meal. With my mouth half full of stew, I asked George what he thought was coming down the pike.

"I think we will see this whole thing come to a grinding halt, but

not before our friendly Uncle Sam has had it out on each and every one of us who has had any hand in this. The airport thing and the power blackouts were only the beginning, I'm sure. I think if anyone knows what is coming next, it's you, Mr. Wayne." George turned in his chair to face me directly. "After all, you and Bob put together the master plan for all this."

"I can't take credit for anything that's been going on, and I don't believe Bob is somewhere out there directing all this either. The last time I saw Bob, he was putting the whole Boblovian thing to rest. He had enough of the notoriety and adoration for a while. Me, I'm just guilty by association with my friend Bob. Somehow, someone else has taken over the active part of the Boblovian Revolution and is executing the war plan. You know Bob had all these crazy ideas written down in a notebook. He called it his war plans, but he was just creating more material for his standup routine, at least that's what I was led to believe. I thought I had that notebook along with all his other stuff, but I can't recall seeing it around before I left. You don't suppose the Feds got ahold of it and are making all this shit happen in order to take us even farther down the road towards total control and suppression?" I sadly shook my head and then was quiet.

"So, you really don't know how all this has gone down, do you, Mike?" Jessica went on to add, "Grandpa was right. The power of the idea of individual sovereignty will always live on in the minds and hearts of free men."

George returned to the stove for the pot of stew and heaped out another portion for me. I dug into the second helping.

"Come on, you two, eat up." George waved the spoon as he spoke. Jessica and Caleb had not touched their food. George sat back down and said, "Well, let me see if I can fill in any of the missing pieces to the story." Immediately, his voice changed in tone and inflection. He began to speak as a well-informed (or well-drilled) individual. His persona switched from a whacked-out mountain hermit, to someone that could easily be imagined in a war room with several stars on his shoulders.

"I'm going to give this to you straight and we may not have much time, so listen carefully. I'm a member of a secret militia group that we call the AmeriCong. We model ourselves after what we think has been the most effective way to combat this bastard government of ours. We know we are out-manned, and out-gunned, so we have to revert to the same asymmetrical tactics that were used so effectively

by the Viet Cong and the Iranian Jihadist who infiltrated the US before the Iran War. The war for us, started a long time ago, right after Vietnam. A great many of us, in the service at that time, awoke to the fact that the real enemy was our own government. It all became obvious once we saw how the war was being conducted. Our pretense for being there, and every other war since then, was false, to say the least. We all lost friends and people we loved in that mess. You're a Vietnam veteran, aren't you, Mike?" George did not wait for a reply. "Slowly, over many years, we have built up a network of cells ourselves while allowing the necessary time for the insertion stage to succeed before moving on to the next stage."

"Insertion? In what way?" injected Caleb.

"One way is what you see here. People like me literally digging in, in the wilderness, waiting for the signal to come out knowing it may be years, or even a lifetime, before we are called into action. In the meantime, we have infiltrated into the system, into the local law enforcement, and into the military and intelligence community particularly, so we have people watching our backs for us."

"What keeps them from infiltrating you?" Jessica implored.

"Oh, they have succeeded in that at times, especially, early on in our endeavors. We lost more than a few cells, but with our system for communicating, they have not been able to penetrate our organization very deeply. We have learned a great deal from their attempts, and have learned how to create sacrificial cells to lure them in, in order to expose them. We have cells that, funny enough, are comprised almost completely of government agents from different agencies who do not know what each other is up to. In fact, the whole Oklahoma City bombing was the result of the FBI, the Israeli Mossad, and the secret Treasury Department's police, trying to get us to show our hand. Their incompetence was staggering. We sat back and watched them stumble over each other. The whole thing was self-instigated with each faction urging on the plan to blow up the federal building in hopes of drawing us into the open. Tim McVeigh was our man on the inside, and the only one who tried to head off the event. Unfortunately, he didn't succeed. The government soon realized how badly they screwed up, and realized that McVeigh was our inside man, so in order to not let any of that information make its way to the discerning public; they quickly tried and executed him as their scapegoat. So, like I said, we have been at war for a long time, a war that takes incredible patience, sacrifice

and perseverance.”

“Just like any war,” I added.

“Yes, and no, Mike. This war really is about preserving our freedom, our country, and our way of life, not about some corporate cause, or political whim.”

“You seem to know quite a bit about how the AmeriCong operate. Does everyone in the organization have access to this much information?” I asked.

“Hardly, I’m one of the founders and am a member of the inner command circle. Even I only have contact with two other members and all communication is delivered by hand, or at secret drops. That protects the rest of the organization if any of us are captured and interrogated. What I have told you three puts you all in danger. I’m aware of that risk, but now that we have moved to the next stage in our plan it won’t matter, because it’s rapidly approaching the all-or-nothing time for all of us. The next level is the implementation stage ...the time for concerted action. That’s why the 222 Revolution is so important to us. You and Bob have enabled us to move into a war mode without having to reveal how great our numbers are. 222 also has given us the opportunity to accurately gauge the support we have from the general population and, more importantly, to gauge how effective we are in actuating our plan. We have a long way to go, but as long as the government is focused on the capture of you and Windowmaker, we are able to go about with our business a little longer without being detected.”

Jessica spoke up, “So you think things are going to turn violent then?”

“It would be nice to think it won’t have to go that way, but we must be prepared for anything. And I know, for damn sure, I won’t go without a fight.”

At that moment, I felt a rumbling and it wasn’t another earthquake. It was my bowels telling me, with much urgency, that the stew had rapidly worked its way through my system.

“Where’s the john? I need to make a visit.” I explained.

“Take this flashlight; the privy is just inside the door in the hut out back. Keep an eye out for spiders they like to hang around under the seat.” George directed.

I made my way out the back, not worrying about spiders, just worrying if I was going to make it there before I let loose in my pants. I sat on the throne with the feeble light from my flashlight

illuminating the scene through the outhouse door inside the Quonset hut. In the dim light, I could barely make out several large clusters of helium filled Mylar balloons held together by heavy netting resting against the roof of the hut.

"I'll be damned;" I whispered softly, "Ol' George was in on it, big time."

As I sat doing my business, I could hear the conversation around George's table.

"Any chance of this weather holding out for another day so Jessica and I can make it back over the pass?" Caleb asked George.

George leaned his head toward the window. "If I can see the sky, I can tell the weather, but I can't see anything out there now. Let me see if I can pick up anything on the radio."

George picked up the fluorescent lantern off the table, gave the crank handle on top several swift turns, flipped it over, and switched on the radio on the base.

"This here is my only link to the outside." He said. "They're really handy. I bought a bunch of them from some fellow from Minnesota a few years back. They make nice Christmas presents."

"...once again, in response to the immediate threat of a catastrophic eruption of the Yellowstone Calderas, the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency has ordered an immediate evacuation of all citizens within a four hundred mile radius of Yellowstone National Park. The National Earthquake Information Center has identified yesterday's 6.4 magnitude earthquake as a precursor of a possible violent eruption of the Yellowstone Super volcano. Reports indicate that magma has advanced towards the surface in several areas of the calderas releasing a cloud of volcanic ash that has already affected an area extending from southwestern Montana, southeastern Idaho and, with the prevailing winds to the south, most of northern Utah, western Wyoming and northern Colorado. The military command center has stated that everyone needs to leave immediately. Safety Centers have been established in Omaha, Nebraska, Spokane, Washington, Portland, Oregon, Las Vegas, Nevada and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Anyone not evacuating within the next three days, will be forcibly removed, for their own safety..."

George turned off the radio, "I can't listen to that shit."

"Jesus Christ," Caleb swore for the first time in his life.

George spoke, "The bastards have been planning this for a long time. Safety Centers my ass; those are concentration camps they're setting up."

"Planning on blowing up Yellowstone? I don't get it." Jessica asked.

"Listen, our government has had the ability to modify the weather and create earthquakes for quite some time now. Have you two ever heard about the work of Nikola Tesla? He pioneered the technology necessary to do all this, and a lot more - scalar interferometry I think it's called. You see, they have these giant antenna arrays all over the world that can focus incredible energy anywhere on the planet, or even deep within it. I have been saying for years to watch what happens at Yellowstone ...when that starts to act up it's time to load up and go hunting." George continued, "Where do you think the majority of the well organized resistance to this monster government of ours is located; it's all in about a four hundred mile radius of Yellowstone. You issue a mandatory evacuation and whom do you have left after every law-abiding citizen has departed?"

"People like you and us," stated Caleb.

"Damn right," said George. "With their remote sensing devices they can pin-point anyone still left behind and then move in and eliminate them."

"So how long do you think we have before they come to root us out?" Caleb was up pacing the floor.

"Considering I shot down one of their little spy gadgets, not very long, I calculate. We need to get you and Jessica ready to roll out at dawn and I'll get Mike on down the mountain and to a safer location. We will decide then how to move him on south."

As if on cue, the whole area around George's cabin suddenly lit up as if it were broad daylight. A voice from a loudspeaker rang out, "George MacFarlane, lay down your weapons and come out with your hands up. We have you surrounded."

My bowels clamped up immediately. I could see through the window, on the far side of the hut that the yard and cabin were now brightly illuminated.

The loud voice blasted, "Michael Wayne, we know you are in there. Everyone come out with your hands on your heads."

“Shit, shit, shit,” I said aloud. “Damn it, I should have kept that pistol, at least I would have a chance of shooting my way out.”

With that option gone, I thought for a moment. Perhaps all those hours of watching MacGyver on television paid off. In a flash of brilliant crazy inspiration, I thought of a plan of escape. The turn of the key on the snowmobile lit up the instruments on the dash. This should run, I thought, and be heavy enough. There’s the rope I need and that chair should do nicely. I placed the plastic lawn chair on the seat of the snowmobile and firmly tied it in place. Next, I grabbed the first bundle of balloons down to the snowmobile and lashed them to a chair leg. I did the same for each of the other three legs.

“We want to come out!” Jessica was yelling from inside George’s cabin door.

The megaphoned voice roared back. “Exit the door, one at a time. Keep your hands on your head at all times and walk towards the light.”

I finished fastening the remaining bundles and climbed up into the lawn chair. I then bound myself tightly to the seat. With my hunting knife set between my teeth, I was able to lean forward and reach the throttle. Turning the key, the vehicle fired to life. I held the brake with one hand and cranked the machine to full throttle with the other. My last thought, before releasing the brake, was that I wished I had a helmet on. Letting go of the brake handle shot the snowmobile forward like a dragster. I headed straight for the closed double doors at the opposite end of the hut. I hit them just right, knocking both doors flat to the ground with a thunderous crash. The snowmobile stalled just beyond the doors with me and the balloons strapped to it. The sudden appearance of the reflective colorful balloons, and the bizarre sight of me atop the snowmobile, had to startle the Feds as much as it did Jessica, Caleb, and George, who were making their way across the yard with hands above their heads. The scene, for me, was no less strange. The intense spotlight was projecting my friends’ shadows onto the clouds of ash hanging in the air making their silhouettes look as tall as the towering pines behind them. There was not time for me to do other than what I had to do, which was to cut myself free of the snowmobile. The extreme tension on the line enabled me to sever it in one quick slash. Instantly, I rocketed up with the everlasting impression frozen in my mind’s eye of George MacFarlane’s amazed stupid grin staring up at me as I disappeared into the blanket of ash suspended in the air.

The glow of the searchlights below me quickly paled, but not before hearing the voice on the megaphone exclaim, “Contact fucking air command. Get me NORTHCOM on the line, now!” This was followed by George MacFarlane’s maniacal laughter fading into the distance.

Enveloped in the cloud of ash, I made a quick assessment of my situation. I was pleased that I had attached the balloons in such a way that my seat was stable and in an upright position. That’s a lot better than dangling upside down, I thought. I had no idea whether I was still ascending, or in what direction I may have been moving in. I rode along in the pitch-blackness choking on the volcanic dust.

I read once of a fellow who tried the same stunt of tying helium filled balloons to a lawn chair. That person had miscalculated his ballast and had shot ten thousand feet straight up into the air traffic lanes at Los Angeles’ LAX airport. I knew that if I was lucky, I would not rise too high, where I would freeze, or run out of air to breathe.

Soon, the ash became so dense that, even though I was wearing my bandana and breathing through my t-shirt, I was having difficulty getting air into my lungs. I focused on taking long shallow breaths to calm myself down, to conserve my energy, and lower my demand for oxygen. It was getting noticeably colder, as well.

Several hours passed this way. I was in a semi-conscious state with my legs and feet long ago becoming numb from the cold. Drifting with the wind, and drifting in and out of my dream of a safe landing, I sailed along in darkness.

Later in the night, I awoke to find I was breathing clean, albeit, cold and thin air. I was floating above the ash cloud. It stretched as far as the horizon in all directions brightly lit by the moon. I had ascended to the height of the tallest mountain peaks, which appeared as mist shrouded islands above the cloud layer. It all would have been so beautiful, if I had not been shivering so badly. As my head cleared, the realization of my situation began to sink in. I’ve literally thrown my fate to the wind. I was too cold to laugh. I reflected on George and the Adams’ kids. I doubt if they made it out. Will they be facing the same consequences that befell Natascha? Is their sacrifice worth this? All I have accomplished is managing to tie myself to a balloon and drift off into space, and if I don’t find a way to land this thing, I may freeze to death.

I inspected the balloons suspended above me. I thought about

untying myself so I could stand on the chair and reach some of the balloons with my knife. I thought if I could let some of the helium out, I could slowly descend to where it was warmer. The change to a higher altitude had caused most of the balloons to puff out to half again as big as when I left the ground. Several of the balloons looked wrinkled, and it was obvious that they had deflated on their own. If they continue to deflate at this rate maybe I'll have a soft landing after all, I reassured myself.

By the time the sky was brightening in the east, I was flying in and out of the ragged wisps of the ash cloud. I was certainly losing altitude and the wind was moving me at a good clip too. It was getting warmer for sure, even though my legs were still without feeling, but that was probably just as much from the loss of circulation from sitting in the chair for so long as from the cold. With the rising sun, it was not as nearly as dark inside the ash cloud as before. A sudden loud pop caused me to jerk my eyes upward. Then another pop followed by a crackling sound. My first thought was that the balloons were starting to fail in masse, but then I saw the glow that was surrounding me. The glow's intensity grew rapidly. I deduced that it was some type of electrical, static charge that I was picking up as I moved through the ash cloud. Raising my hands, I was able to see long electrical filaments straddling the gaps between my fingertips and the chair. My hair, from below my hat, protruded at straight angles, extending into the weird plasma field that surrounded me. Soon, it seemed as if I was enveloped in a ball of fire; although, I could not feel any welcomed heat from the phenomenon. Ablaze in the electrical fire, I peered intently into the pink ash ahead of me.

As I was told later, outside of Mexican Hat, Utah, the Reverend Marshall Peterson took a moment to admire the sunrise before opening up the Heaven's Nation Worship Center. The small adobe and wood framed building served as a church and community room for the one hundred and some citizens of heaven.

Reverend Marshall followed the rays of the rising sun up to a glowing object hanging like a star in the sky. At first, he thought he was watching the planet Venus, the morning star rising, but soon, he noticed that this light was slowly drifting closer. As he watched, the brilliant light descended low enough allowing the dark shadows on the mountains to the east to stand in sharp contrast to the dazzling

light reflecting from the luminous orb. Whatever it was, it looked to the Reverend that it was going to land a mile or two back up the road. Reverend Marshall jumped back into his rusty, beaten up, old Jeep Cherokee, and headed in its direction, all the time keeping his gaze transfixed on the falling object. As he approached, he could see that the mysterious object seemed to be emitting its own light and not just reflecting the sunlight back to him. It had a pinkish blue halo around it and was bright enough to obscure the object itself. Reverend Marshall pulled off the road even with the object that was now suspended less than fifty feet in the air and only about one hundred yards from where he sat. Just as the ball of light made contact with the ground, a brilliant flash of light accompanied with a sharp clap of thunder blasted forth. At first, the Reverend thought it had crashed causing a small explosion, but when the dust settled, all the Reverend could discern was a man rising, and then taking a couple of steps forward, before collapsing to the earth. Excitedly, the Reverend climbed the fence along the road causing him to divert his eyes away from the apparition that had just dropped from the sky. Once over the fence, the Reverend noticed the bright object, once again, lifting off into the morning sky. The rising sun in his eyes, and the eerie blue-pink glow, still made it impossible for him to pick up any details of the craft that had delivered the figure lying on the desert floor just ahead. Reverend Peter Marshall ran as fast as his tired legs could carry him. The only thoughts he had were to help this divine soul that had been delivered unto him. His heart raced as he remembered how, for months, Elder John had prophesized the coming of an angel to the Children Of the Nation of Heaven who would deliver them into the full glory of God's Heaven on Earth. The Reverend stood over the prone body of the Angel Michael, he knew for sure. The angel lay on his back seemingly asleep, but smiling, surrounded by a soft glow of shimmering golden light. The Reverend dared to reach forth to touch the apparition before him. Instantly, a spark crackled to his hand with the sound of a loud snap. The glow about the angel faded, and his eyelids fluttered, just a little.

"Beloved Angel, what is your name?" the Reverend asked fervently.

The angel's lips moved silently. The Reverend leaned closer, putting his ear near the angel's mouth.

"Michael, Michael, Michael." The angel whispered in reply.

Reverend Peter Marshall bowed to his knees and prayed

I awoke from my deep sleep lying motionless, with my eyes closed, in a down filled bed. Around me, I could hear voices speaking lowly, and softly. I had been dreaming of floating aloft, flying above snowy peaks in complete serenity. It took several minutes for me to realize I had actually been doing exactly that. This, and all of the other events of the last few days, came flooding back to my waking reality. The last thing I could remember that I was sure was not part of my dream, was the beginning of my decent, seated in the lawn chair, surrounded by an iridescent glow.

The conversation going on beside me came into focus.

“Why would God send us the Angel Michael dressed like a cowboy?”

“I believe He has been sent here to walk among us, and it only makes sense that He would be dressed in earthly garb.”

“Yes. I can see that. What wondrous gifts await us.”

“Yes, miraculous and wondrous. The Angel Michael has come to us in answer to our prayers. Elder John’s prophecy has come about. Stay by his side and pray for his safekeeping, Sister Naomi. It is time for me to speak before the Family.”

I heard the reverend step out. “We will pray now,” were the preacher’s first words. “Thank you, Father, for delivering this sign to us. Thank you, Father, for revealing Your eternal love through the fulfillment of Elder John’s prophecies. We trust You will guide us in these dark times with Your brilliant light that You grace upon us. We are Your servants. Amen.”

I listened with my eyes closed to the congregation echoing the reverend’s amen.

“For the last few hours, we all have been able to gaze blissfully on blessed Angel Michael. We all are witnesses to Christ’s markings on Angel Michael’s body and we accept them as signs of his divinity.”

Marks on my body? Without wanting to move, I did a mental systems check over my body. I could feel my hands and feet. They were throbbing slightly.

“With this sign from God, we know we are on the righteous way. With this sign, we know the work we have to do. With this sign, we know our way is right, and we will, by the Providence of God, prevail. Elder John will now speak before us.”

I listened intently as the reverend's voice was replaced by a soft spoken, somewhat gravelly voice, of a much older man.

"Angel Michael has come to our flock to shepherd us on our difficult path. For many years, I have been blessed with these visions which have guided us together and helped set our course for the work we have been chosen to do. Dwelling in the Kingdom of Heaven, we should expect the opportunity to embrace the Lord's miracles at each and every moment."

Put me in church, in front of a preacher, and I guarantee you I will be asleep in five minutes. I awoke when I again heard a conversation going on over my bed. Eyes closed, I felt a soft hand holding mine and I could sense a feminine presence by my side.

"Has our beloved stirred, Naomi?"

"No, Brother, he hasn't. I think he is asleep, nothing more."

"Since you, Sister Naomi, have been chosen to be the first with him, it is your duty to take care of him and prepare him when he awakens." I was sure I was hearing the voice of Elder John.

I felt Naomi squeeze my hand a little harder, and with her other hand, she started to gently stroke my arm. "Yes, Father, I will do as has been planned."

"Long has it been since we added to our flock. Joyous it will be when we are able to hold the lambs to come before God and our assembly. We leave to you, Sister Naomi, to bring forth the first of many miracles to come."

The Reverend's voice followed. "Sweet Sister, surely you know how God has smiled on you giving you this opportunity for service only three days before the ending of your chaste path. Your patience and prayers, over your forty-five years, have been rewarded by the Creator."

"Yes, I can feel God's glory rising up through me as we speak, Father."

"You are best to be alone now. We will see that you will not be disturbed."

Naomi's touch left me and I could hear everyone moving towards the door, so I took a chance, and opened my eyes enough to make out two men with their backs towards me, and a woman, a beautiful woman. Naomi closed the door behind Elder John and the preacher, then gently setting the latch she leaned back against the door and sighed a big sigh while placing her hands upon her breast and looking upwards. She stood that way for a long time, giving me the

chance to open my eyes just a bit more, enabling me to see her soft, curvy figure under a long, silken gown. Her brown curls shook as she spread her arms out wide. “Yes,” she said softly then, “Yes,” more loudly, followed by a loud, “Praise the Lord!”

As her eyes settled on me, I closed mine again and feigned sleep. I thought about speaking to her, but I still felt the grip of exhaustion on my body and a little more rest sounded good to me. Whatever plans they had for me, I was sure could wait until morning.

“The first thing we need to do is get you bathed and dressed into something more fitting for an angel, but first, we must change your dressings, my Beloved.”

My attention focused back on my hands and feet. Yes, they were definitely bandaged. It was soothing to have someone care for me as I lay still. It stung when the old dressings were removed and I could feel that I had been burned on my palms and soles of my feet. None of my injuries seemed too severe. I must have shorted-out when I landed. That electrical glow that was around me was something else. I bet I grounded out through my hands and feet. Naomi was not a big woman and she struggled some getting my vest and shirt off me. It was a game for me to not let her know that I was helping her the best I could while still seeming to be unconscious. That got harder to do as she started unbuckling my belt and unzipping my jeans. I had been in the hospital before, and have had female nurses undress me and give me sponge baths when I was truly unable to move or respond, so I knew the routine. One last tug on my pant legs, and my pants were off, quickly followed by my underwear. Unlike in the hospital, where the nurses tried to maintain some sort of modesty with the patient by keeping certain private parts covered, I was simply laid bare to God and Naomi. Another peek revealed Naomi at the foot of the bed grinning from ear-to-ear as she stared at my crotch, which now was another country being heard from, if you know what I mean. God, I can’t be getting an erection. I forced myself to relax and tried to keep my attention on the cool sponge moving across my brow. As she washed me down past my hips, skipping my mid parts, I felt I was back in control and had avoided an embarrassment. I heard Naomi rinse out the sponge in the bedside pan of warm soapy water. The next thing I felt was her hand holding up my cock and her other hand softly washing all around it. That’s all it took for it to rise to the sky.

“Oh how blessed I truly am,” she whispered and she proceeded to give my manhood a thorough cleansing which, I’m sure, was made easier with all the wrinkles taken out. I watched as Naomi dried me with a towel. Never did her eyes stray from my hard cock. Her soft brown eyes reflected the dim light from a candle next to the bed that gave her skin a glorious golden-bronze glow. I wanted to reach out and take her right then, but then I was in enough trouble as it was, and until I figured out where-the-hell I was; I thought it best to play along and let her dress me and go back to being my nursemaid. No longer than it took for that thought to go through my head she had stepped out of her gown and was climbing on top of me. She deftly eased me inside her and let out a moaning, “Oh my God, it feels so wonderful.”

Needless to say, my charade was at end. I took her into my arms the best I could with my bandaged hands. We made wild passionate love for hours. No words were spoken between us. She moved with me as if she could read my mind. Neither of us had to pretend sleep afterwards.

Daylight was showing through the curtains when I awoke to someone reciting prayers again. It was Naomi by my bedside.

“Angel Michael, oh thank you, Angel Michael,” she whispered feverishly. “Thank you for answering our prayers.”

“Let’s cut out the Angel Michael crap. Just call me by my name Mike.”

Naomi’s eyes widen and she looked aghast. “Oh please, please don’t tell me you are not an angel,” she pleaded.

“I’ve been called a lot of things, but never an angel. If there is an angel in this room it must be you.” I laughed and tried to pull her next to me.

“No, no, no, no! This can’t be happening, this can’t be real.” Naomi was obviously greatly upset. “If you aren’t an angel, then we both are doomed, oh no.” She was trembling and sobbing.

“Hey now, it’s not that bad is it? I thought last night was beautiful.”

“Oh it was, it was, but you are my angel. I have been saved all my life for you, and only you, my whole life waiting for the fulfillment of our Family’s prophecy.”

“What the hell do you mean, saved for me your entire life?”

“I have never been with a man. I have been saved only for the Angels.”

“Sorry about your luck.” I was trying to make light of the situation. “I hope you aren’t too disappointed. I’m sure not.”

“If the Family finds this out, we will both be put out of the church, and then, put to death. Oooh, what are we to do?” She threw herself on top of me and cried. “Oh God, please help us, please help us.”

I embraced her and said, “It can’t be all that bad. I’m no angel, that’s for sure.” I was already wanting to make love to her again. “This is all an innocent mistake. None of this is your fault. I’m sure I can talk to them and straighten all this out.”

“If you aren’t the Angel Michael, who are you then? Reverend Marshall said you came out of the Heavens. He found you in the desert. You have the signs of Christ upon you. How do you explain that? You must be an angel; you just don’t know that you are.” The desperation in her voice was clear.

“Maybe I’m an angel at that, but really I doubt it. Listen, it’s a long story about how I got here. By the way, where is here, exactly?”

“You are in Utah, southern Utah. You are with the Family. We are the Children of the Nation of Heaven.”

“So, what is this business about being put to death? Are you a part of some weird religious cult? Don’t tell me you guys are still stoning people.”

Naomi didn’t hear a word I said. Instead, she seemed to be talking to herself. “I can hold them off for another day. I can do that, but I have to have a plan. I can’t possibly look them in the eye and lie; I have never told a lie in my life. They will never understand. Oh, I have to keep my little sisters from suffering the same damnation. I can’t let this happen to them too. I should pray, pray really hard, though I must accept that all this is in God’s hands. Maybe this is the new role for me. I did pray that when my birthday came around, that if I was not able to help fulfill the prophecies, then I wanted a new role in all this, where I could be of service to others.”

“Now come on. It’s never as bad as all that. Snuggle in here next to me. Nothing bad is going to happen to you, I promise.” I still didn’t feel we were in any danger.

“Now listen to me. You must do as I say. The elders will be here soon. You need to lie there just like you did yesterday. I will tell them, lie to them; tell them that you are still unconscious. I will ask them to give me more time with you in order that I can mate with you as Elder John’s prophecy foretells. Will you please do that?”

