

## Chapter Seven

*Until you realize the true Way...you may think that things are correct and in order. However, if we look at things objectively, from the viewpoint of laws of the world, we see various doctrines departing from the true Way. Know well this spirit, and with forthrightness as the foundation and the true spirit as the Way, enact strategy broadly, correctly and openly.*

Miyamoto Musashi  
*Go Rin No Sho*  
 (A Book of Five Rings)  
 (1645)

*Damn! This woman can drive.* Since being picked up on the private tarmac, she'd been bobbing and weaving through the New York traffic like there's no tomorrow. The black Chrysler sedan buzzed through the great canyons of concrete and steel with a smooth accuracy and graceful maneuvering totally out of context with the look of the driver. A black woman, over 250 pounds, she kept a continuous chatter as she maneuvered the machine with the reflexes of a gymnast and the grace of a ballerina.

Danner, as was his bent, got into the front seat at the airport. A subtle message she understood and approved of by passing a message back. With a slight smile and a push of the CD button. *Great driver and good taste in music.* Jimi Hendrix, *Axis: Bold as Love.*

"Probably the most underrated rock album of the 60s," she started in. And from the tarmac to her quick but gentle stop in front of the Lower Manhattan office building Danner listened to a musical dissertation from Mozart to Motown no professor could have exceeded.

"Thirty-eighth floor, sugar," she said pointing to the door.

"Thanks. Without a doubt the most enjoyable ride into the city I've ever had."

Jumping out of the car, the shouts, whistles, honking, and flashes of blue and white strobes of police cruisers assaulted Danner's being. The noise enhanced by echoes in the

claustrophobic canyons of concrete and glass. The sidewalks were filled with people streaming in both directions with a blank intensity. Frightful to many, Danner's reaction was always the same as he scanned about in the middle of the most powerful city on Earth. Whether arriving by taxi, or reaching the street level at Madison Square Garden from the catacombs of Penn Station, always that same comfortable awe: *New York! Capital of the world.*

As Thebes had had its day. Just as Athens and Rome or, Constantinople, Baghdad, Madrid, and London theirs, this time belonged to New York. Born and raised a city boy, Danner had lived in cities all his life. New York isn't his favorite. Certainly not the most beautiful. But make no mistake; it is the greatest city of the era. Those who rule in DC come and go; the masters who rule New York remain.

His reflections were startled by shouting at a fever pitch. *The Occupy Wall Street Protest* across the street was in full swing, its noise and belligerence only adding to the human majesty and power of the city. With Hendrix's "*If 6 Was 9*" still playing in his head, Danner gave a smiling nod, saluting lower Manhattan, as he walked inside the old skyscraper.

The receptionist reacted immediately without the typical "You have to wait here, because I'm important and you're not" game, ushering Danner right into the CEO's office. *Not typical at all*, Danner thought, unaware he was walking into the strangest interview of his life.

*Nice digs*, Danner reflected discretely scanning. The old-Europe, dark wood, deep leather furnishing highlighted the rich patterns of thick Persian rugs. The two men in the chairs in the corner stood politely. *In their mid-sixties, well dressed, and polished. No hint of arrogance, ego or intellectual snobbishness. Definitely smart, open to negotiation and ready to do business*, Danner mused as he gestalted the two men, *Show time!*

"Welcome to the Green Man Group, Mr. Danner. I'm James Vauner, Chairman of GMG, and this is Preston Gimmel, a director of the board. I hope you had a pleasant journey."

"A pleasure gentlemen. Please call me Kirk and yes the trip was as pleasurable as it is mysterious." *First volley—What am I*

*doing here?!*

“Please sit down, Kirk. Something to drink, eat?”

“Coffee, black, if available.”

“Breakfast of champions, huh, Kirk?” Vauner chuckled.

Vauner poured a cup for Danner and joined them around the table as Gimmel reviewed a document in front of him. Never having learned the bureaucrat’s skill of reading upside down, it was unnecessary this time. Danner knew the format. It was a background investigation on him. Nothing out of the ordinary nowadays, but very unusual they allowed him to see they have it. *They’re serious about hiring me, and they won’t be trying to trap me. Showing it to me makes negotiations tougher.* Intel gathering, personal analysis, historical experience was filed as Danner’s focus switched to real-time on Gimmel’s beginning.

“I see you flew fighters in the Marine Corps, and went to TOPGUN,” Gimmel starts in. “Impressive. Did you win the TOPGUN trophy?”

