

## PROLOGUE

*At night you feel strange things stirring in the darkness. A sense of uncanny danger. The hope in peace-and-production is broken. The old flow ruptured. A still older flow has set in...to a savage polarity...away from the polarity of civilized Christian Europe.*

*This, it seems to me, has already happened. And it is a happening of far more profound import than any actual event. It is the father of the next phase of events.*

D. H. Lawrence

*Letter from Germany*

(Reprinted in the *New Statesman*, London, 1924)

“What do you think, Sergeant Major?”

“Looks like a real goat-fuck, Chief. The bridge ain’t mined but anyone on it is in a crossfire from the buildings on either side. I say we bring up our armor and level them.”

“Agree, but we’re ordered to avoid destruction of property. We can’t fire unless fired upon.”

This was the Sergeant Major’s second war in twelve years on this very road. He grunted, spitting snuff perpetually carried between his cheek and gums. “Well why don’t we send the politicians who thought that one up across the bridge? Then we’ll see some firing,” he said, spitting again as the lieutenant snorted, scanning with binoculars.

“That’s an outstanding tactical plan, Sergeant Major. Unfortunately those weenies won’t leave basecamp sixty miles behind us. Let’s get two fireteams with SAWs and M203s on either side of that bitch. Tell them to sight-in and remain in defilade, weapons-tight. The Recon team is supposed to be crossing over from that side in about ten minutes. I’m unsure what they’re wearing so no firing until pos-ID.”

“Roger that, Chief.” The Sergeant Major raised his hand, flicking fingers forward. Two fireteams rose up, moving into the positions he had briefed them to occupy, straddling the bridge. The Sergeant Major was a combat veteran. It was his duty to tell the lieutenant this was a goat-fuck but knew it was now *his*

goat-fuck and he wasn't going to lose any of his men because of it so had planned accordingly on arrival. Twenty minutes later and the *Special Operations* team was still a no-show. He turned to his lieutenant, "Where the hell are they, Chief?"

"I don't know," Lieutenant Paul Henry replied. "But I don't like it. It's too damn quiet over there. The ops team was inserted two days ago to secure the bridge and the Pentagon policy boys have assured the combat commands the Iraqis will surrender on our arrival. That's why we're restricted to engage or destroy property. The *SecDef* has awarded contracts to companies for the Iraqi reconstruction and the contractors want the infrastructure undamaged to avoid costs."

"Why don't we send a couple of our hand-held drones over for a look-see?"

"Wish I could, Sergeant Major but I was ordered to leave them home because they worked too well. The *SecDef*'s intel boys are trying to get Congress to fund more expensive systems only the Air Force can operate. It seems they don't like the Army having a drone capability." The Sergeant Major spit in response as Henry grunted. "Hold here and I'll see what I can find out," he said, easing off the knoll to his command Humvee. "Dirty-Three to Dirty-Actual."

"Go, Dirty-Three. This is Actual. Have you secured the bridge?"

"Negative, Actual. No-joy on insertion team. No activity across bridge."

"You're holding the parade up, Three. Get across the bridge and secure it."

"Request armor for a lead across. I've only scout vehicles up here."

"Negative, Three. Should be no opposition if insertion team hasn't arrived." The logic of that remark escaped him, but those were his orders.

With his six Humvees deployed to engage their .50 calibers, Henry sent a squad over the bridge. Halfway across, windows flashed with machinegun fire. Three soldiers were down as the others dove for the deck hugging the stone wall. "Fire-Fire!" Henry heard himself scream over the Humvees' .50 caliber machineguns now chopping chunks from the buildings across the river.

He ran for his Humvee signaling two others to follow, dashing for the bridge with guns blazing. *SSSuuuwhoossee*. By some miracle, the RPG ripped through the thin metal of the Humvee and right out the other side without exploding, but at a cost. Its passage ripped the gunner's legs off below the knee, falling into Henry's lap in bloody screams. *KKKaaawamm*. The rear Humvee engulfed his in a fireball, driving through it to cover his pinned down troops. Henry stood up manning his top hatch gun, firing as two more Humvees raced across. The 40mm grenade launchers pummeled the buildings in smashing *Kummpps* as body parts flew from windows in dusty red spray. Iraqi 160mm mortars started dropping around the bridge in deafening concussions. "Go-Gooo!" he screamed but his Humvee didn't move. Ducking down, he saw the headless driver still grasping the wheel. He grabbed the still screaming legless man, pulling him out as another Humvee swooped in.

The Sergeant Major, first out, was hit in the thigh but continued firing his M-16, covering the others as they threw the wounded into the two Humvees. Henry raced forward to rally those already across as bullets zipped from every direction. A grenade blew the door of a house and the troops dove for cover. From narrow alleyways pick-up trucks descended, spilling men, women and children armed with AK-47s shooting in every direction. A young boy, untrained, was torn apart from the grenade he had held too long. The impact concussion from an RPG smashed into the mud wall house, blinding all, now deaf from the explosion.

Rumbling mumbles, panicked shock. *What happened! What...integrity to responsibility takes control, You're alive! Lead or die!* Black smoke suffocating, *fire!* Primal fear of burning now adding to the terror of blinding void, "Out of the building" Henry screams, "Out! Now!" Stumbling over a soldier, unsure if alive or dead, he drags her out as sight and hearing returns in the chaos of the roaring gun battle outside.

Another pickup dives around the corner, loaded with *burka* clad women carrying AKs. Henry empties his pistol into them as his soldiers stumble out, firing in every direction. A pickup truck is torn apart, its thin metal no match for the .50 calibers, ripping it to shreds as bodies disintegrate in fleshy chunks. A sudden impact shocks him before realizing he is on the ground, his shoulder numb.

The round went into his upper vest where the *Kevlar* body armor is supposed to be, but the Army hadn't bought enough so he had given his inserts to one of his troop. Crawling to a body, he grabbed the AK-47, firing as its recoil activates shoulder nerves, shocking his being in blinding pain. Still firing, he screams....

"Paul...Paul, wake up." Paul Henry flashed awake, sweat stinging eyes in confusion of the unfamiliar room, the bed sheets clammy in his sweat and adrenaline washing from his body. His mind easing in the warm comfort of Leila Freyan's ice-blue eyes, bringing him back to this world. *The nightmare*, he thought, *only the nightmare*. Freyan, grabbed a handful of tissues, mopping his brow. "Iraq again," she asked soothingly.

"Yeah," he replied, swinging his legs to the floor. "Always."

"Do you want to talk about it?" He shook his head as he went to the bathroom. Turning on the light, the pristine cleanliness of the *Four Seasons Hotel* with its neatly folded towels and little bottles of toiletries seemed alien, as if he had arrived from another world. "If I'm going to be awake at 3:00 am at least let me know how I can help," Freyan softly called.

With a splash of cold water, he returned to the bed, pulling her to him cradled in his arm. "It's not a pretty tale, Le." They had been sharing her bed for the last few days and this was the first time he had responded to her probe. She knew she'd have to step carefully if he was going to open up. She gently cupped his face, forcing him to look at her.

"It never is," Freyan replied. "Just know I'm here for you." He pulled her closer.

"I lost half my platoon on a mission I shouldn't have been on, in a country we should never have entered, in a war that should never have been."

"It wasn't your fault. The..." Freyan saw the cold snap of his head, eyes merciless.

"You think that matters! They were my responsibility. I failed them..." he said, voice breaking, turning away. Freyan remained still, absorbing his outburst, waiting. "The *SecDef* boys were passing the same bogus intel to us on the ground they passed to the American people about *WMD*," he began. "They told the ground forces the Iraqis would surrender when we arrived. They were passing that bullshit so that they could award contracts to the private sector for the *nation building* program and make billions carving up Iraq after the invasion. My unit was the first in and we were directed to the *Highway 1 Bridge* over the Euphrates at *Nasiriyah* to pickup a special-ops team that had been dropped in two days before. Supposedly they would be leading the Iraqi forces to surrender to us. When they didn't show, we were ordered to cross."

"What happened to them?"

"The military geniuses in the Pentagon gave us the wrong time. They tried running the war from the Pentagon instead of giving control to their field commanders. The military uses Greenwich Meridian Time, *Zulu-time*, for coordinating operations. They gave the Special Forces local time. We were three hours late. They waited until it got too hot then moved back out into the desert to wait for us to break through."

"So the Iraqis didn't give up."

"The Iraqi senior officers were cutting deals with the Pentagon for afterwards. But the soldiers gave weapons to ignorant peasants, stripped off their uniforms and joined the Syrians."

"The Syrians? They were in Iraq?"