Naomi looked directly at me. Her bright brown eyes held a look of terror. I nodded in agreement as I followed her eyes down to below my waist where, once again, things had stirred to attention. She gave my hard cock a squeeze and a shake. She flashed a sexy smirk that quickly turned to a frown as if the sun had broken through the clouds for only a moment. She jerked the covers up to my chin and said, "That can't happen when the Elders are here. Now lie still while I dress. They will be here to check on us soon."

No sooner than Naomi had arranged the room as the night before there was a soft rap at the door.

"Sister Naomi, may we enter?" It was Elder John. Naomi opened the door to let him and Reverend Marshall in.

Naomi spoke softly. "Angel Michael has yet to awaken; although, he has stirred several times this morning already. I think he will be with us soon."

"Naomi, my Dear, you only have today to take your place in the prophecy." Elder John added, "You know we must adhere strictly to our tenets. If our beloved has not awakened by tomorrow, then Sister Rebecca must take your place."

I wondered if Rebecca was as delicious as Naomi. It was tempting to continue along as I had been doing, but then, I remembered the genuine fear in Naomi's demeanor, and also, the flood of remembering my journey up to now, and all the sacrifices going on at that very moment in the name of Bob and the Revolution, washed over my being. Not much else was spoken, and the men soon departed.

"Can I move now?" Naomi sat next to me with her hands covering her face. She was sobbing again. I reached out and softly stroked her lovely curls. I slowly pulled her towards me, and this time, she did not pull away. We started making love sweetly, and tenderly, and finished like two dogs in heat. Afterwards, she laid her head on my chest. I was content to hold her in my arms that way for as long as we had together.

"I know I'm about to die, but I feel like I'm in heaven already." She cooed softly. "I don't want this life to end now, not now, not when my life is just beginning." She looked up into my eyes. "Who are you? Where did you come from?"

"My name is Michael Colton Wayne, and unfortunately, that puts you in more danger than you can possibly imagine. I'm on the run. I think every cop in the county is looking for me, not to mention the

military, and who knows who else. I floated in on a lawn chair, not from heaven, but from Idaho, I think.”

Naomi sat up. “That Michael Wayne, the 222 Michael Wayne? How can I believe you?”

“I guess I don’t expect you to, but why would I lie to you? I never claimed to be who you thought I was. I’m not carrying any ID, but I’m sure you could turn on any TV and see my face plastered all over the news.”

“We have never been allowed television, radio, or any real news from the outside. Reverend Marshall and the Elders say it is their duty to protect us from the evil world, but the Reverend has told us plenty about the 222 Revolution. It’s part of the fulfillment of our prophecy. We are to be God’s new chosen people to populate the world after the horrible war that’s coming. We hear your name, and Bob Windowmaker’s name, all the time in his sermons. Even if you are who you claim to be, and I still have no reason to believe you are being truthful, we are still in grave danger because we have broken our Family’s tenets.”

I had gotten up from the bed and started to dress. This whole situation was freaking me out and I knew regardless of what Naomi was up against with her ‘family,’ I needed to get my ass out of there and get back to my journey to Bob and New Mexico. Putting on my vest, I discovered an envelope in my inner pocket. It was the letter to Jade addressed from Bob.

“Here, look at this. See who it’s addressed from. It’s a letter that Bob Windowmaker sent to our friend Jade.” I handed her the envelope and pointed to the return address. “You are welcome to read it.”

Naomi, after looking carefully over the outside of the envelope, took out the letter and started to read it aloud.

Dear Jade,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. It has been so long since we were in touch. I miss you and your beautiful smile and gorgeous brown eyes.

I remember the first time I was able to look deep into those eyes. It wasn’t easy to get you to sit still enough to open my soul up to yours. You were quite the wreck when we first met. Your relationship with Manny had just

exploded apart around you. He locked you out of your own apartment without so much as a toothbrush. The devastating pain you were feeling from having someone you loved so much treat you so badly was so evident in your beautiful brown eyes turned red from crying. You sat on the edge of my couch, rocking back and forth, the same way your mind rocked back and forth, between loving him, and crying over losing him, to being totally pissed, and wanting to hurt him back. You had sacrificed so much to be with Manny, a marriage and being with your children for the chance of what, at the time, must have felt like true love. No wonder you went through a whole pack of cigarettes in less than an hour, talking angrily and sobbing, and feeling so beside yourself in desperation. I remember taking the cigarette from you, as you raised it to your lips, and telling you to scoot over next to me on the couch, so I could hold you in my arms.

I held you like a child, shushing you when you started to speak, reminding you to just be calm and focus on breathing in, and breathing out. I remember having my arms around you in that moment, feeling my love for you and sharing your pain. Slowly, you quieted down and we sat there silently, motionlessly like that, for almost an hour. I never told you this before, but not only did I help to heal a little bit of your heart sickness - I also healed myself by holding a beautiful woman like you in my arms, and feeling only pure unconditional love, desire-less in motivation, just being open to your pain and allowing it to channel through me, but not letting it attach itself to me while together we created a path to let the healing energy of being in the moment bathe us both.

It was one of those special moments that once experienced there is no turning back. I know for you that meant letting go of what you thought your heart wanted, (and may still want) and finding that by letting go, and not holding on to your wants and desires you set yourself free just enough to let life sweep you along a little farther. You learned what I did that night, that by letting go of what we think we have to hold onto, we free ourselves from the suffering inherent in being attached to things through our

desires and expectations. I struggle a little with writing about finding compassion and unconditional love; it's like bragging about enlightenment. If you are truly enlightened, then the last thing we would do is brag about it. It's the same with compassion; it really is experienced in a state of egolessness. There is no map for getting there, but somehow we both arrived at that destination wrapped in each other's arms.

Compassion starts at home. We must have compassion for ourselves before we can have compassion for others. Up until then, the only time I had felt that way was when I held my children, and I saw that this was the same type of love that poured through me then. But, it was something more than that too. For once, I stopped judging and desiring...realizing in that instant that two souls could make a connection for life on a level that superseded any words or actions other than just opening of a heart. It sounds so trite. We are used to saying things like 'opening of my heart.' It may sound romantic, or maybe so common sometimes, but I learned in that instant that opening of the heart was like opening a window into a new dimension where all this incredible energy floods in. Natascha says it was the opening of my heart chakra. I'm not too sure what that is, but I know how I felt then, and it certainly felt transcendental. I used to not believe in anything that I couldn't directly experience, and I suppose I'm still that way. I mean you can talk to me all about epiphanies, satori moments, or open chakras, whatever you want, and I will still only have an abstract understanding of them. What I felt holding you in my arms that night was a direct experience for me. I moved from wanting to believe in those things, wanting them to happen, to knowing they do happen and that they are happening all the time. I moved from believing to knowing.

I sent this letter to let you know that I think of you often and that you are still close in my heart. I hope life has given you all the joy it has given me over the years. I'm finding that this 'letting go' stuff is really the best way to approach things; in fact, my immediate plan is to step back from this world and take it on from a different perspective. I have

been doing some deep exploration of my mind lately and I'm starting to understand how we create our own reality. You may remember how I would always say that 'you create your own reality,' but now I think I am able to really put it into practice. I guess I still sound like Ol' Buddha Bob. That was a long time ago and I used to go off on about a lot of stuff, but this is different. I always thought that all changes manifested in our world could have their origins traced back to a single, usually very simple, idea. Well, I have an idea that I think can change the world, and knowing that I create my own reality, I'm thinking I can create a reality that will nurture my idea. So I'm setting my sights high, but I think I can do it; therefore,

It is VERY important for you and your family's safety that you tell NO ONE that you know me.

Jade, this is very important. You must not even remind the kids that you know me. They were so young when I last saw them so they probably will not remember Mom's friend Bob. It just may be safer to not know too much about me. I know this probably sounds pretty strange, but don't worry, I'm not planning on flipping out, or anything like that. It's just that I have a feeling.....so please keep quiet. (Very important!) If my hunch is right, you should understand why I ask for this. You know I love you all.

A big hug for you,
Bob

"This is a beautiful letter." She looked back at the envelope. "It's dated well over two years ago."

"So how many people do you think are walking around with a letter from Bob Windowmaker? Are you ready to believe me now?"

"I don't know what to believe except that we need to get away from here before the Family finds out the truth. Even if you are this Wayne fellow, you're still not the angel prophesied by Elder John. What I have done is a sin and I know I will have to pay the price. I even lied to them. What other sins lay before me?"

“How about grand theft auto? Any chance we can commandeer a ride to put some distance between us and your family until I can help you sort this out?”

“Morning service is in about an hour. Reverend Marshall has let me drive his jeep on occasion. I know how to start it and it doesn’t take a key.”

While we waited for the sermon to start, I told Naomi more of my recent adventures, which helped to reassure her more, and convince her that leaving with me was the right decision for her. We waited until communion began, and under cover of the singing choir, we slipped out the window and quickly got the jeep headed south from there. In only a few minutes, we had crossed over into Arizona and into a desolate corner of the Navajo Reservation. We drove on silently for several minutes. I was thinking over Bob’s letter that Naomi had read to me. If he wrote that to Jade over two years ago, that’s several months before he ever mentioned the Boblovian thing to me. Did he have a plan all along? I’ll be damned; I shouldn’t put it past him to have had everything figured out long before he let on about it to me or anyone else.

Naomi broke the silence. “I was thinking about that letter. I feel as if I moved from believing to knowing last night like Bob described. Before you came into my world, I believed I knew, but now I know I only just believed. I had no knowledge of what I had believed up until now. I trusted in what my elders told me. I thought they had the knowledge and it was up to me to believe in the story given to me. Now that I have experienced the joy of how souls can connect on so many levels I no longer doubt my beliefs, but now I know that what is, is. It’s just as simple as that. I don’t have to believe in anything, I only have to experience it to know it, and now I see that it’s all around me like I always knew it was. The truth is in our actions. My actions haven’t been un-pure. I know that action is dependent on circumstances, and the more I can accept that knowledge, the more I can influence the circumstances that surround me and how I can make decisions based on the information at hand.” This all came out of her as she stared straight ahead. I could almost see the wheels turning in her head as she went on. “I would have wasted all my life in the Family. Faith seems to be only hope in that things are as we want to believe them to be. It doesn’t take any faith to know that life is all that there is. It is complete; nothing is lacking. There is nothing outside any of this that requires faith or believing in

anything that isn't already present and before me." She turned to see me smiling at her.

"You're smiling at me. Am I crazy? Isn't what I said true?"

"All that went through your pretty little head the last ten minutes?" I asked.

She laughed. "Oh, I've had my internal struggles going on for a lot longer than since you came along. I've been keeping my doubts to myself, but the more Reverend Marshall preached about how the world was changing, and how the whole world is at a critical point demanding a testing of people's faith in their beliefs, the more I realized how important it was for me to reexamine my own way of understanding of how the world really works and to come to my own conclusions. I feel like I've been released from bondage. I feel freer than I ever thought possible."

"Sounds like you're ready to join the Revolution."

"It will be a long time before I'm ready to join anything. I've had my fill of being told what to do and what to believe in and what to pray for. I think I can handle all that responsibility myself, thank you."

"All the same, you would certainly fit in well. What are you going to do now? You know you can't go with me. It's too dangerous for you."

"I don't know what I'll do. I guess I will know what to do when what needs done demands to be done, and I shouldn't worry about it before then. Isn't that the way it works?"

"It's been working that way for me recently, and everyone else around me, it seems. There sure feels like there is a force behind all this. It's like a wind carrying a new form of consciousness, a greater awareness; it's fresh air blowing away the smoke. My eyes were clouded for so long, but now it's as if I can see for the first time. I can't describe it. Most of the time it feels good, but sometimes it's scary. When I feel the fear rise up from knowing, not believing, that there is absolutely nothing to hold on to; I feel like I'm falling. I can feel it right in my gut. Then one day I realized that falling feels the same as floating. I grounded myself in weightlessness and took on a new perspective and attitude that gives me my only support. All I have to hold onto is knowing that there is nothing at all to hold on to. Like I said, it's hard to describe."

"I think I understand. It's like being in the water. It's easy to drown if all you do is flail about trying to grab things. Once you just

relax, and stop floundering, you just float. That's the first step in learning how to swim."

"You know Bob said basically the same thing to me the last time I saw him."

"When was that?"

"This last September. I met him in Oklahoma City. Just a few hours before our meeting he had gotten separated from Jasmine. You know, the woman that turned up with him in Arkansas. Her face has been all over the television."

Naomi looked at me with that smile that I was becoming so fond of - her smile with a slight curl at the corner of her mouth that helped to accent her dazzling brown eyes. "No TV, remember? I don't think Reverend Marshall ever mentioned her in any of his sermons. What happened to her?"

Bob said she had been arrested that morning and that he managed to get away by giving a guy nearly a grand for his bicycle. He rode it downtown to meet with me. I know from what he told me that the two of them were very close and she meant a whole lot to him, but he didn't seem upset at all that she had been taken away by the cops. Later, she did manage to get released, but not before the cops beat on her. She's okay now, I think."

"Do you mean he was glad to get rid of her, I don't understand."

"Not that, I'm sure he missed her greatly, but he said there is no time to mourn or grieve. Then he looked right into my soul and said 'There's no time, Mike. There is no time.'"

"He meant that he had to keep moving? He had to keep the 222 thing going too?"

"No, he meant there is no time. Time doesn't exist in the moment - in the hard here and now. Time doesn't exist in the present; it's only an illusion. I'm not sure I understand it, but what you said about learning to swim, about letting go, reminded me of that."

"What else did he tell you?"

"He said something much bigger was going to happen, something that would transcend the moment."

"Did he mean on February 22nd?"

"He said that he had had a lot of time to think. No one knows that he was held hostage all through the summer by an underground militia group that wanted Bob to be their spokesperson for the Revolution as they saw it going down, which probably wasn't going to be too pretty. Anyway, he said that he moved from believing to

knowing the power of stillness. He said that collectively, all of us being still together at the same time would be transcendent. That's all he said; that, and to keep an eye on the noosphere."

"Okay, I'll bite. What's a noosphere?"

"I looked it up. It's pretty interesting, but I guess you'll have to wait for me to explain it."

We had reached a town, Kayenta, Arizona, a bustling, dusty crossroads in the summer that is the tourist jumping off point for Monument Valley nearby. Normally, in the dead of winter it would be nearly deserted, but there were at least a dozen buses lined up for fuel. I parked behind some tractor-trailers at the truck stop.

"I'm not sure what to do from this point. We are just about out of gas. I don't suppose you have any money, do you?"

Naomi shook her head no.

"Someone is going to spot the jeep before long, that is, if your preacher comes looking for us."

"Oh he will, for sure. No one is allowed out of the Family once they are in it. They will be looking for us both, I'm certain of that."

"Let's go over to that diner. Maybe I can trade my belt buckle or my hat for some fuel. We can't hang out here for very long."

Naomi and I went into the crowded diner, found a booth, and ordered coffee.

"We might as well order some food. I don't have money for the coffee, or lunch, but I'm hungry."

"That wouldn't be right, would it? If we can't pay for it; it isn't ours to have."

"Do you believe that, or do you know that?" I jokingly asked.

"Oh now you have me questioning everything," she replied.

"Go ahead and order anything you want. We are putting this on God's tab."

I asked to borrow a newspaper at the table next to us.

"No, I don't mind." The gentleman next to us said with a thick German accent. "We can't read much English. Can you tell us what it says here?" He pointed to a front-page headline that said New Mexico was under total martial law.

I read aloud. "Most of New Mexico is under martial law. All travel north of interstate 10 is restricted." Great I thought. I hated to think I had gotten this close and wouldn't be able to continue. "Evacuees from the Yellowstone eruption, fleeing to the Safety Centers in Albuquerque, New Mexico, are being diverted to other

centers as authorities continue their search for Robert Windowmaker and Michael Colton Wayne in the northern half of the state. Only escorted convoys of critical supplies are being let through along the I-40 and I-25 corridors. A twenty-four hour curfew is in effect for Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and areas between. As the search for these terrorist suspects narrows down, all travel in this area is prohibited at this time.” I scanned down the page. “The unincorporated community of Needless, New Mexico, located twenty-five miles south of Santa Fe, has become the focus for the extensive manhunt. Residents of Needless have described it as a scene from the movie *Apocalypse Now*. One resident said, ‘We are accustomed to military aerial attacks. It happens every fall when the pot choppers close in, but this time the military have established an around-the-clock presence. It’s almost as bad as when they shot the movie *Wild Boars* in town a few years back.’ I laughed aloud. “It sounds as if Needless is ground zero.”

I was very familiar with Needless. It used to be named Needles, New Mexico, and until the 1970’s was an old mining ghost town. When the hippies bought it up, they renamed it Needless. I knew that Bob was holed up near Needless, and I was either going to find a way into there or die trying.

Naomi got my attention. “Look over there,” she whispered and indicated with her eyes out the window towards where we had parked the jeep. Two pickup trucks had rolled up on it, one parking in front of it, and the other behind, blocking it in. We watched as four men got out and started looking through the jeep.

Naomi was trying to keep calm. “I know those men. They’re of the Family. Please don’t let them find me.”

She wasn’t the only one trying to stay calm. I had just gotten a glance at the flipside of the paper and had seen my mug boldly displayed.

“Come on, follow me.”

We mingled with the group of German tourists who had been seated next to us and headed out of the restaurant with them and followed them onto their bus. Naomi and I settled in next to each other in the back seat. She laid her head on my shoulder and we sat silently watching the family members as they spread out away from the jeep heading in pairs to the truck stop and over to the restaurant that we had just left. The bus filled quickly and the driver returned. Picking up the intercom, he spoke, “We have been given permission

to travel to Albuquerque so you folks can get to the airport. We will join a military escorted convoy in Gallup, New Mexico, then head east on I-40 to Albuquerque. Everyone will need their passports and identification for the military checkpoint in Gallup.” This was followed by a gentleman translating all this into German.

We left Kayenta unnoticed.

“Well Michael, it looks like you are still stuck with me for now.” Naomi snuggled even closer. “I feel I’m safe with you.”

“Hardly,” I said. “I don’t think you realize the danger you are in. The family should be the least of your worries right now. I need to get off this bus before Gallup. I wish I could take you with me. I really like your energy. For some reason I feel like I have known you for a long time. I think it’s your eyes. I have seen eyes like yours before, once in Nepal from a beautiful woman I passed on the street and another time from a woman I met while waiting for a flight in a bar at the airport in Austin, and once again, from a remarkable lady who I spent many years with - the love of my life. Each time I look into your eyes, I feel the same remarkable energy flashing between us, but we both have different journeys ahead of us. I need to remain a fugitive awhile longer; you, on the other hand, need to face up to your family. You don’t want to always be running from something, believe me.”

“I know you are right. I can’t deny what’s been eating at the back of my mind. It’s not right for my sisters to have to be put through what I had to go through. It’s a horrible experience.”

“Gee, I wasn’t that bad was I?” I pulled her tight against me and she squeezed me back.

“They should be shown the truth. They should be given the chance to move beyond believing, like the chance you gave me. It doesn’t matter whether you get stuck in someone’s little private dream like Elder John’s, or in a dream that the rest of the world is dreaming, each of us has to take on the responsibility that we are all play-actors in someone else’s dream, that is, unless we decide to wake up to a new dream, a new way of seeing things, like I’m starting to do now. Fear is scary, that’s for sure, but I need to go back to my family and let them know what I know. I don’t care if they drive me out or stone me to death, but I must help my sisters. They’re all good people, so I shouldn’t be afraid, and I do feel as if I have the power of righteousness over them. Really, when I think about it, the Elders almost had it right. The Nation of Heaven isn’t

that much different than the Confederation. The Family believes that Christ established his Kingdom when he was here the last time, and we are to follow and obey God's law above man's law. So, in a way we have declared our independence, just like you and your friend Bob have done. The difference is that, in the Family, we aren't allowed to directly experience the grace of God. Your prophesized coming, even though you say you're not an angel, kept us suspended in belief without the knowing of our ability to directly experience the Grace of God individually. I was born into the Family and its belief system. It took me a long time before I started questioning any of it. In the meantime, I did exactly what I had given a vow to do, to save myself for you. You may be an angel after all, Michael. You may end up leading my people through me, through the way you have helped open my eyes. Each of us is responsible for our own communications with God. No one needs someone else to interpret for God. His message is directed to each of us individually. His message can now manifest into a common belief, or really, in a common knowing of a common truth shared by every awakened soul."

"And that truth is?" I jumped in.

"I guess it's that no one holds any authority over any other one. Any authority one has, is either a false authority supported through power, coercion and control, or by implicit or implied agreement of an individual who chooses knowingly, or unknowingly, to give the control of their lives over to someone or something else, like I had done with my Family."

"Wow, you sound like you were a lawyer in a past life, or at least a philosopher. How is it that you know so much?" I asked.

"Being a virgin for forty-five years gave me lots of spare time to study everything I could get my hands on. Now that I have finally gotten my hands on other things," Naomi gave my dick a squeeze through my jeans, "I can start applying all that I learned." She looked up at me with an eager little smile. We kissed passionately. Her hand started working on my belt, unbuckling it. "Come back and find me when all this is over, my Love," she whispered feverishly into my ear."

"I will, my Dear, I will," I replied with my full heart.

If we hadn't just then noticed the bus slowing to a stop, I don't know what would have happened in that back seat. A black and white police car crept alongside the bus stopping near the front.

“This can’t be good,” I whispered.

After talking for a moment to the driver, a single uniformed police officer stepped onboard. He peered over the faces in front of him and slowly started walking down the aisle towards the back.

Naomi spoke under her breath, “He’s reservation police, Navajo. We are in their jurisdiction. They always mean business, especially when dealing with non-Native Americans.”

There was nowhere to hide or run, so I just sat there and watched his approach as he looked over each person in front of us. I studied the man who I was certain was to be another adversary, an impediment on my journey, maybe the man who was going to take down the infamous Michael Colton Wayne and his companion Naomi; I never did get her full name. He wasn’t a large man, perhaps less than five feet five, younger than me, I’d say pushing fifty with sharp black eyes showing fierce attention. His name Sgt. Joseph Yazzi reflected on the nameplate above his right breast pocket. All the heads on the bus turned to look at us as he walked past them.

He stopped two feet in front of us and looked us over for a long minute before speaking. “You two look out of place. You don’t belong on this bus, do you?”

Naomi and I both shook our heads sheepishly.

“I’m taking you off the bus. I’m putting these on you, sir. Ma’am, I trust you will behave yourself if I allow you to walk ahead of the gentleman to my patrol car.”

He handcuffed my hands in front of me and I followed Naomi with the police officer behind me down the aisle.

He spoke to the driver as we exited. “They’re the two we are looking for. You are free to continue.”

Out of the bus, he directed us over to the patrol car. It read Navajo Reservation Police, Chinle, Arizona post. “Ma’am, in the back seat, please.” He held the door open for Naomi and then led me around to the front-seat passenger side.

The few seconds it took him to walk around to his side of the car, allowed me to get a few words out to Naomi. “Let me do the talking, I’ll try to get you out of this mess, even if I can’t get out of it myself.”

Sergeant Yazzi asked. “Let’s see some ID, if you have any.”

“Neither of us have ID’s, Officer. We recently lost them while traveling. We got caught up in the volcano evacuation and are just

trying to work our way south and out of danger. Why did you pull us off the bus?” I was doing my best to sound authoritative.

“I’ll ask the questions. Did you two get on the bus in Kayenta?” I answered yes. “Did the two of you leave the restaurant there without paying?” Again, I answered yes. “Well, that and the fact that I’m ninety-nine point nine percent sure I know who you are, is reason enough for me to remove you from the bus, Mr. Wayne.” He said all this while watching me for my reaction.

“I’m afraid you have mistaken my husband for someone else, Officer.” Naomi didn’t sound very convincing.

I interrupted her. “It’s going to be okay, Naomi. There’s no need for you to lie to protect me. She’s just trying to protect me, Sir. We have only traveled together from back there in Kayenta. I hardly know this woman.” It was my turn to lie and to try to distance her from me for her protection.

Yazzi turned a little in his seat so he could see both of us. “I’ll let you in on a little secret. My niece was your waitress back there. She took your order and she also saw the two of you come in together. She didn’t think for a minute that she was waiting on two people who were strangers to each other. She recognized you, Wayne, and called me immediately. She kept her eye on the two of you and saw you board the bus. She also had a chance to talk to two men who came in right after you had left. They were extremely interested in finding you, Ma’am, and if my niece hadn’t thrown them off your trail, they would be hot on your tails. So let me cut to the chase. I know who you are, Wayne, but I need confirmation. Now, you can be honest with me about who you are, the both of you, or I can turn you over to the authorities and let them confirm what I already know to be true.”

Or turn me over to the authorities, I mused. I thought I was already dealing with an authority. “Okay, you’ve got me. I am Michael Colton Wayne.” I let out a big deflating sigh. “This is Naomi, she’s not my wife. We are only friends. Her family is looking for her to take her back to Utah where she doesn’t want to go for fear for her safety. You guarantee me she will be free and safe, and I promise to cooperate. I’ll make sure you get all the glory from this fine piece of police work.”

“Well, there’s just one problem with all that.” Yazzi adjusted his dark sunglasses and closely checked all three rearview mirrors then started the car. “You will have to wait before I tell you what that is.”

We rode a short distance down the desolate highway and soon arrived on the outskirts of Chinle. A right turn took us up a short dirt lane and through a gate that opened into a high adobe walled compound. Yazzi parked in front of the house.

“Alright, Mr. Wayne, you have been honest with me so I’m removing the handcuffs. I’m relying on you not to try an escape. We’re here to see my brother.”

The brisk winter wind swirled the dead cottonwood leaves around our feet as Yazzi led us across the porch and then inside.

“Mama will sit here with you for a moment.” Yazzi directed Naomi and me to the sofa in a dimly lit, low-ceilinged parlor room. Mama sat silently by the door. She looked as old as the hills we had come through that day. Her white hair was in a bun and she wore the long traditional Navajo skirt, which gave the room its only color. Naomi and I could hear Yazzi and his brother in the adjacent room.

“I’m positive he is Wayne. I don’t know for sure who she is, but it shouldn’t be hard to check out her story. I can call the post and see if there is anything out on her, Billy.”

“No, we won’t do that. We don’t want to draw any attention to us or to them. You understand, Joseph?”

The phone rang and we heard Billy answer it. “Oliver, yeah, yeah, he’s here. That’s right, go ahead we’re ready.”

The radio on Joseph Yazzi’s belt crackled to life. “Hey Joseph, I need you to take a trip out to Rough Rock and check on old man Criswell. His daughter called and he was expected at her house this morning. Can you make a run out there now, over?”

“Tell him you’ll make the run. It’s nearly two hours round trip so that will give us enough time to get to know our guest.” Billy said.

“Roger that, Oliver. I’m heading out now.” Joseph replied on the radio.

“Okay, Joseph, let’s meet our guest.”

Joseph introduced us. “I would like you folks to meet my brother Billy. This is Michael Colton Wayne and Naomi... you never gave me a last name, Ma’am.”

