
THE SECOND AMERICAN REVOLUTION



THE BUILDING OF AN EMPIRE

KENNETH R.
SZULCZYK

All characters, places, and situations that appear in this work are purely fictitious, created in the writer's mind. Although the places in the novel do exist, any resemblance to real people – living or dead – are entirely coincidental.

I apologize to my readers for the multiple versions of this novel. I wrote this novel during my spare time and didn't know what I was doing. Feeling obligated to my readers, I studied techniques to improve my writing. Although, I still need improvement, the 8th Edition is the best.

The Second American Revolution – Building of an Empire
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Forward

This book contains shocking and extreme material. Why did I write such a book? The mess we call a legal system has reached a point of critical mass. The U.S. economy teeters on the edge of a collapse. The 2008 Financial Crisis served as a warning sign to our leaders and government officials. Roll back the legal system, making it pro-business again. Our leaders need to simplify and reduce our tax systems and regulations for all levels of government.

If the politicians and elected officials do nothing to stop the government's growth, then someone like Jerrick Ray Davis will stand up and take over. Then this dictator either cleans up the legal system or creates a much bigger mess, involving gas chambers and concentration camps.

Dictator in this book emulates Augustus I, the first Emperor of Rome. The Roman Republic destroyed itself with taxes, laws, and wars. History does repeat itself, doesn't it? Augustus grew tired of the chaos and stood up for what he believed. He inherited $\frac{3}{4}$ of his adopted uncle's wealth, Julius Caesar, and funded an army to take over Rome. His reforms allowed the Roman Empire to last for 500 years, despite being plagued by a string of bad emperors for several centuries.

Introduction

How did the greatest democracy on the earth collapse? Why did people lose faith in their democracy, their political leaders, and allowed one man to seize all the power?

It began during the final days of the democracy after the 2008 Financial Crisis had struck a deathblow to the U.S. economy. Government at levels in the United States created a massive, complicated legal system. Entire U.S. government had transformed into a giant lawnmower, mowing down every grass blade that grew too high. After a person had appeared on the government's radar, the government sent its storm troopers, tax agents, regulators, inspectors, and attorneys. Government arrested many people for petty infractions of the law and seized their property.

Businesses did not survive under such a punitive legal system, and they fled to other countries, taking the jobs and wealth with them. Across this great land, factory buildings shut down, becoming dormant, gradually rusting away from exposure to the elements. Unemployed can't find jobs, and mobs formed as people rioted for food and basic supplies.

In the Republic's final days, some powerful members of government plotted to overthrow the U.S. federal government, such as Richard Woodland.

Richard was a tall, muscular man, built like a marine. He had blonde hair and the coldest, bluish eyes. He sat on a chilly green bench, overlooking the pond with a great view of Jefferson's Memorial, within two blocks of the Whitehouse in Washington, D.C.

Winter was brutally cold in 2016. Richard placed his gloved hands over his bright rosy cheeks, keeping warm while he exhaled icy mists.

Richard was a government agent, well not an agent but a person who fixed problems for the U.S. President, Charles Gibson. Richard was an expert at hiding bodies permanently, ensuring the skeletons stayed buried inside the closet.

Richard watched a family of geese swim across the pond, scampering for food. Mother goose swam in the front with the

young ones following in tow. He wanted to pull his nine-millimeter out and have a little target practice. However, he kept his gun in his shoulder holster underneath his jacket because gunshots in this neighborhood would attract attention.

Richard pulled out his touch screen cell phone, scanning for any messages. Then he played a video clip of Jerrick Ray Davis.

Jerrick Ray Davis was a revolutionary, who turned into a big pain in the ass. He formed a new political party, the National Workers' Party and spoke about creating the American Empire. He claimed an empire would save the United States, and he attracted a large following as his speeches hypnotized half the nation.

Richard stretched his legs out, preventing them from going to sleep. As he stretched his legs, the tensed muscles popped several joints in his legs. Then he relaxed and listened to Jerrick's speech.

Jerrick's voice rang out from his cell phone.

Enough is enough.

Our government is ruining our economy.

Our founding fathers had given us one of the greatest gifts one can bestow upon their children.

They gave us a system with great laws with a great government.

Now look at the people in government today.

They are pigs!

They fatten themselves at the public trough.

What have they accomplished?

They keep increasing taxes, regulations, and laws.

They fatten themselves with high salaries and benefits as they feed off the hardworking and industrious.

Those fat pigs in government took over the economy, and nothing makes sense anymore, except the pigs are becoming fatter, literally while the hardworking have sick and are dying off like an extinct species.

Unfortunately, our government is broken, and Congress and the bureaucrats have become the people's enemy.

We must purge ourselves of these charlatans, thieves, and misfits to fix our economy.

We must unite and fight this common enemy.
We must rid ourselves of these people and create a new
government!
A stronger government!
A more intelligent government!”

Then the audience chanted his name in unison, Jerrick!
Jerrick! Jerrick! Jerrick!

Richard abruptly switched the video off and returned the phone to his inside coat pocket. He rubbed his hands together, gently exhaling through them, keeping his hands warm.

Richard agreed that Jerrick Davis was right. The United States suffered from the Second Great Depression, and our leaders were not fixing it. Politicians denied the collapsing, financial health of this great nation. All Americans were passengers on the Titanic and the mountainous iceberg, the sledgehammer of death, floated just over the horizon. Someone must do something, or the United States would sink to the depths of a third-world country.

General Ninian Edwards appeared from nowhere and sat next to Richard. General Edwards towered at six feet one and packed 200 pounds of lean muscle onto his large frame. His hair was still light brown for his age, and his barber always cut his hair short. General scratched at the ragged scar on his left cheek, a souvenir from the 1990 Gulf War, when shrapnel from a grenade injured him on the battlefield. At that time, he was a captain.

General quickly down on the bench before Richard knew it.

However, Richard didn't flinch in surprise. He possessed nerves of steel.

The general broke the cold silence, “I'm glad you made it to our meeting, Richard.”

Richard studied those geese with bad intent. World would not miss them while his finger twitched for several shots. Then he turned to face the general and replied emotionlessly, “General; I wouldn't miss this for the world. Besides, time is our enemy. Any delays and our plans are finished.”

The General asked ambivalently, “Do you really think Jerrick Davis can pull this off?”

“I’m not sure, but what are our options? Can you lead this great country after a coup d’état and prevent a civil war from breaking out? Can you hold this nation together as we transform our government?”

The General reflected for several seconds in deep thought and then uttered, “No, my job is to win battles. I don’t think I could lead this great country, especially since I swore an oath to protect it.”

“That’s precisely my point! Unfortunately, we have no choice. I’m not a leader. I’m more the silent, deadly type if you know what I mean. Only other person who can lead is the leader of the Communist Party, Frank Gitlow...”

“Like hell, I would shoot the bastard myself if he became President. I spent half my life fighting the Communists. Do you think I would hand power over to a Communist?”

“You see; we have no one else. Jerrick is critical to our plans. He must be the new President, whether we want him or not. Jerrick is a natural leader and has a grand vision. People trust him and believe in him. Jerrick is the only one who can pull it off,” Richard added decisively.

“But in some ways, Jerrick scares me. Jerrick’s vision is about building an empire. An empire conquers other countries.”

“Well General, I thought you said your job was winning battles. It sounds like Jerrick will create job security for you. Besides, if Jerrick is half as smart as we think he is, he could pull it off. We’ll be at his side. We’ll help guide him and keep him in line.”

General snickered at the prospect of job security because it had died in the last century. In the new economy, workers suffered at the whim of their employers. An employee could be a superstar today, but the next day, the boss fires the employee, and large, overbearing guards escort the employee off the employer’s property.

General replied, “Well; what kind of job will you do for the Empire?”

“Like I said, I will do what I do best. I’m good at tracking down troublemakers and help them disappear, so Jerrick needs a

strong leader for the Department of Homeland Security, which is perfectly suited for me. You know me. I like to stay in the shadows and do my bidding.”

“You know this is a dangerous course. What happens if we fail? What happens if the coup falls apart? We’ll all be traitors. We’ll face a firing squad.”