Danner smiled. No matter what else is on his resume; law degree, MBA, Marine Officer, Capitol Hill, or business experience, his TOPGUN training is always the first thing anyone wants to talk about. It usually means first dispelling the misconceptions.

“That was a good movie, but when I went through TOPGUN they didn’t have any trophy for the aircrews going through the program.”

“Really? Why?”

*Yup, here we go,* thinks Danner. With long experience in dealing with people about the Marines, he knew most civilians had only two mindsets, whether they admit it or not. The first is that the military is populated with slow-witted automatons that couldn’t hack it in the real world. The other is that people in the military are incapable of innovation or independent action. Both mindsets are so far from the reality, he equated it to trying to explain to an Earthling what it’s like to live on Venus. *There is nothing in your limited life experience that would allow you to comprehend the most fundamental concepts needed to form a basis in communication.*

In truth, the traits most civilians think populate the military

services are the very ones that can't survive there. People with those traits, as those without integrity, are the ones who can't 'hack it.' *Let's start this interview easy*, Danner thinks.

"When I went through TOPGUN, the instructors knew who they were dealing with," Danner replied calmly. "As a group, fighter aircrews are the most aggressive, competitive people in the world. You don't push competition with people like that in a training environment. It's a difficult concept for most people to understand, but the competition is honed for life and death situations, not winning trophies or making your numbers for one's annual bonus. The instructors there when I went through did everything possible to tone down competition between the aircrews."

"They sound like a dangerous group of people," Gimmel says, watching for a reaction from Danner. *Okay they got the easy part*, he thinks, *let's see how they do with the important part*.

"They are Preston. Very dangerous people. Which is the reason they don't get there until passing through an extremely rigorous screening process," replied Danner calmly smiling. "And only after consistently displaying the most important trait. The trait that keeps you an asset to your country, your fellow Marines and yourself, which is..."

"Aggression?" Gimmel interjects. *Not even close*, Danner flashed as he smiled at the two men.

"There are lots of aggressive people around, Preston. But the necessary trait, the most important of all, is discipline. Without that you're nothing but a berserk Viking with the ability to burn whole cities in a single pass. That level of aggression in control of such destructive power requires the highest discipline. Without it you're useless to everyone, including yourself. That's what most people don't understand about the military. Without discipline, any military unit is just an extremely lethal mob."

Gimmel and Vauner look at each other with a discrete nod. *Interesting*. Danner noted, *They got it on the first try. Who are these guys?*

"So aggression and discipline is the key. Those traits stay with you?"

“Unfortunately, yes,” Danner replies.

“Unfortunate Kirk? Why unfortunate,” Vauner asks.

*Okay, see how they do with the next concept in the politically correct snowflake environment of our society. “They’re traits intimately connected to integrity, and all three aren’t very useful in the modern world.”*

“Times change, Kirk. Your bio shows a man without advantage or connections continually going forward. Don’t you think those traits helped you through law school? I see you went to a top law school in DC, while earning an MBA at the same time. Sounds like a lot of discipline while working full time on Capitol Hill.”

“Yeah, well that and \$4.50 will get you a cup of coffee in the café downstairs,” Danner replies easily. He had never been comfortable bragging and self deflating humor is a good way to avoid it. Many in modern society think it’s a weakness or an insecurity, but in Danner’s view, just unnecessary. A lion doesn’t try to prove he’s a lion and if someone can’t grasp that concept, tell them to walk over and kick him. Just be sure you’re holding the car keys.

“Kirk, you’re being far too modest. I noticed you left the political and corporate world to start your own business. Why?”

*The tone is interesting,* thinks Danner. They have the report, they know I know they have it, but they keep trying to bait me. I’m here for business. *Need to get to the matter at hand.*

“A matter of perspective.”

“In what way?” Vauner inquires.

*Not yet, they want to stay on this vector They have the file, and I respect these men. See how they take a sad reality of the modern world.*

“One can spend their time preparing for a position,” Danner begins. “Or one can spend their life manipulating everyone around them to get that position. Once there was a time when being prepared was more important than whose ass you kissed or whose back you stabbed.” *Time to give them the face they keep trying to see,* he thought. “I spent a lot of time preparing, so I wasn’t very good at ass kissing or backstabbing.”

“I can see the aggression coming out, Kirk,” replied Gimmel

cautiously.

Danner knew this was the moment of truth. He could do the politically correct thing and cower in apology; or he could lie, pretending it was a mistaken use of words. Or, he could take his usual course; let them understand he knows both the overt and underlying analysis they've been conducting, fully aware of the danger of that course. Holders of power in politicized modern America are often threatened by any hint of equality. They want you at their feet, or out the door.