“Because I don’t have a last name.” Naomi said somewhat defiantly. “I am Sister Naomi. No one born a member of the Family has a surname or social security number either. We are citizens of Heaven’s Nation and we hold to no authority other than the Lord’s.”

Billy looked at Naomi and smiled warmly. “I hope that works out for you folks, I really do.” Turning to me, he said. “You, Mr. Wayne

look just like your picture down to the hat and belt buckle. They say you are armed and extremely dangerous; you don't look very dangerous to me." Billy chuckled. He held a wanted poster with my picture on it. The drone at MacFarlane's had captured my image. It showed surprising detail with even a blow-up of my belt buckle. I looked like a great western outlaw on top of Sally. My thoughts shifted to Jessica, and Caleb, and all the others I had touched on my recent path and now these folks and Naomi. What consequences were they facing for associating with me? I was afraid to know. I decided then I was going ahead alone for sure.

Billy reminded me of an old friend named Tonto. He had the same wide girth and ageless face. He seemed to be a few years older than his brother Joseph, and I was sure he was the man who had my fate in his hands. I could sense Billy's piercing, black eyes searching at depth inside me. He silently held my gaze for at least a minute finally looking over at his Mama still sitting rigidly by the door.

"Are we fine with this, Mama?" Billy asked.

Mama stirred slightly and rocked forward saying something in her native language that seemed to be giving her approval. She rose slowly to her feet and, with a precious dignity, walked to the kitchen. I could tell from the way she moved that she had trouble seeing, but that didn't keep her from fixing her stare upon me. I spoke up. "I'm a bit confused. Are we your guests, or your prisoners?"

"At this moment, probably a little bit of both." Joseph answered. "Right, Billy?"

"I can understand your confusion, Mr. Wayne. We should put you at ease right now. We are sympathetic to your cause, to say the least, and no one wants this Boblovian Revolution to succeed any more than we do. Anything that can help avoid the bloodshed of a violent revolution, we welcome, of course. We would much rather see a peaceful people's revolution like you guys are trying to pull off than the type of revolution we have been preparing for, but we will get into all that a little later. First, I need to ask you a few questions, Mr. Wayne."

"Mike, please call me Mike." I reached for Naomi's hand and held it on my lap. I needed her energy. "Ask away, Billy."

The first question took me by surprise. "Have you ever heard of Operation Vampire Killer?"

"No I haven't, and I can't say I like the sound of it either."

“I’ll have time to fill you in. Are you operating alone, or with any other groups or individuals?”

“I can’t say that I am operating at all. I’m just trying to get my ass over into New Mexico. I think that’s where Bob Windowmaker is, and I plan on trying to find him before February 22nd, to assist him in any way I can. He is my friend, and I have gone through quite an adventure to be his friend to the end. It’s all rather a long story, and I hope I’ll have the time to fill you in.”

“So, you aren’t in contact with anyone right now?”

“I’m afraid what you see here is all you get. Even if I was in contact, or operating like you said, why would I tell you?”

“Now that’s the attitude we like, isn’t it, Joseph?”

Mama returned from the kitchen with hot coffee and a tray of some type of native pastries.

“Thank you, Mama.” Joseph said then facing me asked, “Your only plan is to go to Needless and see what happens from there?”

“That’s a fair assessment. I know Bob is near there, and I know everyone is looking for him too, so that makes my job harder, but hell, I made it this far without much of a plan, and I only have a few hundred miles to go, so I’ll walk from here if I have to.”

“I don’t think you’ll have to walk, not with our help.” Billy clasped his hands, and with elbows on his knees, leaned a little closer to me. “It’s unbelievable you made it this far. I look forward to hearing how you managed to go unrecognized for so long. You took quite a chance going into the restaurant in Kayenta. You’re lucky my niece was the only one there to identify you, but we can’t be sure of that. The bus driver, at least, will probably report the whole incident to the authorities in Gallup. That’s why I’ve been on the phone ever since Joseph called this morning telling me he picked you up off that bus. We can get you almost all the way to Needless, if you like, but we will have to book you into our jail for the night.”

“Okay, assuming you can convince me that that is a good idea, tell me how this is going to work.”

As Joseph poured us coffee, Billy went on to explain, “To begin with, not all cops are on their side - their side meaning the government’s. Many of us, and I do mean many, tens of thousands, if not more, in the law enforcement end of things and just as many in the military, have given our oath to serve and protect the public and to defend to the death our God given and constitutional rights. That’s part of OVK, Operation Vampire Killer. Long before you and this

Boblovian 222 Revolution came about, a secret organization had evolved, and it's now prepared to fight the same corporate bastards and corrupt politicians that are worrying their asses off that their gravy train has come into the station. They know they're losing their grip on the reins fast, and they are willing to get heavy-handed and nasty to keep control no matter how many innocent lives are lost."

I settled back on the sofa and put my arm around Naomi. "I'm listening. Tell me more."

"The roots to this thing go way back. It's not clear how all of this has come about, and there has always been some debate over how it got started. You can go back to the founding of our country. It was evident to some, even then, that early on in our country's history there was an agenda by the international bankers and some secret societies to garner control of our currency and our country. Some believed it would take another secret society to defend our country from within. That's how the KGC was formed, The Knights of the Golden Circle. They were no angels either, and they had their own agenda too, not all good by today's standards. However, they did succeed in creating an organization of supporters that operated within the government and the military that secretly influenced events before, during, and for a while, after the Civil War. At that time, it was all in support of the Confederacy. They created secret standing armies and went to great lengths to cache gold, equipment and weapons in order to rise up again once they saw victory slipping away from the cause of the southern states. They also wanted to annex parts of Mexico and elsewhere, so it goes to say they were not successful. The one thing they were successful in doing was establishing within the military ranks an ever-widening core of officers who were brave enough to organize secretly against our government. I'm sure they felt then, as we do today, the call to duty to defend our country from any aggressor. Today, it's easy to identify that aggressor. It's our own government, and all those beholden to large foreign and corporate interests who have aggressively taken away our freedom and our human rights."

Joseph spoke. "Now, fast forward a hundred and fifty years to today. So many of us, and I mean military, ex-military, and law enforcement see that the enemy isn't free minded individuals, such as yourself and all those behind the 222 Revolution; the enemy is the system that surrounds us, that's invaded our very souls and every aspect of our lives. As a Native American, I could go on and talk

about this ongoing aggression in very specific terms, but I realize we all have been oppressed, white, black, red, yellow. That's why we see the Boblovian Confederation spread across the globe. We all are suffering under the same oppressive thumb. I, for one, am tired of doing their dirty work. I woke up to all this when I did my tour in Panama in eighty-nine. That whole thing was a dirty black ops mess. The excuse we had to go in there was so bogus; we all knew that going in. Getting Noriega out of there, in light of all the evidence of illegal drug trafficking still seemed like justification enough for us to invade though. What became evident to me, and many others who served with me, was that we were serving a larger drug lord than Noriega ever dreamed of being. Poppy Bush, and all of his old CIA cronies, used the military to do their dirty work for them. Noriega was threatening to spill the beans on the whole operation if he didn't get a bigger piece of the pie, so we were sent in to take him out. What was never reported, and you never heard mentioned, was the secret black-hooded death squads we sent in to eradicate the civilian opposition to Noriega. Six thousand, or so, innocent Panamanians, many of them professionals, doctors, lawyers, teachers and the like, who were poised to lead a new democratic government were taken from their homes and shot in the head. The mass graves are still there if anyone wants to go look for them. Since then, I had two tours in the late 90's working federal drug enforcement on the border in south Texas. The corruption there is beyond belief. What a waste of time, money and lives that is. Hell, it's Panama all over again. Now, instead of Noriega we have independent free-lancers rising up as powerful drug cartels, in direct competition of our own low-handed government which continues the charade of enforcing anti-drug laws and eradicating illicit trade, while all the time raking in billions of dollars in their own illegal trafficking endeavors. The drug war is a farce. The victims are the American people and people all over the world who are caught up in this so-called war in one way or another. It was during the eighties that Operation Vampire Killer came into being."

"Let me take it further," interrupted Billy. "I was military intelligence for nearly twenty years, long enough to get a retirement. I was stationed all over the world and worked my last six years in the Pentagon during the Iran Contra crisis. The truth that emerged from those hearings was there, for the most part, for anyone to see. The hearings were broadcast live, but so few paid any attention to them.

But for those of us who did, it was shocking to hear Colonel Ollie North admit that for many years a shadow government existed that ran outside the confines of the law or the constitution. He made it blatantly clear that the power had shifted and concentrated into the control of a small handful of powerful non-elected insiders and a few traitors in the military. In essence, the United States government had been overthrown, a secret coup d'état. Now it doesn't matter which political party is in power, they all are working from the same playbook. It's the military industrial complex that Eisenhower warned us about right before he left office in 1961. They are the same people who now hide behind the PNAC, the Plan for a New American Century. It gets much deeper than that when you dig for the facts. The evidence is strong that they were behind the 9/11 attacks that enabled them to accelerate their timeline towards their goal of total world domination. They have used other weapons, such as the designed crash of our economy and the devaluation of the dollar. It is all by design."

"I've heard that argument before, but what could they possibly gain by purposely creating chaos." I asked.

Joseph replied, "Out of chaos, order. The new world order, the domination of each individual on the planet, either by eradication, incarceration, or re-education."

"That sounds like a pretty ambitious plan for them, and one hell of a giant dragon for you to go after." I added.

"Every dragon has at least one chink in its armor that makes it vulnerable." Joseph said, then Billy followed, "You and Bob have found one of their weak spots; there's no other way to explain it. We are hoping that we can take advantage of the dragon having its attention directed towards you and the 222 Revolution so we can do what we need to do."

"Meet the new boss, same as the old boss, it sounds like to me. I'm so tired of bosses." I saw both men drop their heads.

Billy spoke. "Quite frankly Mr. Wayne, so are we, so are we. That's why so many of us in OVK want the 222 Revolution to succeed. We always wanted to take a supporting role for the people. We dread being the new man in charge. We know many people will be slow to warm up to a military dictatorship, which it would have to be at the start. We always worried about how to get the people to understand that our only responsibility is to defend, not to lead, but lead we must, if that is what is required to make this county what it

once was, a land of freedom and opportunity. Ideally, the people need to lead themselves, and in so doing, give us back our role as protector. Make no mistake, there is a huge amount of support in the military and law-enforcement community for what you and Bob are doing.”

“Everyone needs to stop giving me credit; it’s all Bob. I’m just along for the ride, and to help out if I can. Okay, you have convinced me that you want to help. Now convince me why I have to go to jail.”

“Yes, okay, here is the plan we have worked out. Oliver, at the post here in Chinle, is busy as we speak creating a fake felony warrant and extradition papers for you to be transferred to the New Mexico State Penitentiary just a few miles north of Needless.”

“I know where it is. It’s between Santa Fe and Needless.” I remembered the heavy vibe I would get every time I drove past it.

“We will get you to the post and book you for vagrancy before Oliver gets off duty. Oliver is one of us. We can trust him, but the night shift at the jail we can’t. We will have the paper work ready to transfer you in the morning. Oliver and Joseph are already scheduled to take another prisoner over there tomorrow; Old Red Hawk is his name. He is blind and in poor health, and has asked to be transferred to New Mexico to serve out his sentence. He will be closer to his family and better medical care than what we can provide here in Chinle. So that gives us a way to get you pretty damn close to where you want to be by tomorrow evening. We can drop you off on I-25 west of the Cerrillos Hills. The rest will be totally up to you. Are you up for that?”

“You bet.” I was starting to feel up beat again until I saw the look on Naomi’s face. A few tiny tears ran down her cheek.

“You know we have to go our separate ways for now, Naomi.”

“I know Mike, it’s for the best. I’m just worried that I may never see you again.” She buried her head into my shoulder and sobbed.

“Hey now,” I said. “What if I said I would meet you six months from now, let’s say on the fourth of July at the Four Corners. Can you promise me you will be there if possible? I promise you I will do everything in my power to be there. If for any reason either one of us can’t make it, we can contact Billy or Joseph here and leave a message.” I hugged her and wiped her tears away with my finger.

“Yes, oh yes, my Angel.” She smiled up at me. “I’ll do what I have to do back in Utah. I need to go back and let them know the truth.”

“We can help you, Naomi. We can send some people with you to assure your safety. In the meantime, you can stay with us for a couple of days until we know that the drop off goes as planned.” Billy patted Naomi’s arm. “You are one of us now, and we stick together. You will no longer have to walk in fear.” Then turning to me, he said, “Mama insists on having a ceremony before you go, but first we will break bread together, my Brother.”

We ate a simple meal of tortillas, fry bread, corn, beans, and squash, then we all, including Mama, sat in a circle. First, a pipe filled with tobacco leaf was passed around. Naomi and I were given instructions by Billy.

“Draw the smoke in, but do not inhale.” Then he demonstrated how to offer the sacred smoke to the four directions, the sky, and the earth, followed with a blessing for the pipe and ourselves. Mama chanted a prayer, and we did our best in repeating the words that she spoke in her native language. Finally, a prayer stick was passed from person to person. The person who held the stick was encouraged to speak a small prayer.

Joseph was first, “Blessed are our protective spirits that have brought these two guests into our home. Please protect them as they journey forth in these troubled times.”

He passed the stick to Naomi, “Thank you, Lord for giving me the light in order to see the glorious workings of Your divine plan. Please watch over us, especially Michael and Bob, as they manifest Your work in Your name, Amen.”

My turn came. “I give thanks to the spirits guiding me. May the world become a better place through our sacrifices and efforts; may the world find the peace it deserves so much.”

Billy took the prayer stick next. “Let no harm come to our friends. Let the new dream that you, our Fathers, have prophesied come into full being. Watch over us as we battle the dark forces that, as we pray before you, are already retreating from our door. Please give us your wisdom to do the right thing when we confront our enemies face-to-face. Please leave our hearts open to the love and compassion that fills us as we share this ceremony with our friends.”

Mama was last. She spoke no English, but the power of her words resonated through me. She offered a closing prayer, which again we repeated as best we could.

Joseph brought me a change of clothes. "It would be no good to have you go around dressed like Michael Wayne now, would it." I changed into different jeans, dirty and ragged, a dark blue-hooded sweatshirt, and a woolen sock hat. "Keep that hat down as low as you can and try not to look anyone straight in the face," Joseph warned.

"Now is time to say goodbye," Billy said. "We must go now, Mike; Godspeed on your journey."

Naomi and I were left alone for a few moments. I held her in my arms and promised her that I would come back for her when I could. She didn't cry, but only said to me, "I know you will, my Love, I know you will."

I left Naomi my hat and belt buckle. "I want you to have these for me the next time we meet, my Dear."

Billy shook my hand. He had tears flowing freely down his cheek. "You will succeed. I know this to be true. The spirits have revealed this to me. Trust in this knowledge and all will turn out fine."

Lastly, Mama placed a small turquoise adorned medicine bag tied to a leather strand around my neck. Billy said to me, "That is powerful medicine, Mike, very powerful."

In less than thirty minutes, I was booked, fingerprinted, then put in a holding cell. Nothing I hate worse than being locked up, not that it ever happened that often, but in my days of youthful exuberance, I was detained on more than one occasion and probably for my own good. This too was for my own good, I kept telling myself; nonetheless, the feeling of not having complete control over my situation kept me up most of the night. I was kept alone the whole time with nothing to do except to watch TV, which was turned to the twenty-four hour news channel. It gave me the chance to catch up on things. The first report concerned the Yellowstone Evacuation farce.

"...the Federal Emergency Management Agency reports that last week's eruption of the Yellowstone Calderas was much smaller than originally measured. The fallout of the ash cloud was limited to a fifty mile by one hundred and fifty mile swath that drifted to the northwest, covering parts

of southern Montana and southeast Idaho. Nonetheless, FEMA considers the potential for much larger eruptions to be imminent. So the evacuation continues.” The report went on to state that the evacuation was proceeding smoothly with the aid of the U.S. Army and local authorities.

“Reports have come in of some individuals refusing to leave, but the authorities said they had several non-lethal means available to them to get the last few reluctant refugees out. Meanwhile, power has been restored to nearly all the affected areas from last week’s power outage across the central and northwestern United States. Only the areas directly impacted by the Yellowstone ash plume have yet to come back on line. It may still take weeks for complete restoration of power to those areas.”

The report confirmed my suspicions. The whole Yellowstone thing was staged; I would bet anything on it. The next story came from Needless, New Mexico.

“...Frank Donaldson is our man on the ground in Needless, New Mexico, embedded with the 82nd Airborne. We go to Frank in Needless.”

“...We have been with the 3rd Battalion of the 82nd Airborne in Needless for the last week. This small community of artists and small entrepreneurs has been besieged with all the activity centered on the massive manhunt taking place in the hills that nestle this town of approximately four hundred residents. No private vehicles are being allowed to operate within a fifty-mile radius. A curfew is in effect in Needless, only allowing the citizens to move around on foot, for seven hours a day. Most, if not all, residents have taken to dressing in long brown robes, and for those not already with long hair, in ragged wigs and fake beards in an attempt to look like the domestic terrorist Bob Windowmaker.

One Needless resident has agreed to speak with us. He goes by the name Crazy Wolf. Mr. Wolf, can you tell our viewers why most of the residents have taken to dressing up like Bob Windowmaker?”

The brown robed, bearded, shaggy-haired gentleman responded, "It is our duty as residents of the Township of Needless to take heed to our elevated security threat as it is defined in the Needless Homegrown Security procedures. We have defined five different levels of threats to our security, and we have plans in place to react to each of them.

Our lowest security alert level is RAINBOW, defined as 'It's all Groovy, Man.' The citizen response to RAINBOW is - 'Business as Usual.'

Moving up one level, we have TYE-DYE, meaning - 'Chill Out.' The action plan for alert level TYE-DYE is - 'It's Going to be OK, Dude.'

Following TYE-DYE is the alert level PAISELY, meaning 'Smoke'm If You Got'em,' and its action plan is - 'We've All Seen This Before.'

The fourth alert level in the Township of Needless is DAY-GLO, which is 'Dig In -I'm Good Until My Stash Runs Out.'

We are now at our highest alert level CAMOUFLAGE, which means 'Apache Up! - In Us We Trust.'"

Frank probed with the next question. "Can you be clearer as to what actions are derived from alert level CAMOUFLAGE?"

"Apache Up means to circle the wagons and gather the tribes; prepare to defend our liberties to the death. We have our camouflage on right now." Crazy Wolf indicated to the robe he was wearing. "Defense of our freedom does not necessarily involve a violent course of action. We are dedicated to finding peaceable means of resistance. Of course, if push comes to shove, we will use any means available to us to resist any limitations to our freedom."

(Frank again) "Rumors abound that Robert Windowmaker is actually here in Needless. Can you give us any confirmation of that?"

"Let me explain it this way. The Needless Homegrown Security Plan is in place to protect all citizens of the Township of Needless. Mr. Windowmaker has been de-facto accepted as an honored resident whether he is here, or not. In order to make it safe for him here, we have chosen

to camouflage ourselves accordingly, making it as safe as possible for Bob, if he is indeed here, and the rest of us to move about as freely as possible.”

(The camera zooms in on the reporter) “There you have it. The residents of Needless have joined together in overt mockery of those here tasked in capturing Windowmaker and Wayne, making their jobs a bit more difficult. So far, the township seems to be satisfied with this bizarre attempt to hinder the efforts of our defenders of our nation. As of yet, no action has been taken by the Federal authorities, but the 3rd Battalion commander has suggested implementing a restriction on brown robes for Needless residents. We will continue reporting on events from Needless, New Mexico, as they unfold.”

“That was Frank Donaldson reporting from New Mexico. With only one week to go before February 22nd, much of the world seems to be poised in almost breathless anticipation. For weeks, people have hoarded the things they think they need to get through the 22nd, leaving most retailers with bare shelves in their stores. Peaceful demonstrations have started to turn violent in some areas. In Memphis, Tennessee, nearly six hundred Boblovian supporters were arrested and detained in buses in order to relocate them to one of several detention centers located around the country. As the scene in Memphis unfolded yesterday, thousands of people poured from their homes blocking streets and major thoroughfares, preventing the buses from leaving Memphis. The authorities there were forced to release the people on the buses in exchange for their own safe passage. Similar scenes are being repeated from around the globe. Meanwhile, the search has intensified in New Mexico for the two top criminals responsible for the terrorist attacks we have experienced since December. NORTHCOM Command in Colorado Springs is coordinating the effort. For the latest we go to Alice Jones in Colorado...”

My attention was diverted from the television by noise in the hallway outside of my holding cell. I rolled over on the bench with my face to the wall.

“Dinner is served. Come get your tray.” It was the voice of the jail trustee who I had seen mopping floors when I was brought in. “You better eat. There ain’t gonna be any bedtime snacks.”

“I’m not hungry,” I mumbled, as I kept my face turned away.

“Suit yourself then.” I heard the dinner cart rattle on down the hall.

I stayed stretched out that way trying to relax. Only one week to go to find Bob; I should be within ten to twenty miles by tomorrow night. I thought it might be safer to travel in the daytime once I’m out there on foot. I knew they would be searching with night vision goggles and infrared, making me stand out in the dark against the cold desert ground. I knew where Bob would be, or at least I hoped that I knew. Bob and I always had a backup plan. The plan was that if we ever needed to bug out, to get out ahead of any massive disaster or upheaval, we would go to New Mexico. In Oklahoma City, I had reminded Bob about the cave that I helped my friend Zeph prepare on one of my frequent trips to the southwest. It was in a very well protected location, high up in a rock face, in the Ortiz Mountains. The cave, halfway up a towering cliff, commanded a view down the valley that opened out to the west. You could see the Cerrillos Hills, flanked by the huge rock mastiff called Devil’s Throne; beyond them, the Jemez Mountains brooded on the far horizon. The only access to the cave was from the trail head at the base. From there, you had to crawl under a long rock overhang that recessed about twenty feet into the sandstone face that formed its own shallow cave. The ceiling was about ten feet high. A chimney vent hole, about three feet in diameter, formed naturally by the wind and water, opened above. Once, Zeph and I lugged supplies up there three days in a row. Zeph showed me how to get up into the chimney hole.

“Be sure to bring a crooked stick like this with you, one with a hook on it.” Zeph reached up the hole with the stick and was able to snag a hidden rope ladder tucked behind the lip of the opening. You had to wiggle through a section that was barely big enough to get through, but you soon found yourself behind the face of the cliff. The cliff face stood out several feet in front of the bedrock behind it and was pocked regularly with dinner plate sized holes that let the light filter in illuminating the steep steps that had taken Zeph a whole summer to carve. Several hundred feet above was the ledge with the cave that was now fully and comfortably stocked for a

prolonged stay for a dozen people or so. Getting to the upper trailhead would be a problem to solve later. I hoped Bob had time to settle in before the Feds had gotten hot on his heels.

I flashed on Naomi. I remembered how her heart felt beating next to mine. It gave me something to look forward to, something to hold onto for when 222 played out. I realized I hadn't given any thought to what would come the day after 222. I had no idea of what would come next. Then the next thing came. The sound from the television had stopped long enough for me to notice. I turned and saw the screen had turned blue: blue with three bright white characters, 222. The numbers faded replaced by a silhouetted figure sitting in front of a backlit screen bannered by the words:

222

A MESSAGE FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE OPERATION NEWVISION

A man's voice began.

"This is a message to the American people from the organized militia underground. We go by many names and we are huge in our numbers. We are armed and prepared to defend every citizen's rights and freedom to the death. We are responsible for the shutdown of the airports, the power outages, and other non-violent actions taken by us as a demonstration of our strength. We have the capability to do much more. We have the arms and stores to take this fight to another level. We are prepared to act in the defense of our people. We are what concerns our corrupt government the most, an armed, and active citizenry with the means to overthrow their rule. We no longer need to remain hidden. It is no longer necessary to hide ourselves... *(As the voice continued, the lighted backdrop dimmed, and the man speaking came into clear view)* I am retired Colonel Leopold Wapple, I am the leader of the militia underground. I have orders for all of our underground cell leaders, including those in command of Operation Vampire Killer. Those that know this by name know who I am and

that their responsibility lies in the carrying out of my orders. We are no longer afraid to show ourselves. Our country is at a critical crossroads. For a long time, we have been prepared to lead the fight ourselves, but with the arising of the Boblovian Revolution, the 222 Revolution, we recognize that the people of our once proud nation are willing to take up the fight and lead themselves to their freedom from oppression.

I need to make one thing very clear, and this is very important. In no way have Robert Windowmaker, or Michael Colton Wayne been responsible for any of our clandestine activities. They have not conferred with us or advised us in any way. We have acted completely independently from any of the organized 222 activities. What we have done has been totally on our own without any involvement from outside our militia ranks. As far as we can discern, Mr. Windowmaker and Mr. Wayne have not participated in anything that can be construed as illegal or treasonous; I am sure the government sees otherwise. However, we do support Mr. Windowmaker and Mr. Wayne in their endeavors to bring about the Boblovian Revolution. Given that, we are dedicated to their defense and will do everything in our power to assure their safety, along with the security and safety of all of our brave citizens who support their cause.

This is why we have commanded the airways via our Operation NewVision. I am here to give new orders, listen carefully. I am ordering an immediate stand-down to all militia groups. I am ordering a stand-down order for our brethren bravely participating in Operation Vampire Killer. I am ordering them and all others in our military and law enforcement ranks to take part in this immediate stand-down order.

We are greatly impressed by the nerve and resolve of our citizens as they take on their own personal responsibility as free and sovereign individuals. We support you completely, that is why, for the moment, we have chosen to take a back seat to the Revolution. We will wait until after February 22nd before issuing any new orders as necessary. Our actions will be dependent on the reaction of

our government and the will of our people. We hope to move through this dynamic time without having to do physical battle. We support the Boblovian Movement completely, but as you all have witnessed, we have the means and manpower to take action to force the capitulation of our leaders. It is time for them to step aside and let the people decide for themselves how we will shape our future together.

Once again, I repeat your orders. Stand down for February 22nd. Cease all activities immediately. Operation Vampire Killer is on hold. Take no action until further orders. That is all.”

The television faded to black replaced by a screen that said Technical Difficulties, Please Stand By. So, that was Uncle Leo; I admit I was impressed. Bob had told me about his capture by Colonel Wapple and how Wapple had tried to coerce him into cooperating with Operation NewVision. I hadn’t expected this though, after what Bob had described to me. Evidently, they were taking a non-violent passive role too. This was good news. Well maybe the remainder of my journey will be easier than I thought. It sounds as if the military will have some of their own issues to deal with after this broadcast. Maybe I’ll get to Bob before the 22nd, after all.

I tried to get some rest before morning. I knew I needed my strength for what lay ahead. I must have finally fallen asleep, because the next thing I remembered was the trustee at my cell delivering breakfast. I gulped down the lukewarm coffee and ate the powdered eggs, grits and toast. I forced myself to eat all of it even though the taste of grits nearly makes me puke. All morning long, the television remained blank. Evidently, the broadcast systems were being jammed, or for some other reason, no longer operating. Around noon, Joseph arrived and started preparing me for the next leg of my journey.