“General, does it really matter? Look around you. We’re doomed. If we sit back and wait, nothing will happen. Do you think those damn politicians in Congress will fix anything? Do you see anyone else, who can fix the United States?”

General let out a long sigh and then replied, “Damn; you’re right. It’s just that I dedicated my life to this country. No one has ever done this before in our history.”

“I know, general. I have faith. It can work. Besides, we have no choice. We must move quickly.”

“Why? Is there something you’re not telling me?”

“Jerrick is pissing off everyone in government. President Gibson is losing sleep over Jerrick. I think the time is nearing, when the President will demand a hit on Jerrick. As you can see, we have little time.”

“Do you think you’ll be that hit man?”

“I’m the specialist, and I’m sure I’m at the top of the list.”

“So, you could prevent Jerrick’s assassination?”

“Ideally, but it’s hard to say. After the president issues the orders, I should have enough time to warn Jerrick.”

“Good, we don’t want anything to happen to our golden boy.”

“So general, how’s the state of your troops? Will they follow orders?”

“To be honest, our troops’ state is abysmal. We’re still fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then Congress cut their paychecks, so I know I can rattle our troops to attack Congress, but like I said, time is the essence. Troops’ morale is falling faster than a missile falling from the sky. If I’m lucky, I have a year or two left until the troops stop following my orders.”

“Then general, we must plan quickly. I’ll set up a meeting with you and Jerrick. Without those troops, our coup will not succeed.”

“Okay; set up the meeting.”

Before Richard knew it, the general hopped off the bench and disappeared, leaving Richard alone with the geese. His plan was coming to fruition, and a revolution was imminent. Our democracy’s life was ending, and the greatest empire was ready to be born.

American Empire will dominate the world for centuries.

Part 1 – The Final Days of the Democracy

In the Beginning

Powerful leader was born on January 7, 1979 in a tiny coastal town, Holland, Michigan.

Holland, a small typical town where nothing special happens, is located in western Michigan next to the shores of Lake Michigan. Although Lake Michigan is tainted with toxic chemicals, the lake waters emanate a pristine blue. Its waves crash softly on the light brown sandy shores. During the summer, warm waters attract the people. Occasionally, a drunkard drunk too much, falls off the long pier and drowns.

Why was Jerrick born in this small town? Great leaders are born somewhere. Remember, it's not where you start in life, but where you finish. Jerrick Ray Davis started from the modest environment and grew into a powerful leader. All great leaders are born somewhere.

His mother, Dorothy Davis, chose the name Jerrick, despite protests from his father. Jerrick's mother didn't know the original or meaning of his name. Somewhere she heard the name, and the name stuck. Jerrick is American origin and means "gifted ruler" or the "people's ruler."

Jerrick came from modest stock. His mother worked as a waitress. Dorothy Davis was a slim, petite woman with long curly brunette hair. Although still attractive, the exhaustive hours as a waitress took its toll on her. Spider-like varicose veins crept up her legs, and the constant exposure to cigarette smoke in the restaurant aged her skin with fine cracks and crevices around the eyes and mouth. Of course, a thin coating of makeup would hide the lines and cracks for another five years.

Derrick's father, John Davis, worked as a truck driver, who was always on the road, earning a living for his family. He was the typical absentee father and was never around. Jerrick's father had three passions: drinking beer, watching football, and meting out punishment to his son. If he thought for his son, Jerrick, had misbehaved, he slipped his belt off in seconds, lashing out like a

lunatic. Other than that, John didn't bother with the role of fatherhood. Luckily, for Jerrick, he rarely saw the ferocious licking of his father's belt.

Jerrick Ray Davis was an unusual child. Although Jerrick was a healthy baby who rarely cried, he laid quietly in his crib, observing the world around him. He watched and observed everything with these strange hypnotic, hazel eyes. His blonde hair would darken to a light chestnut brown when he reached puberty.

Everybody in the family loved Jerrick, being a cute and a well-behaved baby. He only cried if he had a problem, but his family knew something was strange about this boy. He always played alone and showed no interest in the other kids. He also took things apart to study them or build things. However, he had trouble speaking and pronouncing words, and continuously babbled syllables that made no sense as if he spoke a foreign language that only he knew.

Jerrick started kindergarten at five years old at Old Bell Elementary School. School's halls and classrooms saw thousands of screaming kids pass through since the 1940s. Furthermore, this school saw several generations of tired, overworked teachers.

After four weeks of school, Jerrick's mom stood washing the dishes at the kitchen sink, and occasionally glanced at a small TV set sitting on the counter, blaring a never-ending soap opera.

Telephone began ringing.

Tossing the dish into the sink, she grabbed the telephone receiver. Then she frowned, when the caller identified himself as the principal.

Principal wanted to speak with Dorothy and John as soon as possible.

After she had dropped the phone receiver onto its cradle, her elbow knocked a coffee cup to the floor, exploding into large shards.

Next day, Dorothy arrived at school while her husband drove a long haul to Nevada.

Jerrick's mother meandered to the reception's desk and politely announced, "I'm here to speak with the principal."

Receptionist had a perpetual frown carved on her face as joy and life left her generations ago. Receptionist knew it was never good for parents to meet the principal, especially within the first month of school.

Receptionist replied formally and emotionlessly, "Yes; we were expecting you. Please have a seat Ms. Davis."

Then she pressed a button on the phone system and let the principal know Jerrick's parent had arrived. Next, she called Jerrick's teacher on the school's intercom to request her presence in the principal's office.

After ten minutes, the principal poked his head out the door.

Principal neared sixty years old, and he was losing the battle with his hair as his hairline rapidly receded. He wore glasses with a thin silver frame. He impressed people that he was very smart and knew what he was doing.

Principal said politely, "Oh, Mrs. Davis, please come in."

Principal opened his door all the way and used his left hand to gesture for Jerrick's mother to sit in a chair by his desk.

After a few seconds, Jerrick's teacher opened the door and sat in the seat next to Mrs. Davis. She panted from the jog between her classroom and the principal's office.

Teacher was Ms. Bauer, a young, attractive woman, recently graduated from college. Filled with youth and vitality, she eagerly taught her children.

Principal closed the door and sat behind his desk. He leaned forward and placed both hands on his desk.

Principal started in a kind, serious tone, "Ms. Bauer, Jerrick's teacher, has noticed some strange behavior from Jerrick. He never plays with the other children and has trouble talking. Further, he always daydreams when Ms. Bauer is teaching the kids."

Mrs. Davis didn't know what to say. Her worst nightmare came true. Something was wrong with Jerrick. She wanted to

cradle her face into her hands and cry. However, Jerrick's mom fought back those tears. She didn't cry in front of strangers.

Ms. Bauer sat there quietly with a serious expression upon her face. She wouldn't be the harbinger of bad news. Furthermore, she neither added nor elucidated any points. She observed the meeting between the principal and the parent.

"Mrs. Davis; please permit our psychologist to test Jerrick? Once we have more information, then we can plan a course of action," the principal said cheerfully, dispelling the gloom.

Principal slid a consent form across the desk, so it rested in front of Mrs. Davis.

With no conscious thought, she grabbed the nearest pen and scribbled her signature on the bottom of the form.

"Mrs. Davis, where is your husband?" the principal inquired solemnly.

Looking up to see the principal's face, Mrs. Davis studied the principal's degrees on the wall behind him. A Bachelor's degree hung to the left while a Master's degree hung to the right.

"He's a truck driver. He's delivering a long haul to Nevada," Dorothy mumbled.

Emotional impact from today's bad news made her voice crackle and rough. She wished her husband, John, was here, so she could hold his hand and tap into his strength. As usual, he had left, when she needed him the most.

"Thank you for coming in, Mrs. Davis," the principal said.

Jerrick's mom shot up from the chair and bolted for the exit.

Teacher remained in the principal's office a little longer.

Once Jerrick's mom inserted the key into the car door, the tears flowed down her face in small rivulets, smearing her makeup.

Dorothy sat in her car for 15 minutes until she had composed herself and drove home.

Psychologist tested Jerrick's IQ. He scored 80, placing him in the below average intelligence category.