"They were cadres funded by Iran. That's who they called *al Qaeda* before they became *ISIS*. It's all the same out there. The region is inundated with tribal warlords who've been fighting each other for the last 2,000 years. Religious fundamentalism is just the excuse, like the wars between the Protestants and Catholics in 15<sup>th</sup> Century Europe. Now the Iranian backed *Shia* factions in the predominantly *Sunni* Iraqi government we created work for the Iranians against the US as we pour billions into the pockets of corrupt Iraqi officials. No wonder the Iraqi *Sunni* and *Kurds* are fighting the central government."

"Is that why you left the Army?" Freyan asked. Henry snorted.

"Not quite," he said. "After the bridge, I was *medevac'd* to base camp. I was standing next to the body bags of my troops coming in and a couple of contractors started asking me about the comm. When I told them the Pentagon hadn't given us any way to contact the SOF team and we didn't have the frequency spectrum, they started laughing and said 'We're sure to get the *Defense Appropriations* for our electronic network now. Congress can't say no

after this *snafu*.'

"You can't be serious. What did you do?"

"I gave one of them a concussion and the other a broken jaw. My commanding officer had to pull me off them. I'd have killed them if I hadn't had an arm in a sling."

"Oh my God. What did they do?"

"I was lucky Mary Nuwang was nearby. She got me out of there or they would have court-martialed me so..."

"Mary was there? What was she doing in Iraq during the invasion?" Leila Freyan had been in Washington, DC for a month, assigned there from New York by her boss, James Vauner, CEO of the 'Green Man Group' investment bank. She had quickly learned that in Washington there was a world beyond the world she knew. It was a world her fellow Americans knew nothing about. A world the media and politicians pretend doesn't exist. She caught Henry's eye-shift, knowing she had reached a doorway to that secret world.

"Uh, I guess she was on an inspection tour or something," he replied. "She left the Pentagon after Iraq and Dave Hollis hired her right after she left." Freyan knew he was hiding something and her probe had closed the door. "The Army brass covered the whole thing up but the contractors and the Pentagon boys blackballed my career," he said.

Freyan had been working with Nuwang for a month and knew there was more to the story, probing in another direction. "How long was Mary at the Pentagon?"

"I don't know. But she was the one who got me the staff job over in the House. She and Pam Dugent are real patriots, some of the last of their kind." Freyan, a recognized math genius with three years on Wall Street knew deception when she heard it but realized Henry wasn't going to say anything else so she let it slide, having learned that real keepers of secrets never say 'I can't talk about it,' they just don't talk. She probed in another direction.

"Pam's the sharpest lawyer I've ever worked with. She could make a mint on Wall Street."

"Not her deal, Le. Pam was the Counsel for the Senate Republicans for almost twenty years. Money isn't what she's about. Like I said, she's a patriot."

"Oh here we go," she said. "Now I'm going to get bullshit for working on Wall Street."

"It isn't about where you work, Leila, it's about who you are. It's not how much money you make or your complexion, gender or who you sleep with. It's all about how you live your life. Pam's exactly where she should be, just like Mary and you are."

"Well, I wish I could say that for most of the crowd running things down here in DC. Some of the people I've dealt with are the most dysfunctional arrogant blockheads I've ever met. No wonder the country is so screwed up." Henry chuckled and drew her closer.

"Most of the people you've dealt with or read about in the Congress or the

Federal Departments are just petty egos with the money or connections to get into positions of power. They're parasites who live off the patriots like Dugent and Nuwang. Trouble is that parasites don't know what power is for and only want more regardless of the harm done to the government or the nation."

"Are they the *Deep State* everyone is always talking about?"

"No. Most of them are nothing but paid lackeys of the *Deep State*. If it wasn't for them the real *Deep State* wouldn't have any power in DC."

"So you're telling me the *Deep State* isn't just some whacked-out conspiracy theory?"

"The conspiracy is that it's called *Deep*, Leila," he replied, suddenly tense. "It's all out in the open and has been since 1996 when they got rid of the old guard in the Congress. Think about it. The President tells Americans we must invade Iraq because they have *WMD* and the Congress just shrugs when we learn it was a lie. The bankers borrow money from the Federal Reserve Bank at .01% interest rate then loans it back to the Government at 1.26%. Congress was paid off to repeal the *Glass-Steagall* regulations then allowed the banks to use depositor's money to speculate until the whole thing collapsed in unregulated greed in '08. Then the Congress bailed them out with taxpayer's money, an action Congress was prohibited to do by the Constitution. They had no right to use *our* money that way. People talk about Russia hacking our elections while private companies are allowed to track our movement, purchases and the most intimate details of our families' lives from school grades to health information and sell it to other private companies. Our defense costs are higher than the next five nations combined, yet wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been ongoing over a decade. Then we're told we must deploy more troops to Iraq as our Ambassador publicly states they lost over \$15 billion dollars there and the Pentagon admits it can't account for over \$3 trillion during Congressional testimony. The Senators nod and increase the Defense budget. The Congress passes the most unconstitutional legislation in our history, the *Patriot Act* and then creates The Department of Homeland Security's spying apparatus which they immediately turn on Americans. What part of that seems *fucking deep* to you?" Henry caught himself, turning to Freyan calmly analyzing his premise without judgment.

"Is the problem in our military or the bureaucracies?"

"It's the political process, Leila. It's the ones in charge, lost in their drive for power and wealth. Our system is being used to siphon billions of taxpayers' money which don't add a sliver to national security. It's not the Americans in our military. We have brilliant scientists working at places like *NASA* and the *EPA*. We have analysts at the *CIA* and the *FBI* who have the information and expertise to provide viable solutions to any issue we face today, domestically or internationally. We've subject matter experts at the State and Treasury Departments who have studied the issues for decades. The issue to the problem is the politicians running the program. It's the people in control and the politics of wealth and power."

Henry eased. "Sorry," he said. "It just gets me that people are so gullible, worrying about gender-neutral toilets while Americans are dying all over the world, our debt is exceeding our GNP and our Republic is collapsing. They listen to the media telling them to focus on the war on Christmas or baking cakes for gay weddings as our Constitution, the most revolutionary political testament in history dissolves. We're falling into the same tyrannical corruption that ruined every civilization before us, the rise of Empire. If Americans don't wake up soon it will be too late."

"Seventy years is nigh at hand," Freyan hushed. Henry turned, "What?"

"Something Kirk wrote before he left. Do you know what it means?" Paul stilled, the comment evoking a message from an unexpected direction.

"Maybe you should ask Dave Hollis. Danner is...uh...out there."

"What do you mean?" she asked. She had her own concerns about Danner and Paul was being hesitant again. *What is it about Kirk everyone is so...what, about?* she thought.

"Ever read any *Goethe*?" Henry asked. "Danner is...a force of nature."

"How long have you known him?"

"I just met him with you last week, but that was enough. I've seen his type before but not in Washington, DC," he said, then laughed. "They must have hated him when he was on the Hill."

"Why would they have hated him?"

"Danner's kind scares the shit out of bureaucrats and politicians because they fear what they can't control and when Danner looks into your eyes, you only see what you are."

I don't get it. I've worked with him for over a month. I never felt afraid of him."

"Of course not, Le. You know who you are and what you are doing. Most of the people in our upper echelons of business and politics got there on a lie; daddy's connections, kissing ass and political treachery along the way. In the politically correct world of today, merit and hard work no longer matter. It's all about political manipulation or inherited wealth. Our nation is in the same decaying cycle of civilizations you read about in 18<sup>th</sup> Century France."

"Thank you for the history lesson, but the subject was Danner," she replied smiling.

"That's what I'm talking about," he said smiling back. "The politicians fear him because they know either consciously or unconsciously he sees right through them. They try to dominate him and quickly learn they can't, so they work to destroy him before the lie of their life is exposed. But that's when they really get scared because they realize his secret."

"What secret?"

"Those like Danner don't care about their psychoses or lies. They're focused on their mission. In his world, they don't matter because they are nothing but parasites who survive by the political manipulation of the true creators in business or politics. To Danner, they are irrelevant and that

exposure is their greatest fear.”

“I know the feeling,” she hushed. “I never care about their games.” She hadn’t even realized her slip. Henry pulled her to him, kissing her.

“I’m sure you don’t. Your kind never does.” She smiled in realization, kissing him back.

“What happened to him on the Hill?”

“Before my time but Pam worked on the Hill with him. They go back a long way.”

“Pam and Vanessa in the Hollis office are the only ones who aren’t nervous about him.”

“Like I said, your kind never is.” She smiled taking the comment in the way it was meant.

“So are *you* frightened of me?”

“Terrified,” he said smiling. “What the hell happened to Kirk over there at Barnold?”

“Talk about whacked. One minute he was fine, listening to those assholes trying to bribe us to walk from Senator Jackson’s Financial Reform Bill and suddenly Kirk just collapses, knocked out cold. It was like he was electrocuted or something. He only woke up night before last.”