Not long after, we were leaving Chinle in a dark blue van. I sat behind the heavy metal grate that separated the prisoners from the driver’s compartment. I wore a bright orange jump suit that Joseph had me put on over my clothes before I left my cell, as well as a pair of handcuffs and leg shackles. Not the way I like to dress when I go out. The day was overcast and gray. Patches of snow clung to the

north face of every little rock and swale. We drove through a howling crosswind that kept Oliver busy with both hands on the wheel. He was a short, middle-aged bald-headed guy with a huge handlebar mustache. Behind me sat Old Red Hawk, a wizened old man with long, white hair, and milky white cataracts in both eyes that stared blindly ahead.

Oliver looked at me through the mirror above him which was angled so the driver could watch the prisoners' compartment behind him.

"Did you see the stand-down order on TV last night, Wayne?" he asked me.

"I saw it. So is Leo Wapple is your leader?"

"I suppose he is, at least that was what our contact person told us."

"So do you think his order will stand? Are you guys following his lead?"

"We don't have much choice, and anything that can help us avoid violence is certainly welcomed on our end." Joseph nodded in agreement. "We want to get through this in one piece ourselves. We have our people to think about too. We'd just as soon be home watching over them than out doing battle with the enemy."

Joseph turned in his seat towards me. "I'm afraid, Mike, we can't do a whole lot for you other than get you as close as we can to where you want to go. We should be able to make your drop near sunset. I wanted to pack a bag for you with some supplies, but Billy said that would look suspicious and advised against it. I do have a blanket and some water for you. That's all I could risk getting on board the van since the whole transfer area back in Chinle is watched via security cameras. You should try to get some rest, Mike. Something tells me you are going to need it."

I watched out the window as the miles rolled by. A sign ahead said Welcome to New Mexico the Land of Enchantment. I finally made it to New Mexico and with enough time to spare. The distant mountains appeared unmoving as the scrub and cactus shot past along the road's edge. We drove north to Shiprock in order to work our way over to NM 550 that would take us all the way through Bernalillo, and from there, another thirty minutes north on I-25 to where I would be getting out. The stark lonely spire called Shiprock dominated the view in front of us. It is an old volcanic plug that has endured millions of years of erosion and time. It didn't seem to care

that the world of man was undergoing a transformation that, to us, was unprecedented. Shiprock was there for the last revolution and would probably be there unchanged for the next one too. Soon, I was fast asleep.

"Hey, Mike, wake up, wake up." I sat up and rubbed my eyes. We were on the interstate heading north. "Get yourself together, my friend," said Joseph. "We'll be dropping you off soon. You can go ahead and get out of that jump suit. Put your cuffs up to the grate so I can unlock them. We are going to make the drop along the frontage road between Cochiti and Waldo Canyon exits where the highway crosses the Galisteo River. Do you know that area?"

"Yeah, like the back of my hand." I had driven Waldo Canyon Road more than once, and was somewhat familiar with the terrain, but I never traveled it on foot.

"The river bottom should give you enough cover for your run to the hills. To be honest, I don't think your chances are very good that you will get that far, but it's the best we can do for you for now."

"You will make it through, friend. The guide spirits are with you. I can see them hovering above, watching, and protecting you." This voice came from the back of the van, from Old Red Hawk.

"Is that you, Red Hawk? I'll be damned. You aren't deaf after all." Oliver shook his head and laughed a little. "We haven't heard one word out of him since he was brought in over a month ago."

I silently wondered what Old Red Hawk had done to be going to a penitentiary to die of old age, but I didn't have time to ask him.

"Thank you, old man. I hope you are right."

The sheer west face of Sandia Peak, now lit brightly orange from the setting sun, dropped quickly away behind us. The only traffic we saw were military vehicles, mostly heading southbound. We could see headlights several miles behind us so Oliver sped up in an attempt to increase the distance between us.

After a few more minutes, Oliver said, "I still think they are gaining on us. I think we better make the drop on the shoulder instead of risking the exit; that might look too suspicious."

"I think you're right, Oliver. We will have to make this quick. Get your blanket and water bottle, Mike. You're getting out at the bottom of this hill."

Oliver had already started to decelerate, downshifting in order to not use the brakes any more than he had to. "We'll lose direct line of sight to those headlights behind us for only a moment," he said.

Joseph jumped out as the van was still rolling to a stop. Keys in hand, he quickly unlocked and slid the door open. I leapt from the van and ran to the shoulder. As I was diving headfirst over the barbed wire fence that lined the highway, I heard the doors slam shut and Joseph yell, "Good Luck, Wayne," then the van sped off.

The ground dropped off sharply on the other side of the fence. I tumbled down to the bottom of a small arroyo and stayed still until I heard the vehicles that had been trailing us pass by me. The western horizon was still bright enough to enable me to see around me, and to get my bearings, but I soon found myself in complete darkness with no moon to help light my way as I worked my way down to the river. Less than eighty years ago, the Galisteo River ran free and clear, but after the Army Corp of Engineers screwed with it, it runs dry most of the year having had most of its flow diverted to the Pecos River and into Texas.

Even though the river's flow was now only a trickle, surfacing every so often before disappearing under the sandy riverbed, the banks were lined with tall cottonwoods, densely packed clusters of Russian olive trees and salt cedars. They gave me good cover. Close by, a pack of coyotes howled. They sounded close enough that I knew they were checking me out. I walked as quietly as I could trying not to leave footprints, but after a short time, it became too difficult jumping from rock to rock in the dark, so I started hiking in the middle of the riverbed. I was worried that the military had placed motion and sound detectors all over the area, but to hell with them, I thought. I put my money on the fact that if I kept up a quick pace, jogging when I could, I would be able to reach the safety of the Cerrillos Hills before dawn and find better cover. My trek wasn't as easy as it looked. Down in between the riverbanks it was hard for me to see how far I had to go. Once I damn near decapitated myself on a single strand of barbwire that some asshole property owner had stretched across the river. It had to be some out of state rich fuck who had bought a little piece of land and now thinks he owns the whole goddamn county. They all had the same mentality. They come to New Mexico to get away from the city, and the first thing they do is put up a fence. Then they all get together in their little fucked-up coalitions and try to turn the rest of the countryside into public land driving off the native New Mexicans and their ability to earn a living and to be able to live freely. They want us to respect their personal property rights while the rest of us poor slobs have our rights taken

away. It was a vicious cycle that I hope the Boblovian Revolution would bring to an end.

The Milky Way hung like a curtain above me as it slowly made its nightly circuit across the sky. After several hours, I made it as far as the abandoned town of Waldo. Waldo once had a train station and a long history as a mining town. The ruins of the old smelters still stood and were now silhouetted slightly by a gradually brightening sky, hinting of sunrise. From there, I turned away from the river and made a dash across the railroad tracks and the gravel road and headed up into the hills where I thought I would be able to find a place to rest and to think about how I was to get over the hills and into the Ortiz Mountains that were looming to the south. I was familiar with the Cerrillos Hills. I had made several trips with friends into the hills looking for turquoise and other interesting minerals, and always felt a special connection to them. The hills are believed to be the oldest mining area in North American. The pueblo people mined them before the Spaniards came into the region and enslaved them in the mines. The irony that the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 began on the very ground that I was passing over was not lost on me. That was a people's uprising too, and they succeeded in driving out the Spanish for nearly twelve years, eradicating all traces of the conquistadors, and the Catholic Church, in the process. It is hard to imagine that these hills were where revolutions were born, but there was no denying that now. I rested a bit at the mouth of a long, rock tumbled gorge winding down from the tallest peak. I was glad Joseph had given me the blanket, it helped some, but the cold still crept in. I decided to keep warm by continuing to move up the canyon. Just as the sun rose, I heard the choppers. I ran for cover. The helicopters moved beyond the ridge showing themselves. I saw two Cheyennes that I knew would be sweeping back over where I cowered trying to make myself smaller than the rock I was behind, which was only half my size. I knew as I closed in on where I expected Bob to be, the harder it would be for me to stay undetected. I no longer feared getting caught or killed; I only feared not making it the rest of the way, especially since I was so close to my final destination.

I stayed as still as I could as the choppers hovered directly over me. The dirt and sand were blasting me in the face from the force of the prop wash as I cowered under my blanket. At any moment I expected to see army boots through the peephole I had to see

through. I heard the engines on both choppers go to maximum rev. I couldn't help but to take a peek upwards. Just lifting my head a little was enough for the blast off the blades to rip my blanket away from me. My eyes met the eyes of the pilot as he hovered only yards away. I realized that running would be futile. There was no cover in the canyon large enough to hide me, and the sides were too steep for me to get up without difficulty, so I just stood there, in full view, watching the machines hovering over me, knowing that more military was on the way.

It's weird when you have that feeling that someone is looking at you, and I didn't mean the chopper crews, or anything like that. I had the feeling as if an animal was looking at me, sizing me up for dinner. It was a strong enough sensation to make me forget the immediate peril of capture and to turn and look behind me on the boulder strewn hillside. What I saw made me freeze. Out of a narrow slot, between the stacked boulders, was a face grinning at me. To its chin, was a long dirty finger motioning for me to come closer. It took only two backward shuffling steps towards the opening for me to see that there was room around the back of the closest rock to slip into the narrow crack. I turned my eyes back to the choppers. Both were hovering a little higher, probably to keep from whipping up too much dust that might have obscured me. I could see both pilots and their copilot's movements; at no time did I have less than two pairs of eyes on me. All the noise and dust prevented me from hearing, or seeing, the first rocks fall. The ground shook under my feet, but I thought it was more helicopters coming, then I realized the chopper crews were not looking my way; rather, their eyes were fixed on something above me. I looked up and saw a rockslide tumbling directly at me. Instinctively, out of survival, I sprang head first into the narrow crack, which I seemed to have hallucinated a human face peering out at me just a moment before. A firm grip caught me by one bicep and dragged me scrapping and clawing several yards. In the confusion, I thought again of the staring animal eye vibe I had only a moment ago, and I thought I was being dragged into a lion's den. The narrow slot that I had just come through opened into a tunnel that, as I was being pulled along, was collapsing at my feet. The dust was choking and it was pitch dark, and to top that off, I felt myself sliding head first down a steeply sloped slide. I hit bottom and the grip on my arm relaxed. Above and beyond us in the tunnel the rumble of rocks and earth shifting quieted.

“Breathe through this a minute.” I felt a rubber mouthpiece of a breathing apparatus shoved into my mouth. “We’ll take turns until the dust settles. Breathe easy and try to conserve our supply. We will probably need it to get out of here.” The voice broke off into a hacking cough so I handed the mouthpiece back into the darkness from the direction it came and felt a hand take it from me. This went on without any other words spoken for at least an hour, the best I could tell. The only sound was the noise of the air passing through the regulator and the taking turns of choking and hacking between a few clean breaths. Didn’t I just say I was no longer afraid except for not completing my journey? The thought of my dream and the Hounds of Hell chasing me as I crawled through the darkness hit me like a jolt of electricity. So that was what I had to look forward to; I was now sure.

It was getting easier to breathe without the breathing device and, as soon as that realization came to my mind, the regulator wasn’t passed back to me. Instead, I saw a dim light come on. I could tell it was a flashlight and whoever wielded it was searching the rock walls around us.

“It looks like we will have to go down from here.” The voice was controlled and calm.

“Who are you?”

The flashlight turned towards the face speaking to me.

“I’m Dog, the dog that’s going to lead you out of here, buddy”

“Well, I’m grateful for that and for you saving my ass back there.”

“You can thank God and the Spanish for that.”

“Thank the Spanish for saving me from capture and being buried in a rockslide?”

“They are the ones who booby trapped the entrance. All I did was set it off. As for saving your ass from capture, you are one lucky son-of-a-bitch to have been at just the right spot, Wayne.”

“You know who I am?”

“Hello, your picture and description has been all over the gosh darn place. Heck, you have brought so much heat around here I thought it best to head underground and sit this one out. I guess I was fooling myself about sitting it out since now you’ve shown up. Here take this.” Dog handed me the flashlight.

I turned the flashlight toward Dog and watched him turn on lights attached to a helmet he was wearing. It had lights and cameras and

what else on it, I could only guess.

“Do you know the way out of here?” I asked.

“Not yet. I came in the same way you did.” Dog was already examining the walls of the tunnel we were in.

“This is definitely Spanish workings,” he said, as he carefully crawled a little farther down the sloping shaft. “I think this is a backdoor to the Mina de Plata, an old silver mine. If it is, then we may be able to connect to the main works deeper in.” He continued to crawl away from me. “Well, are you just going to sit there, or are you coming with me?” Dog said flatly.

“Lead the way, Dog,” and I crawled after him.

After moving a few yards ahead, I asked, “So you think this tunnel connects to others? I hope you’re right.”

Dog stopped abruptly and turned the light on me. “Listen, and I will tell you only once; I don’t care if you make it out, or not, but I do care if I do, so the first thing is, don’t talk unless I talk to you first. Do you understand?” Dog didn’t wait for a reply. “Secondly, you’ll do exactly what I do. If I put my hand in a certain place to pull myself along, or place my foot in a certain spot, you are to copy me move-for-move. If you are able to do that, then we both may get out of here, but if you don’t do exactly as I say then I will gladly leave your ass here to find your own way out. Do I make myself clear?” I nodded. “Good, now follow me.”

In the silence, I listened for the hellhounds sure to be at my heels. We continued down the gradual grade for quite a while before we reached a chamber large enough to stand in.

“We’ll take a break here. Eat one of these.” Dog handed me an energy bar wrapped in cellophane. “Okay, so tell me what the hell were you doing out there? You had no chance in hell avoiding capture.”

“God, it’s such a long story, I’m surprised I’ve made it this far. I’m so close to where I want to get to, but the closer I get, the farther away I seem to be.”

“Where is it that you want to be?” Dog asked.

“I’m trying to hook up with Bob Windowmaker before the 22nd. I know he is hold up in a cave in the Ortiz - a cave that my friend Zeph has stocked up for the end of the world.”

“Zeph Huntley?”

“You know him?”

“Sure, he is one of my old cave rats. We have been poking under

these hills together for many years. I know the general location of the cave, but Zeph has never taken me there. Zeph thinks there is an underground connection from his cave to under the hills here. We have been trying to find that connection for a long time.”

“So you are saying there is a way to get there underground?”

“I’m sure of it; although, I never have tried to find it from this side. But I guess now is the time to try.” Dog downed the last bite of the fruit bar he was eating and said, “I want you to wait here while I explore up ahead a little. Don’t touch anything; just sit here. Do you need any water?”

“I have some left, a little.” I said jiggling the bottle.

“Good, try to save it. We may need to ration our supplies, including our batteries, so leave your light off until I come back for you.”

I wanted to ask how long he thought we would be underground, but I was afraid to speak, and anyway, he was already moving off into the darkness. I watched the lights on his helmet bob along then disappear around a turn. A good time for the dogs to come for me I nervously thought. I had the urge to go forward, following Dog, but his tone when he told me that he would have no problem leaving me down here, convinced me to stay put.

It was hard for me to tell how long I sat in the pitch black, but it was enough time for me to alternate between spats of near panic and complete despair. I listened as carefully as I could for any signal from Dog, but the blood pounding in my ears seemed so loud as to drown out any other sound. I did my best to keep myself in control trying to stay calm and relaxed. I stretched out on the hard floor of the chamber and focused on my breathing and remaining still. I tried to forget that I was now alone somewhere deep in the earth dependent once again on another stranger on my path to help me along on my journey. Soon, I was breathing slowly and deeply almost in a trance. Then I heard a voice speaking to me as clearly as if they were right next to me, but it wasn’t Dog’s voice, it was Bob’s. “Find your fear and face it. Study what you are afraid of. See how fear only exists in the mind. Turn fear into wonderment and embrace it. Life is a rollercoaster ride. We hang on tight screaming for our lives, but as soon as the ride is over, we race excitedly back in line to do it again.”

“Wake up, Mike.” Bob’s voice in my head turned into Dog’s. “Most people would be hysterical by now left alone down here in the

dark. It's good you were resting; you will need all your strength. I think I found the way we need to go, but it's going to be difficult."

I opened my eyes and slowly got to my feet. "Yeah, I was really out there. How long were you gone?" I asked.

"Maybe a couple of hours or more; I found an opening in the old basaltic structure, an old lava tube that I hope connects down deeper to the main fissure that runs for at least a hundred miles or more that connects all the mountains. If I'm right, then we can possibly come up under the same structure that Zeph's cave is in."

Again, I felt my spirit buoy. "Fantastic! That's the best news I've heard in a longtime."

"It's way too early to thank me, Wayne. It's going to be a bitch getting there. Can you swim?"

As quickly as my hopes had lifted, I felt them sink. My stomach turned over. "No, I can't, not very well anyway." I have always been afraid of the water ever since I was a kid, but I didn't want to tell Dog that. "We will have to swim down here?"

"Yes, my friend, down here water may be the least of our problems. Besides getting lost, buried, or running into poisonous gases, we have to worry about more death traps rigged to either crush us or blow us up."

"Spanish deathtraps?"

"Spanish, Jesuit, Aztec, Mayan, Sumerian, who knows, they all worked these hills at some point in history, so remember, do as I do, don't make a move on your own, don't touch the walls, don't speak until I speak. Can you do all that? You understand, it's my neck too if you screw up."

"I understand completely, let's go." I swallowed hard and followed after Dog.

Around the first turn, the tunnel sloped up steeply. I hoped we were nearing the surface, but I knew we would be going down eventually, a long way down by the way Dog had described it. The walls and ceiling narrowed as we moved ahead to the point where we were scrambling on all fours over loose rock and boulders. I watched as Dog squeezed himself through a hole barely big enough to fit through.

"Don't worry, Wayne, you'll fit. It's not far before it opens up big time."

I feared confined spaces almost as much as water, but left with no choice but to follow, I wiggled forward on my belly. In a moment,

my head popped out into what I could immediately tell was a much larger space around us. Dog had his finger to his lips motioning me to keep silent. I got through the hole and stood by him. Dog took his light and shined it around us. What I saw took my breath away. Before me, and above me, were giant mechanical devices, huge wooden cogged wheels, massive timbers, and old wheeled carts and tools.

"This is how the Spanish mined," Dog whispered in my ear. "That's a giant windlass for pulling water up to chambers above us that they used to power their operation. That's where we are going down, over there." He pointed to below the giant windlass. "Let me give you a quick lesson on how to belay a rope."

I let Dog show me, even though this I knew how to do well, having done a lot of repelling in the service. We worked our way over to the edge of the shaft that disappeared down into the darkened depths. Dog took a stone and tossed it in. I waited for what seemed an eternity to hear it hit, and then I heard from far down the unmistakable sound of rock hitting water.

Dog smiled at me. "About one hundred and sixty feet, I'd say. Can't tell how deep the water is until we get there."

We worked our way down in stages, Dog first then me. He knew all the tricks and impressed me with how he found places to tie off on while he waited for me to catch up. I think I impressed him a little too in how I was able to handle myself on a rope. Soon we neared the bottom.

"You make the last leg first, Wayne. You'll hit water. I'll keep you tied off and you tell me how deep it is."

Here we go, I thought to myself. Don't be afraid. Like Ol' Redhawk said, I have the spirit guides with me.

Dog lowered me down the last fifty feet or so until I yelled up to him. "My feet are in the water, easy now." I held my breath and Dog eased me lower. The water wasn't bad, fairly warm to my surprise. Slowly the water level crept up to about mid chest high, then my feet hit bottom. "Hialeah, it's only chest deep," I hollered up to Dog.

"Water warm, or cold?"

"Fairly warm," I answered.

"Too bad. Can you feel any current?"

"No, not that I can tell."

"I'm coming down." In a moment, we were both standing chest deep in the water.

Dog worked the rope back into a coil and clipped the slack onto his belt. "The water is warm and stagnant. I was hoping it would be cool and moving, meaning that it was flowing to the outside. We will follow the tunnel this way." He pointed to my left. "Tie off on me and stay at least ten feet behind me and be ready to pull the rope in case I step into a hole."

"So you think this will lead us out?"

"To a dead end probably. We will watch for any tunnels off to the side, but we will be lucky if we find anything opening up above the waterline." Dog said grimly.

I stayed back as Dog went ahead. I kept a tight grip on the rope. The ceiling to the tunnel was only about four feet above our heads. It definitely showed signs of being manmade with many tool marks. The rock was a dark black and brown, but that changed as we progressed. Soon, pockets of quartz started glittering in the light.

"That's the ore they were after; see the black in with the quartz? That's some of the silver they extracted. We may find a seam where they mined out enough where we can get above this water."

Dog was right. We reached a pocket carved in the side of the tunnel that we could climb up in. He pulled me up alongside him.

Dog let out his breath, "I'll be damned, look at that!"

"How in the hell did a canoe get down here?" I was looking at a birch bark canoe that looked like it had been made only yesterday.

"It was used for transporting ore back to below the windlass, would be my guess."

"Do you think we could use it?" I envisioned paddling along underground. I reached out to feel the smooth bark and it crumbled under my touch. "I guess not."

"Didn't I say to keep your hands off things? You're just like a little kid."

"Sorry I couldn't help myself. It's a piece of art isn't it?"

"Listen; there are all kinds of things down here to draw your attention. You might even see a bar of gold, or a stack of silver, and the natural thing is to go right to it and pick it up, but that's the type of thing that will get you killed. You have to suspect everything is a likely trigger for a deathtrap. They play on people's common nature to get you. So please keep your hands off shit, okay?"

I nodded. "So you don't think this tunnel opens up to the outside?" I could only hope.

Dog took his high beam flashlight and shined it further up the tunnel. "See how it's changed? We are in a natural crack in the earth now. That's a good sign. We might be able to get to where we want to go yet; ready to move on?"

Thankfully, the water was warmer than the air. Just the few minutes out on the dry ledge had me shuddering with a chill. Again, Dog was right; we were now making our way through a natural formation. The tunnel had widened out some, but we stayed close to the right hand side. Above me, the ceiling had disappeared into a dark void making it seem as if we were wading in a lake. Beneath our feet, the floor rose, so now we were only thigh deep in water. After approximately three hundred yards, we could see the end ahead. The walls sloped in abruptly forming an arch above that ended in a jagged crack only inches wide. With the water now less deep, I had relaxed my grip on the rope, and as I let me eyes wander above me, I must have moved out a little from behind Dog because, with my next step, I suddenly found myself in over my head, sinking into the fathoms, floundering for my life in a moment of panic. I thrashed to the surface long enough to grab a breath and yell like a little girl. I could hear Dog laughing.

"Grab the gosh darn rope, will you? I'll pull you up."

I managed to reach the rope that he tossed in my direction and he pulled me towards him and up out of the hole.

"Great job, Mike. You found our way out." He was still laughing as I tried to regain my dignity.

Collecting myself, I said, "That's the way out? I don't get it."

"It better be." Dog replied. "There's no way we are getting back up that shaft we came down."

The thought of having to dive down that hole that I had just about drowned in made me ask, "Can't we go back the other way and see what's there? Maybe it leads to a side tunnel or something."

"Oh it probably does, but it's all part of the Spanish works and I very much doubt it would lead us to the surface. See that wall there? It's one solid piece of greenstone. It's part of the old volcanic dyke. It probably isn't very wide. My educated guess is that we are in a cave system and there is a good chance that not too far down this hole you just discovered is another opening angling up above the water table on the other side of the dyke. I'll go first if it will make you feel any better."

“Yes, you go first.” I said pleadingly not realizing that Dog was messing with me and that he had no intention of letting me lead the way underwater. Dog went over my instructions. I was to play out the rope as he dived down keeping a very slight tension on the line. A signal of two tugs, followed by another single tug, then two more meant for me to follow in down after him. That would mean that he had come out somewhere above the waterline. Three rapid tugs was the signal that he was in trouble and I was to pull him back to me as quickly as I could. Dog stripped off his gear and bundled it all into his pack. He kept his helmet on. Tie this to the end of the rope before you follow me.

“Aren’t you using the air pack?” I asked.

“That’s for our survival. I’m not wasting it on water. I can hold my breath long enough to find my way through or back here, but I can’t do that in a pocket of hydrogen sulfide.”

We shared the last of the water that I had with me; and, as Dog tied one end of the rope around me, then the other end around himself, I wished him good luck.

“I don’t believe in luck,” he said seriously, and with that, he sank below the water.

I watched his ghostly lights dissolve into the depths. With my heart pounding, I metered out the rope trying to gauge how far Dog had gone. Frequently, I felt a tug on the line, but never any signal sequence. My anxiety grew exponentially with every yard I played out. After perhaps eighty feet of rope had trailed after Dog, the tension slacked. Each second seemed a minute and a minute an hour. I knew no one could hold their breath that long. I dared not to breathe least I miss the signal. My fingers searched the rope for the slightest vibration. Fear took its grip on me. If I don’t get a sign soon, what should I do, follow him, search for another way out, or curl up in a ball and wait for Satan’s hellhounds? I swallowed hard as if I could keep the panic from reaching my brain. Then I got the signal to follow him. Ironically, all the worry I had about swimming no longer mattered. I felt relieved and eager to dive. I took Dog’s bundle of gear and supplies and tied it onto the tail end of the line. I repeated the signal on the rope to let Dog know I was ready and gladly jumped in feet first. That was my first mistake and it was almost fatal. As soon as I was submerged, the rope grew tight spinning me around into a head down position like I should have been in the first place. The sudden flip I made, and my head coming

into hard contact with the side of the hole, made me lose most of the air in my lungs. I took a death grip on the rope and started kicking wildly doing my best to go faster than the rope was pulling me. The rocks cut into me as I scraped along underwater nearly blacking out before Dog pulled me up on his side of the hole.

I didn't care what air I was breathing as long as I had something to fill my lungs. I hung in the pool with my head above water listening to Dog laugh at me. "You beat your head up pretty good. Everything all right, Mike?"

"Damn that was rough. I sure hope I don't have to do that again." I gasped. Then I learned of my second nearly fatal error.

"Gosh darn it! Fuck! I fucked up." Dog kept repeating, "Fuck, fuck, fuck."

My first thought was that we had swum into a blind pocket and had no way to go on from there, but then I saw the tail end of the rope in his hand and I knew I had fucked up. The bundle of supplies had come off during my dive. "Oh shit. I really fucked up." I realized that bundle contained everything we would need to get out alive. Our food, air, water, batteries, and whatever else Dog had with him, were gone.

"It's my fucking fault. I should have tied the knot myself." Dog squatted with his head down then looked up at me and stoically said, "Oh well. Die and learn." Looking around, he said "At least we have plenty of water at the moment, so the next thing is finding something to eat. How do you feel about cannibalism, Mike?" He grinned and pulled out his blade that he had strapped to his leg.

I was at the point where I took everything Dog said seriously. I had no response. I watched Dog take his blade and scrap it on the black fuzzy rocks at the water's edge. He wiped the slimy accumulation off the knife with his finger and put it in his mouth.