Watching a talk show on TV, Jerrick's mother answered the telephone. Principal informed her of the bad news. He said, "We think the best course for Jerrick is to place him in special education. There, he'll get the attention he deserves. Don't worry! Once he makes progress, we'll switch him to the regular classes. We also have a licensed speech therapist, who'll meet Jerrick three times a week to work with his speech impediment."

Hanging up the phone, Jerrick's mother sat on the couch and cried again.

Dorothy's tears drowned out the constant arguing emanating from a TV talk show host and his rowdy guests. She drowned in her own thoughts. What could she do? These educated people knew what they were doing. She placed her son's future into their hands. Perhaps the principal thought they can help him and make him normal. Jerrick would live a regular life and make a decent living someday.

Principal immediately placed Jerrick in special education.

Teacher, Kathy Brewster hated the title Ms. Brewster because it made her sound old, so everyone called her Kathy. Besides, Kathy was more personable, more approachable, more friendly. Kathy taught in a classroom, located at the end of the building on the far side of an L-shaped school. School administration isolated the special kids from everyone else.

Kathy was a middle-aged woman. Her life consisted of her job, taking care of her cat, and reading hot, steamy romance novels. Sometimes, she dated younger men, but they were immature and afraid of a strong, educated woman. Kathy remained unwed and focused on her job.

Kathy noticed strange things about Jerrick. On one fall day when the green leaves were turning into yellows, reds, and browns, she was reading to the children.

Children were sitting on the carpet surrounding the teacher, giggling and laughing at the funny story.

Kathy noticed Jerrick playing by himself in the corner. She let him play alone, avoiding a conflict with him. He could be a stubborn little guy with a little temper.

Kathy noticed Jerrick had a Rubric's Cube in his hands, and every side had a mixture of different colors.

After Kathy had read the book, she saw the happy faces who immensely enjoyed the story. Then she stared at Jerrick.

Jerrick tossed the Rubric's Cube onto the floor near his feet. He solved it! Every side had a solid color.

Teacher looked at the Rubric's Cube in disbelief. Perhaps she was working too hard and wasn't sleeping well. She imagined he had solved it! Even though she loved these children and loved her job, these kids were special, or in the old days, they would call them slow. They were light bulbs that didn't shine as brightly as the other children in the normal classes.

Jerrick can't solve a Rubric's Cube in 15 minutes. The principal never placed children who can solve Rubric's Cubes into her class. Principal always gave her the special children, who needed more help with their education.

Kathy Brewster noticed another incident with Jerrick in January 1985 in the middle of a mild Michigan winter. It snowed a lot in Michigan because the Great Lakes surrounded the state, creating the lake effect.

Children returned to their classrooms after three-week Christmas vacation, spending their free time making snowmen and throwing snowballs. Children sat at their desk and painted pictures with watercolors.

Jerrick played on the other side of the room and collected all the wooden blocks from the toy chest.

After 40 minutes, Kathy didn't hear a peep from Jerrick. He played on the side of the room with a partition blocking her view.

Kathy stood up and rushed to the other side of the room, and lo and behold, she almost tripped over an elaborate city made from the small wooden blocks. City spanned half the floor.

"What's that?" Kathy asked sweetly.

"That ff-food ff-for people," Jerrick replied, stuttering a little, pointing to a large building on the city's edge. Building was sizable and square as if the building could feed thousands.

Then he pointed to the largest building in the center and added, "That's KK-King lives." Building was not quite a pyramid because the blocks made it boxy, similar to an Aztec ziggurat.

City also had a library, a car repair shop, and a school.

Teacher was in shock because Jerrick put thought into the city's layout. He ensured the city's residents had easy access to all the amenities.

Towards the end of the year, Kathy experienced the biggest shock in her life.

Kathy was reading a children's book about the Founding Fathers of the United States. She held the book up high, so the children can see the pictures. She read each sentence slowly, precisely enunciating her words.

Kathy glanced to her left, surprised to see Jerrick sitting with the group, listening intently.

Once Kathy finished, a commotion broke out.

Jerrick stood on one of the chairs above the other children. In perfect English, he said, "Give me liberty or give me death. Tell the King no more taxes!"

Kathy was both amazed and shocked.

Jerrick always played alone and never showed interest in the other children. Now, he became a politician, standing on his soapbox, giving a political speech. He would be a good politician. Heaven forbid, his low IQ would be perfect for the job.

After Kathy had guided her students onto their buses, she dashed to the psychologist's office.

Psychologist was bewildered too and re-tested Jerrick's IQ unofficially.

Following week, Jerrick left Kathy's room and went to the psychologist's office for half the day.

At the end of the day, Kathy's curiosity tugged impatiently at her mind.

Kathy hurried to the psychologist's office and tapped on the psychologist's office door.

"Door is open, come on in!"

Kathy opened the door and walked in, "I hate to bother you, but I'm curious about the IQ results for one of my students."

Psychologist sat behind his desk, folding his hands behind his head, leaning dangerously back on his chair.

Psychologist grew a thick dark beard, gradually turning gray. He absently scratched his beard, when he talked to people as if the act of scratching boosted his intelligence level. Unfortunately, the years behind the desk and little physical exercise took a tow on him as his belly protruded from his abdomen.

Kathy noticed the psychologist's desk, littered with stacks of random papers, student files, and test results. On one stack of papers, a coffee cup lay in the center with a mist rising from the cup.

"I have your student's results right here. That's why I just poured myself another cup of coffee. I'm relaxing and thinking about it," the psychologist stated in a mysterious tone.

Kathy's curiosity escalated and asked, "What do you mean? What do you need to think about?"

"Jerrick tested higher. His IQ increased to 120."

"What? What do you mean?"

Kathy's mouth opened widely in surprise, and she grabbed the back of a chair to hold her balance.

"That is why I'm sitting here, thinking. IQs are stable and change very little over a person's life."

"So, Jerrick is not only smart but gifted?"

"It does appear that way."

"Should he remain in special ed?"

"I talked to the principal half an hour ago. We believe Jerrick should stay in special ed. He hasn't developed the maturity and social skills to be in a normal class. If he improves socially, then we'll place him in a regular class. Don't tell his parents about the new IQ results."

"Why?" Kathy asked perplexed and added, "That would put Jerrick's parents at ease because their son is smart."

"Principal and I concur the best course of action is Jerrick stays in special ed. If his parents knew, they could sue the school. Besides, if Jerrick's parents think their son is slow, they'll be more

motivated to help him succeed,” the psychologist said mechanically in a calculated tone.

Kathy left the psychologist’s office bewildered because special ed is for the special students. Now she had this anomaly attending her class.

Kathy, principal, and psychologist knew little about Jerrick because he was a creative genius. Creative geniuses are a different breed. Half of them showed their brilliance at a young age while the other half appeared slow and even retarded as young children. Their brilliant minds needed more time to develop, but once their minds blossomed; then nothing could stop their brilliance and creativity.

If the psychologist had retested Jerrick as a young man, he would discover Jerrick’s IQ rose to 150. Jerrick was quite gifted as the whole world would find out.

Jerrick’s mom suspected something was different about her son. One Saturday morning, she popped into his room unannounced.

Jerrick kept his room organized with all the toys stacked neatly on shelves. However, on this day, Jerrick spread all his toys across the bedroom floor.

On one side of the room, Jerrick constructed a large city made from dominoes with an elaborate layout, resembling Aztec architecture.

On the other side of the room, Jerrick constructed a modern city made from children’s blocks. Some blocks stood tall like skyscrapers while other blocks were short and long.

Between the cities, Jerrick lined all his little green, plastic army men and tanks. They faced the domino city. On one side of the block city, Jerrick placed several small toy airplanes.

“Jerrick, sweetie, what are you doing?”

“Mom, army goes there,” as he pointed at the domino city.

“Why?”

“Build, mom. Bigger cities.”

“Which city is that,” his mom asked while pointing at the domino city.

“Mexico, mom.”

“How do you know about Mexico?”

“A map mom,” Jerrick said as he pointed to his bed.

On his bed, he sprawled a world map over the top of the bedspread. On the map, Jerrick circled Mexico with a crayon and scribbled an arrow pointing at Mexico City.