“What happened?” Henry repeated. Freyan saw his instant focus confirming another lesson learned in Washington; no information is inconsequential and every question has a reason. But now it was Freyan’s turn to dance. She had her own secrets to conceal.

“James Vauner had him flown to Bavaria to see some specialist. He left yesterday morning.”

“Bavaria? Why Bavaria?”

“I don’t know. The GMG majority shareholders live there, that’s all I know about the place. I saw him before he left. He...seems recovered.” He caught the message she hadn’t meant to pass.

“Seems recovered? What’s wrong?”

“Oh, uh, nothing...nothing. Still in a lot of pain I guess.” Henry confirmed she was a novice at keeping secrets but respected her too much to push it, probing in another direction.

“Well those assholes over at Barnold International Lobbyists are the poster-children for everything wrong in this city. Big money, big corruption. Nobody knows who or what they represent but I wouldn’t put anything past those guys.”

“That seems to be the opinion of everybody over at the Hollis Company.”

“Dave Hollis has been fighting assholes like those guys at Barnold since the Eisenhower Administration. He’s a legend in the National Security Community. He’s the one who rescued Pam and Mary when the politicians threw them out.”

“Why did they get thrown out of politics, they’re some of the most ethical, smartest people I’ve ever worked around?”

“That’s why. Empires don’t want integrity around because it gets in the

way.”

“Gets in the way of what?” She felt his slight shudder as he tensed.

“What’s coming,” he whispered, catching himself. “So Vauner and GMG are still supporting Jackson’s financial reform legislation? I’m glad. She’ll need every bit of help she can get. There’s some powerful voodoo against her.”

“That’s why I’m still here,” she replied. “But, what’s coming, Paul?” He tensed, readying another evasion but suddenly eased, wanting to share his emotional turmoil.

“I...I don’t know, Le. That’s the issue but I can feel it in the air. Something has gone terribly wrong in our country. And it’s...its coming. The system is broken and the President, the Democrats or the Republicans can’t fix it. We’re reaching the point of critical mass. I’ve been feeling it since Governor Martel was attacked and DHS put him into protective custody, right after he had publicly supported Senator Jackson’s banking reforms for the Midwest states.”

“But wasn’t that a terrorist incident? I thought the DHS took him under protective custody under their authorities mandated by the Patriot Act?” He looked away shaking his head, the message passed clearly. A door to that world beyond her world opened in revelation. Henry continued, the door slowly opening wider.

“Senator Jackson lost her Chair on the Finance Committee because she was fighting for needed reforms and when she wouldn’t back down her own party attacked her with that lawsuit.”

“I thought that was the ‘Christian Decency Society’ attacking her chief of staff, Cliff Tolmes for being gay?”

“Only Senator Meadit, the majority leader, could have allowed it to happen.”

“Well that CDS lawsuit got thrown out of court. Dave Hollis brought in a former judge who quashed it. How can that stop Jackson’s reforms for the financial sector?”

“That’s what I’m talking about. Americans are focused on scandals not the issues. It will suck all the air out of what Jackson is trying to do and hurt her reelection chances in 2014. You outside the beltway people have no idea how the system works. It doesn’t matter what party is in control. I feel like we’re arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. Its...coming, Le.”

“What?!”

“We’re watching the twilight of our Republic and the rise of the imperial empire.”

It wasn’t so much the words, as his tone. His raw emotions triggering a frightening revelation in Freyan. But she hid it, knowing he needed reassurance and now was not the time. “You certainly know how to wake a person up in the morning,” she said smiling. Henry eased back down on to the bed now back in emotional control.

“Sorry, it just...comes rushing up. I better go. I’ve got to be at work early this morning.” Henry jumped up and started dressing. “You know, you could

stay at my place.”

“Uh, I don’t know. I like the room service here.”

“Hey, I’m not trying to hem you in or get you to commit. I’m just saying...”

“I know. It just a little too early for the...”

“Domestic scene?” Freyan smiled, shrugging. Henry reached out and kissed her. “Okay I get it but you know the trains run to New York every day, so you might find it hard to get rid of me after you’ve had your way with me and return to the big city.”

She kissed him. “I’m unsure if that’s a promise or a threat. Either way, you best be careful cuz’ I might hold you to it.” They both laughed and he was gone.

It took her a moment to adjust to the silence of both the room and her mind, going to the window overlooking *Rock Creek Park*, the coming dawn casting dark shadows on the forested hill, challenging brain to make sense of the void her eyes perceived. *Nothing is as it seems in DC*, Freyan thought.

Like most Americans, Freyan usually ignored the bickering of Washington, DC. The political dysfunction and arrogant stupidities that media focuses on never seemed to have relevance to their daily lives or their world. But since coming here, Freyan had become aware of a world beyond the world Americans were taught was their reality. It was a treacherous, dangerous place, holding immense power. A power so immense it could change human destiny for good *or*, she shuddered, *evil*. Evil not in a religious or moral sense, as such terms were meaningless in that world, but in...*what*, she thought.

After three years on Wall Street, she knew about power. But the power in this secret world was far beyond arrogant greed or accumulating wealth which most Americans considered the be-all of their reality. The power in this secret world was so great it could destroy everything she had ever known. The frightening revelation that had whispered as she listened to Henry returned, *Life against the anti-life*.

Freyan realized this secret world was in a death struggle for the forces of evolution against the forces of tyranny, the rise of empire—*Life against anti-life*. What else made sense? The bickering and partisan divides were a sham to keep the masses blind to the real struggle. But if that was true, who was on which side? Paul’s litany of the last twenty years of American political history replayed in her mind as she analyzed the premise.

Both Parties were equally guilty. A Democratic Administration had repealed *Glass-Steagall* and a Republican Administration allowed the banks to collapse the economy and then a Democratic Congress bailed them out. Both Parties had allowed the war in Iraq knowing the lie of *WMD*. Both parties had voted for the *Patriot Act* and now both parties were allowing it to destroy the Constitution. Both parties declared they would end the elite’s pillaging of the American system, yet the corporations only became richer while the rate of poverty for Americans kept accelerating. The past three Presidents had said they would curtail the endless wars and ‘*Foreign entanglements*’ yet once in power, intervened in Africa, Asia, the Balkans and the Mideast; just as the

current Democratic Administration promised to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan only to increase troops in both places once elected. *It's not about party*, she realized, *it's about individuals. It's not about systems, it's about integrity!*

Her view of the dark void changed in the dawning light, the trees becoming distinct. *It's about individuals*, she thought. James Vauner, an American of Jamaican descent was a Republican CEO of a Wall Street bank and he was supporting Democratic Senator Andrea Jackson's financial reforms against Wall Street interests. Pam Dugent a black woman from the inner city and Mary Nuwang, a white daughter of a cop, both Republicans, were fighting the corporate corruption with Dave Hollis, an 80-year old charter member of the so-called *military-industrial complex* for over fifty years. *It's not about politics, complexion or party affiliation! It's about evolving the system. Paul's right*, Freyan analyzed, *Americans must awaken. Something is wrong and...and only those aware of the realities of this world can confront it.*

Thesis, antithesis and synthesis, the ancient path of logic which for those like Freyan, trained in math, comes naturally—*Collate, analyze and solve*. In the still of that moment her decision was made. *The fight is now and the time has come*. Leila Freyan was on her own mission now.

And she knew she had powerful allies. She trusted Paul Henry *and might even*, she smiled, be falling in love with him. Those around her like Vauner, Hollis, Dugent and Nuwang were patriots, allied with a vast network of other patriots. Patriots who moved in the world beyond the world she knew with the integrity and experience to confront whatever it was they were.... A whisper from the abyss stilled her, *Between heaven and hell, there are worlds, unimaginable.*

She had heard Dave Hollis say it often, usually in a half-jest, but now the ancient saying had surfaced in her mind with another insight: *Worlds* unimaginable. Could there be something else? Could there be something more than the greed of primitive egos driving the world back into empire for the old delusions of wealth and power? Was evolution a product of civilization or...*a force of nature?* Her thought flashed with a razor's edge, *Danner!*

The twenty-seven year old Freyan had been working with Danner, fifty-eight, for weeks now. She had been attracted to him from the first, not so much in a sexual sense or in some father-figure bullshit but in...*what?* she thought, remembering Paul's description of him—'When Danner looks into your eyes, you only see what you are.' *That's what it was!* He had never acted any other way toward her but as an equal, without the politically correct hypocrisy of gender equality. Danner didn't care about your gender, political persuasion, philosophy or lifestyle. He didn't care if you agreed with him or not. He readily acquiesced if you proved him wrong and respected only one thing in any person he met—*Integrity*.

*Was a force of nature moral*, she thought? *No, but it is precise*, she answered herself smiling, now understanding Paul's comment about why

politicians and bureaucrats hated him.