Looking into Gimmel's eyes, feeling the intense gestalt of Vauner's gaze, Danner decision came naturally. *If you can't handle the truth, then we might as well end this now.* "Not at all Preston," he replied. "What you're seeing is the discipline of that aggression. As I said, a matter of perspective. What you construe as some Adlerian acting-out response, I consider a truthful reply in the manner and tone you've attempted to solicit from me since my arrival." *They're still listening*, Danner thinks, continuing.

"Out of the blue, a successful and secretive Wall Street investment firm has flown me up here to sit down with the principals who obviously know who I am and, therefore, I am bound by integrity to answer in the manner you wish it to be delivered." The moment is broken by Vauner's respectful tone.

"You're right, Kirk, that is an alternative perspective. You must be a student of quantum physics."

Danner's surprise at the statement is exceeded only by his admiration in the perfection of its structure. *Who are these guys?*

"An interesting philosophical discussion that I'd enjoy having over a bottle of vodka," replied Danner. The air warmed with the polite laughter of fellow professionals. "In all honesty, gentlemen," he continued, "I'm interested in why I'm here."

"We currently require someone of your capabilities and experience."

"You have a unique background," Gimmel added. "Capabilities which we will soon require over the next few months."

"Appreciate the confidence, but you must have a slew of Ivy League MBAs who work a spreadsheet as well as I."

"We've access to ample technicians and budding

politicians,” Vauner returns. “But we anticipate operations requiring someone who understands mission accomplishment.” The volley continued.

“We need someone who won’t fold,” Gimmel says. “Or worry about insulting the proverbial next job opportunity.”

“We require,” Vauner adds, “someone who will do what’s necessary, not just stay in the bounds of the politically correct.”

*That word. That concept. Who today understands? Clarify immediately,* Danner thinks. “An interesting requirement in the Twenty-first century. In my experience, it’s often requested but not supported. Doing what’s necessary inevitably gets tough. And that’s when the requestor starts looking for an out. Which, again, inevitably leaves the one doing the ‘necessary’ out on the limb as the requestor expresses their most sincere ‘deepest sympathy’ for sawing it off.”

“Perhaps you’re working and trusting the wrong side, Kirk. We’re confident you’re the man for the job,” Vauner replies.

*We’ll see,* Danner thinks. “Well, I appreciate your confidence, James, but you still haven’t told me what the work entails.”

“Interesting,” Gimmel interjects. “Most would want to know what the pay is.”

*Okay, you’ve nullified your negotiating advantages. My turn.* “Well, I’m a sucker for a good cup of coffee.” Their smiles attest to the appreciation as he continued. “Actually, once I know what the work is, how long it will take and the investment size and then determine I have the capabilities, the money part is easy.”

“A rather refreshing inconsistency with the way interviews usually go nowadays. And it’s confirmed that you have the qualities we need,” Vauner says.

“Which are?”

“Aggression and discipline of course.” All smile, all understand. Gimmel’s comeback is again, perfect. *They’re hiring me but still haven’t told me what for. Who are these guys?*

Vauner pulls a cashier’s check out of his pocket, telling Danner as he hands it to him, “Three hundred fifty thousand dollars for the next three months. Green Man pays all travel and

accommodations. We'd like you to start immediately."

"So be it, gentlemen. I need a desktop and the current financials on your initiative and your investment criteria. Let me review it. I'll provide a preliminary report by 17:00 tonight."

Gimmel is surprised. "You really don't waste any time do you."

"Forgot I was talking to a Marine," said Vauner, smiling. "I meant you'll be our guest at the Financial Services Black-Tie Charity Event tonight. We've a seat at our table for you."

"I'd just as soon get to work. Besides, I didn't pack my tux."

"A tux is waiting at the hotel for you. Tonight will be more work than you think. Consider it a reconnoiter. You can wire the check into your account downstairs. Return to your hotel and a car will pick you up at eight."

Vauner's crisp wrap-up is a message immediately understood. This has been a done deal since yesterday afternoon. Danner nods in thanks for the confidence, and the truth.

"Welcome to GMG, Kirk," Vauner says with his hand out. Danner's firm grasp and grip of Gimmel's hand next is, all know, the only contract they need. Of course the lawyers will send over some twenty-page, legal double-talk for all to sign in multiple copies but the deal is done. One push of a button, the receptionist appears to escort Danner downstairs.