Jerrick’s mom shook her head in disbelief because he had an active imagination.

“I made you a grilled cheese sandwich for lunch and cherry punch.”

“Oh boy,” Jerrick screamed as he ran from the room to the kitchen.

Jerrick delayed the battle because the little Emperor was hungry. Conquest of Mexico will wait for another day.

By the third grade, the principal and psychologist placed Jerrick in the normal classes.

Jerrick floated through school and never completed any homework. He slid by with B’s and C’s in his classes. Sometimes, Jerrick became defiant and didn’t listen to his teachers, spending a chunk of his early education in the detention room, counting the number of bricks in the wall.

By the fifth grade, the school administration combated Jerrick’s classroom disruptions with Ritalin, believing he suffered from attention-deficit disorder. In the old days, teachers called it hyperactivity. Unfortunately, many people view hyperactivity as a disease that must be cured. However, as hyperactive children reached adulthood, they can channel the energy from hyperactivity into motivation and drive.

Around 10 o'clock, Jerrick strolled to the office to take his medication each morning.

Jerrick's parents went along because the school officials knew what to do. Besides, Jerrick's parents didn't have a choice. If they refused the medication, then the school would turn the parents into the Child Protective Services. The State of Michigan during that time treated families harshly if they refused to drug their hyperactive kids.

Ritalin reduced Jerrick's disruptions. Once the drug kicked in, Jerrick became drowsy, lethargic, and imaginative. He didn't mind because daydreams would flow through his mind.

Jerrick Ray Davis, being a creative genius, kicked back, relaxed, and enjoyed his vivid daydreams. He sometimes dreamt he flew airplanes around the world and visited exotic cities. Other daydream he stood on stage delivering speeches while crowds of people chanted his name after he had made a poignant statement. Then the crowd's roar rose to a crescendo, 'Jerrick! Jerrick! Jerrick! . . .'

If Jerrick weren't daydreaming, he stared out the classroom windows at the clouds and trees, conjuring faces and images from the trees and clouds.

For example, one day in 5th grade science class, Jerrick gazed out the classroom window at a group of oak trees, bordering the school playground. He saw one oak tree resembled a witch's face.

Witch had sunken, beady eyes, and a long, crooked nose as green oak leaves cast the face in a greenish hue. Jagged shards of teeth jutted from a large, grinning mouth.

Looking at the witch's face, Jerrick saw the eyes turned a bloody red while his heart had beaten faster.

Then a wind rustled through the leaves.

Witch grimaced and opened her mouth broadly to blow a curse in Jerrick's direction.

Jerrick convulsed from his daydream.

Witch casting a curse on Jerrick had startled him. He twitched his arms and legs while his right arm collided with his books, crashing them to the floor, disrupting the whole class.

All the students stopped writing notes, and his teacher stopped his lecture in mid-sentence. Everyone turned to face Jerrick.

Teacher asked, “Jerrick, is there a problem?”

“No!” Jerrick replied firmly with a little cockiness in his voice, challenging the teacher, hissing like a striking cobra.

Teacher turned to the blackboard and continued writing.

Jerrick picked up his books and returned them to their spot on the desk. He stared at the oak tree through the window. Witch had left. Jerrick saw an ordinary, oak tree.

Unfortunately, Jerrick’s imagination would get the best of him. On some nights, he still checked under the bed for monsters. He didn’t want any extra guests in his room at night, especially guests with beady red eyes, claws and ragged teeth, waiting for Jerrick to fall asleep.

The Teenage Years

Jerrick hated high school and all his teachers. Who could blame him? Jerrick’s high school was located at the end of a long paved road on the edge of town. A fence followed the property on the backside of the school, isolating the school from the four-lane highway, and its roaring traffic speeding down the asphalt jungle. On some days, students heard the incessant howl of the traffic.

On the left side of the school was a dark, dense forest while on the right side was the football and baseball fields. Then thick, dense woods bordered the sports fields. Many students felt the property was better suited for a prison than a school.

During high school, Jerrick’s brilliant mind blossomed. He picked up a book in the 8th grade and couldn’t put it down. He devoured all 800 pages of the Stephen King’s *The Stand* in one weekend. This one book led to stacks of other books. He branched into electronics, computers, psychology, mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Unfortunately, Jerrick’s restless mind had trouble focusing on history and classical literature.

Jerrick's peers noticed. Although Jerrick didn't earn the highest grades in class, he brilliantly answered the teacher's questions, swimming circles around the teacher's head.

Jerrick loved mathematics, and his brilliant mind absorbed basic calculus by the 10th grade.

Jerrick stealthily approached and cornered the school principal one day while the principal was walking along the hallway.

Principal jumped in surprise and tried to walk around Jerrick.

Subsequently, Jerrick announced in a loud voice, "Mr. Bastien; could I take calculus in the 11th grade?"

Principal stopped and glared at Jerrick, startled as if he stepped on some dog shit during a walk in the park. Then he searched for a discrete way to shake the shit off his shoe without touching it.

Principal retorted in an authoritative voice, "I'm sorry Jerrick, but you should take calculus during your senior year."

Entire school administration knew Jerrick, and he was a pain in the ass. Principal didn't want to torture the calculus teacher yet, granting the teacher another year of peace before Jerrick showed up.

Of course, Jerrick showed his brilliance to the calculus teacher, defying authority.

One day in the 10th grade, Jerrick stayed late in the electronics lab, playing with an educational, electric motor, where a person can adjust multiple settings. Jerrick tried various adjustments until he squeezed the most power from that motor as the motor's whine filled the classroom.

Bell had rung, signaling the students to go to their next class.

Jerrick ignored the hustle and bustle around him as students shuffled in and out of the classroom. He disassembled the motor and wires and placed them in the box, oblivious to his surroundings.

As Jerrick looked up, the students in the calculus class began sitting down.

Then the tardy bell rang, and the calculus teacher started the lesson.

Jerrick stayed a little longer as his curiosity caught the best of him.

Calculus teacher explained, “When a function has multiple pieces like a function within a parenthesis raised to a power, then you use the chain rule to calculate the derivative.”

Teacher then wrote the function on the black board, $y = 3(x^2+1)^3$.

Jerrick solved the problem easily.

Jerrick rose from his chair and started to leave the classroom.

Teacher was explaining the steps to calculate the derivative.

Once Jerrick opened the classroom door, he turned to face the teacher and the class. Then he shouted, “the derivative is $18x(x^2+1)^2$ ”

Subsequently, he closed the door silently behind him.

Unfortunately, Jerrick missed the calculus teacher’s frown, when he solved the problem and indeed, it equaled $18x(x^2+1)^2$.

Students gasped because a smart-ass sophomore just outsmarted them in the calculus class.

Jerrick expanded his social life during high school. He made new friends and hung out with misfits; you might even call losers. They rebelled against authority and all of its representations. They were lazy, did poorly in school, and consumed copious amounts of alcohol and marijuana.

Jerrick rarely drank beer because the hops’ bitterness was too much for him. However, pot was different. Jerrick wasn’t sure why he started smoking marijuana. Perhaps the school forced him to take Ritalin as a child. Nevertheless, he suspected marijuana represented the outcasts and misfits, and Jerrick wanted to belong to that group. At the heart of Jerrick’s core, he was a rebel. A revolutionary leader never follows a crowd.

Of course hanging out with misfits was interesting too. They did some of the craziest shit together. Usual suspects were Larry, Jerrick, and Tommy. If the three left town, the crime rate would drop in half.

One night in the 10th grade, Jerrick, Tommy, and Larry snuck out of their parent's homes at 10 PM.

Jerrick, Tommy, and Larry met down at the Black River under the Bell Road Bridge. River's official name was the Macatawa River. However, all the locals called it the Black River because the river's waters were dark, turbulent, and shiny like black obsidian stone under the moonlight. If a person accidentally dropped something into it, it would disappear into the murky waters forever.

Bell Road Bridge was on the edge of the city's limits, which had little traffic. However, the boys didn't worry about the traffic. They looked for Holland's finest, the Holland City Police.

Small cities like Holland have low crime rates, so the police harass the drunks and teenagers. If the police caught the teenagers violating curfew, then the state would go after their parents, assessing large fines while enriching the city's coffers.