"Not bad if you like bacteria," and he worked up another finger full and offered it to me. "Help yourself. There's plenty more."

By this time, I was well-trained to do whatever Dog instructed. I ate a mouthful of slime without even tasting it.

"If we are lucky, this will keep us alive, or maybe it will kill us, but what doesn't kill you, only makes you stronger. Are you just going to hang there in that hole, or do you need help getting out of there?" Dog offered his hand and pulled me to my feet.

"Thanks," I said. "I'm sorry for the fuck up. What can I say? I guess I must have kicked the pack loose when I struggled after

hitting my head.” I reached up and felt the bloody knot above my left ear.

“Don’t worry about it. At least we are still alive ...for now,” he added after a pause. “Come on let’s sit here and think for a bit. Damn it! I had two cigarettes in that pack; that does suck!” He smiled at me. I could see the determination in his face. Here was a man who would never give up.

While we sat and took inventory, Dog continued scraping at the rocks. “Looks like some algae here too. I like vegetables, don’t you?” He laughed.

His twisted humor started to worry me. Maybe the stress was getting to him. Still, I don’t think he would have eaten me, but I wasn’t too sure. Dog made a slime pile in his t-shirt that he had spread before him. He tied it up into a pouch and handed it to me. “Don’t lose it this time. That’s our breakfast.”

Thanks to me, we had little to work with. Dog had two lights on his helmet. One was already weakening noticeably. Also mounted on the helmet were two range finder lasers that weren’t going to be of much help. He did have a small hand cranked light, the type you would see on a keychain, that barely cut the darkness, but it was better than having no backup at all. We had no means to carry water, so we drank all we could, not worrying about whether it was clean or not. Dog said the alga was a good sign and that the water was probably safe to drink.

“Well, let’s see where this goes.” Dog said as he wiped the knife blade clean.

I climbed after Dog. At least we were going up again, this time through a natural crack about four feet wide that split into darkness above us. We moved quietly for an hour; only the sound of our footsteps and our breathing, amplified by the silence surrounded us. Every so often, we would find ourselves surrounded by beautiful crystalline formations that I would have loved to examine closer, but given the situation, we couldn’t afford taking any pictures with the tiny watertight camera on Dog’s helmet. We needed all the battery power we could muster. The crevasse seemed to level out, and in a while we could detect cooler air ahead of us. We soon came out onto a ledge that opened into a huge natural chamber that was so large that the beam of light on Dog’s helmet couldn’t reach the opposite side.

“This is it, Mike. We made it to the center of the earth.”

“Really?” I said gullibly.

The light on Dog’s helmet shone in my eyes. I couldn’t see his face, but I knew he was shaking his head at my stupidity.

“This is what I was hoping to find. This is the major north-south rift that cuts under half of the state of New Mexico. Now the trick is figuring out how far we need to go before we start working ourselves up. How are you doing, Mike, adrenaline still pumping? We can rest a little now if we need to.” His watched glowed on his wrist. “It’s been eighteen hours since I dragged you through that crack.”

“I can keep moving. I still have a little leg left in me.” I was tired, but not enough to sleep. I still felt that creepy feeling that something was following us through the dark.

We worked our way down off the ledge. The going was really rough. We had to navigate over piles of giant boulders. It would have been hard enough in the daylight, but with only the tiny light on Dog’s helmet, it was all I could do to see him ahead of me, let alone, where I needed to put my feet. It was apparent the quality of the air had changed. The coolness and slight movement felt on our faces hinted of larger spaces ahead. Evidently, we had not yet reached the main fracture. We did eventually reach a section where the going got easier. We seemed to have reached the floor level. Dog said we were in a lava tube that had collapsed. Under our feet, we heard the crunch of volcanic glass that had been undisturbed for millions of years.

“This is a good place to spend the night, don’t you think, Mike?” With those words from Dog, I dropped to the ground and let out a sigh.

“As good as place as any; what’s for dinner?” I tried to keep my spirits lifted.

“No dinner tonight. We’ll try to get some sleep and save what slime we have for the morning.” Dog turned out the light and we sat in unimaginable pitch-blackness. I closed my eyes and fell into a fitful sleep. It was weird waking up and hearing Dog snoring, but not being able to see anything, or to even tell if my eyes were open or not. Finally, I slipped into my own exhausted oblivion. I dreamed of being back in the jail cell in Chinle, thinking that all that had happened since then had only been a dream.

I woke up feeling sick to my stomach. My mouth felt like the bottom of a birdcage. I was sure I was running a fever, too.

“I feel sick,” I moaned.

Dog's voice came to me from the dark, "Yeah, the slime didn't set well with me either. I forced myself to puke. I hate wasting the fluids, but I feel better. We are going to have to find water soon, or we will have to backtrack to the pool."

"How long did I sleep?" I asked.

"A little over three hours, I've already scouted out the area, are you ready to give it a try?"

I wobbled to my feet. Weakly I said, "Let's get moving."

My ears rang in the silence. I could actually hear the blood pounding in my head. Dog turned on his helmet light which had grown dimmer. I wanted to ask him what he thought our chances were of getting out of this alive, but knowing that I was responsible for our predicament, I let it pass. Dog took the laser range finder off his helmet and shook it out ahead of us. The thin green beam pierced the blackness bouncing off gigantic bizarre rock formations far ahead giving definition to the huge vaulted chamber we were in. I trailed behind Dog marveling at the diamond like reflections coming off the shards of black obsidian under our feet. Moving made me feel a little better, and soon, I had my second wind. We had easy going for a while, and up ahead, we could feel the current of air gathering strength against our faces. It must have been at least another two hours before the floor suddenly sloped down before us. Once again, Dog used his laser to reconnoiter our position. The passage we had been in, as large as it was, had opened out into something larger on a much grander scale.

"This has to be the main rift. Damn, it would be easy getting lost in here." Hearing him say that gave me some comfort, for I thought we were already lost in the bowels of the earth.

Standing at the edge of the opening was like standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon at night. A discernible gentle breeze flowed upward towards us. Dog took a large stone and threw it down into the depths. We heard it hit something soft with a thud. He took another smaller rock and heaved it out as far as he could, and again, our ears were met with another thud.

"I don't know how far down it goes, but this probably slopes down all the way to the bottom. Let's give it a try."

We moved down the grade. It was like walking down a huge sand dune. Dog suddenly yelled. "Keep up with me!" And, with a loud whoop, he headed down in leaps and bounds. After descending about three hundred feet, we reached the bottom.

The powdery obsidian sand flowed out onto a smooth glassy floor. Dog took the first step on level ground and his foot broke through the surface, sinking halfway up to his knee. "This could get tricky now. We will try to stay close to the sides; but we had better use the rope. There's no telling what's under us."

We tied off to each other and carefully made our way. It was like walking on crusty snow. Some places held our weight, and some didn't. We never broke through any deeper than knee deep, but each time we did, our pants tore, and the sharp glassy shards cut into our flesh. There wasn't any way to avoid it.

"This isn't going to work; we'll cut ourselves to ribbons in this shit. I've got a different plan." I watched Dog as he cut four lengths of rope. "Give me your shirt." He cut it into two even pieces, and had me wrap a piece around each of my calves. He then coiled a length of rope around each of my legs. He did the same for himself. "I think this will work just fine."

It made a big difference, and we were able to make good progress. Another several hundred yards, and we were back on terra firma. For perhaps a couple of miles, we moved forward making our way in and around giant boulders the size of small houses. Our footing alternated between black sand and loose rubble. At one point Dog stopped and scooped up a handful of the black sand. He held it out to me and pointed his light on it. "You see that, Mike? That's gold, and a lot of it." He rubbed the sand in his hands letting it pass through his fingers. Then he held his palms out. In the dim light, I saw his hands were indeed covered in gold dust.

"I guess we hit the mother lode." I said.

"I'd trade it all for a gallon of water." Dog said.

As we moved along, Dog closely inspected everything within the light's reach. I could tell he was searching for clues. Every change in the type of rock we encountered added to the puzzle he was trying to solve - where to go up from here. I was starting to get sick and shaky again. Another wave of nausea swept over me and I knew my fever had come back in a rage. I kept quiet about my suffering, knowing that the last thing Dog needed to hear was that I was petering out. I struggled to stay behind him and on my feet, but soon, I was so lightheaded I knew I needed to lie down.

"I need to stop for a minute." Dog could tell from the sound of my voice that I was fading fast. He shined the light on me and said.

“You don’t look so good, Mike. You’d better not give out on me now. I’m not going to carry you, that’s for sure; so you better take a minute and pull yourself together.”

“I’ll be okay. Just let me rest a little, huh?”

“Do that. Here take this crank light. I’m going to do some more scouting while you gather your strength. If you hear me calling for you, signal me, so I can find you again”

I soon lost track of Dog as he moved out into the black abyss. I started to shiver violently. I felt chilled and I started to sweat profusely. I rolled over and puked. The dry heaves only made me feel worse. I had no idea how long I was in that state. I think I lost consciousness for a while. At some point, I came to, only to be gripped with panic and a feeling of doom. The dream I had back in Montana, riding under the cattle trailer, came to life. In my delusional state, I saw red eyes and blood covered fangs rushing toward me. I turned and ran blindly into the blackness screaming bloody murder. I must have run nearly twenty yards before running headlong into solid rock. I got knocked on my ass. It was a good thing, and it helped me to regain my senses. Laying there, my breathing returned to normal and I took comfort feeling the cool dampness of the sand against my face. Without moving, I took stock of myself. I felt better. My fever had subsided and the sand did feel damp and refreshing. Then it hit me. There was moisture in the sand I had fallen on. My first thought was I had fallen where I had puked, but I knew that couldn’t be the case. I had run quite a ways before crashing into the rock. I took the hand cranked light, wound the little handle, and saw how the damp sand was sticking to my skin. I could compress it into a ball and I knew then it held at least a little water. I didn’t know if this discovery would help us or not, but my hopes soared.

“Dog! Hey Dog!” I hollered.

“Hang on, hang on, I’m coming. Let me see some light.” Dog wasn’t far off. “What the heck happened to you? Did you see a ghost?” He laughed, as his light bounced through the black towards me.

“Another nightmare; I’m okay. Check this out,” I said excitedly.

“What did you find?”

I pointed out my discovery to Dog. He dug down into the sand and confirmed what I suspected. “Yeah, it’s wet all right. Let’s look around.”

Dog searched the surroundings carefully. “Here we go; good job, Buddy. See here, there’s water seeping down from somewhere above us. Wait here while I check it out.”

I lay back down resting comfortably this time. I stared above into space envisioning a cool drink of water. I watched Dog slowly climbing up above me until his light disappeared into a crack high in the wall. My eyes adjusted to the dark as I kept watching for his return. I wondered what day it was. How soon to February 22nd? Was I getting any closer to Bob, I wondered? Did it even matter? Just getting to the surface would make me happy now. Soon, I thought I could make out a faint glow far above me. Dog must be on his way back. I closed my eyes and again imagined slacking my over-powering thirst with cool, cool water. My daydream was quickly interrupted.

“Here, take this from me. Be really careful, don’t spill it.” Dog was directly above me on a narrow ledge. He held in his hands a carefully coiled rope wound into a cone shape. I took it from him. It was wet and heavy. Dog jumped the last few feet landing beside me. “Drink up, Mike. I think it’s good water.”

Dog had found water and had devised a way to bring some back to me. “It’s amazing what you can do with a little rope and some clay.” Dog had coiled the rope and fastened it into a funnel that he lined by smearing a sticky gray clay over the inside. “Work’s pretty damn good, doesn’t it?” He said proudly.

“You amaze me, Dog.” He had managed to bring back about a half-gallon of water. With each gulp, I could feel my body coming back to par.

“Drink as much as you can. We’ll take a break, and I will fetch some more. I think we can carry a little water with this. At least we have bought another forty-eight hours for ourselves, but food will be our next big issue; anyway, so far, so good.” Dog turned out the light to conserve the battery.

We sat quietly in the darkness for a moment and then I said. “I’ve been trying to figure out what day it is. It has to be closing in on the 22nd.”

Dog looked at his watch. “It’s the 19th, good Buddy, 4:20pm to be exact.” We both chuckled. “A bowl would be good about now, but my stash went down with the ship.”

“I’ll make it up to you when we get topside.” We both were feeling refreshed and confident.

“All you crazy fucks ate up on the 222 thing; I hope at least if it goes down, then marijuana will finally be legal.”

“Bob says it’s already legal in Boblovia.” I told him.

“That whole thing is so off-the-wall. Tell me; are you all that they say you are? Did you and Bob pull off the airport and power blackout thing? You don’t fit the picture of a domestic terrorist.”

I took a deep breath, “I’ll give you the short story, okay?” I went on to tell Dog as much as I could in fifteen minutes of how Bob had managed to put the fuck to the world. Winding up with the story, I said, “The last time I saw Bob was on September 11th, in Oklahoma City. He had gone through another transformation. He is anything but a leader. In fact, he seemed sure that it would all gradually go away before now. He told me that by the end of this February, everyone would be tuned in to the Stupor Bowl, and not the Revolution. He didn’t seem to hold out much hope that people would actually take his message to heart.”

“Stupor bowl, huh. You mean the Super Bowl?”

“Yeah, Bob said the Super Bowl was some form of mass hypnosis. I don’t think he ever believed that the people would rise up, but after the economy took the big shit last October, and the way the government has reacted, I guess he was wrong. Whether Bob would admit it, or not, he is pretty much responsible for bringing about great change. Like I said, it all started out as a joke, part of his comedy routine, you know, just fucking around with an idea, but somehow it exploded into everyone’s consciousness. Bob did hint to the fact that it was important to watch the noosphere; that collectively, a new mass consciousness would evolve that would transform everything about ourselves. I still don’t know about that; but damn, things sure have gotten interesting haven’t they?”

“I think I like this Bob guy. I bet he is a lot smarter than he leads people to believe. I like his style. Use a little humor, keep it human and make the message a positive one; that’s the key. Once we all learn to laugh at ourselves, we can see how ridiculous the world is and how we all need to get the same joke. It’s all been one long joke since the beginning. Bob has just come up with a new punch line.” Dog flicked on his light and picked up the coiled rope water container. “I’ll go fill this up again. You can wait here.”

I relaxed prone on my back. I thought again of the last year, and especially, of all the people I had encountered on my adventure. Each person had come into my life at just the right moment, all the

way down to Dog. I thought of Naomi and wondered how things were going for her. I felt confident that we would meet up again in July. Everything seemed okay in the world at that moment. It's all turned out good so far, and I shouldn't expect anything less than that. Again, my attention was drawn to the faint glow of light far above me. Old Dog, he sure could cover a lot of ground. He got back up there in no time. Then for a brief instant, I saw Dog's light vanished into a seam below and to the left of the faint glow. It was barely perceptible, but persistent. I was sure I was seeing light seeping in high above me. When Dog had come back with some more water, I pointed out what I had seen. It took him a few minutes staring above, allowing his eyes to adjust, to see it.

"You're good, Mike. I see it too. It could be some type of iridescent luminous bio-mass growing up there, but then again it could be daylight. Come on, let's check it out."

"Hmmm, iridescent luminous bio-mass, yum, yum," I kidded.

It was a lot farther up than it looked, and it took us nearly an hour to get to a ledge below the crack from which the glow was now clearly visible. Dog had to climb a sheer face up the last thirty feet hanging by his fingernails. He pulled himself up into a narrow crevice, lowered the rope down to me and pulled me up to him.

"There's definitely light coming through here and fresh air too. You may have found our way out!" said Dog excitedly.

We had to squeeze sideways through the very narrow seam. The glow grew in intensity as we shuffled forward. After being in the dark for so long, even a faint glow seemed bright as day. We had one more blind turn to wiggle around. Our excitement grew; but in no way did it prepare us for what we encountered next; we hit a wall, a manmade wall of poured concrete, and towards the top, was a stainless steel louvered vent with light filtering through.

"That's crazy," Dog said. "What the fuck?"

"Well, are you going to take a look; or do I have to race you?" I knew Dog was going to get the first look. We were both about ready to jump out of our skins.

Dog was able to put his back to one wall, and with his feet against the other side, work his way upward. He got up even with the vent. I could see his face in the light. It's a picture I will always remember - the whites of his eyes big as golf balls, his grin of amazement, his cackling laugh, and the words that followed, "You're not going to believe this; my God we're going to have some fun now."

Dog released from the wall and dropped down next to me.

“What the hell is it? What did you see?”

Dog cackled. He was almost beside himself with excitement.

“You’re going to have to see it for yourself, good Buddy.”

I took my turn and worked my way up to peer through the grate. I could see through to a well-lit, broad tunnel approximately seventy-five feet wide, by at least sixty-feet high. The opening I peered through was near the ceiling. Below me, two narrow gauge sets of rails, separated by a roadway, ran down the tunnel. At my eye level, a single monorail system hung suspended from the ceiling.

“Military?” I asked.

“Damn right.” Dog replied.

“There are only screws holding this grate. I bet we can get through it.” I suggested.

“Damn right.” Dog said again as he was pulling his knife from the sheath strapped to his leg. “Let me up there; I’ll get ‘er open.”

I took another glance through the grating before jumping down. A second before I released my grip. I saw the monorail pass by only feet in front of me. A gust of air from the moving train hit me in the face. I know what I saw, but it didn’t register in my brain. I was so startled that I let out a yell and fell out of control. Dog was below to break my fall.

“Are you okay?” Dog laughed. Then he saw the look on my face, “What the hell did you see?”

Literally, I started to spin in circles and flap my arms slapping them against my sides. Dog bent over laughing at me. “Good God, Mike, are you alright? Get a grip, man. Tell me what you saw.”

I calmed down enough to stop spinning and flapping; nevertheless, I was so stunned that I couldn’t get any words to come out of my mouth. Dog faced me and nodded rapidly looking at me trying to help me get the words out.

“Aliens, I saw aliens, I swear to God. There were a bunch of them - little guys, with big eyes. They looked like a bunch of commuters just riding to work on the train. One of them looked right at me!”

“No shit? You really saw them? Little gray guys with big eyes?”

I nodded in excitement.

“Hot fucking damn, I’ve been waiting for this my whole life.”

In one beat, Dog was at work on removing the grating using his knife to remove the screws and pry loose the cover.

I was shaking like a leaf. “Don’t tell me you are going in there?”

“You’re welcome to stay here, Mike. Maybe you will get lucky again and find another way out. I’m going in, with or without you. Come on, squirrel up here next to me. We’ll drop through together.”

I stood there shaking like a leaf. “It knew my name, it knew my name,” I kept repeating.

“What the fuck are you talking about?” Dog was busy loosening the screws.

“It looked right at me. I could hear him in my head. It said my name, Michael Colton Wayne. I’m not making it up.”

“Did he give you a wave too? I guess you won’t need an introduction then. Now get your ass up here and give me a hand.”

I was in shock, but I followed Dog’s instructions and climbed up next to him.

“It’s loose; on the count of three, give it a kick.”

It took three hard kicks to bust the grating loose. It was heavy and made one of a hell of a racket as it fell in onto the floor below. Dog was able flip the rope out onto a beam that supported the monorail, and we belayed ourselves down. I was still so freaked that I wanted to run as soon as my feet hit the floor. Dog saw the state I was in and grabbed me by my belt to keep me from bolting.

“Mike, come on, Mike! I need you to calm down. Don’t make me have to knock you in the head.”

Frantically, I looked around me. There was no place to run to, no place to hide. In either direction, the tunnel disappeared into the distance.

“What are we going to do now? How are we going to get out of here? I don’t like this place.” Dog still had me by my belt.

“Will you calm the fuck down, Mike? I’m going to let you go now so don’t fucking run off. We found our way in here; I’m sure we can find our way out.”

Alongside the tracks was a service platform that ran the length of the tunnel. Every fifty feet or so, a large supporting column protruded from the sides. Dog and I huddled in the shadowed side of one of the columns.

“Give me a minute to take a look around.” Dog peered out around the column and said, “I don’t see any cameras or anything. We can’t leave that grating lying there. Help me drag it over here.”

We had just gotten that task done, when Dog saw a bright light coming down the track. We pressed up together in the corner opposite the direction from which the train was coming. It was

moving silently, at about a forty-miles an hour. It looked like it was automated, and we couldn't see anyone human, or alien, operating it. What we did see though, even took Dog's breath away. The low electric tow motor had five flatcars trailing it. Each car had what certainly looked like a long oblong aircraft on it. They were sort of saucer shaped, very streamlined, each with a round dome on top. They all had United States Air Force insignias on them.

"I knew it! Damn it anyway; we've been working with aliens for a long time. We got a whole damn space fleet of UFO's, I'll bet ya." Dog was getting really excited. "I've gotta get my hands on one of those suckers. I bet I could fly one, or die trying."

"They had U.S. markings on them, they're ours then. You really think we are working with the aliens?"

"You tell me, Mike. Hell, you saw one yourself. You're ahead of me there. Shit, if people knew only half the truth they would fucking flip out. The government lies about everything else, what makes you think they aren't lying about UFO's too. Hell, ever since the late forties we've been in contact with several alien civilizations that I'm sure of. I've heard stories for years about secret underground bases all connected by tunnels like this one. Supposedly, New Mexico is honeycombed by them. There are even stories of an underground war with little gray aliens somewhere up around Dulce in the late sixties, I think; but we can't stand around here talking about it; let's keep moving. We'll go this way."

I was still so scared that I was almost riding on Dog's back. The panic I experienced in my dream was manifesting in reality. I had an overpowering urge to run, but I controlled myself enough to stay with Dog, but the hair standing up on the back of my neck warned me that the Hellhounds were closing in. The two of us jogged along. Dog scoped out the tunnel as we went. After a couple of hundred yards, on the other side of the tracks, we saw a ladder leading up to a catwalk near the ceiling.

"Let's see what's up there. Don't touch the rails they are probably energized with high voltage." Dog warned.

We carefully crossed the tracks and reached the bottom of the steel rung ladder. "It looks like a utility service platform. Still, it's worth checking out." Dog added.

Dog made it up about only ten rungs when we both heard a loud, high-pitched whine coming down the tracks towards us at very high speed. It looked like a car of some sort, very low profiled, painted

black, with no lights on it. I started to scurry up the ladder behind Dog thinking we might be able to hide up there. Then a beam from a spotlight bathed us in its brilliance. I remember hearing a loud buzzing in my ears. An intense vibration racked through my body and I lost my grip on the ladder and fell into a heap on the ground. The same thing happened to Dog and he fell down on top of me. Neither one of us lost consciousness, but we both were effectively paralyzed by some sort of weapon. Where I lay, all I could see were two pairs of boots in front of my face. My hands and ankles were bound with restraints and a rough canvass hood was placed over my head and drawn tight around my neck. I felt myself being lifted and thrown into a compartment like a sack of feed. I sensed the motion as we hurled along the tracks with the high-pitched whine reverberating in my ears.

It's hard to say how far we traveled, or how much time passed, until we stopped. I was alert, but I kept quiet so I could listen to what was happening around me.

"Show your damn faces, you fucking cowards. It's pretty chicken shit if you ask me. Get this fucking bag off my head and show yourselves." It was Dog and he was pissed. "I know who the fuck you guys are. Whatcha gonna do with me, off me?" I could hear him struggling nearby.

I felt a hand grab my arm and pull up my sleeve followed by the unmistakable prick of a needle in my flesh. Then I lost consciousness.

What happened to me next, is still unclear. I only have snippets of memories. I'm pretty sure I was detained in a stainless steel cubicle, devoid of any furnishings other than a solitary chair to which I was strapped. One wall seemed to be open to another room, but the intense light shining in my eyes from that direction prevented me from seeing beyond it. I saw no sign, nor heard no word from Dog. I do know that at some point I was cleaned, fed, and redressed in navy-blue, lightweight coveralls. I had lost all track of time and remembered very little else other than the bright lights being turned off leaving me restrained in the chair in total darkness. A hood was again placed over my head and I was led away, eventually finding myself sitting in a chopper. I heard the props rev and felt the chopper leave the ground. My hands were cuffed to the rails on either side of the seat. I gave up all hope of escaping. I had no hope of finding Bob, or ever seeing Dog again or for that matter any other friendly

face again. At least I'm not in a fucking flying saucer, I thought. That's was just about the only consolation I could find.

Chapter XVII

JASMINE HARDY
(Part Seven)

I left Uncle Leo's on early Monday morning. I had it with trying to change his way of thinking. Even though he knew that I thought he was going about things the wrong way, he still agreed to help me out. Uncle Leo provided me with a set of false identification. I was now Carol Williams from Chicago, Illinois. He also set me up with an old Toyota Landcruiser that had seen its better days, but it had a completely new engine, and drive train, that I could take anywhere; on or off the road. The dents, and cracked windshield, made it look like it belonged in New Mexico. Along with more than enough money, he gave me a secured phone that I could use to contact him.

I stopped in Santa Fe to purchase more supplies and reached Needless late in the afternoon. I had been through Needless a couple of times, done a little shopping and more than my fair share of drinking. I knew that I had to be able to integrate into the community if I were to stay there for any length of time. I was on my own. Uncle Leo said I was only to contact him in an emergency or if I should indeed locate Bob. I knew I couldn't risk being recognized, so I had to manufacture a completely new persona. To complete my disguise, I dyed my hair bright red and wore a couple of fake body piercings, one above my eye, and one through my tongue that was magnetic and uncomfortable as hell; but I knew I now had the right look in order to be able to fit in.

My first night in town, I slept in the back of the Landcruiser. Actually, if you don't want to stick out like a sore thumb in Needless, living in your car is a good way to blend in. In the morning, I went to the local coffee shop and enjoyed the mild weather. It was the end of the tourist season and the town was reverting back to its local character. I sat outside drinking coffee and looking over the paper. Several of the local folks sat around a table next to me. I got a few looks my way, but since no one knew me, I was looked over with suspicion. I tried to act nonchalant, like I was just killing time, while I did my best to listen in on the conversations around me.

"Did you see those choppers up on Goldmine yesterday?"

“That’s the third day in a row. They buzzed my house all afternoon. I’m getting sick of this shit. I don’t think Bob was ever here in Needless. I wish they would find some other place to harass.”

“It’s crazy that all that 222 shit has come here. Hell, we’ve been living like that for the last forty years. They can have their fucking Revolution. We already had ours.”

“At least they have been so busy looking for Bob that they have forgotten to look for the pot.”

“Tell that to Ralph and Andy. They got there shit ripped up by those fucking Feds running all over the place.”

“Yeah, I heard, but they weren’t looking for weed, just that Bob guy. Nobody got arrested. That’s what I heard.”

“Just the same, how long is this shit going to go on? I’ve had enough.”

“We should write our Congressman.” Everyone laughed.

A black sedan cruised slowly by. “There’s two of those fucks now. Everybody wave!” And they all did.

“At least they could wave back.” More laughter.

“It’s fucked, now we have to go back in the alley to get high. Anybody up for an attitude adjustment?”