Alone now, Vauner and Gimmel stand frozen in place, contemplating, calculating strategies and weighing options from long experience. Options without modern conceptions of mercy. Far from the valuations of contemporary society's ever changing excuses of right and wrong. Gimmel's confirmation breaks Vauner's analysis.

"May God have mercy on us," Gimmel ominously whispers. "SHE was right. He's of the bloodline of the Vher! Didn't know they still existed, or any were alive now."

"Yes. Definitely," Vauner replied. "When Bavaria alerted us, I was pessimistic they'd ever find a Guardian bloodline and that any of his generation survived. Can't imagine how hard it must have been for him over the last forty years," mused Vauner, the smooth black features of his Caribbean heritage now

wrinkled in contemplation. He suddenly whispered, “Did you see his energy spectrum when he walked in?”

“Frightening,” snapped Gimmel. “Of course I missed the whole first half of the Twentieth century, but I haven’t seen an aura like that since the 1500s. Rather chilling. Like coming face to face with a leopard in the tall grass.”

“From what we can gather, *The Order* killed off most of the Guardians on all sides during World War II. Their rebirth cycles were set for operations in the 1970s when they planned to launch WW III,” Vauner said, halting in the remembrance of 1973. *Nineteen seventy-three*, he thought, *when the world hung so dangerously over the abyss*. The recollection stunned him even now. Catching himself in his refocus, he continued. “Fortunately, we stopped them then. So they just wiped all of Danner’s generation out.”

“To think Danner’s gone through this lifecycle unaware of who he was. Abandoned in a society he unconsciously frightens to the depth of their souls,” Gimmel said. “What hatred and scorn he must have endured. Incredible he has accomplished anything. Like a wolf attempting to live like a lamb in a sheep herd.”

“Definitely one of the last of his kind. But our real issues are twofold. What has society’s abuse and fear of him done to his psyche and more important, what happens if he becomes aware and we can’t control him? Far too dangerous for us to leave for The Order to pick up again.”

“Bavaria’s building the file on his recent past. But it’s The Order who nullified him. He wouldn’t go back to them. Would he?”

“If he does...” Vauner began, pausing at the thought, *IF HE DOES!* He blocks the terrible consequences of that analysis, but immediately plots a countermove. “I believe we need a contingency plan in place.”

“Termination?”

Vauner’s nod is Gimmel’s cue. He’s been thinking along the same line since feeling the impact of the energy spectrum now called Kirk Danner.

“We’ve assets in Europe, certainly no one here.”

“I agree. Let’s write up our analysis and get it over to Dr. Bethman immediately. There’s only one group smart enough and tough enough to deal with this guy and Bethman has the contacts in Jerusalem if that’s going to be necessary.”

“Do you really think that’s going to be necessary?” Gimmel asked searchingly.

“Do you really think we can afford not to be ready if it does become necessary?” Vauner retorted. “A Vher reborn in America? To follow your thought, a wolf in a sheep herd suddenly realizing he’s a wolf not a goat. The Order’s social programming has been trying to make Americans believe they’re cattle for the last fifty years. If the average American woke up it could be bad enough. But him?!”

The look in Gimmel’s eyes was the only answer Vauner needed. He knew Gimmel understood. Gimmel’s memory ran long in Western civilization. Gimmel remembered the last time serfs realized they had a free will and the right to exercise it. Art and enlightenment hadn’t been the only cultural explosion in the *Renaissance*.

“We’re in dangerous waters,” Vauner mused. “We haven’t utilized the Guardians since the mid-1700s. Let’s proceed carefully and keep the Council fully informed.”



Had anyone in the Green Man Group been listening to their bosses discuss their latest hire, they would have immediately headed for the door. *Who are these guys? Who’s SHE? What’s a Vher?* They would have started polishing their resume and contacting any client they thought they could steal away from GMG. *This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century and I am fiber-optically connected to all knowledge of importance this very minute. Important last minute? Can’t remember, ancient history in a society run in nanoseconds,* they would repeat over and over to themselves.

Of course those same people could not grasp the concept that only machines can function properly in nanoseconds. In fact, their egos were so sure of themselves, so sure they had a firm grasp of reality and their world, that listening to Vauner and

Gimmel they would have thought they were reading a fantasy novel. *Hey get serious, dude!* their egos would tell them. They watched the news last night, they read the papers, they knew everything important. Their egos never let them remember the ancient's perception of the world: "*Between heaven and hell, there are worlds...Unimaginable.*"

Such perceptions can cause too many questions the modern ego is just not equipped to answer.