Under the bridge, Jerrick, Tommy, and Larry isolated themselves.

During a cool October night, the chilly air turned the young men's breathe into small clouds of mist.

Full moon reflected off the river's waves, breaking the moon's image into shimmering shards of light.

They lay on their backs on the concrete foundation with Larry in the center. Jerrick lay to his left while Tommy lay on the right. Concrete's coldness penetrated through their clothes.

Larry was the oldest and the leader. Although Larry was not an athlete, he had a muscular build. He let his dark-brown hair and scraggly beard grow long. His rugged, good looks attracted women here and there.

On the other hand, Tommy was skinny and appeared to be underfed as a child. He let his black hair grow long. He grew a beard once, but his beard poked out in patches on his boyish face.

Jerrick's appearance was somewhere in between. He was not skinny but not as muscular as Larry. However, he was an average looking guy. In a room of 100 women, ten women would find Jerrick attractive, especially capturing the hearts of the heavier ones.

Jerrick would get a scribble here and there in a lonely teenage girl's diary while Larry would get several pages. Of course, once Jerrick said something too intelligent, those women would flee as if he had escaped from an insane asylum. Unfortunately, women in Michigan are attracted to the dumb, athletic types.

Larry pulled a joint from his pocket and lit it up, inhaling deeply. An acrid, pine-tree smell of marijuana filled the air around them.

Then Larry passed the joint to Jerrick while Larry coughed out the smoke. "This is some good shit," Larry replied in a muffled, harsh voice.

Jerrick eagerly grabbed that joint and asked, "What kind of shit is this?"

"Sensimilla! Supposedly, this grower used genetically modified seeds from Amsterdam," Larry replied.

"That shit is supposed to be the best," Tommy chimed in, fitting in with the group.

Then Larry pulled out some tweezers and smoked the rest until it disintegrated into nothing.

Larry, Tommy, and Jerrick were very high. Although the concrete foundation had an angle of 40 degrees, the boys thought they hovered several feet off the ground.

Tommy replied completely stoned, "Wow; look at the water, the moon in the water. Ohhhh! Wow!"

After an hour, the boys weren't quite so high anymore.

Larry stood up, stretching his legs.

Jerrick also rose slowly to his feet and asked, "What do you want to do?"

“I’m hungry and thirsty,” Larry replied. He coughed several times and added, “Let’s go look for something to eat.”

“Are you crazy? Nearest store is two miles away,” Jerrick argued as if this knowledge would stop Larry.

Larry pointed at a row of piers with boats, “What about over there?”

Although the piers were hidden under darkness, several, white boats stood out.

“I’m hungry too,” and Tommy got up.

Boys glanced at the pier where the river bended and changed direction. They saw the outline of several boats bobbing up and down from the small waves of the river.

Then, the boys began walking in single file. Larry walked first; Jerrick followed second while Tommy followed last.

The boys walked a bumpy, treacherous path along the river. Larry tripped on a branch but quickly regained his balance.

One misstep, then a person would be getting a cold, muddy river bath. Of course, Larry knew this path well. Indeed, two years ago, he tripped and fell into the dirty water, face first. Then he had a long, cold humiliating walk home.

Boys, however, made it to the first short pier, bone dry; nobody took a dirty bath that evening in the river.

Boys walked on the pier and hopped into the speedboat that someone tied to the end of the pier. Boat gently swayed as each boy climbed aboard.

Then they saw several fishing rods and tackle boxes, but the boat had no munchies.

In a fit of rage, Larry threw the fishing rods into the river. Then he glanced toward the boat’s front, studying the controls.

Larry whispered, “You guys won’t believe this. Keys are still in the ignition!”

Tommy and Jerrick both turned and stared at the boat’s steering wheel. Under moonlight, they saw the silver glint of a key.

Before Tommy and Jerrick had spoken, Larry untied the boat.

Jerrick asked apprehensively, “What are you doing?”

“Let’s go for a spin!”

Larry sat behind the steering wheel while Tommy climbed into the front passenger seat, and Jerrick sat in the second seat behind Larry.

Boys let the boat drift a little down the river.

Then Larry turned the key in the ignition.

Engine made several loud clicks but refused to start.

Then Larry paused a minute and tried again.

Boat's motor roared into life.

As Larry increased the throttle, the boat lurched forward, taking off across the water.

For a few seconds, Jerrick worried about their misdeeds. Someone near the river could hear the loud boat motor and call the police. In these parts, men often went fishing under a moon lit sky with a 12-pack of beer chilling in a cooler.

If the police caught them, the police would charge the boys with vehicle theft, marijuana possession, and curfew violation.

Jerrick looked around and didn't see any lights or commotions or any other human activity.

Occasionally, Jerrick heard a dog barking in the distance over the roar of the engine.

Then Jerrick calmed down and stopped worrying as adrenaline pumped through his veins. Adding the high from the genetically modified marijuana from Amsterdam, they were gods, hopping across the water.

They took turns driving the boat.

When Jerrick drove the boat, the cool wind blew Jerrick's hair back as the powerful motor propelled the boat forward.

Then Jerrick turned sharply and made loopy figure eights while the boat bobbed up and down from the river's waves.

After an hour, the boys drove the boat to the Bell Road Bridge. Larry took it cool and turned off the boat's motor, steering the boat onto the shore as the boat's bottom scraped the riverbank.

Both Tommy and Jerrick jumped off the boat and scampered home like scared rats.

Larry sauntered home, acting as if he did nothing wrong. He would be shocked if someone accused him of any crime that

night. How could someone accuse Larry of a crime? He didn't do anything tonight except hang out with a couple of good friends.

Jerrick and his friends started the 11th grade.

Before the first day of school, they planned to teepee the high school. In Michigan, the schools start at the end of August, when Michigan's summers are hot and humid with temperatures soaring into the upper 90s.

Larry, the ringleader, called Jerrick, Tommy, Brian, Richard, Tim, Ed, and so on, telling them to meet at nine o'clock in the woods next to the high school's baseball field. He said, "Bring as much toilet paper, bleach, and eggs that you can carry."

Everyone showed up.

Jerrick arrived a few minutes late, but he saw Bruce brought a large army duffel bag filled with toilet paper.

They sat in a large circle on the edge of the baseball field, giving communion to their God, Mary Jane. All the malfeasants wore shorts while the tall, prickly grass made their legs itch.

Malfeasants started the ceremony in good spirits. Several people pulled out joints, smoking them and passing them around.

At 11 o'clock, they stood up, brushing the debris and grass from their legs. Then they formed a line like soldiers, picking up their arsenal in unison and marching single file into the battlefield at the front of the high school.

Then pandemonium broke out.

Jerrick grabbed a couple of rolls of toilet paper, flinging them high into the large oak trees.

Kids threw rolls of toilet paper everywhere.

Some members wove toilet paper into the bushes as if they were decorating a Christmas tree.

Someone grabbed bleach and poured it across the lawn.

Larry used charcoal to scribble on the doors, "Seniors Rule!"

They must admit. They were clever for a bunch of druggies. They were all juniors, so the school administration would blame the seniors for this vandalism.

Although the misfits brought a large quantity of supplies, the mayhem lasted for 15 minutes. However, the rush and marijuana stretched minutes into hours.

After the supplies had run out, the group began leaving.

Jerrick turned and glanced at the school. Giant oak trees in the front looked like weeping willows with white vines swaying in the wind.

They threw so much toilet paper; it looked like it snowed on the school property in late August.

Next day, Jerrick woke up groggy as the rattle of his alarm clock pricked his head with needles.

Jerrick slid out of bed and walked to the kitchen.

His mom slaved over a stove.

“Mom, I don’t feel good. Can I stay home from school?”

“You’ll miss the first day.”

His mom scrutinized him from head to toe as her hand moved the spatula in the frying pan, scrambling the eggs. Jerrick was a little pale and unkempt so he must be sick.

Then his mom added, “Okay, but no computer games. Also no novels. Read something better.”

“Okay mom,” Jerrick replied while almost halfway to his room.