But Freyan knew Danner had changed after his collapse at the Barnold office, remembering their meeting before he left for Bavaria. *His eyes*, she remembered, *Relentless–Merciless*. She wondered if it was always there or something inside him had snapped. And the notes he had passed to her had been even more shocking. He had created a stand-alone company which would siphon billions of dollars from the GMG plan to stop the coming financial collapse *someone* was planning. *Correction*, she thought, it wasn't GMG's plan. Danner had created the plan *for* GMG.

Has he gone insane? Why had he told her? What was he planning? Could he be trusted with that much power? Could anyone? The unknown variables cascaded in a torrent of concern and frustration as she felt a strange compulsion, going to her briefcase and pulling the notes Danner had left her, reading the last page:

*Leila,*

*Our accidental empire started in 1945.*

*Eisenhower warned us in 1960.*

*Our brothers have been killed.*

*Seventy years is nigh at hand.*

*Burn the myths! I don't ask you to trust me.*

*I ask only that you trust yourself.*

"Worlds, unimaginable," Freyan hushed to herself as her ancient teacher, networked into the DNA archives of over 200 million years of evolution, whispered from the depths. *Worlds–Unimaginable. Roll with it, child. Roll with it.* The sudden burst of strident ringing made her jump as she reached for the phone, "Hello."

"Hey girlfriend. Best throw that boy out of the room. Mary and I will be over to pick you up in about a half-hour. There's been a change in plans." Freyan smiled.

"What's up, Pammy?"

"Your boys from London arrived at *Dulles* about an hour ago. They're goin' to Dave's farm in Fredericksburg. He stayed the weekend there with that bunch from LA who got in yesterday."

"I'll meet you in the lobby."

"Talk to you soon, Le." Freyan pressed the room service button, instantly answered.

"I'd like a small bowl of cashew nuts, two apples and a coffee, black, please."

"On the way ma'am."

## CHAPTER ONE

*As we peer into society's future, we—you and I, and our government—must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.*

President Dwight D. Eisenhower  
*Farewell Address to the Nation*  
(January 17, 1961)

Senator Andrea 'Andi' Jackson was awake early, as usual. By 3:30 am she had watched the international news for twenty minutes on her treadmill before sitting down with a coffee for a quick perusal of the online *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post* before her shower. Out the door of her 4<sup>th</sup> Street SE townhouse by 4:00, she made the five-block walk to Capitol Hill at a speed matching the predawn August humidity of Washington, DC.

Arriving at the now guarded gate of the Capitol grounds her usual thought flashed as she scanned the recently completed *Congressional Visitor Center*. The grass and trees, some planted in President McKinley's time, had been torn out and replaced with the paved grandeur of a Roman Forum, its austere stone more fitting for a *Nuremberg Rally* than the Capitol of her Republic. *Vulgar delusions of grandeur*, she thought, recalling Gore Vidal's insight on her government's new imperial architecture: "*It will certainly make impressive ruins a few centuries from now.*"

Crossing Constitution Avenue, she walked into the *Russell Senate Office Building*, taking the stairs to the second floor, enjoying the still quiet of the time, about 4:30, she started the coffee her staff prepared last night. She slept in on the weekends, sometimes not arriving until 7:00 am.

Changing from sneakers into dress shoes, she grabbed the pile of correspondence from her inbox, scanning it to ensure no emergencies and with

coffee in hand went to the arched window, gazing across Delaware Street at the *Senate Terrace Fountain*, shimmering in dawn's early light. In the quiet reflection, her old question whispered, *What happened?* A question patriots like Jackson had been asking themselves for the last thirty years.

Jackson knew the accepted version of American history but also the secret history of her nation. She knew that by 1960, America had won the Cold War. The Soviets had ceased being an overt global threat by 1962, and only the stifling oppression of the Soviet bureaucracy had held the façade of its threat in anemic stasis before their system's utter collapse in 1989.

The United States of America, Jackson knew, had been the world's banker since the early 1950s and the undisputed leader in manufacturing, education, medicine, technology and science. By the mid-60s, Americans had created a society providing more citizens a better life than any society in human history. But the Cold War had been kept alive, siphoning trillions for defense under the illusion of the communist threat which was an illusion divorced from the reality of America's overwhelming financial, technological and productive capabilities. The vast investment in the national security infrastructure had been done by keeping a whole socio-economic class of underprivileged Americans in perpetual poverty. How could it be that now in 2012, this same group of Americans, in urban ghettos and rural hinterlands, were still suffering, still underprivileged, still...*without?* Americans had overcome far worse crises both foreign and domestic than any now faced.

They had overcome *The Great Depression* when over 30% of the nation was unemployed, their government bankrupt and mass desperation threatened the fanaticism which, by 1935, had eaten Europe, Russia and Asia. But Americans had kept their Republic intact, reigning in the financial speculation which had collapsed the economy by regulating it. They repaired their disregard for their environment which had turned America's breadbasket into a *Dustbowl*, healing the land with careful application of science and technology.

Americans had overcome far more terrible foes. They were the undisputed victors in the most horrific war in history, World War II. The war had demolished European civilization and decimated three generations of the global population by 1945. But with the American people's productive genius and a complete takeover of the nation by the federal government, Americans out-produced the entire world *combined* for over four years. Women left their homes for the factories and Americans of every complexion supported the heroism of our victories at *Midway*, *Tarawa*, and the '*Bulge*.' The victory was won in the sweat and blood of *All Americans*.

And what of racism, the ancient myth of the human species, nurtured and passed on by human ignorance. Of African heritage, Jackson knew no nation or tribe had been spared the consequences of the myth of race, its stain on the American experience manifest. Institutional slavery and pogroms inflicted on Native Americans, Chinese and Hispanics, all sacrificed at the altar of the myth

that the human species is made up of races. Ignorant prejudice without a color line as Arab, Catholic, Irish, Italian, Jew and Moslem had felt its lash throughout American history. She remembered the government's shame for imprisoning Americans of Japanese descent while claiming the crime a defense of freedom. Jackson, as a national leader, as a black woman, knew the pain of humanity's ancient curse.

But Jackson knew her people and understood our history. Americans had fought their bloodiest war against themselves because in the final analysis they knew their Union could not survive alongside slavery. The years of struggle continued as Americans evolved, striving for the ideal of their Constitution. Through war, calamity and terrible oppression, the evolution continued. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment had outlawed slavery but ignorance remained. Americans tried again with the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, forbidding States from denying citizens due process of law or equal protection. Ignorance won again, when the concept of 'separate but equal' was decided in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896). Ignorance and fear scoffed at the Constitution and 2,000 years of Christian morality. For sixty years the pressure built, for sixty years the Congress, controlled by the Democratic Party's Southern wing, fought the *Civil Rights* movement.

The Congress refused to address it until the American people said enough and the Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

The nation's struggle against the myth of race continued, spilling the blood of our children, burning our cities and poisoning our culture, but the *vast majority* of Americans awoke. Jackson remembered the media scandal when Captain Kirk kissed Lieutenant Uhura on national TV but real Americans understood. The majority of Americans looked beyond ancient myths in 2008, and although the President's election wasn't the end of racism, it was the beginning of its end. Change comes hard for a species evolving for less than 19,000 years and Jackson knew no law can change a person's heart. Only wisdom and evolution can do that. Jackson, an American leader, understood her debt to those who came before and her responsibility to those coming. She had long ago vowed never to submit to the curse of ancient myths.

Jackson didn't consider herself an *African* American; she knew there was no such thing. It was an illusion, the same as an Irish-American, Chinese-American or Mexican-American. She was an American. She was the proud daughter of Americans who had stood up to two hundred years of oppression with the battle cry: "*Say it loud! I'm Black and I'm proud!*"

Jackson knew Americans, *real* Americans, understood the responsibility demanded of them by the original founding fathers and dynamic of our modern founding fathers such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Justice Thurgood Marshall and Medgar Evers; the formation of a *more perfect Union*. Through calamities natural and manmade, Americans had not just endured; they had continued evolving their *more perfect Union*.

She knew that 'American' wasn't a tribe, wasn't a 'race.' America was an idea. Perhaps the most revolutionary idea in human history stating *All* are equal under the law with the unalienable *Right* to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. America was a concept—That individuals, without regard for color or creed, could form a union, not by perpetuating a ruling class, but designed against ruling classes. The *Rights* were the citizen's, not the government's or some corporate elite. *What happened* she thought, *and why?*

*You know*, came the whisper, *you've always known. It is the rise of Empire. It's about MORE, always more.*

Jackson knew it started in 1900 when *McKinley* decided to keep the Philippines and Cuba after the Spanish-American War, becoming America's first colonies. But WWII changed it all as the government took over the nation and the road to Empire was set.