Within the week, I found a little one-room adobe casita to rent - complete with an outhouse. At least it had running water and a hot shower. Over the days, and weeks to come, I slowly made acquaintances with some of the locals, mainly men who saw me as fresh meat in town. I usually hung at the bar in the evenings, playing pool, or just sitting on the porch. No one tried to pry into my business. My story was that I had to get out of Chicago before it took a big shit and everyone seemed to think that made good sense. More often than not, I would drive around on the rough dirt roads trying to tune my intuitive antennae to any vibe I may pick up from Bob. That’s all I had to work with: hope and time. A day didn’t go by that I didn’t second guess myself and wish that I had made a different decision. Still, I had a feeling that he was close by, and I was determined to find him. I couldn’t just go around asking people if they had seen him, and most of the locals believed he wasn’t here to begin with, but I knew if he was in the area, at least one person would know it. All I had to do was find that person.

I don’t think I ever felt as lonely in my life as I did that year around the holidays. Needless goes all out with Christmas lights and decorations making the year’s last attempt at drawing in some

tourists. This year, with the economy taking a beating, and all the anxiety building up to February 22nd; virtually no business was coming in. To make it appear as if I was trying to be part of the community, I went around looking for work - putting in a word here and there not expecting anything and finding nothing. New Year's came and went. Needless had been socked in by three feet of snow keeping nearly everyone hostage in their homes for a week. Finally, enough snow had melted that I thought I could get out and explore some more of the back roads. Little did I know that New Mexico has four seasons: hot, cold, windy, and muddy. I chose the muddy season to try to get up towards the Ortiz Mountains. I tried to stay on roads that looked passable, but by the time I reached the foot of Stony Road I was stuck deep in the mud. I had four- wheel drive and had gotten good at driving in sloppy conditions: however, you can still get stuck like I did with one wheel hung up in the ditch. I got out surveying the situation. The days were at their shortest, and with the cloud cover, it was almost night. I hadn't passed any houses or gates for several miles and I couldn't see any lights around me. I got back in and tried to rock the truck forward and backwards to get free. This only succeeded in burying my wheels deeper into the mud. I decided my best bet was to just sit it out. Someone would come by sooner or later and give me a hand. After about an hour of sitting in the truck running the heater to stay warm, I went outside to pee. I squatted against the side of the Landcruiser and did my business. It was incredibly dark outside, no stars, no moon and so quiet and calm that I felt like I was alone in the world. That's when I heard a soft, muffled bark and a whimpering nearby. I kept listening and was able to determine that the sound was coming from up the ditch in front of me. Stupid me didn't have a flash light; but my headlights gave out enough light for me to see a dog lying in the ditch. There were no tracks around him, so I knew the poor thing had been lying there for a while. My first concern was that he was injured and I didn't want to have him bite me out of pain. I got down on my knees and examined the animal carefully. I couldn't see any signs of injury and he was trying to wag his tail and get on his feet, but he seemed too weak to be able to do so. I reached out and stroked his silver-gray short fur and he responded by trying to lick my hand. I retrieved a blanket from the truck, wrapped the poor fellow in it, and got him into the backseat.

He looked like full breed pit bull less than a year old. He had a

collar, but no tags except for a nametag, which read Bob. I had to laugh to myself. I finally found Bob. He had turned into a dog.

“Okay, Bob where do you live? You look starved, poor baby.”

I gave him some beef jerky and some water.

“Thirsty too, I see. We’ll somebody has to be looking for you.”

Bob seemed none-the-worse for the wear. I didn’t see any injuries, or signs of frostbite, only symptoms of dehydration and starvation. It looked like he had been lost for a while, probably since before the big snowfall. I sat next to the pup and massaged his muscles to warm them up. Within the hour, I saw headlights approaching. Whoever it was, they seemed to be having a blast charging up the road fishtailing side-to-side. I recognized the truck. It was my pool-shooting buddy Zeph. He was a cool guy, quiet and polite, kind of good looking, in a rough way, even with the rastaman dreads. We had shared a few drinks, and he had a good sense of humor and a realistic view of life. He said he was a big supporter of the 222 Revolution and he was really excited about February 22nd only being a few weeks away. He never tried to make a pass at me, but he did say to me once that he wished he could drag me off to his cave. I told him that’s where I probably belonged. Zeph pulled up in front of me and we both got out.

“What the heck are you doing way out here, Carol? I’m the only one that’s been down this road in a week. You’re lucky I came along.” Zeph was already getting a chain out of the bed of his truck. “I’ll have you out of there in no time.”

I got back behind the wheel of my truck, and with one clean jerk, Zeph pulled me back onto the road. Zeph came up to my window and said.

“I’ll help you get turned around and then you can follow me back to the main road. You should be okay if you stay in my tracks. It gets easier in the mud after the sun goes down and the road starts to freeze.” Zeph patted his coat pocket. “Hey, I’ve got some killer bud. Wanna get high?”

“Sure do, get on in.”

Zeph hopped into the passenger’s seat and had a bowl already to go. He gave it to me to take the money hit. “That’s good shit. Did you grow it yourself?”

“It’s some left over from last year’s crop. It’s better than this year’s. I had to bring in my crop early this year because of all of the choppers, so my girls didn’t get to mature completely this season.

They ain't gonna find Bob just buzzing around up there," he added looking up to the sky.

"I found Bob," I smiled. "He's in the backseat. Do you know whose dog this is?"

Zeph turned in his seat. "Bob, god there you are. I've been looking for him all week. He belongs to a friend of mine and I was taking care of him. I didn't have the heart to tell her he was missing. Boy, I was sure he was lost for good. Is he okay? He looks pretty weak."

"I think he misses his mama. He needs some real food in his belly and a good going over."

"The girl whose dog this is lives just up the road. I think it would be okay to take him there tonight. It's late enough. I don't think anybody is out looking for him. Let's go see Asia, Bob." Bob's tail started thumping loudly on the seat. "You'll trip out over their place; I'll vouch for you. They know I wouldn't bring just anybody around to their home."

"I'm game," I said.

Zeph turned his truck around and I followed him up the road a short way and through a gate.

We parked in an underground garage and Zeph explained to me, "This is Grayson Canyon, Pueblo to the Stars; some fine people live here. We have to walk a trail back to their place, so stay with me and watch your step." Zeph held my arm and walked alongside me while holding Bob in his other arm wrapped in a blanket like a baby. He smiled over at me and said, "We should go dancing sometime."

"I'd like that. It's been a long time since I did that."

"A pretty girl like you must have a lot of boyfriends."

"You'd think, wouldn't you?"

"Okay, we have to go down these steps."

"Over the edge of the canyon? I guess you know where you're going."

Soon, Zeph was introducing me to a young man named Chandler. He invited us in and had us wait for him in this incredibly lush atrium tucked inside an even more incredible home. In a few moments, a young lady came running into the room and started fussing over her dog.

"Zeph, what on earth happened to my Bob? Oh, poor baby, did you miss your mama?"

Zeph told Asia the story about Bob and that he had wandered off

and had been AWOL for nearly a week before I found him.

“My goodness, Bob would have died if you hadn’t found him, Carol. Help me get him to the kitchen; let’s see if we can get some food in him. You guys probably could use some hot chocolate, coffee, or something, too.”

Chandler helped with some refreshments and answered all the questions I had about the house. He filled me in on the history of the place and the man who created it –Chandler and Asia’s late father Grayson.

We sat around the table shooting the breeze then Zeph asked Chandler, “What’s new down in the lab?”

“We’ve been working out the bugs in our quantum detector. We can’t wait to try it out. The GCP has been doing some weird things too lately. Since Asia’s Moqui marbles got separated, our egg has been generating frequent sequences of one’s, instead of two’s. It’s like they miss each other.”

None of this made sense to me, but it sure sounded intriguing. Zeph began explaining to me how they were working on several different projects that were cutting-edge.

“This spring I will have my truck converted over to running on hydrogen. Rick and Chandler have a device that splits hydrogen out of water and their trucks run on nothing but water now. Pretty cool, huh?”

“So what’s a quantum detector?” I asked.

“Think of it as a cross between an Ouija board and a dowsing rod,” Chandler said.

“We can tune it to locate anything. It takes some training to use it and requires a certain state of mind by the operator to get it to function right.”

“It can find anything? What about people?”

“That we haven’t worked on yet; but in theory, we should be able to.”

Asia said, “Why don’t you and Zeph spend the night with us? I know once Zeph and the guys get started tinkering in the lab it will be all night before they come up for air. Besides, I would like you to meet my mom. She could use some company.”

“That would be lovely,” I replied, “looks like little Bob is doing much better.” The pup was circling under the table.

“Old Bob Barker, you’re happy to be home again, aren’t you?” Asia scratched his back with her foot. “It should be safe for him to

stay here now, don't you think?"

Chandler gave her a little frown and said, "We'll talk about that later, Asia."

"Let's go find Mom and let her know Bob is back." She gave Chandler a defiant glance. "Maybe it will cheer her up having at least one of the Bobs around again."

Asia and I left the kitchen to go meet her mother. "Tell me why you couldn't have your pup here with you? He sure looks at home here."

"I'm supposed to keep my trap shut about that. Let's just say that little ol' Bob was a fugitive from justice this fall and he had to go into hiding."

My mind raced. When I first got to Needless, I had overheard a couple of people talking at the coffee shop about the Feds looking for a dog. They thought it had something to do with finding my man Bob. Up until now, I hadn't been able to put two-and-two together. I wanted to grill Asia for more information; but I wasn't ready to blow my cover.

Asia knocked at her mother's door. "Hey, Mom, are you descent? I have a friend with me and I thought we could visit for a little while."

We were invited in. "I was just doing some writing, Dear." A pretty lady, not much older than me, sat at a desk with reading glasses and candles set around her. "Hello," she rose and came over to greet me. "I'm Brooke. We haven't met before, have we?"

"I'm Carol. Zeph and I dropped in a little bit ago," We shook hands politely. "You have such a beautiful home. I've never seen anything like it."

"Thank you, Carol." Then she looked at Bob Barker and said. "Oh my, look you have Bob back!" She stooped to pet him. "Did your brother say it was okay for Bob to come home?"

"Carol found him along the road this evening. He had gotten away from Doug's and Zeph had been out looking for him. They brought him here. I've invited Zeph and Carol to spend the evening, I hope that's okay?"

"Of course, Dear, I'd love some company." Brooke then asked me if I needed to borrow some pajamas or anything. "We look to be the same size, Carol. Here, let me get some things for you."

"You don't have to do that, Brooke. I'll be fine."

"Nonsense, girl, let me fix you up." Brooke went to her closet and

started flipping through hangers. "Have a seat and get comfortable."

I sat down next to Brooke's writing table. On a velvet covered tiny pedestal sat a brown, rough-textured stone. It looked like something special; but I had never seen anything like it before. I was ready to ask her about it when I saw a picture frame sitting next to it with something written by hand in it. It was a poem. I read the first couple of lines then I stopped. A cold chill shot through me. "Do you mind if I read this?" I already had it in my hand.

"Not at all; it's a poem written to me by a very dear friend."

My heart was racing. Having spent all summer reading Bob's handwritten notebooks left me no doubt as to whose handwriting was there before me."

"It's a beautiful poem, isn't it, Carol?"

"Yes, yes it is." I hadn't even got around to reading it. I was still in shock seeing Bob's unmistakable penmanship.

Everything started racing through my head. It would make sense that if Bob were in the area, he would have found his way to such a remarkable group of people. Then the story about the pup being wanted by the Feds, - then if Bob had been here, what was he doing writing a lovely poem to another woman? I never had a poem written for me. Meat Puppet popped into my head. I looked at Brooke who was laying some things out on the bed. Bob would definitely have been attracted to her had they met.

"Carol, are you all right?" Asia saw that I had been staring at the framed poem with my jaw dropped open.

"I know who wrote this." I looked up and saw Asia and Brooke both looking at me funny. "Bob Windowmaker wrote this to you, didn't he?"

Brooke walked over to me, took the frame from me, and looked at it longingly saying nothing as if she could see Bob's face on the page.

"How would you know such a thing, Carol?" Her voice sounded far off. "Who are you? What are you doing here?" she asked accusingly. "Asia, go get Chandler!"

It was obvious Brooke was very upset. "Hold on. Let me explain. I'm not a threat to you. I'm a close friend of Bob's and I would know his handwriting anywhere."

Asia stood at the door with her hand on the knob. "Okay, let's hear your story, Carol, if that is who you really are." She took a seat on the edge of the bed alongside her mother.

“First, I’m not Carol Williams. My name is Jasmine Hardy.” Brooke let out a muffled cry. I knew then that I had hit a nerve. “I guess you know a lot of my story already.”

“We know about Jasmine Hardy, who doesn’t?” Asia was still reserving her judgment.

“I came to Needless about two months ago to try and track down Bob. I don’t know what else I’m supposed to do to tell you the truth. I found myself sitting on the sidelines of the whole 222 Revolution after my arrest in Oklahoma City last September. The only logical thing I could come up with was to slip out here and see if there was any way for me to help Bob. Bob has been a constant source of frustration for me. Every time I thought the two of us we’re going to be together something completely out of our control would pop up and I kept finding myself apart from him.” I removed the fake eye and tongue piercings, and let my hair down and shook it out. “I dyed my hair and took on a new identity. I never can be sure whether I’m on the list to get rearrested or not. I do know that Bob is a wanted man and I will do everything I can to protect him.” Asia and Brooke remained quiet; but I could tell Brooke was very upset and on the verge of tears. I went on, “So Bob was here, wasn’t he? You know where he is. You have been protecting him too. I can tell you are all good people and that you have put yourselves at risk too. Everyone who encounters him is now at risk of being arrested and beaten like I was. Whatever you managed to do for Bob, I appreciate with all my heart.”

“You do look like her, I suppose,” Asia said. “I’d better go get the guys. They need to hear this. Are you going to be okay, Mom?” Brooke bit her lip and nodded.

Brooke gazed at the poem she was still clutching. “You two are really close, aren’t you?”

“We’ve been through a lot together; that’s for sure.” I saw Brooke and I knew Bob and her had shared something special between them. “Bob means a lot to you too, doesn’t he?”

The tears streamed down Brooke’s face. “He was only here for two days then he had to move on because it wasn’t safe for us having him here. I barely had time to say goodbye to him.”

“He wrote that poem to you. You must have found a special place in his heart. If it’s any consolation to you, he never wrote a poem for me.”

Brooke came across the room, hugged me, buried her face in my

shoulder, and cried. "I've been a total wreck since he left. I can't stop worrying that I'll never see him again."

I comforted her. "I know just how you feel," then I started crying too.

Chandler, Asia and Zeph returned and found Brooke and me sobbing in each other's arms.

Asia said. "Carol, tell the guys what you told us."

I repeated my tale and added as much as I could to assure them who I was. Brooke sat with me, and held my hand, as the guys grilled me with their questions. Eventually, Chandler and Zeph finally accepted I was really Jasmine Hardy.

Chandler let out a big breath, placed his hands on top of his head, and paced a circle around the room before stopping in front of me. His eyes held mine for a moment. "You know the last thing I said to Bob before he had to leave was I guess it's supposed to be like this or it wouldn't be happening. Nothing should come as a surprise at this point. Welcome to Grayson Canyon, Pueblo to the Stars, Miss Jasmine Hardy."

"It's gittin' pretty interesting," Zeph grinned. "For some reason I feel like celebrating."

"I do too," Brooke said, and gave my hand a squeeze and a pat. "Let's take this party downstairs."

In the brief time I had so far in Brooke's presence, I could feel a genuine bond building between us. We shared something very much in common - our love and affection for Bob. From that point on, Brooke and I were like sisters, and in some ways, co-conspirators. We trusted each other completely. We both knew without saying it that we were in competition for Bob's attention; however, we would leave it up to him to make his own decision about us.

Zeph walked with me downstairs. "I knew there was something special about you. That's one reason I couldn't keep my eyes off you. Wow, I can't believe I'm friends with both Bob and Mike and now you. You guys are my heroes. Listen, what would you like to drink? I'm going to make a liquor run." Then he said loud enough for Chandler to hear, "They never keep any booze in this place. I think it's just because they don't want me hanging out."

Chandler laughed. "I'll tell you what, pick me up a pint of Crown and a twelve pack, and I'll show you why we don't keep booze around."

Brooke whispered to me, "At least Chandler lets me keep my

wine in the house.” To Zeph Brooke said, “Zeph, be a dear while you are in town and run by and pick up Jasmine’s things.” Then smiling at me, she continued, “Jasmine is going to be staying with us for a while, right Jasmine?”

“That’s sounds wonderful, Brooke.”

“Everyone okay with that?” Brooke asked. Even Bob Barker yipped excitedly. It was decided; I was a guest of honor.

Chandler, Asia, Brooke and I gathered in the great room. Asia told me how she had met Bob in Oklahoma City on the same day that I had been arrested and then she told me her story about the thunderstorm and the tale of the amazing Moqui marbles. I now knew what that stone was resting on Brooke’s desk. She told me the things that Bob talked about on their trip together. Some I knew from Bob’s notebooks and some things were new to me. She brought the whole story up to date telling me that Zeph had taken Bob to his secret cave; the one that Bob’s friend Mike had helped prepare. It was all coming full circle. All that remained for me to do to find Bob was to get Zeph to tell me where the cave was.

Asia broke out her stash of kine bud and we all enjoyed getting high. Brooke played her flute for us, and we talked back and forth about what we thought would happen come February 22nd. We reached a consensus that none of us had any clue what would come about. Their friends, Rick and Anna came in, and before I could get introduced, Rick told us the bad news. They had seen Zeph being pulled over by the state police. It was obvious that he had been drinking. Rick and Anna hung around long enough to see Zeph led away in handcuffs and his truck impounded.

“That’s his third DUI. That’s at least thirty days in the hole, mandatory,” Rick said. “Plus Zeph had several outstanding traffic and failure to appear warrants.” Anna added.

“Christ, that sucks,” Chandler said. “I guess we will see what we can do to help him in the morning.”

I had to tell my story over again to Rick and Anna. Rick said, “I bet Zeph was freaking out when Bob Barker came up missing. It’s not like he could put up pictures for a lost dog, or anything like that; the pooch is just as hot as Bob Windowmaker is. Maybe we should have sent them both to the cave; but then, we wouldn’t have the infamous Jasmine Hardy as our guest.”

The news about Zeph put a damper on our little party; and soon, we all turned in for the night. I was put up in a lovely little guest

room overlooking the floor of the canyon. In the morning, we all sat down together for breakfast. Rick had his laptop out catching up on the latest news.

“Okay, here we go, check this out.” Rick read us the breaking news. “All flights have been grounded until further notification. The government has said that twelve major airline hubs had come under attack this morning.” He went on to explain that explosives had been detected at several terminals across the country and a manifesto from Bob Windowmaker, and the 222 Revolution, had been sent to several major newspapers that morning along with a list of demands, including a call for the immediate resignation of the President. “Immediately, the government has stepped up its search for Bob Windowmaker, who is believed to be hiding in New Mexico masterminding the attack.” Rick finished.

We were stunned. “Well, we know it’s not Bob behind this; that’s for certain. How can they be so bold as to blame him? He wouldn’t have had anything to do with something like this” Chandler said.

I was having a hard time believing what I was hearing. I had read Bob’s war plans and I knew about Uncle Leo’s Operation Blowback. Uncle Leo was showing his hand. “This is only the beginning. There’s going to be more shit happening soon, and Bob will get the blame for all of it.”

Rick read more breaking news. “Authorities are also looking for a man named Michael Colton Wayne, from Indiana. That’s Zeph’s friend, isn’t it? He is also wanted in connection with what they are calling a terrorist attack by the 222 Insurrectionist.”

“Mike was the name of the guy Bob was meeting in Oklahoma City,” I threw in. “They are old friends. That’s all I know about him.”

“It goes on to say that they think Wayne is in route to New Mexico.”

Asia piped up. “Well, don’t be surprised if he shows up at our door. Everyone else has.”

As we followed the latest reports over the next few hours, the first wave of helicopters buzzed loudly over the house. We watched them scouring the hills until dusk. At least there was no mention of me in the day’s news.

By the end of the day, martial law had been declared in northern New Mexico and motorized travel was being prohibited. It only got worse after that. Five days later, the nation was hit with a huge

power outage. Again, Windowmaker and Wayne were to blame. Wayne was suspected to be in North Dakota; and reports said they were close to apprehending him. Windowmaker was still at large too. It only got crazier the next day when Yellowstone was rocked by a large quake and, as a result, a plume of ash was blanketing a large area around the awakening caldera forcing a huge mandatory evacuation of most of the northern Rocky Mountains. By then, all roads in, and out of Needless were blocked, and the military had moved in, in force. With each passing hour, new information poured in. Wayne had managed somehow to get as far as eastern Idaho. A new picture of Mike was broadcast of him sitting astride a horse wearing a big black cowboy hat and a huge silver belt buckle, and still, the search went on for Bob.

Poor Zeph was left to his own devices; there was nothing we could do for him at that moment. The obvious problem with that was - Zeph was the only one who knew the location of the cave where Bob was hiding. The rest of us had to stay put and indoors. Everything that was moving on land - either by car, or on foot, was being detained and harassed by the military. There was no way of getting any news out. We dared not even text or instant message over the internet. We had to sit tight and see what would happen next. My anger grew over Uncle Leo and his fucked up methods. It seemed what we feared the most was about to happen, - a violent backlash from the government and an equally violent response from the people. I knew this is what Uncle Leo had been wanting all along. Next up, I knew, would be Operation NewVision.

There were less than two weeks before the 22nd, and all hell was breaking loose up on the mountain. Troops went door-to-door looking for Bob. Grayson Canyon was unable to escape the scrutiny of the authorities either. The first time we were 'visited,' we were expecting them. Chandler and Rick welcomed them with opened arms. I was hiding, along with Bob Barker, in the root cellar that Grayson Connell had built into the cliff behind the house. I had walked past the entrance many times; but it was so well disguised that there was virtually no way to detect it. Grayson had used his movie prop technique to create a false boulder at the end of the hallway leading to the master bedroom. It had the feel, sound, and weight of real rock, but it could be opened easily if you knew how. Too bad it wasn't big enough for Bob to have stayed in; it wasn't

much bigger than a walk-in closet, but it was soundproofed and well hidden. Chandler told me it was the army that was going door-to-door the first time. He said he could see the embarrassment and weariness on the faces of the soldiers as they came up the driveway.

“They were just a bunch of kids, younger than me,” Chandler said. “They hated the job they were doing. Even the officer with them seemed very apologetic and polite. I gave them the tour of the house, with the exception of the observatory and, of course, the root cellar. Rick and I had everything disassembled in the lab, for the most part, except for the stuff we have been working with, the CGP and the quantum unit. They asked a few questions, but seemed satisfied with our explanation that we just liked to tinker with stuff. All of them were very interested in the house and were amazed at how comfortably we were living off-grid and self-sufficiently. Anna even served them tea and coffee. I told them next time to call ahead and we would be sure to have some beer on ice. They apologized for any inconvenience they caused and went on their way.”

Brooke and I spent most of our free time together talking about Bob and how much we looked forward to seeing him again. We both figured he must be close to losing his mind cooped up in a cave for months. One of the first evenings I was there, before we had the house searched the first time; Brooke took me up to the observatory.

“I’ve scanned the hills day and night with the telescope and binoculars trying to detect the location of Zeph’s cave. Zeph had said the he and Bob would be able to reach it from his place in around six hours of walking; so it has to be in line-of-sight of our place, doesn’t it? If I only knew exactly where it was I would be there already. Chandler says it’s not safe now to open the dome, but I wanted you to see it at least once, Jasmine. It is a special place for me.”

I looked through the telescope and surveyed the slopes and the mountain faces. “It would be really hard to tell where the cave is from here. If the army can’t find it; I doubt if we could.”

“I keep hoping that Bob will walk out and surprise me; but I know the cave is up near the peaks so he probably has a good view of what’s happening down in the valley and is using good sense staying put.” Brooke reassured herself.

“It’s a shame to think, come the 22nd, he will be all alone up there. Zeph said that their friend Mike knows where the cave is, maybe we will get lucky and have him show up on the scene, but they are hunting for him just as hard as they are hunting for Bob. You know,

maybe Mike has already hooked up with Bob in the cave, you suppose? That would at least give Bob some company on his big day.” I tried to encourage Brooke. “If you had a way to find the cave, hell, I would help you get there. Screw the government; we are free and independent sovereign individuals and we should be able to do anything we want.”

“You would really help me find him, Jasmine? You would do that?”

“Hell yeah, I would. I know Bob well enough to know that he isn’t going to spend one day beyond the 22nd in that cave. If he said he would be back on the 22nd, then I’m sure he will be.” I tried to sound more optimistic than I was.

All we could do now was to sit tight and wait to see what would happen next. Already, the Revolution was having a dramatic impact on world events. After Uncle Leo’s manifesto appeared, after the so-called attacks on the airports, many more manifestos surfaced. It was obvious there were many individuals who were trying to take the reins on behalf of the 222 Movement in various forms. In general, there were adamant calls for the stepping aside of the government while a transitional people’s leadership team stepped in. One suggestion that was interesting, and was receiving a massive amount of public approval, was the setting up of free zones for people to relocate in. Several models of collective government were suggested. The Sioux Indian Nation had already declared years ago that North and South Dakota, along with parts of Minnesota, and Nebraska, were now an independent indigenous nation. They, once again, were inviting anyone who wanted to relocate there to come and participate in the creation of an independent sovereign nation. Great parts of the southwest, including New Mexico, were also doing the same. Of course, Alabama and Georgia, along with other portions of the southern tier states, were also claiming independence from the federal government. Other states were close to following suit, as well.

The mainstream media continued cranking up the fear level. They contended that everything would come crashing down around us if we all participated by doing nothing on 222. It only seemed to reinforce the knowledge that the power had reverted to the people, and it was only those in power, who were fearful. Of course, rumors ran rampant. The 222 websites presented new evidence daily that

many of those tasked with bringing civil order were defecting. Only the small contingent of foreign mercenaries, contracted to do roundups of large numbers of people, were effective. It was also obvious that there was some major dissention in the military and law enforcement ranks.

The President went before the people and did his best demagogic-self to threaten everyone with bodily harm if they took part in any overt acts to disrupt the status quo. But the status quo had already been established. It was chaos. A National State of Emergency was declared. Everyone was ordered to continue his or her normal course of business. It was ridiculous, to say the least. No one was supporting the pleas of the administration. Nearly every corporation had already declared a three-day holiday for its workers starting on the 22nd. They knew that very few people would come to work those days, and the risk of having them at work, outweighed any benefits derived from trying to keep things as business as usual. Clearly, even those who had sat back with their heads hidden in the sand knew that the day of reckoning was close-at-hand. Whether they supported the Revolution or not, they would be participating themselves, by remaining home out of fear of what may happen on the 22nd. So in essence, the national strike would have full participation, like it or not.