Although his mom’s cooking filled the house with scents of eggs, bacon, hash browns, and toast, Jerrick needed more sleep than nourishment.

He awakened several hours later and ate a healthy breakfast that his mom left on a plate on the counter.

His mom left a note on the kitchen table, ‘Jerrick. I went to the store. I love you, MOM.’

After breakfast, he headed into his room to read a book on social psychology, which he bought last week at a garage sale. Jerrick scoured the garage sales for cheap college textbooks.

He read up to Chapter 4, when Larry called him.

Larry stated in his usual cheery voice, “Hey dude; what’s up?”

“Not much, I was just lying around.”

“I know; I didn’t see you in school. You skipped again.”

Jerrick asked, “What happened?” He knew the school principal was furious.

“Principal and teachers were mad. In the first period, the principal said over the intercom that all students must go outside and pick up that mess. If we do not clean it up within an hour, we’ll lose our open lunch and other privileges. So, all the students went outside and pick up the toilet paper. You missed it. It was great!”

“Ah man, I shouldn’t have skipped!”

“What are you doing tonight? Let’s get high!”

“Larry, I can’t. My mom doesn’t work tonight. I must stay home because I told her I was sick.”

“Alright. Later man!”

“Later!”

Then they both hung up.

Jerrick’s mother quickly burst through the door, “Jerrick, who was that on the phone?”

Jerrick almost jumped because he immersed himself in a book; he didn’t hear his mom return from the store. She was in her bedroom, when Larry had called.

“That was Larry. He told me about the first day of school.”

“Larry? You know I don’t like you hanging out with him. Can’t you find better friends?”

“Mom, Larry is okay once you get to know him.”

“Me and your dad think something is wrong with Larry. That boy ain’t right!”

“Mom, Larry is my best friend.”

“Okay! Okay!” Jerrick’s mom didn’t want to argue and asked, “Would you like something to drink?”

“A Pepsi with plenty of ice.”

“You didn’t say the magic word!”

“Pleeease mom, may I have a Pepsi?”

Jerrick's mom smiled and closed his bedroom door. She went to the kitchen and poured a soda for her only son.

Next day in school as Jerrick walked to his locker, a passing face here and there frowned at him angrily. Some students weren't pleased to see Jerrick.

Then one student, Jimmy, walked by Jerrick and uttered, "Thanks asshole for the mess yesterday!"

Jerrick kept walking as if he didn't hear the student's comment. What could he say?

Strangely, every student knew who tee-peed the school except the administration. It was no mystery. Somehow and in some way, when something happened, Larry, Jerrick, and Tommy were at the center of it. A person didn't need a degree in rocket science to identify the suspects! However, the school administration never questioned them!

Although Jerrick liked hanging out with Larry, sometimes Jerrick avoided him.

Larry was personable, friendly charismatic, and the center of a party. Unfortunately, he could be a nut. If Larry had one too many beers at a party, he would turn around and punch the face of the biggest guy in the room. Although Larry wasn't a small man, he always picked fights with much bigger men, the size of a refrigerator with legs. Then of course, Larry would get his ass kicked. He had a growing collection of torn t-shirts with blood splatters on them. After the fight had ended, a beautiful woman would always help Larry off the floor and nurse Larry's wounds with kisses and hot passion.

Some nights Jerrick stayed home and curled up to a good suspense novel, spending the whole night reading it.

Of course, Jerrick still daydreamed. He kept daydreaming, where he stood on a stage while millions of people stood in the crowd, savoring his every word. Jerrick spoke with great words and gestured with his hands to emphasize key points.

Then, the crowd erupted into a loud chant, “Jerrick! Jerrick! Jerrick! ...” Afterwards, the crowd’s cheers would die down, and Jerrick continued his speech.

At this point, Jerrick didn’t hear all the words in his daydream, but the words would flow out. He would rise and become a powerful leader one day.

Jerrick knew Larry and Tommy weren’t going to college. Jerrick was surprised because Larry was smart and would make a good businessman.

Of course, Larry and Tommy planned to remain in their hometown and party as if they still attended high school. Although they became older, the high school girls were always the same age. Those two would plant themselves in Holland with IVs stuck in their arms, filling their veins with copious amounts of beer and marijuana.

Jerrick debated whether to go to college. He knew from history that all U.S. Presidents in the 20th century went to college, except Harry Truman. Some considered President Truman to be a great leader. Out of all presidents, Truman had both the highest and lowest approval ratings in history, at least until the presidents after 2000. After 2000, U.S. presidents competed for the lowest approval ratings as the U.S. economy sank, and chaos and riots erupted across the great land.

Jerrick had no choice about college. He knew something infected the Michigan economy because his grandmother told him many stories about old Michigan.

His grandmother grew up poor in rural Arkansas during the Great Depression, working hard in the rice fields to feed her family. His grandfather, long deceased, married her and took her on a journey, starting a new life in Michigan.

During the 1950s, Michigan had it all. Employers were hurting for workers as the Michigan factories operated at full steam, producing cars and trucks for the whole world. Workers joined unions and earned high wages with generous health benefits and pension plans. Cities were clean. Government paved and constructed new highways and roads and instituted an excellent education system.

Jerrick didn't believe his grandmother. Comparing the new and old Michigans was comparing Ferraris to Fiats. Two completely differed. Did Michigan have the best roads and highways in the nation? Now Michigan had the worst roads and highways with more cracks and craters than the moon's surface. Did Michigan have the best schools in the nation? Jerrick saw most his peers students smoked pot or drank alcohol. His school was particularly bad. Rival schools called Jerrick's school 'The Chemical Team.'

Jerrick knew Michigan had jobs during the 1990s, but these were non-union jobs. They were full-time and paid \$6 per hour while the minimum wage was \$3.35 per hour. However, the union jobs disappeared a long time ago.

Jerrick heard rumors a union job would pay a janitor \$20 per hour to push a broom. Everyone knew which factories were the union shops. When people drove by a factory, they saw a large parking lot that could hold hundreds of cars would have 30 cars parked in it. The union shop employed few people, leaving large factory spaces empty.

Then Jerrick noticed something else. Occasionally, as he drove by the union shops, he saw no cars parked in the parking lot. The factories were abandoned, gradually rusting away.

Jerrick knew the reason why. The United States opened itself to international trade. High-cost factories, the union shops, became the first casualty. Then the non-union shops were next, and finally, a massive financial crash put the remaining Americans out of work after 2008.

Jerrick knew the death of U.S. manufacturing came in three destructive waves. First, Japan kicked our asses in the 1980s, decimating our steel industries and denting the American car industry. Then Japan experienced a financial crisis in the 1990s and never rebounded. Second, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan kicked our asses during the 1990s. Whole electronics and computer hardware industries were gone. Finally, before the 2008 Financial Crisis, the Mexican, Indian, and Chinese corporations were kicking our ass. Mexico made our cars, the programmers in India wrote all our computer programs and

answered the telephone help lines, and China made all that cheap crap that filled the shelves in our stores.

Jerrick knew he can't stay in his small hometown in Michigan, even though he loved hanging out with Larry and Tommy. He knew the Michigan economy had only one direction - down.

One day in September, Jerrick went to the library and pulled a thick, soft cover SAT preparation book from the shelf.

Jerrick spent months devouring every problem in that book. He knew his grades were not great, but excellent SAT scores would give him an edge. Almost all college admissions dissected a student's achievement into grades and test scores. Having access to a large cache of money helped too, especially if a university needed a new library!

On a cold winter day in January 1998, Jerrick took the SAT.

Only half the juniors sat in the cafeteria taking the exam.

Jerrick knew where the other half was. Holland had no shortage of booze and drugs. Trillions of brain cells were dying that night in a small Michigan town.

Jerrick aced the mathematics section but struggled with the verbal section. He almost fainted from shocked, when he received the results three weeks later.

Jerrick ripped open the envelope and accidentally tore a corner off the page of the test results.

His eyes quickly scanned for those two important numbers.

With the old SAT exam ranging from 200 to 800, Jerrick scored a 780 in math and a 490 for verbal. He missed two math problems, but his verbal score was atrocious. He joked he was a mathematical genius, but couldn't speak English.