*Eisenhower saw it coming and warned us all*, she thought. Kennedy and Nixon from opposite sides of the political spectrum had confronted it and both had paid the price. The secret history was exposed in 1970 with the release of the *Pentagon Papers*. Americans learned their leaders had known since 1961 that the *Vietnam War* could never be won. They had continued it because the dark vector of empire had released a monster none could control. Americans protested the endless war only to be accused of being communists as their government turned on them with oppression and surveillance. Dark alliances were exposed at the highest reaches of government in the aftermath of *Vietnam*, *Watergate*, the assassinations, government coups and subversion of American's Constitutional rights in fear mongering. The innocent believed the government which told them they had to take away their rights to protect them from communists, drugs, fascism or terrorists. Jackson had seen where it was going by 1976.

Some Americans wouldn't believe it. Others gave up. The young protested and the greedy joined in. But for Americans like Jackson, the revelation had been a call to arms. Some joined the Marines, others the Peace Corps. Jackson, too young for either, worked on Jimmy Carter's election campaign in '76. How disappointed she was when the 'outsider' brought his cronies from Georgia who were more interested in partying with Donald Trump at New York's *Studio 54* than supporting their President. The *outsider* failed in four years as wealth and power snuffed out a viable peace in the Middle East and a revolution in the energy sector. *At least we got the best former President in modern history*, she thought smiling.

Andrea Jackson had seen the dark vector of empire eroding the American experience as wealth and power took the imperial path of old but she knew what needed to be done. Graduating with honors from *Grambling* with a BA in finance, then a law degree from *Berkeley*, she worked six years in a prestigious New York corporate law firm. Jackson learned the game of tax policy and *junk bond* financing in the go-go years of the *new morning* of America's '80s, watching the financial system eat itself in unleashed greed as Americans were

hypnotized by the *fabulous lives of the rich and famous*.

She watched, she learned and she understood. She saw the unbridled wealth buy the American government whose only Constitutional *authority* was to *regulate* it. Campaign finance laws were nullified as the regulators became hired mouthpieces. She understood what had to be done, leaving New York and returning home to the Deep South. Everyone said she was crazy for leaving her big-money job and a great pension, shaking their heads in dismay when she joined a nonprofit for local farmers.

Far from the fabulous lives of Wall Street's rich and famous, Jackson learned what the average American's real problems were—feeding their children and keeping a roof over them while trying to save for their education. She heard the corporate accountants talk of the rising stock market proving the growing economy but the wealth never *trickled down* and Americans were suddenly being told they would have to *live with less* now.

She watched her nation be put up for sale after 1992. Watched its laws rewritten to make what was illegal for over a century, legal as political parties fought for more PAC cashflow. She heard both parties blaming the other for the dysfunction as they took the bribes from the same paymasters. Jackson had learned long ago that money has no political affiliation.

Jackson understood what had to be done. She was elected to the House for two-terms and then into the Senate as the State's first woman Senator, but the struggle only intensified. Jackson learned the inside story of what had happened to the American political process in '92 and '94. Few Americans believed what was blatantly obvious; the nation's political parties were working for the same paymasters. The Democratic Speaker and the Senate Republican Leader were being paid by the same people and although mouthing different words, it always had the same result.

Like all great nations, the United States of America had a secret history. The secrets were a strain of poison which had destroyed every civilization since the *Sumerians*. The Constitution of the United States was not immune to that poison, but its original drafters, students of history, were well aware of the threat. They had created '*Checks and Balances*,' which for over a century had kept the dark forces of empire in check. But the '*Checks*' were now gone. There could no longer be '*Balance*.'

Now Jackson found herself in a fight with her own party. Her majority leader, Senator Meadit, had taken her Committee away from her not for being wrong or corrupt but for being right and attempting to stop corruption. Her financial reform legislation wasn't radical, it was designed only to return the '*checks*' and hopefully bring back some balance to a system so out of control that five banks now controlled over 78% of the productive assets of the nation. A system so imbalanced that 0.5% of the population now had more wealth than the other 99.5% of Americans *combined*.

Jackson didn't consider herself a victim of racism, sexism or any other '*ism*' now spewed by the hypocrisy of the politically correct who demanded

everyone think in their narrow, uninformed emotional concepts. The new 'group think' demanded outrage against everything yet offered no viable solutions to anything. The PC movement demanded schools prohibit teaching children ethics and integrity while promoting an undefined amoral self-interest where all are victims. The PC movement was now demanding all opinions differing from theirs be banned. Book burning was coming back in fashion in the new *progressive* ideology. Jackson knew fascism comes in many forms but always demands no one 'think' about its ideology just obey it—whatever it was.

Gazing out the window, the enormity of the task she had prepared all her life to accomplish flooded back in memories of the sacrifices, the tragedies and the incredible frustration of it all. *What am I going to do now?* she thought in the sudden still. But from deep within her came the laughing reply: *Same as always! Roll with it and keep fighting!* She draped her suit jacket over her chair and donned her reading glasses, pulling today's stack of work from her inbox.

In today's cynical 21<sup>st</sup> Century American society, Jackson's kind were sneered at from both the left and the right. Her kind were denigrated, held in suspicion and considered politically *incorrect*. But that had never mattered to her.

Andrea Jackson is an American patriot. She knows she owes it to someone.



Absorbed in the CBO's latest Fiscal Year budget data, the knock startled her. *Who the hell at this time?* she flashed. Opening her private entrance, she was met by the two ladies' jovial groans. "Who else would be here at five in the morning?" said Pam Dugent, smiling.

"Now that you're in the Senate, ma'am, you have to step up your game," Mary Nuwang chimed in. "The Senate is the major leagues and you need to put on more of an imperial air."

Jackson invited them in, pointing at the coffee which both declined. "So I need to be a legend in my own mind like most Senators?" she snapped, smiling. "Now why are you two here so early other than to harass me? Thought our meeting was later."

"Sorry to bother you, Senator. There's been a change in plans and we have to get down to Fredericksburg. But we wanted to drop off the latest draft of the Financial Reform Legislation."

Jackson smiled. "The real one this time? Cliff told me what you two hooligans did with that phony draft that the Committee got a hold of."

"Oohhh, how did the Committee get that first draft? It was supposed to be confidential and is full of false leads and blind alleys," said Dugent, smiling innocently as they all laughed. "They and the bank lobbyists will be chasing their own tails for the next month, Senator. "They won't know what hit them when you introduce the real Bill."

"I'm in league with a bunch of outlaws," said Jackson.

"In the modern world, Senator, it often takes honest outlaws to do the necessary."

"You're right Mary," Jackson said, getting back on track. "And just how is the private sector side of our little revolution going?"

"Coming along nicely, Senator. Leila Freyan's team just arrived from London and James Vauner has committed GMG capital for the execution. Dave Hollis and James have laid all the trap lines throughout the national security community and financial sector. If they try to do to us what they did in 2008, we'll be prepared."

"Any preliminary intel?"

"Nothing definitive, Senator," Nuwang replied. "It's like a tidal wave. All our trusted sources in Europe and Asia can feel the movement but it's invisible right now."

"It always is, until it hits the shoreline," replied Jackson. "And Leila Freyan is running the program now? She's young for that much responsibility. Might be a little tightly wrapped."

"She's tightly wrapped because she's smarter than the three of us put together," said Dugent. "Vauner trusts her and so does Kirk." It was Jackson's estimation of Freyan, now independently confirmed by two of her trusted sources. She nodded confidently.

"How's Danner doing? Dave called me yesterday morning to tell me he was flown to Bavaria." Jackson caught the quick glances from them. "Are there problems?"

"I really can't speculate, Senator. I've never seen anything like it. He was fine one second and when he came in contact with Chairman Mickslaw...it was like he..., I don't know."

"Some type of seizure wasn't it?"

"Whatever it was, it wasn't a seizure."

Jackson felt their hesitancy but let it slide, probing in another direction. "Well coming in contact with that Mickslaw could give anyone fits."

"Where did he come from, Senator? I've been inside DC for twenty years. The guy seems to have so much juice even the insiders are afraid to whisper his name."

"No one seems to know, Mary. When the old guard in the Senate was driven out in '96, they took most of the institutional knowledge with them. I think he got his start in the Reagan years."

"He was around longer than that," said Dugent. "The Reagan and Bush '41 people would have nothing to do with him and I remember the old timers saying Nixon treated him like the plague. He seems to have surfaced in Clinton's Administration and he was all over Junior's Administration." They gazed at each other in question. *How old is he? Something doesn't fit*, but too smart to waste time in idle speculation, the thought was filed away for later analysis.

"Well, at least we got one 'old timer' still around," Jackson said, smiling at

Dugent.