Through all this ran the message from the 222 Movement consistently, and continuously, calling for active non-participation of all citizens on the 22nd. Everyone was being encouraged to just sit, find stillness, explore mindfulness, and do nothing. There was no call for an uprising or resisting any move that the government might take. It seemed that everyone was taking on their personal responsibility to assure their safety, and the safety of their loved ones, by stocking up for the 'holidays' as it was being defined. Clearly, no one was in charge anymore other than the people. It was going to be a huge shit-storm for sure.

Rick put up a large digital clock in the kitchen that counted down the days, hours, and minutes to February 22nd. Chandler had set up motion detectors and security cameras at the gate to gives us advanced warning if anyone approached. Twice, I had to duck back into my hidey-hole with Bob Barker when the house was 're-inspected,' as Chandler called it. Both times that we were visited, it was more as if some other company commander had heard about the beautiful Grayson Canyon, Pueblo to the Stars and had wanted to see

it for himself. The family always welcomed them benevolently and played the part of gracious hosts. On the last visit, Chandler had recorded their conversation so I could listen to the playback.

Asia retrieved me from the root cellar. "You can come out now, Jasmine. We're all in the kitchen." Asia let out her infectious giggle. "You aren't going to believe what just happened! Come on, Bob; I'll race you," and Asia ran off down the hall.

"You will find this really interesting, Jasmine." Chandler said as he played back the recording. "The guy you hear speaking is army Major Douglass. He showed up with a contingent of four other officers and a three-man escort detail. We gave them the full tour; then we sat in here and enjoyed some dinner.

Chandler pressed play. "I've never seen anything like this, Mr. Connell. Now I know how I want to live after I retire. Is there any way you would be able to advise me on how to get started on building a place like this?"

"We are set up to do that, Major; that's what we do. We want to help replicate this dream of ours. We think that everyone should be able to move towards this lifestyle, in one form, or another."

"I love how there is so much thought put into every detail. A man's home should be his castle," said the admiring Major.

"Or his country," I heard Brooke say.

"Yes, his country." The major chuckled. "I'm starting to buy into that idea myself."

"If you don't mind me asking, how is the search going for Bob Windowmaker?" Brooke asked.

"For that terrorist bastard?" the major said angrily. Then the major laughed heartily, "Old Bob, he sure as hell stirred up shit, hasn't he? It's all classified information, Ma'am. We are hot on his heels, aren't we boys?" He, and his men, all laughed louder. "To be honest, we don't have a clue where he is, and frankly, we don't much care. I'll let you in on a little secret. We know who is really behind the attacks, and it's not Windowmaker, or Wayne. They are just scapegoats, if you ask me. We have captured one of the leaders of the underground militia. His name is George MacFarlane. He has admitted to instigating the power blackouts and the whole airport thing. Pretty damn clever plan too, I must say."

"So why are you still looking for Bob, and putting everyone under such hardship in the meantime?" Brooke's voice wavered with the sound of hope.

“We have to follow orders, Mrs. Connell. That’s what we do. Until we are ordered to do something else, we will have to continue our search. We don’t have many leads to go on, I’m afraid. We still believe he is out around here somewhere. We also know that Mr. Wayne is doing his damn hardest to get out here, as we speak.”

“What’s the latest on him?” Chandler asked.

This brought out another round of laughter from the officers. “Tell them, Major,” one of the officers said.

“Wayne is quite the slippery fellow. He managed to avoid capture at MacFarlane’s place in Idaho, just over a week ago. The bastard floated out of there on a lawn chair with a bunch of helium balloons attached to it. Hell, for all we know, the poor fool came down in the mountains, or floated out to space,” again, more laughter.

Chandler switched off the recording and smiled. I saw everyone looking at me. “Now get a load of this; you aren’t going to believe it. Rick had the news up on his laptop while we were talking with Major Douglass.”

Chandler switched on the recorder and I heard Rick say, “Whoa, check this out! This is real time; it’s happening right now!”

I recognized the voice immediately. It was Uncle Leo’s Operation NewVision. I felt my gut turn and I held my breath preparing for the worse.

“This is a message to the American people from the organized militia underground. We go by many names and we are huge in our numbers. We are armed and prepared to defend every citizen’s rights and freedom to the death. We are responsible for the shutdown of the airports, the power outages, and other non-violent actions, taken by us...”

I listened to the entire broadcast and then Chandler paused the recording. “Well, don’t keep me in suspense. What did the Major have to say about that?”

Everyone sat around smiling at me. Brooke said, “You’ll love this. You’d have thought the Major had seen a ghost. He sat there stunned, we all were.”

Chandler switched it back on and I heard a long pause then the Major’s soft chuckle. “I’ll be damned,” followed by another long pause. “Well, Gentlemen, I guess we have our new orders.”

Brooke's voice was next. "I don't understand. What does all this mean?"

"It means that, for now, we have our own problems, Ma'am. Colonel Wapple has drawn out the line in the sand, it seems. Now it is up to us to see which side we stand on." There was another long pause and then the major said, "We must be on our way, folks. We have our work cut out for us. I greatly enjoyed this moment. I hope to be able to come back and visit with you all soon, if that's fine with you. I guess I'll be starting on my house soon, after all." I listened as everyone said their goodbyes expressing their thanks for the tour and dinner.

I sat in disbelief. "Which side do you suppose they were on?" I asked.

Rick responded. "I think it was pretty obvious. They all seemed relieved, for sure. My impression was that a huge burden had been lifted from them. It was funny; you could see a change come over all of them. It was like they had all been discharged. When they left, they left with an air of being civilians, not military men. That's what I sensed."

"Rick's right." Chandler said, "This means that there is a huge amount of support for the Revolution within the military. That's how I took it."

"Oh, it's such good news, Jasmine, don't you see? It's all going to happen peacefully. I just know it will. Oh I wish Bob was here." Brooke was thrilled.

I had a hard time letting all the news soak in. I sat shaking my head. "Colonel Wapple is my uncle. He's had a change of heart."

"Say what? That guy is your Uncle?" Rick asked, and I nodded.

"It just keeps getting weirder and weirder." Asia laughed delightfully.

"Well, it seems you have another story to tell, Jasmine." Chandler looked at his mom. "Mom, why don't you breakout some of the good wine? This ought to be good."

For the next hour, or so, we drank, and smoked, and I filled them in on Uncle Leo and the militia underground.

For the next day and a half, we were all walking on air. It seemed as if with every twist and turn, a new miracle emerged. Our hopes were sky-high that come this time next week, everything would turn out for the best. Then we got the horrible news. Michael Colton

Wayne had been killed in a huge rockslide over in the Cerrillos Hills. The news reported that Mike had been spotted, alone, and on foot, in a canyon, only miles from us. They believed that the side of the canyon collapsed on him due to the vibration of the helicopters that had been hovering over him. The report went on to say a recovery operation for his body was underway. We had our first real causality of the Revolution.

We knew that Mike and Bob were dear friends and this news would come as a severe blow to Bob. We all cried for a man none of us knew personally, but who, undoubtedly, stood for the same things we did.

After operation NewVision, we expected things up on the mountain to mellow a bit; but it was just the opposite. The helicopters were up in masse, day and night. Heavily armed patrols cruised the surrounding roads. The news of Michael Wayne's death rocked the 222 world, but it only seemed to increase the resolve of all of us to continue our support for the cause.

At least Mike died for what he believed in. Now his name would go down forever in history as a major figure in the Revolution. All we could do was pray that he would be the only one that would have to give the ultimate sacrifice.

In the kitchen, the clocked wound down to midnight of the 21st of February. I went to bed knowing that, come morning, a new world, in whatever form, awaited me.

Just before dawn, I heard a tapping at my door. "Yes, come in," I said sleepily. What now, I thought; and then I remembered what day it was.

Brooke slipped into my room. She was all decked out in camouflage with a small backpack. "What's with you? What's all this?" I asked.

"I know how to find the cave." She excitedly said. "You said you would go with me, Jasmine. You will, won't you? I brought you clothes like mine and everything we need. I want you to go with me, dear. Bob belongs to both of us, and he will need his friends when we have to break the news about Mike to him."

I looked Brooke over. I could see how determined she was, and I knew she would leave without me. "I can't let you go alone, Brooke. I did promise you I would go if you had a way to find the cave."

“I know I can find it. I’m sure of it. We can find it using this.” She pulled Chandler’s quantum detector from her backpack.

“Come on, Brooke. That’s no more than a toy, for Christ sakes.”

Brooke looked at me pleadingly, “I think you’re wrong. I’ve been keeping my eye on the progress that Chandler and Rick have been making with this. I know it doesn’t look like much, but that just means it’s really simple to operate. If I understand it correctly, all you need is to tune it in on exactly what you are looking for, and it will lead you right to it.”

“Yes, Rick gave me a demonstration the other day. I told him that I could have used it many times to look for my car keys, but I don’t know how you could use it to find Bob.”

“We don’t have to find Bob, all we have to do is find the mate to this.” Brooke took a small pouch from her pocket and pulled out the stone I had seen sitting on the little pedestal resting on her writing table when we first met.

“That’s one of the Moqui marbles Asia was telling me about. I’ve heard Chandler say how it has an effect on their noosphere detector. It really seems to have a life of its own, doesn’t it? You think you could use it to find Bob?”

“As long as Bob still has the other half of this pair, I think we can.” She giggled. “I’ve been playing with it all night. When I hold the Moqui marble in my hand and concentrate on it, the arrow keeps pointing due south, right where I think the cave is. I mean it’s worth a try, isn’t it? Come on, Jasmine, get dressed. We have a big day ahead of us.”

One half of me wanted to find a way to talk her out of it. I thought about telling Chandler. I knew he wouldn’t let her go on some crazy ass adventure like this, but the other half of me wanted to find Bob too. I thought about all the other strange things that I had gone through this last year, and I realized now was not the time to just sit on my ass. The irony of that thought struck me too. Here it was, February 22nd, and sitting on my butt was exactly what we all were supposed to be doing. “Hell, why not? I’m game. Let’s go get Bob.”

I got dressed and Brooke and I, snuck out of the house. We knew the others would be up watching for the latest developments so we had to be sneaky.

Brooke was in the lead. "I know where Chandler has set up the motion detectors and cameras. We should be able to avoid them if we climb up this way."

We worked our way in the twilight, finally crossing over the road above the gate.

"Stop here and let me get a reading." Brooke broke out the quantum detector. It sort of looked like a dustpan, but with a handle below shaped like a pistol grip. It was made of plastic and had a big arrow that pivoted on top. From the handle, a wire ran to a device that looked like a cell phone that the operator held in their other hand, along with a sample of whatever you were trying to detect, which, in this case, was the Moqui marble.

"We can get a compass reading and follow it until we get farther in."

"Damn, girl, I'm impressed. You do know what you're doing." I tried to put the distant sound of helicopters out of my mind. "Let's keep moving." I added, looking at the sky.

We stayed parallel to the road until we got up near Zeph's place, then Brooke took another reading with the detector.

"It looks like we need to work our way towards that peak on the left."

The sun was still below the horizon, but it lit the peak as if providing us with a beacon. We moved as quickly as we could, trying to stay hidden. We followed a shallow arroyo that, as we moved along, deepened into a high, rock-walled canyon. Several times, we heard the drone of aircraft above us. They may have been unmanned drones the type we had seen from the house over the last few days. I didn't see any way that we could make it all the way, but if Brooke was determined to try, so was I.

As the walls of the canyon became steeper, we made the decision to climb out and take another reading. We both crawled in under a cedar tree and Brooke used the device to get another heading. We were still on course.

I started to have my doubts though, and with full daylight approaching, I expressed my concern. "How do you know it's actually indicating to the other Moqui marble? Couldn't it just be pointing us to some large outcropping made of the same material? After all, Asia said the Moqui marbles are just made out of sandstone with a little iron ore mixed in."

“Oh, I’m sure it’s directing us to its mate. There is so much iron and sandstone all around us that if that’s all it was detecting we wouldn’t be getting such a consistent reading.” Brooke seemed very confident in her analysis.

“I trust that you know what you’re talking about, Brooke. Too bad it can’t tell us how far we have to go.”

We were able to cover quite a bit of ground and fortunately, the weather was cooperating; although, the higher we climbed the colder it became.

To Brooke I said, “So I wonder what is happening with the rest of the world today. I wish we had an idea what was going on with the Revolution. Everybody back at the pueblo must be glued to the screen, that’s if they haven’t freaked out about us being gone.”

“I left Asia and Chandler a letter telling them that we were going to find Bob. I know they will be upset, but really, what can go wrong? I know my way around these parts. I know we won’t get lost. If we become separated, and you have to find your way back, just keep heading downhill. You’ll run into a road eventually.”

For the most part, we had the necessary cover to stay hidden from above, but we reached an area, at the foot of the peak, that was fairly open and devoid of trees. We stopped and took another reading.

“Look at that!” Brooke said. “You can see when I tilt it that it’s getting a strong signal from up there. Let’s get across this open area. There’s another big ravine on the other side that runs up in the direction we need to go.”

“You must have been a girl scout when you were younger,”

“Campfire Girl, one hell of a cute Campfire Girl. Ready to make a run for it?”

“Right behind you.” We made a mad dash across the loose gravel of the exposed area. It was only about fifty yards across before it dived down into a deep cut. We made it to the far side and, as we were scouting out a way to get down the steep slope, we heard a roar over our heads. Two A-10 Warthog jets swooped low over us. They were so low to the ground that we didn’t hear them until they were right above us. In a panic, we both threw ourselves over the edge and slide to the bottom of the ravine.

“Are you okay? Do you think they saw us?” Brooke was on her feet.

“How could they have missed us?” I started picking the cactus needles out of my ass. “Let’s get up in those rocks. There’s some cover there.”

From our hiding place, we could only see a small portion of the sky, but we could hear the rumble of the jets all around us. Then I spotted them. They were turning in slow tight circles over the area we had just come tumbling down. “Yeah, they saw us.” As if to confirm my statement, one plane shot a smoke flare out unto the ridge above us. “We’re fucked, Brooke. They are calling in the choppers.”

Brooke shook her fist at the sky. “I’m not stopping now. Come and get me, you bastards,” and off she ran, up the ravine.

It was all I could do to catch up with her. We ran and stumbled our way another couple of hundred yards before we came to a mass of dead limbs and tree trunks that had accumulated in a big brush pile blocking our way. We burrowed our way under it and tried to catch our breath.

“At least the snakes aren’t out this time of year.” Brooke had to raise her voice to be heard over the thunder of the jets echoing up the canyon. “Let’s take another reading.”

Brooke was so set on getting to her goal that she seemed not to care that we now had helicopters circling over us. I knew our asses were grass. We weren’t going to get out of this pinch. There was only one thing I could think to do, call Uncle Leo on my emergency cell phone. Someone, at least, should know that we were being captured.

I hit speed dial. Bless the cell phone gods, Uncle Leo answered. I had to yell into the phone. “Uncle Leo, We’re in trouble. I’m with a friend. We are on the north slopes of the Ortiz Mountains. The bastards are hovering over me right now. They dropped a flare, so they know we are here. There isn’t much time left before they get us. We tried to get to Bob. He is up in the mountain, in a cave somewhere close, but we’re not going to make it. I know you can’t help us, but I wanted someone to know what’s happened.”

“Roger that, sit tight. We’ll be right there.” I thought I heard laughter.

“Who the heck are you calling at a time like this? We’ve got to get away from here!” Brooke made a move to go.

I grabbed her and told her, “I called Uncle Leo, he told me to call him in an emergency. I think this qualifies as an emergency. He told

us to sit tight. Our best bet is to wait here. We can't out run them, besides we don't want to lead them any closer to Bob, do we?"

Brooke knew I was right. So, we settled in and tried to figure out what was happening above us. The two A-10's made a low pass over us and each did a full barrel roll and roared away. Now we could hear only the thumping of helicopter blades. We could tell that they were landing back at the clearing down from us. After about five minutes, all became quiet.

"Come on let's go, we can still make a run for it, Jasmine." Brooke started crawling out from under the brush. I was in agreement with her; running seemed like the best option.

Brooke was already out of the hole and standing in the open when I heard her say, "We have company, Jasmine."

I got up to my feet and stood next to her. Standing above us, on the rim of the canyon, I could see five figures silhouetted by the sun at their backs.

Then my phone rang. As if in my sleep, I answered the call, "Hello?"

Chapter XVIII

COLONEL LEO WAPPLE (Part Seven)

I was glad to have Jasmine out of my hair. Now I could get back to business. She had no idea that we could track her through the cell phone I had given her. It was for her own good. Jasmine stood a better chance in finding Windowmaker than we did or, for that matter, the military, and I was certain that at some point she would need our help.

Jasmine spoke with passion when she berated me about our plans to implement the Boblovian War Plans. I had listened to her lay her guilt trip on me, and I knew she made a good point. Windowmaker and his 222 Revolution had succeeded in fermenting great dissent amongst the population. That was certainly something we were not able to do. Our methods were secret and clandestine; Windowmaker's were overt and in their face. We would have to wait before we could get in their face ourselves with Operation NewVision. The one thing that I gained from Jasmine was the understanding that we would have to be very flexible. We couldn't afford to only lock down on a single strategy; we needed to have multiple contingency plans, all of which could take us in a completely different direction.

With the dramatic crash of the stock market and the ensuing economic crises, which now had knocked the nation to its knees, we became confident that our Operation NewVision would find our audience primed to take up our call for an armed revolution. We closely watched the infighting within Washington. It became clear that it was becoming every man for himself. With the current bubble popping, and the gross devaluation of the dollar, the avenue for pumping more fiat currency into the system evaporated. The states' rights movement exploded. The Balkanization of the United States was underway. The old Confederate flag was the new banner for the South. Talk of succession from the U.S. was becoming more than just wishful thinking. Our part of our organization that had directly evolved from the Knights of the Golden Circle was feeling their oats once again. This made it extremely difficult for me to keep them in alignment with our overall goals. The same could be said for the

Dakotas, West Virginia, Montana, Idaho, New Hampshire, Vermont and, of course, Texas. Those states too, had in essence, turned their backs on Washington. These states and many others were taking it upon themselves to deal with the crisis ignoring any federal mandates. We knew we would have to step in at any moment in order to provide for the safety and security of our citizens.

The net result in all this was, as the nation became fractionalized, our organization was fracturing, too. If I waited too long to implement Operation Blowback and Operation NewVision, I could find myself without control. Nonetheless, I waited. One thing that Jasmine impressed on me, and I had witnessed with Windowmaker, was their reliance on the unexpected. Perhaps I had blinded myself by working so hard to try to stay on course with our plan set in concrete that I was preventing myself from seeing the situation with new eyes.

For the first time in a long time I forced myself to look in the mirror. Had I become so set on fighting a violent fight that I had ignored any other possibilities? How much was my own anger responsible for my actions? How pure were my own intentions? I had been on a power trip for a long time; that's how it is in the military. Had I brought all this along too far to change now? I realized that I had been so concerned with the reassessment of our resources and capabilities that I had neglected to make any personal reassessment. I forced myself to ask what it was that I really cared about. Who were the people I was trying to save? Were they even asking for my help? Who am I to play God?

I took a giant step back and looked at the big picture. I tried to put it all in perspective. I made the effort to look at everything objectively, in a new light. In my head I made a list of where everything stood. We had Operation NewVision in the can. We had pieced together enough snippets and sound bites of Bob that we were sure we could make it believable when it when on the air. Bob would be calling for a mass uprising of the people. He would tell everyone to take the fight to the streets. We had performed our beta test on the nation's broadcasting system and had confirmed our ability to command the airways at any time of our choosing. That decision was still mine.

Operation Blowback was a horse of a different color. General MacFarlane had his orders. There was no way to rescind them now. It was out of my hands. The shit would hit the fan; that's a given.

And Jasmine was correct; Windowmaker would get the blame. Once Operation Blowback went into action, Windowmaker's life wouldn't be worth a plug nickel. He would be lucky if they didn't shoot him on sight. For that matter, Operation Blowback would put everyone labeled a 222'er in the same peril. It was making no sense. Here I had been so focused on being the savior of the people that I had ignored the fact that I was putting innocent people in the direct line of fire. All the while, I was just sitting in my little bunker, pulling the strings. People aren't meat puppets meant for my own delights. Everyone is an individual. Everyone has the right to do what they think is right, as long as it doesn't infringe on another's personal sovereignty. I get it now. Damn it, it was time to find Bob.

That afternoon, I called a meeting with Richard and Tim.

"I don't know where to start. I've got a lot on my mind."

"We all do, Uncle," Tim replied.

"Let's hear it, Commander. We're here to listen."

For the next hour, I laid out my line of reasoning. I explained how, in essence, we had been fighting on two fronts. We had been going against both the government and the Boblovian Revolution. It was now obvious that the people had chosen which side they were on, and in support of the people, it was time for us to do the same. From this point on we would do everything we could to assist the Revolution.

"It's about fucking time, Leo" Richard had dropped all formalities.

"Yeah, we were wondering if you were ever going to see the light, Colonel." Tim added.

I saw both men's eagerness to go in a new direction. "So that means we need to find Windowmaker, right?"

Tim beat the table with his hands, "We need a new plan then, don't we? Let's get busy"

By day's end, we came up with a new course of action. No one knew where Windowmaker was, but the best place to look for him was where he was seen last. We agreed that Jasmine was our best bet on the ground. She did seem to be a Bob magnet. We would let her do her own thing while we did ours. We assigned ourselves new tasks. Richard and Tim would be flying with our New Mexico Air National Guard unit. We had successfully secured all sixteen choppers and the entire command organization over to our side. Richard, and Tim, would take part in the air patrols. The unit was

already assigned to do aerial searches in the immediate Needless area. They were very well suited for the task, being so familiar with the area after years of doing pot seizures. For now, I was to stay behind in order to coordinate our efforts and to revamp Operation NewVision.

For weeks we heard no new news. Richard coordinated the daily air searches, and Tim was delighted to be back behind the stick. No word came from Jasmine. She had settled in up above Needless, so we centered our search from there.

We knew we were in the calm-before-the-storm. When the storm hit, it hit full force. The same day that Operation Blowback began with the attack on the airports, Michael Colton Wayne gave us the slip. He had gone into work as he did every day, but did not leave, at least as far as we or the Feds could determine. I looked forward to meeting Wayne. My intuition told me that he was a kindred soul and just as determined to find Bob as we were. He certainly brought the heat on himself by fleeing when he did. I observed the latest reports saying that he was suspected of being in North Dakota in route to New Mexico, and that helped to confirm my suspicion that Bob was indeed here. In a matter of days, General MacFarlane was successful in implementing stage two of Operation Blowback, the turning off a large portion of the electrical grid. Leave it to Mac, and the job always gets done. The response by the government was exactly as we had predicted. They came after who they thought was responsible for the attacks, locked and loaded, aimed right at Windowmaker.

I was stunned when Yellowstone blew. Mac had always warned me that that would happen. With that one event, we lost a good third of our organization for the time being while they got themselves clear of the area. Wayne had gotten out of North Dakota somehow, and now his picture was on the news showing him all dressed up like a cowboy on horseback. It took us the better part of the week to learn that MacFarlane and two other people had been arrested at Mac's cabin in Idaho. Not even D Cubed could help them now. We had no way to get a word to Mac and he couldn't get a message back to us to let us know what we found out later; Wayne had been there and had barely escaped.

The manhunt for Windowmaker and Wayne was unprecedented. Our New Mexico Air National Guard unit, under Richard's command, now took on a new role. Rather than search for Bob, we were now concerned with keeping the government from finding him.

So we flew around-the-clock providing support from the air. The 82nd Airborne had the ground mission, and we had no one inside the 82nd who we could trust, so Richard and his men kept the 82nd busy running after a ghost keeping them harmlessly occupied.

A week before February 22nd, I went live on the air with the revamped Operation NewVision. I didn't think we had much to gain from that, but I knew I needed to do what I could to take some of the heat off Windowmaker and Wayne. Immediately after the broadcast I took my place alongside Richard and Tim with the New Mexico Air National Guard. What followed was one of the worst days of my life. We were on dawn patrol over the Cerrillos Hills when we got word from the ground that their remote sensors were indicating someone moving on foot in the hills. We were the first to respond. I was delighted to see that we had tracked down Wayne. He stood exposed on the ground obviously resigned to his fate. I couldn't wait to see the look on his face once he was onboard and found out he was amongst friends. Then, the unthinkable happened. The vibration from our aircraft created a rockslide that buried Mike right in front of our eyes. We all were devastated. I didn't think there was any way he could have survived. It was incredible that Wayne had made it this far; that spoke loudly to me of what type of man he was. With the hours counting down to the 22nd, we intensified our efforts in finding Bob.

We were in the air before sunrise on February 22nd. Whatever would go down would go down on this day. My hunch was that Bob, wherever he was hiding, might reappear. That is what I would have done. Jasmine was still at the house up near the Ortiz. She had been there for over two weeks and had not moved. I knew she would contact me if she had a clue on Bob's whereabouts, and she was probably in a safe place.

I was keeping abreast of the news, what there was of it. Everything had shut down for the 'holidays.' Around the globe everything was coming to a complete standstill. People were staying in their homes. All businesses were closed, no trains moved, no planes flew, nothing moved on the ground. Everyone either sat down in support of the 222 Revolution or was too full of fear to leave their homes. I wished we could have been a part of the doing of nothing, but we were in the eye-of-the-storm. We had to find Bob before they did.

Then we received new orders from the North American Command Center based at Fort Carson, Colorado. We had two high priority prisoners to transport from a secret base in the Manzano Mountains south of Albuquerque to Fort Carson. Our orders were to break off our operation immediately and to proceed to Area 22. Our thoughts were, at that time, that if we couldn't rescue Bob and we had already lost Mike, then we could at least rescue two poor souls who must have found themselves in some really deep shit.

We made a beeline south to the coordinates given us. Two other of our aircrews escorted us off both wings. From the air, Area 22 is nothing more than a large helicopter landing pad with a refueling station. Area 22 sat tucked high above Kirtland Air Force Base to the northwest. Tim sat us down dead center on the pad. The ground crew quickly came and began servicing the aircraft.

"All I see is that little door over there recessed into the hill, Colonel." Tim said into my ear over the sound of the engines winding down. That was all there was to see, a standard sized door, painted gray with a gravel footpath connecting it to the landing pad. "Where do you suppose it leads to?" Tim asked.

"I'm sure we don't want to know," I answered. I had heard plenty of stories of super-secret underground facilities near here. I also had enough information to know that they were more than stories. The government has huge underground installations all over the country, and New Mexico has more than its fair share. I knew, too, that many were interconnected and were used to research everything from bio-warfare weapons to alien technology.

I saw four armed guards escorting two shackled, cuffed, and hooded prisoners towards us. Richard, who was the captain, hung out the door.

"These are our prisoners? Are you sure they won't get away?" Richard kidded. "Maybe we should wrap them in duct tape too."

"Captain, NORTHCOM Command wants these two delivered pronto. You are not to talk to them or remove their hoods, understood?"