Of course, those eggheads said the SAT is not an intelligence exam. If a person had scored too high, they called him or her a genius. If a person scored too low, then they called him/her a dumb shit.

Consequently, Jerrick applied to several universities in the State of Michigan. Although they all accepted him, only one university, Northern Mackinaw University, offered a scholarship.

Unfortunately, the university was located in the isolated, cold, northern peninsula in Michigan in the middle of nowhere.

University was located in a dying community as the iron mining industry left the state and relocated to Asia.

Jerrick didn't want to go to Upper Michigan, but where else could he go? He didn't come from a rich family. If he did, he would be going to a party school, like Chico State or Arizona State.

Jerrick did his best and accepted the scholarship. He must suffer the long cold winters for four years in Upper Michigan.

It was amazing how fast time flew by. Jerrick was already a senior in high school and graduation was rapidly approaching.

Jerrick was never girl crazy, but, during his senior year, he thought about the opposite sex. Jerrick was shy and intimidated by women, but the prom was two weeks away.

Entering the cafeteria, he saw his potential date, Sandy. He didn't know much about her except she was stuck in the 80s and not a popular girl in school.

Sandy stood quietly in the lunch line, eating a late lunch.

Cafeteria had few students.

Jerrick deliberately stood in line behind her.

Sandy stood there as a dolled up mannequin. She wore an odd combination of clothes: black tights and a pink top with a white sweater tied around her waist. She highlighted randomly her brunette hair while hair strands twisted in crazy directions.

Jerrick noticed she wrapped a scarf around her hair, like a headband, puffing up her hair more. The Madonna-look hadn't died in Michigan yet.

Jerrick was nervous, almost shaking. He lightly tapped her shoulder and mumbled her name, "Sanddddyyyyy."

Sandy turned and faced Jerrick with an annoyed look on her face as if a wasp had stung her. She wanted to give someone, anyone, a bad day.

Jerrick blurted, “Prom is in two weeks. Would you like to go with me?”

“NNNOOO!” Then Sandy turned around, grabbed her tray, and rushed to the far side of the cafeteria. She put as much distance between herself and Jerrick.

Word ‘NO’ pierced Jerrick’s heart, like a spear.

Jerrick turned and walked away, showing no emotion, feeling a piece of Jerrick’s humanity died with him that day. He received his first rejection, gift wrapped by a retro-chick, stuck in the 80s.

Jerrick wanted to cry, but an ancient memory awakened deep from his subconscious. As a kid, he was crying but didn’t know why.

Then his dad rushed over and slapped him hard across his face with his lightning fast hand.

Slap left a reddish handprint across his cheek for days, and it disoriented him a little.

Then his dad told him words of wisdom, “Men must be strong. Men don’t cry. Only babies and women cry. Jerrick, are you a baby?”

Of course, he didn’t want to be a baby. We live in a society where men must be strong. Nothing more is disgusting in this world, when tears flow down a man’s face. Crying is a sign of weakness.

After his father had slapped him, Jerrick lost the ability to cry. Many times, Jerrick wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn’t flow. He must be a strong man, who never cried.

On prom night, Jerrick stayed home. Last two weeks, he didn’t eat any food because he was hurting inside as if Jennifer had ripped out his heart from his chest and stomped on it several times. Then she surgical replanted his heart into his chest, half-broken, lopsided, beating erratically.

His mom kept pestering him, “Jerrick, aren’t you going to the prom?”

“No, mom; the prom is stupid. I’m not going.”

His mom sensed someone had hurt her boy.

His mom continued, "I'm worried about you. You haven't eaten lately."

"I'm not hungry, mom."

Then the phone rang, and his mother picked up the receiver, "Hello. Yes, he's right here," and his mom handed the phone to Jerrick.

Larry asked, "Hey dude, what's up?"

"Not much. Why aren't you at the prom tonight?" Jerrick inquired. Of all people, Larry would have no trouble finding a date.

"Are you fucking crazy? Do you know how many drugs I can buy with that money that would be wasted on the prom?"

"I see your point."

"You want to get high tonight?"

"Okay, where do you want to meet?"

"Let's meet at Tommy's house. His parents are at a relatives' tonight."

"Okay. Later dude!"

"Later!"

Jerrick placed the received down onto the phone cradle and headed to his room to get his jacket.

"Jerrick, where are you going tonight?"

"I'm going to Tommy's. We'll watch a movie."

Jerrick's mom examined him. She suspected Jerrick was using drugs, but what could she do? At least, he received a scholarship for college that was located 400 miles away from those troublemakers, Larry and Tommy.

Jerrick slipped on his coat and opened the door. He turned to his mom, "I'll be back at 10 tonight. Okay?"

"Stay out of trouble, Jerrick."

Jerrick walked out the door and hurried to Tommy's.

Day finally came, Friday, June 8, 1998. Jerrick Ray Davis graduated from high school.

Jerrick wore the customary black gown over his blue jeans and a t-shirt, hiding his bad taste in clothes,

Graduation ceremony started at 10 o'clock, and his mom was very excited, wanting to leave early.

As usual, Jerrick's dad was driving another delivery across the country. Jerrick often wondered if his dad had another family in another state, spending more time with them. Besides, supporting two families is cheaper than divorcing one family and creating another. Divorce courts are cruel against a man with a good job. Actually, Michigan's courts were quite infamous for destroying men's lives.

"Jerrick, are you ready? Let's go!"

Jerrick used a comb to put the final touches on his hair. He would slip the black cap on later, so it wouldn't mess up his hair.

Jerrick gulped the remaining Pepsi from his glass and returned it to its spot on the dresser.

Then he headed from his bedroom to the living room.

"Let's go, Jerrick. I don't want to be late picking up grandma!"

Jerrick glanced at the clock and saw it is 9 o'clock. They had plenty of time, but he replied, "Okay mom. I'm ready!"

Jerrick's mom picked up his grandmother, and they headed to the school.

School held a plain ceremony in the gym. His mom and grandmother sat on the wooden bleachers with the audience while Jerrick sat with his classmates on the hard, cold metal folding chairs on the basketball court.

Staff aligned and arranged the chairs in rows, and Larry sat behind Jerrick. He leaned towards Jerrick and whispered, "My mom bought a keg for graduation. Come over. Let's get fucked up!"

Jerrick smiled, "It sounds like a great plan."

Principal walked onto the stage and started the procession, "Today ladies and gentlemen; a bright new path emerges for our graduates...."

Jerrick and Larry looked around for Tommy, and they saw him sitting three rows behind them.

Jerrick wondered if Larry were high because he wished, he was high. If the procession were more boring, Jerrick would fall

asleep on this uncomfortable metallic chair, even with the cold metal freezing his ass.

After a while, the principal started calling out names, “Regina Angler, Sharon Beckman, ...Jerrick Davis.....”

Jerrick stood up and walked to the stage. Then he approached the principal and shook his hand.

Principal turned to the table behind him, picked up a diploma, and handed it to him.

Subsequently, the principal grinned at him because Jerrick was graduating and leaving his school permanently.

Jerrick exited from the other side of the stage.

Once Jerrick sat down, he opened the diploma and saw a single sheet of paper tucked inside with the message, ‘Students can pick up their diplomas at the end of June when their grades are finalized.’

Larry leaned close to Jerrick, glancing over his shoulder to examine the diploma, and he began laughing under his breath.

Ceremony lasted for an eternity, but then it had ended.

Jerrick headed to the bleachers, searching for his mom and grandmother.

They had large, beaming smiles. Few Davises finished high school, but that would change with the new generation. A new generation of educated Davises will emerge and rule the world someday.

“Mom is it okay that I go to Tommy’s? His mom is throwing a party.”

“Okay, but no drinking.”

“Thanks mom,” Jerrick said and reached over to hug his mom and then his grandmother.

His grandmother planted a large wet kiss on his cheek.

Jerrick used the sleeve of his gown to wipe the lipstick off.

His mom asked, “What about your cap and gown, Jerrick?”

“I’ll stop at the office and drop them off. Bye mom, bye grandma.”

Then Jerrick trotted away.

After ten steps, Jerrick turned and waved to them. He felt bad about lying to his mom, but she would refuse to let him stay at Larry's house.