“Careful, ma’am,” said Dugent smiling, changing the subject. “How’s Cliff?”

“He’s still pretty upset, but he’s tough, he’ll come around. I don’t know if I will. Those bastards attacked him just to get at me. That was below the belt to a level I really can’t forgive.”

“Shit,” Mary said. “They could move the entire Congress and the staffs back into the Capitol building and close the Senate and House office buildings if all the gays left the Hill.”

“And they know it,” Jackson nodded. “Hypocrisy has reached a new level in politics.”

“I wish I felt it was at the lowest level Senator, but I’m afraid we haven’t seen rock bottom yet,” said Nuwang, checking her watch. “You’ll have to excuse us. We have to pick up Leila in Georgetown in fifteen minutes. As they stood to go, Jackson probed again.

“Will Kirk be back?”

“Oh he’ll be back, Senator,” Dugent said seriously. “If there is one thing in your life you can count on, if he’s breathing, he’ll be back.”

“Sounds ominous, Pammy. He didn’t strike me as the vengeful type.”

“I’ve known him for over twenty years. He’s *old-school*, Senator. Kirk isn’t interested in revenge. It’s retribution that drives him and he’ll do whatever needs to be done. He’ll be back.”

“Is that a threat or a promise?”

“Both,” said Mary. “I’ve seen his type before. There’s an old saying in the Marines, *May God have mercy on their souls because mercy is not Marine Corps policy.*” Mary’s eyes flashed the message and both knew enough of Mary’s background to know she knew what she was talking about. They both calmly nodded and said goodbye....

The slight knock on her door was preceded by the tall dark handsome man entering with a coffee cup. His sharp, angular features and complexion were confusing in the mix, as he could easily be Arabic, Black or Hispanic. Jackson had never learned what Cliff Tolmes ancestry was as it had never been important to her. He was an American, which meant he could be one or the other, or a mix of all three. “Morning Senator,” Tolmes said.

What had mattered to her in their original meeting was his character. He had a PhD in economics from an Ivy League university, graduating with honors so she knew he was well educated, but the steel in his eyes and respect in his voice told her far more important things about him than mere grades and resume. He had integrity. She hired him as Chief of Staff at their first interview. “Morning Cliff,” said Jackson, removing her glasses. “Why are you in so early?”

“I just wanted to...uh talk to you privately before everyone shows up,” he said. “I’ve been thinking now that Judge Tusrett quashed the CDS lawsuit, it may be time for me to move on. I’m offering my letter of resignation. With everyone gunning for you and your legislation, I’ve become too much of a

distraction.” Jackson looked at him calmly and put her glasses back on, returning to her reading.

“I don’t want to hear any more of that bullshit, Cliff. You’re not going anywhere. What’s done is done and we’ll deal with the *gentlemen* who caused *that* issue in good time.” Jackson looked back up. “Read this morning’s *Journal*? China has devalued their currency again.”

Tolmes was immediately engaged. “Think it’s a shot across the bow? I understand they are balking on the President’s Pacific Rim trade deal. China’s the second biggest economy with the four biggest banks in the world. I didn’t think their economy was so fragile.”

“They’re not. The Chinese *Yuan* doesn’t float. Its value is whatever the Chinese Politburo says it is. Today it’s worth five to the dollar, tomorrow its worth six. They are devaluing to cut the rest of Asia out of the manufacturing sector they have in the US and Europe. They’re cutting out the competition from Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines.”

“They have the capital to join in. Their banks are investing all over the world.”

“Yes, but look how. Their capital is locked up and secured by American debt. Their economy relies on American consumers and stolen intellectual property. The country is controlled by a socialist military-industrial complex, producing a society where oppression is total. We complain in this country about the top 1% owning 99%. In China it’s the .01%. The Chinese people are subjected to oppressive government, working for subsistence wages while the top one-ten-thousandth live like modern mandarins. Western China is destitute and they spend billions to build military bases in the South China Sea. The Empire is back in China.”

“There is a growing fear in the country that China has become a global economic threat.”

“China will never be an economic threat until they release the Chinese people from totalitarian oppression. The Chinese elite have the power they have through the enslavement of their own people. Their Stalinist system is already overextended and will in time, implode. What we Americans have to be concerned about is our own leaders who sold our country’s productive assets, jobs and technology to them.” Jackson paused, thinking. “Why don’t you and Jon take a look at the current trade negotiations this morning and let’s discuss at nine.”

“You have a nine o’clock with Pam Dugent on the Financial Reform Bill.”

“Canceled. There’s been a change in plans. Tell Jon to check with *Ex/Im* Bank for the latest...” The knock interrupted. “Come in,” said Jackson. Her receptionist entered with a stack of messages. “Morning Susan. Want some coffee?”

“No thanks, two cups is my limit,” Susan said, handing her a stack of messages.

“Wish I had your discipline,” she said, scanning the messages. “Eden

Mobsely is in the hospital with cancer. Susan, call her daughter and see if there is anything we can do. And find out what hospital she's in and send flowers." She went to the next message. "Set up a conference call with the third district's school board for next week. Go through Margaret Titner to find out who should be on the call. I want their input for the State's education budget for the next fiscal year." Jackson turned, "Cliff, when is the Education Committee going to drop the bill?"

Tolmes pulled his mobile viewing his calendar. "They haven't provided any time on that yet, Senator. The bill cleared the committee on May 2nd."

"What's the holdup?"

"It's still being run through the Appropriations Committee."

"Susan, tell Marlene to call her counterpart on the Appropriations Committee staff and find out what the holdup is. If she gets any BS, tell her to tell them my next call will be to the *Office of Management and Budget*. The Appropriations Committee is in the yearly duel with OMB and the White House would like nothing better than to zing the Senate before the election." Jackson chuckled. "That should open the information flow." Susan laughed as Jackson frowned at the next message. "Call Senator Leemhy's office, I need to talk to him." She turned to Tolmes, "When's the Agriculture Committee meeting?"

"2:30, Senator. *Hart* building conference room."

"Okay, call Tim Quistor and tell him we need data on the state's soybean subsidies by noon. Speak now or forever hold your peace for FY 2013. I've asked twice since March for the data."

"We met with the state's Ag folks in March and May, Senator. Both times the subject was discussed and what we need from them," said Tolmes.

"Yeah...Bunch of good ole' boys down there. They'll get to it when they get to it but they're first to cry how we're not helping them when we don't have their forecasts."

"Shall I call them this afternoon?"

"No. Won't do any good, Cliff. Barney Stubs is holding back."

"Why is the state's Agriculture guy withholding the data we need to get farmers the price support and irrigation funds?"

"He's supporting Robbi Aperdolt in the second district for my Senate seat in 2014. Stubs thinks Aperdolt will support him to take his vacated seat in the House."

"Stubs thinks he's Congressional material? That guy couldn't even win county commissioner three cycles in a row. He couldn't be elected dog catcher."

"No doubt, Cliff, but he's being told he could. It's all about making me look bad for Aperdolt's run at my seat. He's got the whole state's Christian right fanatics in an uproar saying I'm not doing enough for the war against Christmas or supporting the placement of the Ten Commandments on the State House lawns. A lot of farmers down there in the Bible Belt."

"So they withhold data we need to help them? Even the Christian Right

can't be that dumb."

"No, they're not. But the average American is clueless of politics and kept that way by the local knuckleheads spewing BS and corn on their local bible channels. Politicians playing the faith card instead of supporting their needs..." Jackson trailed off, thinking.

Tolmes hadn't known about any of this, wondering how Jackson, with everything else, was intimately familiar with the state politics. "Let's just let it go, Senator. Let them learn how Stubs and Aperdolt screwed them come October when the Department of Agriculture starts releasing the grant money. Most of those guys won't vote for you anyway."

"True, but that's not the point. The farmers need the funding and an expansion of the irrigation system. That's my responsibility whether they understand or not," she replied, turning to Susan. "Call Lisa in our State office and I need to talk to Senator Leemhy right away."

Lisa Bandt was Senator Jackson's State coordinator. Each member of Congress has an office staff in their State in addition to the one in Washington, DC. The staffs are usually jockeying for position, both groups jealous of the other, some actually hostile to each other, an attitude often encouraged by some Members who take the Stalinist mindset of keeping everyone insecure, fighting for survival. Jackson, long in the private sector, never allowed that type of mindset knowing such a system results in only the most treacherous surviving.

"I'll take care of this, Senator," said Tolmes.

"Let Lisa run with it, she's closer to the people on the ground and I want you to stay focused on our Financial Reform Legislation," Jackson replied, not wanting Cliff to know the other reason as she didn't want to subject Tolmes to anymore attacks. After the Christian Decency Society lawsuit over immoral behavior, the state's Republican machine had launched a series of ads about Jackson's un-American hiring of "known perverts" on her staff. The local Christian Right groups had sent a delegation of pastors, demanding Tolmes be fired. She had politely told them to blow it out their ass by diplomatically thanking them for teaching her all she needed to understand about their brand of Christianity.