"Are you sure you just don't want us to boot them out at three thousand feet? It would save NORTHCOM the trouble."

"We are to accompany the prisoners, Captain."

"Not on my chopper you won't. This bird has been in the air every day for the last month. With the fuel load we just took on, we

can only handle the weight of these two. You can ride with our escort.”

The squad leader protested, but Richard impressed upon him that they wouldn't want to be held responsible for a ship going down, so after securing the prisoners to their seats, they climbed into one of our sister ships. In moments, Tim had us flying in formation at fifteen hundred feet.

“Well, let's see who we have flying with us today?” I lifted the hood off one of the men. He was not a happy camper. He glared ferociously at me and growled through his teeth like a rabid dog.

I had no clue who he was. “What's your name, son?”

“Fuck you! That's my name.”

“Okay, I'll get back to you in a minute. I pulled the hood off the other prisoner.

“Wayne! Goddamn! I saw you die!”

“Michael Colton Wayne, Fuck me. Let me get those hands free.” Richard undid the chains binding Mike to his seat. “You don't know who we are, do you, you lucky bastard.”

Mike sat rubbing his wrist shaking his head. “Do tell,” Mike cracked.

I removed my flight helmet so he could get a good look at me. “I'm Leo Wapple, Colonel Leo Wapple.”

“I recognize you from the TV. You are Jasmine Hardy's uncle, aren't you?”

“You saw Operation NewVision; then you know who I am and what we stand for.”

“I also know you held Bob Windowmaker hostage for all of last summer too. Now you have me, it seems.”

“We are all working together now, Mike. We have been scouring the hills looking for Bob too. You know where he is, don't you?”

“Hey, would somebody mind telling me what the hell is going on? And get these freakin' chains off me, will you?” Dog was pulling at his leash.

“Who is this guy, Mike? Is he a friend or foe?”

“He's a friend for sure. His name is Dog.”

“I'm sure you both have a great story to tell, but first we need to get to Bob. Where in the hell is he?”

“What day is today?” Mike asked.

Richard answered, “It's the big day, Mike. Its 222.”

Mike sighed heavily, "If I thought there was any other way to get to him on my own..." He tailed off, taking a moment to think. Then he lifted his eyes to look out the front of the cockpit. "He is hiding in a cave, I think, straight ahead in the Ortiz. We should be able to land pretty close by and then we can go on foot."

For someone who had escaped death from a rockslide, and just escaped from whatever purgatory had been destined for him at Fort Collins, Mike, nor Dog, seemed very buoyed or excited. Whatever they had gone through had left both of them looking tired and haggard.

"Tim, pull up alongside our escort," I ordered.

I caught the attention of our pilot flying the chopper with the armed escort. I gave the cutthroat sign and pointed my thumb down overboard. He knew the drill. Immediately, he was on the radio communicating problems with the aircraft and that he was heading back to Area 22.

"That takes care of our friends," I said. Then I received a call from Shadow Command on my secured line.

"Commander, we have indications that your niece has started out on foot heading due south from where she had been."

"Roger that." I turned to Richard, "Damn this is turning out to be a fun day! Let's go get Jasmine."

I got back on our secured line and gave orders for our A-10 tactical wing to clear the airspace ahead and to mark the coordinates coming from Shadow Command. I didn't want to waste time looking for her and a place to land.

As soon as we cleared the top ridge of the Ortiz Mountains from the south, we saw the smoke flares marking our landing zone. Then the call came in from Jasmine.

"Uncle Leo, We're in trouble. I'm with a friend. We are on the north slopes of the Ortiz Mountains. The bastards are hovering over me right now. They dropped a flare, so they know we are here. There isn't much time left before they get us. We tried to get to Bob. He is up in the mountain in a cave somewhere close, but we're not going to make it. I know you can't help us, but I wanted someone to know what's happened."

"Roger that, sit tight. We'll be right there." I said laughing.

"Did you hear that, Mike? We have to stop and pick up Jasmine first."

“Damn, I haven’t had this much fun since the pigs ate my little brother,” Tim threw in.

“Come on, Bobcat; let’s go get your big sister.” I patted him on the back.

Mike kneeled with us in the cockpit. Pointing out the window, he said with no emotion, “Right were the smoke is, that’s where we want to land. We will walk from there.”

I turned to look at him and saw the tears flooding down his face.

Chapter XIX

JASMINE HARDY
(Part Eight)

I watched the person waving at me. I still had the cell phone to my ear.

“Aren’t you going to give your uncle and little brother a hug?”

“Come on, Brooke! We’ve been rescued!”

Tim and Uncle Leo ran down to greet us. “How in the world did you find us, Leo? Tim I missed you. You look good in that uniform.” I hugged them both. “This is my friend Brooke - Brooke, meet my uncle Leo and my bother Tim.”

Leo replied, “It’s a long story. We’ll get to all that later. Any luck in finding Bob?”

“He is hiding in a cave up there,” Brooke said, pointing up the mountain. “We think we can find him. I’m sure we can.”

“I’m sure of it too. Come on, Jasmine. There’s someone up there you should meet.”

We climbed up after Uncle Leo and Tim to where three other men were standing.

Richard stepped forward, “Welcome back, Jasmine. It’s been awhile.”

I hugged Richard and thanked him for coming to our aide.

Leo put his arm around me and led me to the other men. I didn’t recognize either one, but Brooke recognized one of them immediately.

“Dog! Oh it’s wonderful to see you.”

“Hi, Mrs. Connell, fancy meeting you here.” They hugged and Brooke introduced Dog to me as a friend of Zeph’s.

“Don’t forget me,” the other man said and smiled. “I’m Michael Wayne, Jasmine. I’m a good friend of Bob’s. Don’t I get a hug too?”

“You’re alive! My god we thought you had died.”

Brooke was equally as excited. “You’re alive and you know right where the cave is!” She was jumping up and down like a little Campfire Girl.

Mike grinned. “You guys were heading in the right direction. It’s a two hour hike up from here.”

I was almost out of my mind with joy. We all had come together on 222, all of us except Bob, and he was just up the hill. "Let's get a move on then." Brooke and I were ready to go.

Uncle Leo gave orders to the crew in one of the helicopters and it took off. "They'll be around if we need them," Uncle Leo told Tim to get a field pack ready and then he asked, not ordered, Richard to stay with the chopper.

"Sorry Richard, but someone has to stay here with the ship."

"It's all good. You guys have fun and tell Bob I'll see him later."

Following Mike's directions, the six of us made our way up the trail. Mike walked quietly behind Tim and me, with Leo, Brooke, and Dog ahead. Brooke was showing Dog the Bob Detector, as she started calling it, and explaining how it worked. This interested Dog to no end.

"I have a clear picture in my mind how that is supposed to work." Dog said. "I can't wait until Zeph and I get a chance to play with it. Where is Zeph? How come he isn't here to show you the way?"

Brooke explained Zeph's situation. "We haven't been able to get out to help him; hopefully, after today, we will be able to."

I put my arm around my brother. "So tell me, Tim, when did Uncle Leo finally get his head out of his ass?" I said it loud enough for Leo to hear me.

Leo turned his head and grinned. "You gave me a lot to think about, Jasmine. Bob did too. I played back all the tapes we made of our conversations back in Ozone. It took me awhile, but I finally realized we were fighting against the Revolution as much as we were fighting the corrupt government. I knew we had to step aside and let the people decide for themselves how to move forward."

"Better late than never," I said.

Tim broke stride and said, "Yeah, Uncle Leo had what I guess you would call an epiphany. He saw that people had become accustomed to eating the shit the government was serving us off a silver platter. But once they started serving it up on paper plates, everyone started waking up to the fact that we all had to start standing up for ourselves, and our job is to do what it takes to help them."

"Let the people lead and the leaders will follow. That's the lesson I learned." Leo said.

I slowed down to let Mike catch up to me "This is turning into a pretty good day, isn't it, Mike?"

Mike remained silent walking slowly and deliberately. He seemed to be lost in his thoughts. Up ahead, Dog turned to ask.

"How much farther is it to the cave, Mike?"

Mike came up out of his fog enough to reply, "Not very far. We're almost there."

I studied the hard lines in Mike's face. There seemed to be little fire left in his eyes. "You're being quiet." I said. "I can't imagine all the hardships you went through to get here, but I'm so glad you are alive and with us today. Bob will be so happy to see you."

Mike paused and looked around as if he was seeing all of us for the first time. "I've been thinking of the book I have been writing. I've worked for many months trying to get the whole story of Boblovia on paper. I had a hell of a time trying to organize everything that Bob had in his notebooks - the ones he gave me in Oklahoma."

"I had those with me all summer," I said. "I can see how hard it would be to make much sense out of all of it; but by the time I read through all of them, I had a pretty good picture of what Bob is all about," I said, then added, "I'm glad someone is trying to get all this down. People are going to need to know how all this came about."

"I don't know. I've known Bob a very long time and I still don't really know what goes on in that head of his. Whenever I think I know him and his habits and patterns, he does something to completely surprise me. I guess that is why we have been friends for so long; he keeps me on my toes."

"That's quite an understatement, Mike." We both laughed.

"I guess all I have left to do is gather all you folks' stories and write the ending chapter." Mike looked up at the cliffs we were approaching. He stopped and took a deep breath. "The cave is up there. I'll take the point. Follow me."

After another three hundred yards, or so, Mike broke a long dead limb off a dead pinon tree. "We'll need this." He said. "Stay behind me while Dog and I look for tracks."

The rest of us followed closely behind. We soon stood in front of the opening of a large undercut in the cliff face. "It doesn't look like anyone's been through here recently," Dog said inspecting the ground. "Where to from here?"

"Through here," Mike said, and we all gathered under the ledge.

"This can't be it," Brooke said.

“Look above you.” Mike pointed to an opening in the ceiling. “That’s what this stick is for.” He reached up with the limb and fished out the rope ladder. “Who’s first?” he asked.

“You know the way; you should be first, Mike,” said Leo.

“Do you think he is watching for us? Can he hear us from here?” Brooke was dancing with excitement. I was feeling it too.

“Maybe, but let’s see if we can surprise him.” Mike said.

Brooke and I let Dog and Mike lead, and Tim and Uncle Leo brought up the rear. We climbed the steps to just below where Mike said the entrance to the cave was. “Anyone have the time?” Mike whispered.

Leo glanced at his watch and smiled broadly. “That’s pretty good, Mike. It’s exactly 2:22 pm.”

Our delight broke the silence, “Surprise!” we yelled, and we all poured up into the cave.

No one was there.

Mike and Dog made a quick search of the place. “By the looks of things I’d say we just missed him.” Dog said. “I hope he didn’t try to leave out the back. Zeph’s says it leads to a maze of passages, and it would be easy to get lost in there.”

“Look here, Bob left a note!” Brooke had found it weighted by a rock just inside the cave’s entrance. “It’s addressed to you, Mike.”

“You found it, Brooke. You get to read it,” Mike said.

Draw water
Carry wood
Supernatural powers

Dear Mike,

I’ll begin by saying thank you, Michael, nice job stocking the cave. The notebook was a nice touch. It has the same cover as the one I wrote all my Boblovia stuff in. I believe that one was a gift from you too. It was one of those that I asked you to keep when I saw you last in Oklahoma City.

My world took another wonderful turn after our last meeting, just like we thought it would. Getting here from O.K. City was full of amazing adventures too. But each day, as I sit and meditate, I find even more adventure in exploring my world within, which is the very world itself. I have lost track of the days, but the sun, the moon, and the

stars tell me it must be moving toward late February. 222, The Revolution from the Couch, must be just around the corner. Hopefully, after my 'disappearance,' that whole thing has started to peter out like we predicted it would. If I'm a good judge of the average American, then the Super Bowl should have bumped me off the front page and begun to put everyone back into hypnosis. They should call it the Stupor Bowl. We've been right about all of it so far, so I'm sure we are right about this too. All of that seems so long ago now, and to think it was just a joke. I think you and I are the only ones who know that. Like I have always said, "you create your own reality" and, as I remember, you said it was more like "you create your own bullshit." However it is expressed, it is literally true and entirely beyond expression. Wait until I tell you how I know that! I'm definitely planning to get all of what I have discovered down on paper the best I can, although I have no idea in this moment whether it would even be possible to describe my recent experiences.

I must draw water and Kerry Wood. How did the Cubs do last year? Sorry, always a joker. Damn if that isn't how all of this started - with my standup routine. Hail Boblovia. Talking about creating your own reality, boy did that get out of hand. I still crack myself up. Too bad no one else ever laughed. I know a few friends laughed, but it was hard to hear them over the groans and catcalls from the rest of the audience. Funny, it's like if only Hitler had been a successful painter; if people had laughed at my standup routine, our world may have been very different, to say the least. I guess people aren't able to see the humor in how they are enslaved by their own dreams.

As all of the craziness that started around our internet scheme gained momentum, I remember thinking this is how you create your own reality. Back then, I thought reality was a result of focusing on a well-defined goal supported by carefully planned activity. Sounds like a business model, doesn't it? How wonderfully crude we were back then - hardly innocent sinners. Nonetheless, we trusted that our intentions would secure our place in heaven, or put another way, we hoped our good karma outweighed our bad karma.

How many harebrained plans did we devise? Do you remember all of the Hollywood movie-like plots and rip offs we designed but never executed? Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't we even want to start a militia in the 1960's? Knowing what I know now, with the wisdom and understanding that has been given to me, it's a wonder we didn't blow up the world somewhere along the way. I often wonder if all of our adventures were necessary in order to find ourselves where we are at this moment. In this moment - me in the moment writing this, and you in yours when someday you have the chance to read this.

When you first told me about the cave and how it would end up being our end-of-the-world refuge, little did I believe I would be here in the situation I'm in now.

I'm writing this to you because I know if anyone were to read this, it would have to be after you had found it first. Regardless of all this, our paths to heaven seemed to have, as always, taken a path through a vagina.

I will stop here. The light is leaving the den and I must be on my way before sunset. There is someone I desperately want to see and I hope to see you too, my Brother, very soon.

Another letter lost in time,
Bob

"He's headed for my house. He might be there already!" Brooke was beside herself with joy. I had a brief wave of jealousy pass through me. I knew he had a thing for Brooke, and I tried to prepare myself for more disappointment, but just the thought that Bob was safe and we would soon meet up kept my spirits soaring. Nonetheless, tears started pouring down my face. I put my arms around Brooke and gave her a hug. We cried in each other's arms.

"We'll have to walk back to the chopper. I don't think Richard can get it in any closer," said Tim.

Uncle Leo walked over to where Mike stood holding a notebook in his hand. "Let's go find out what's happening in the rest of the world, Mike."

“This is the notebook I left here for Bob. This was resting on top of it.” Mike gingerly held the Moqui marble. “A voice told me to look up on the shelf up there. What is this thing. Can it talk?”

Brooke took the Moqui marble and held it in her hands to her breast. “It can now,” she said. “It’s saying read the book.”

Mike opened the notebook and quickly flipped through the pages. “He only wrote on the first page,” he said. Then Mike read to us aloud.

Time flies when you’re having fun. I’m teaching myself to play the guitar. I’ve learned to play the flute. I cheat at solitaire. I read the complete works of Kierkegaard. I read aloud Finnegan’s Wake. It still makes no sense to me. I watch the ants. I have their busy routine down pat. I eat when I’m hungry, and I sleep when I’m tired. Some days I sit from sunup, to sundown, watching the light crawl across the walls. At night, I stare at the stars and wonder why I’m here. My friends are the lizards; they now eat from my hand. We sit next to each other, eyes heavy lidded, soaking up the morning sun.

I got bored once, just for the fun of it, but it didn’t last. I’m letting one toe nail grow just to see how long it will get. I haven’t shaved since I’ve been here, nor cut my hair. I wear the brown bathrobe I brought from Grayson Canyon, but mostly I lay around naked. I write short stories or poems nearly every day, and in the evening, I use them to start the fire. I have explored the cave and nearly got lost. I’ve seen the mountain lion that lives close by and have heard its scream at night. I had a bear nose around down below and several deer have grazed up close. I peer through the binoculars and watch the helicopters circling afar. I’ve seen, more than once, the reflections of the telescope from the observatory. I have felt Brooke’s heart searching for mine. I think of Mike and how he said he would be here to join me on 222. I wonder if Jasmine is still thinking of me. What the hell is Leo up to these days? Did Natascha ever buy the Hummer she wanted?

I lost my mind the other day, but found it in the morning under my pillow. I can kick ass at darts now. Watch out! I’m dangerous with a rubber band. For three days, I did

everything with a blindfold on to see how it was to be blind. I can tie every kind of knot in the book. I can stand on my head for thirty minutes. I memorized the Latin names for every plant in the southwest. I make up Haiku's and deliver them to the wind. And deliver them to the wind, to the wind. I spend one hour a day trying to bend a silver fork with my mind. No success yet.

I used to have a life, now I have more. I talk to the ghost that lives here. He is a Clovis man. He showed me how to make a spear point. I can start a fire with two sticks. I memorized, word-for-word, *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac. I can do twenty-five chin ups in a row. I made a family of sock puppets and invited them for dinner. I served fried Spam animals that I cut out with cookie cutters. I play tic-tac-toe in my head using the cross hatched Chemtrails I see nearly every day. I still suck at chess. I can hold my breath for six and a half minutes. I can slow my heart rate to almost nothing.

On the days the clouds roll in, I wander outside howling like a coyote. They return my call. I hear voices in my head, but they don't seem to mind that I'm here.

I wanted to change the world once, but ended up changing myself instead; found that there was no difference.

I couldn't find the stillness that I was searching for, so I stopped searching. And lo, there it was. There all along. Imagine that.

...I had a life once, now I have more!

Chapter XX

222 The Apocalypse

*Insects on a bough
Floating downriver
Still Singing
-Issa*

After discovering that Bob had left the cave, we all hiked back down to where Richard was waiting in the chopper. Richard flew us back to Grayson Canyon, Pueblo to the Stars hoping to find Bob waiting for us there. That wasn't the case. Leo asked Tim and Richard to coordinate a search for Bob, and Dog went with them.

Just before dark, as we all sat around the kitchen table, Chandler's motion detector sounded an alarm. Rick sat watching the monitor on his laptop.

"It's him, it's Bob!"

And there he was, dressed in a brown robe, sandals, with a walking stick. It was just like the old days, Boblovia had returned.

So, Bob said I would write a book about him someday, and now I have. I finished it on the first of July, only three days before the celebration of our independence. The 4th of July will always be the 4th of July in this land, and what better day to celebrate our new independence brought about by the 222 Revolution? Summer is a much better season to party than in the dead of winter on February 22nd; so the 4th became the day for celebrating and, by general consensus, the 22nd would hereafter become a holiday for three days of quiet mindful contemplation.

Apocalypse means lifting of the veil. That is the best way I can describe what happened on February 22nd. The world, in unison, kicked back for three days and quietly contemplated what kind of new dream would manifest itself. The Boblovian Revolution had been successful in leaving the world in a huge fucked up mess; however, as fucked up as things were, it was better than the nightmare we all had been living in.

After Bob's return, Grayson Canyon became our refuge as we all got back to business. The first thing for me was to fetch Naomi. I realized that the only news she had of me after I left Chinle, Arizona was of my death. Leo arranged for Tim and Richard to fly me back to Mexican Hat, Utah, in search of Naomi. The new insignias on the helicopter, a Zia sun symbol with three numeral 2's clustered in the center, reminded me of when Bob had put the Boblovian Embassy markings on his Honda which now seemed so long ago.

I found out that Naomi had rejoined her Family. They had finally seen the light. I found her with the vestigial virgins and Elder John working a garden plot near the church. All of her Sisters were as lovely as Naomi, but Naomi had captured my heart, and when she saw me walking up, she broke down.

"My love, my love. I never gave up hope. I never stopped praying for you, Michael."

It was as if I had been resurrected from the grave and, in some ways, I had been. All of us were reborn. We had finally found our purpose for being in the world. After I had been taken out of Chinle, Naomi stayed with the Yazzi family and had seen the news of my premature demise. She went back to Utah with a heavy heart. She said, with the news of my death, the church elders had come to realize that I wasn't the Archangel Michael after all; nevertheless, they still considered my arrival an act of God and I can't disagree. I now have the love of my life in my arms. The Children of the Nation of Heaven had found a new purpose. They were some of the few in the area that had been prepared for the new world. They were now opening up to the community and sharing their stores and knowledge on how to live self-sufficiently. They still believe that God has more in store for them than just the Boblovian Revolution, and I'm sure He has; nonetheless, there was work to be done now.

Our job at this moment is to prepare for the big blow out at Grayson Canyon for the 4th. We have guest to prepare for. It would be the first time that all of our friends and loved ones would be together in one place.

We sent out invitations. Dallas D. Duncan arrived yesterday with his new bride-to-be, Natascha. D Cubed had managed to get all the political prisoners released. In Natascha's case, he had arranged a stay of execution that had been scheduled for the 1st of March, and he was at the prison on the 22nd to take Natascha, as he put it, into

his personal custody. Natascha still has Badger in tow. He is now D Cubed's new valet.

General MacFarlane had helped Caleb and Jessica Adams escape a day after they were captured in Idaho. Mac had to sit it out in solitary confinement until the morning after 222. Mac said he had been able to create a diversion that allowed Jessica and Caleb to escape on horseback. We learned that they, along with several hundred Freeman of Montana, had been able to walk into the prison where their father Leroy was detained, and Jessica was able to personally unlock his cell. All across the country prisoners were being released. Not all of them. Some deserved to remain in jail, many by their own admission, but with one in less than a hundred adults in this country behind bars, thousands were sorted out and set free in the days immediately after the 22nd. This included all non-violent drug offenders who were prisoners of war because of the War on Drugs.

Dog's first order of business was getting our friend Zeph out of jail. Since then, the two of them, along with Chandler and Rick, have been occupied with the quantum detector. Dog and Zeph are now committed to uncovering ancient and alien technology. Dog is still determined to get his hands on a flying saucer. None of us would be too surprised to see him landing one in our front yard someday soon.

Tim is now in charge of the New Mexico State Militia. He was the one to come up with the new insignia. I'm looking forward to him meeting Jade. She always had a thing for a man in uniform, and she will be arriving tomorrow with her kids.

Asia and Anna are on a short road trip to Oklahoma. We are looking forward to seeing Otto again. Asia took along Bobby Barker. He is now named Bobby in order to avoid confusing him with Bob.

Jasmine has found a new love interest, Richard. Richard confessed to always having been strongly attracted to her, but with Jasmine being his commanding officer's niece, he felt she was unapproachable. The two of them have taken upon themselves the task of utilizing Leo's militia's broadcast uplink to begin disseminating volumes of valuable information regarding what people needed to do in order to combine and share resources to survive. They work in close conjunction with the Founding Fathers who had become what Jasmine jokingly referred to as, the Floundering Fathers. Jebongo and Ivania, Taylor, and the rest found that they suddenly didn't have a revolution anymore, so they took a

good look around them and found new work among all those trying to adapt to the new world that had arrived. All 222 websites under Rogerdonia's umbrella become the clearinghouse for the new reorganization of society. Together, they all have decided that to serve is to lead.

It was the same for almost everybody. After the 222 Revolution, and after the dust had settled, people have come to realize that our work has only just begun. The people have taken back control in this country and in many other countries, as well. Washington D.C. still has a federal government. Their reach does not now extend beyond the District of Columbia. Many states have chosen to go it alone, but as time has progressed, coalitions between states have emerged. Bob says it all will sort itself out eventually. With what I've seen with all this, I see one basic element that has emerged. Each individual is his or her own sovereign entity coming together as individuals working for a common good organizing organically, it seems, around a common purpose of implementing a new dream. Back in Indiana and across the breadbasket of the former United States, community farms have begun replanting food that people can actually eat. What a novel idea. Out of the chaos I see how no matter what problems arise there are enough good-minded people to take up the responsibility of finding solutions that benefit everyone.

Already, after only a few months, there have been radical changes. The U. S. dollar is no longer in circulation. It's been replaced primarily with barter and equal trade of labor. Some new currencies have emerged that are backed with tangible goods and services, and it remains to be seen how that will work itself out. This has left the wealthy finding themselves without anyone to work for them unless, they too, choose to join in and get their hands dirty.

The world's religious leaders are starting to come onboard too. No one can deny that we, as a species, have evolved into beings of much greater awareness. This certainly has been confirmed with our measurements of the noosphere. There is now no denying that each and every individual has a direct line to the Creator. It is no longer necessary to have anyone tell us what we are supposed to blindly believe. Everyone can now accept that we all exist in the moment and, now that the veil has been lifted from our eyes, we all stand as equals bathed in the glorious light of a new heaven on earth. It has required a stepping back away from the old dream and a reaching back to an even older dream that now, combined with this new

understanding of our soul's purpose, is guiding us forward with confidence.

Like I say, the world at this moment is pretty fucked up, but there are thousands of pockets of success already. Grayson Canyon has become one of them. All of us coming together this weekend have dedicated ourselves to making a better world by leading by example. Right now, the chaos and grief caused by the collapse of the old system may be the order of the day, but as more and more free and sovereign individuals put their shoulders to the task, the success derived from their efforts grows. The three days of the Boblovian Revolution, the 222 Revolution, the just don't do something, sit there on the couch potato revolution, resulted in people taking time to look around and see what was really working around them and in the world. Find the models and work to replicate them. That became the new dream. Brooke said it was like the spots on a fawn. They continue to grow and spread until they all start to connect. Therefore, that is the job we have set out for ourselves to do - to be able to utilize what we know, and to share that with as many other like-minded, free individuals, as we can.

Leo Wapple and I have become dear friends. We even took a couple of days off and went fishing together, but we are now busy on a new plan. Leo is coordinating his old organization and all of the ex-military into a team that is now tasked with the process of nation building. It's different in that the focus is on encouraging individuals to organize around the work that needs to be done, not because they have to, but only because they want to. Leo and I are providing assistance, mainly with logistics, moving resources where they are needed and transporting valued experts into areas that need someone's special guidance.

The little town of Needless has become a Mecca for those seeking their place within the new emerging dream. It is almost as if everyone living in Needless had obtained an honorary PhD in living self-sufficiently. Needless is definitely becoming a standard for how work needs to be done, and in essence, it has become a hands-on learning center for the rest of the country.

And what about Bob? He and Brooke have become inseparable. They have assumed the roles of grand host and hostess for everyone visiting Grayson Canyon. Bob quietly and gently goes about his day helping with the chores around the house and working in the garden.

The other day, when the two of us were alone up in the observatory looking out over the new world that he had helped to create, I asked him about the letter he had sent to Jade, now well over two years ago.

“You wrote that to her long before you ever said anything to me about any of this, didn’t you, you fucker?”

Bob just grinned at me and started whistling the tune from a new hit song, “Don’t Be Afraid to Be Happy.”

Let me tell you about Bob. Bob has almost nothing to say these days. That rambling train of information that had been careening down the track, screaming ahead into the dark with no light at the front of his engine had finally come into the station. All that was left for us poor helpless sheep to do was merely get on board.