"The Foreign Relations Committee meeting is at 3:00 and your luncheon address to the state's manufacturers is confirmed at 11:30 at the *Hotel Washington*. Might be tight, Senator," Susan said checking her schedule book.

"No problem, Susan. Thanks." She read the next message, turning to Tolmes. "Have we gotten any more data from Ari Goldblum from Midcentral Bank on the Midwest export trade data for the second quarter?"

"Yes. Came in yesterday. It appears our trade imbalance keeps going higher. *ExIm* won't fund the farmers or our local manufacturers. All *ExIm* bank funding credits go to the aerospace companies and as tradeoffs, the Commerce Department allows the third world countries to dump raw steel production and textiles goods into our economy. It's killing our small businesses and family

farms across the country.”

“*Hmm*. Have we gotten any answer from our ‘Fair Trade’ financial analysis we sent to the ExIm Bank?”

“The same line they’ve carried for the past decade, Senator. Our textile manufacturing can’t compete in the modern global trade environment.”

“What a load of bunk. Let’s talk about it at nine,” she said turning to Susan. “Would you have Marlene come in? And then let’s start on the calls, Senator Leemhy first.”

“Right away, Senator,” Susan said, handing over the stack of messages. “These are routine and I’ll go in order, unless you say different.”

“Thanks, Susan.” Within a minute, Marlene, Jackson’s *Appropriations* Legislative Director entered. “Morning Senator, you wanted to see me?”

“Morning, Marlene. What’s the latest from the Commerce Department on the dumping of textiles imports in the US?”

“They responded to the Committee’s report, claiming the issue is unsolvable. Our textile manufacturing companies can’t compete. I reviewed their numbers,” she said, putting a report on the desk, open to a page of financial statistics. “It’s very thorough. They make a pretty good case, Senator.”

Jackson reviewed the stats within seconds. “They make a pretty good case for collecting contributions for the President’s reelection campaign but not for proving American companies can’t compete,” she replied, handing the report back to her.

“Senator?”

“Americans are told our textile industry can’t compete by all these promoters of free trade, but look at the numbers. The big-box and online retailers could buy a US made shirt for \$5 and sell it for \$20, that’s a Return-On-Investment of 400%. However, they buy a foreign made shirt for 50 cents, add in transportation costs of \$1.00 and then sell it for \$12, an ROI of over 800%,” Jackson paused. “I won’t address the quality issue,” she chuckled, continuing.

“Simultaneously, American’s taxes rise to increase social services for unemployed textile workers in addition to the truck drivers, grocery stores, machinery manufacturers and repair personnel who supported the textile industry. What happens is capital concentrates into a tighter circle of entities.”

“Surely our banking system sees that strategy is strangling the goose that lays the golden eggs,” Marlene replied. “If they have no work, they have no money. No money, they don’t buy.”

“What do they care? The banks collect the interest payments on the international loans while they charge the average citizen over eighteen-percent on their credit cards to buy that \$12.00 shirt. We keep devaluing our currency by raising the debt ceiling which increases the interest payments on the debt. The debt is an illusion but the interest paid by the American citizens is real. The citizens are S-O-L,” said Jackson.

“SOL, Senator?” Marlene knew Jackson was an expert in finance and a recent MBA graduate, it was an acronym she hadn’t learned of in her Ivy

League Masters program.

“Shit Out of Luck, Marlene. They don’t teach you people about the real world in school. Our Social Security system continues to collapse as fewer employed are contributing to the system. My example here is textiles but when you look at the numbers, it’s the same thing happening in all sectors from steel manufacturing to appliances. And the technology industry is completely out of control. It took over fifty years for our country to lose our industrial jobs but less than a decade for us to lose our technology manufacturing jobs.”

“Senator, isn’t that the system? I mean the global trade system...uh, economies of scale, lowest price in specialized sectors within the global trade system.”

“No, it’s not,” replied Jackson. “The term ‘free trade’ has come to mean a financial transaction. The bottom line is the current free-trade agreements being negotiated are not what the politicians who are allowing it are telling you.”

Jackson saw their confusion. Thinking a second, she continued. “Take China for example. They demand both US private sector and government funding to build factories in China. Then demand we turnover the technology rights and pay for training their workers so they can export goods to the US but for this so called market access, we are prohibited from selling American made products in China. ‘Free Trade’ is defined as we turn our industrial capacity and jobs over to them while providing the investment capital to do it so that we can import knockoff products for American consumption. We trade our wealth, but aren’t allowed to trade our production which would create future wealth or keep people employed in our country.”

“But why would our government allow that, Senator?”

“They’re the beneficiaries of the big banks and retailers’ PAC contributions. Their former staffs are at the big law firms negotiating these trade deals. The big financial entities lobby for ‘free trade’ to collect millions in fees for arranging those multi-billion dollar loans to the developing nation’s governments.”

“And the political process got bought,” nodded Cliff. “Pam Dugent was saying just the other day that there has been a fifty-percent cost increase of presidential elections just since 2008 and the 2012 Presidential election will cost over *\$3 billion*. Compare that with the 1988 Presidential election in which both candidates *combined* spent less than *\$250 million*. Dugent also quoted a study which showed a Senator needs to raise \$3,000 per day for their entire six-year term and a Congressman over \$1,500 per day for their two-year term for their reelection campaigns. The cost of political campaigns has become astronomical driven by perpetual electioneering. The system has become totally dependent on PAC donations. Regardless of party, every member of Congress is bought before their election. It’s why we are working on campaign finance reform.”

“Oh? Why haven’t I seen it,” asked Jackson, smiling, “You holding out on

me, Cliff?"

He laughed. "Not ready to show you, Senator. Besides you've been a little busy lately."

"But aren't the companies paying taxes?" Marlene asked.

"Not like they should because their money is kept offshore. Trillions of dollars are being sucked out of the country and stashed in foreign bank accounts. And the capital for these foreign loans is debt from the Federal Reserve. Americans pay the interest and the companies get the depreciation and amortization write-offs."

"I thought they made that illegal."

Cliff looked at Jackson who nodded to continue. "Why do you think all these accounting firms have offices outside the US? They are stashing these profits in places like Panama, Nigeria, Bahrain, Ireland, and Uruguay." said Tolmes. "European economies are having the same problem in their nations. Capital liquidity of the world's production is disappearing into the *Dark Pools* where the rich elites can legally do insider trading off the market. Global capital is not being used for investment or wealth generation anymore but all kept in the elite's network or their corporate *Retained Earnings* account. Hell, right now the top five technology companies have more capital reserves than all but the top eight nations in the world today."

"That's got to be an exaggeration, Cliff."

"Wish it was. Today in 2012, the richest 412 individuals throughout the world own more wealth than half of the world's population combined."

Marlene gasped. "Four hundred people own more than the poorest 3.7 billion?!"

"Yes," replied Cliff. "By 2015 it will *be* less than *sixty-two*! Sixty-two people will own more than the poorest half of the world's population. Currently the top 1% of the world's elites own or control 85% of the world's natural resources and over 99% of its productive assets."

"Well most of those people are Americans and American companies. So don't we benefit?"

"Looks good on statistics, but the reality is that the big technology, agriculture, energy, and manufacturing companies are using their financial power only to stifle competition in their sectors. They are not expanding jobs or opportunity but using their cash for stock buybacks, bonuses for management and to buy up their competition so that they don't have to compete."

"Tech companies are not investing in innovation? That's what the technology sector is all about...Isn't it?"

"Was," said Tolmes. "When something innovative is created they just buy the company and absorb it to protect their products or services. Why do you think these small start-up companies, without revenue, staff, or even a coherent business model are suddenly bought for hundreds of millions? They are being absorbed for their intellectual property. If it looks like a good idea, the major tech companies immediately take them out of play."

“Why do they sell to the companies? If it was a good idea they could become a major tech company themselves.”

“There’s a difference between wanting to create and wanting to cash-in. Most of these kids don’t know how to *create a business* and why should they learn? Most walk away with a billion dollars and a \$185 million a year contract or sell the technology to them and the company crashes. They cash in—the American dream, right? The buyer’s stock price isn’t affected because they don’t pay dividends. The transaction is controlled by a closed group of multinational investment houses. It’s not like the old days...” Jackson laughed, thinking about the definition. In the tech-sector, the ‘old days’ were defined as pre-2002. “The original tech-giants like *AOL*, *Microsoft* and *Intel* made thousands of small investors millionaires. But the average American doesn’t even get to participate in the process today because the Wall Street banks are running the program now.”

“If we don’t free up the capital,” said Tolmes, “our economy doesn’t have the liquidity to reinvest into our infrastructure. The primary issue is capital liquidity within the economy. Liquidity is frozen in the elite’s networks. Without investment or capital liquidity economic growth under the classic rules of the *Keynesian economics* model can’t happen. Government debt is absorbed by the elites instead of spreading out to the citizens, creating a double whammy. The citizens have to pay for the interest on the debt while their dollars are devalued which is why a 2012 dollar is worth about *four-cents* of a 1959 dollar. Government debt devalues currency and the citizen’s productive labor.”

“What the hell do these people want, Senator? What’s their goal?”

“More, Marlene. Always, more.”

“What are we going to do about it?”

“I’ve been thinking about that,” replied Jackson. “Cliff, I want you to stay focused on our financial reform legislation. Introduce Marlene to James Vauner’s and Dave Hollis’ people. That Leila Freyan is sharp.” Jackson turned to Marlene, “Get with Freyan as soon as you can and bring Jon into the loop. Draft some ideas about what we can put together on trade issues then get back to Cliff. Oh, and are you available for a meeting at nine? You should be in on this.”

Marlene smiled. “I am now, Senator. Shall I talk to the Committee about it?”

“No, that’s a waste of time, especially with the mid-terms coming up. Nobody will rock the PAC funding boat this close to the election. However, when we drop the financial reform legislation it’s going to open a lot of doors. Let’s be ready for an opportunity.”

“I don’t know, Senator,” Tolmes replied. “We haven’t been getting a lot of attention on that type legislation. Seems like everyone has gone back to sleep since the meltdown of 2008. I’m unsure if Congress or Americans are even paying attention. All the news shows are up in arms about this transgender bathroom controversy.”

“Maybe if we could tie free trade to transgender bathrooms, we’d have

more luck getting American's support," said Marlene, joining the other's chuckles.

Jackson refocused them. "Success is when preparation meets opportunity. Get started on that with Dugent and Freyan. Cliff, make the introductions and have Nuwang call me before you guys go over there. I'll fill her in on what we...." Susan buzzed into Jackson's office.

"Yes, Susan."

"Senator Leemhy, Senator." Marlene nodded to Jackson and left the room.

"Put him through." As soon as Senator Jackson got on the line, Leemhy's assistant instantly forwarded the call to Leemhy. "Morning, Andi," he said.

"Morning John. How we doing with the Agriculture appropriations? I'm looking for some irrigation funds for my folks back home."

"We're going to *reconciliation* with the House on Tuesday. Is there a problem?"

"No, I'm just having problems getting the fiscal information from home."

Leemhy chuckled. He had been thirty-four years on the Hill and knew the game, and the players. "Aperdolt tugging the rope? I hear he wants to leave the farm-team over in the House and come up to the majors."

Jackson joined in his laughter. "Nothing I can't handle, John. Unfortunately, he's tugging the rope around the necks of our farmers down there."

"Knucklehead," Leemhy said, chuckling. "What do you need?"

"Well, I'm not going to make up a number, so can we earmark 103% of what we got last year for irrigation funding? At least I'll have a marker in the bill when it goes to the House."

"Of course, Andi. Have your Ag guy talk to my staff, we'll slip it in."

"Thanks John," replied Jackson. "What do you need?" *Let the negotiations begin*, Jackson thought, waiting. Nothing in the Senate is free and Jackson knew the rules—One good turn deserved another. In the major leagues of politics it was extremely bad form to make the other person ask. The Senate had rules of etiquette, very old rules and broken at one's own risk.

"We're having problems with the House Ag Committee on my initiative to plus up the food stamp program."

"You've got my vote, John. Who should I call over in the House? Surely, if we can afford a trillion-dollar aircraft program, we can afford allowing a few million American children to eat better for the next five years for \$209 million."

"You would think. Chairman Ducas could sure use the logic."

"He's on my list, John. I'll talk to him today."

"I'm sure that will help. We are trying to support them on the tobacco subsidies next year. I could use your support."

"That's difficult, John," replied Jackson.

"I know, Andi. But the Maryland delegation really needs it."

"John, it's not a moral issue with me. If people want to poison themselves that's their business. But from a fiscal standpoint how does it make us look if we are budgeting forty-seven million dollars a year for anti-smoking TV ads

while we are paying the tobacco industry over six times that in subsidies because they aren't selling enough tobacco?"

"I know you're right, but the tobacco companies are big contributors and we've got to give them something. Tobacco farming in Maryland and Virginia goes back a long way. Virginia became the richest pre-Revolution colony on the power of tobacco exports. Tobacco was America's biggest cash crop for close to a hundred years."

"I know, John," she laughed. "Always thought it funny that the first big export product of America was drugs..." replied Jackson lightly, stalling, as she thought through a compromise, the silence deafening as Leemhy waited for a counterproposal. "How about this, John," she said. "We take the \$47 million for the anti-smoking ads from the tobacco subsidies? Just a matter of reprogramming the money in the bill."

She waited, the silence deafening, readying a counter-counterproposal. "That's a big hit for them, Andi," replied Leemhy. "How about if we reprogram \$5 million?"

*Gotcha! Time to go to work*, Jackson thought, beaming at Tolmes.

"John, the reason for the tobacco subsidies was to give them time to wean themselves off tobacco and reinvest into new crops. That was over twenty years ago and it's really getting about time isn't it? Besides, Virginia is getting about 25% of the entire Defense Budget in one form or another and that doesn't include all the military personal and the Pentagon staff that live in Virginia and Maryland feeding the State's coffers."

"Well...it's still a steep hit, Andi. How about \$15 million?"

"John, let's put in \$45 million and let them negotiate us down to half the cost of anti-smoking campaign spots, about \$24 million. It will show we are serious about them moving to another cash crop and get those people moving for Fiscal Year 2014 Appropriations. If they don't show progress, we are in position to take the other half of the ad costs next fiscal year."

"That might work, Andi," Leemhy replied.

"I think so too, John. I'll support the subsidy at a minimum of half the anti-smoking budget."

The marker was down. Leemhy understood he had Jackson's support, *at half*. The deal was nonnegotiable and binding, a matter of honor and of the inevitable return. Both knew John would need her for an important vote in the future. Senators have a long memory. "Let's see what happens, Andi. It's a good plan."

"How's the family John?" asked Jackson, the negotiation now over.

"Fine, Andi. I really appreciate your help on this. Anything else we need to look into?"

"Not a thing, John. I'll talk to Ducas today. If you think of anything else I can do to support the plus-up in the food stamps program let me know."

"Will do, Andi. You'll be at the Committee Mark-up next week?"

"Look forward to it, John. Have a good one." The line clicked off.

"I sure hope the farmers back home realize what you're doing for them," said Cliff.

"Doesn't matter, Cliff. That's what we're here for."

"Do they understand that?"

"The problem is Americans don't know their own history and that isn't their fault nor the media's or any of the hundred other excuses citizens are told. The issue is our political process and what the Congress and the White House has allowed to happen."

Still thinking about what he had been a party to, Tolmes sighed. "We live in terrible times."

Knowing what he was focused on, she looked at him, smiling. "I always have to chuckle when I hear millennials talk about how these are such terrible times. We've seen times far more terrible with far more horror than anything we're dealing with today, Cliff. We have the scientific knowledge and the financial and technological resources to surpass any problem in our world today. Yet our leaders keep playing by the same rules Julius Caesar played by and keep ending up with the same result. The primary issue confronting us today is education."

Cliff nodded. "It all seems so...futile sometimes, Senator."

Jackson laughed. "No, Cliff. We keep fighting. The issues of our economy, environment, foreign policy or societal issues like racism, women rights and individual lifestyles can be addressed and solved by the last independent powerbrokers left in our Republic. It's time they took back what is theirs." He looked at her, waiting.

"The voters, Cliff. The ones who will be the final arbitrator of the Republic," Jackson said, pressing the intercom. "Susan, call Congressman Ducas' office. I need to talk to him ASAP."

## About the Author

### William H. Wisecarver

After a career spanning over forty years in national security, politics and international finance, WH “Bill” Wisecarver has written the *Resurrection Saga*. The novels are political thrillers based on actual events ripped from today’s headlines.

Born and raised in San Francisco, CA., his professional experience spans both the public and private sectors. After three tours in the western Pacific with exchange tours in Japan and South Korea, he lectured at the USMC Command and Staff College before becoming a national security advisor on a Senate Leadership staff and as Counsel for the Senate Armed Services Committee. Bill has also served in positions at NASA and the Pentagon. An attorney and financier, he has over twenty years experience in international business.

In addition to writing, Bill continues to provide counsel on national security, constitutional, and economic issues.

He is the recipient of numerous military honors and distinctions and has published several works on national security topics.