He slipped off his gown and removed the cap during his journey to the school's main office.

Walking by a trashcan, Jerrick wanted to toss them into the trash, but the school would charge \$50 for replacements. He couldn't be a rebel with a \$50 price tag. Besides, he found many ways to be bad for free. Why should he waste the money?

Jerrick returned the cap and gown to the school and headed outside to catch up with Larry and Tommy.

Three misfits meandered to the nearest woods by the school.

Jerrick pulled a joint from his pocket and lit it up, taking a hit.

"OOOOOuuuhhhh! School is over!" Larry screamed.

Jerrick passed the joint to Larry.

Then finally, Tommy took a hit.

They sat on a log on the edge of the woods.

Jerrick gazed at the landscape. A breeze blew through the large oak trees, vibrating the leaves. His mind found peace as his internal dialogue stopped. He saw every individual, vibrating leaf at the same time.

Jerrick glanced over at Larry.

Larry exhaled a huge plume of marijuana smoke, engulfing a large, black bug, flying in front of him.

After a couple of seconds, the bug fell down to the ground dead. It lay on its back with its legs twitching in the air.

The boys erupted into raucous laughter.

After several hours, the boys arrived at Larry's.

Larry's mom prepared food and bought a keg of beer. She placed on a large kitchen table: potato salad, bowls of chips and tortillas, salsa, chip dip, a platter of cheese and crackers, and various types of finger foods.

Larry helped his mom and tossed ten hamburgers on the grill.

"You boys get you something to drink," Larry's mom said.

“Thanks, Mrs. Collins,” Jerrick and Tommy chimed in unison.

Jerrick and Tommy headed out to the enclosed walkway that connected the house to the garage where Larry submerged a keg of beer in a large tub of ice.

Jerrick grabbed a cup and the tap and began pouring a beer, “Here you go, sir,” as he passed the beer to Tommy.

Then Jerrick pumped the keg several times and poured himself a beer.

Next, they headed into the backyard. Relatives from Larry’s family and friends, such as Bruce, Ed, and Chad sat on lawn chairs, eating food and drinking beer.

After three beers and two, quite delicious hamburgers, Jerrick passed out in the lawn chair in the backyard. He awakened about two in the morning, disoriented, groggy.

Jerrick looked around and saw the party had ended. He saw Larry’s and Tommy’s silhouettes as they sat on lawn chairs across from him.

Larry said, “What happened dude? What a light weight?”

Then both Larry and Tommy began giggling.

“I know. I know. A couple of beers and a delicious meal and then lights out,” Jerrick replied, scooting his chair closer to the group.

“Keep it down; my mom is sleeping. You’re just in time,” Larry whispered and lit up a newly rolled joint, passing it around.

Pungent aroma of marijuana filled the cool night spring air.

During the summer, Jerrick, Larry, and Tommy didn’t work. In fact, they did nothing but partied all summer.

Somehow, summer flew by at light speed, and before knowing it, Jerrick packed all his possessions into two suitcases for college, placing them in the trunk of his mom’s car.

Jerrick’s dad stayed home this weekend. His dad towered at six feet tall with an athletic build and played football in high school. However, the many years he sat behind a steering wheel

wore John Davis down as his belly protruded from his waistline. His large dad became rounder and less imposing than when he was young. He grew into a shape of a large beetle than a muscular pit-bull.

Jerrick's dad and his mom took turns driving the family car for the 400-mile trek to Upper Michigan.

They dropped Jerrick off at the front entrance of the red, brick, three-story dormitory that was part of a complex lying on the outskirts of the main campus. He could stroll to a store or his classes within 10 minutes.

As his parents dropped Jerrick at the dormitory, his dad jumped out of the car first and helped put Jerrick's luggage on the sidewalk.

His father was smiling, which was definitely a rare event.

Before Jerrick said a word, his father embraced him and whispered in this ear, "I know I haven't been a good father, but I'm proud of you. Only good advice I can give you is the world is cruel. If you are weak, then the world will eat you up and spit you out. You must be strong and find your place in this world."

On the last sentence, Jerrick's dad embraced him tightly, emphasizing his last point. Then his father released him, and his smile widened.

Jerrick stood with his mouth hanging open. Just when you think, you know a person all their lives, they throw a curve ball at you, shaking up your convictions. He didn't know what to say except, "Thanks dad."

Until tonight, Jerrick and his father were never close. They rarely spoke to each other throughout their lives. Jerrick mentally counted the number of conversations he held with his father and counted twelve. When his father was home, he surfed the internet or watched sports while drinking copious amounts of beer.

Jerrick never participated in sports. His dad beat up kids like Jerrick in high school, the nerdy, weak kids. For his punishment, God gave him a son whom he would despise, or at least until this day. Today, his dad was proud of Jerrick.

His mom came next and hugged him; then she kissed him on the cheek, “Son, do your best. Be the first Davis to graduate from college.”

Then his mom let go and climbed back into the car on the passenger side. She looked at her son and waved good-bye to him with tears forming in her eyes.

His dad started the car and pulled away.

His parents stayed at a hotel. Early, the next morning, they drove home, completing their long journey.

Jerrick felt a tinge of sadness. He didn’t know it, but he wouldn’t see them again in four years. Unfortunately, a poor, college student’s reality is returning to the parents’ house was a luxury. They spend many lonely Christmases at the university, pursuing their dreams in sadness and grief.

The College Years

One word can describe Jerrick’s college years: lonely. He became isolated from everyone.

In Upper Michigan, everyone talked like Canadians, and ended a sentence with AYE, such as ‘How ya doing, AYE?’

Jerrick could never talk that way, and he didn’t make any new friends in upper Michigan.

All the locals spotted and despised the outsiders. Locals wanted the outsiders to return to the other side of the Mackinaw Island Bridge and return to their caves. The Mackinaw Island Bridge spanned five miles over the Straits of Mackinac, connecting the two large peninsulas of Michigan.

Upper Michigan residents circulated a joke – Lower Michigan residents are trolls, who live under the bridge.

Residents of Upper Michigan even wanted to break away from Michigan and form their own state.

Despite the intense loneliness of Upper Michigan, Jerrick expanded his mind at college. He poured over books and learned things he would never learn on his own. His mind became a sponge, soaking up massive quantities of information.

Unfortunately, Jerrick didn't make any new friends in college. He kept to himself, spending hours studying in the library on the second floor, where he had a nice view of the small woods outside the window and he watched the sparkling waters of Lake Superior in the background.

Jerrick's grades reflected his hard work and earned almost all A's in all his classes. Of course, Jerrick didn't shy away from the challenging classes like calculus, chemistry, and economics.

Jerrick studied because college had a different atmosphere than high school. In college, the professors don't care if students come to class or spend the whole night partying and drinking. If students chose not to learn, then professors will fail those students. In high school, the teachers shackled their students to their desks and fretted over every insignificant detail about the students' lives.

In college, Jerrick fell into a routine. As clockwork, he awakened every day at 8 o'clock, showered, ate breakfast in the cafeteria, and left for class.

Jerrick always arrived early, sitting in the second or third row, usually dead center. That way, he saw everything on the blackboard.

Many professors noticed Jerrick. He wasn't the smartest kid in class, but his grades were always in the top 5%, competing fiercely with the Asian kids in math and science.

Asians were programmed automatons, who spent their whole lives eating, sleeping, and shitting mathematics and engineering. Homebred American students rarely attained the top 10% of these hard classes.

Jerrick's college social life, unfortunately, was pitiful, and he often reminisced about his old friends from high school, missing the parties, booze, and weed.

Jerrick's hometown friends avoided hard work and ethics, and continued freeloading off their parents, like bed bugs coming out at night to quench their carnal thirsts. They even stole from their parents, friends, or acquaintances, pawning the stolen jewelry, and power tools at the local pawnshops.

Jerrick longed to be with his friends, but knew his life would be limited. Party lifestyle always included a stint at the local

jail, entailing the finest accommodations: bars on the windows and doors, and a metallic bunk bed, where the metal would gnaw at the prisoner's ass.

Besides, Jerrick still had his aspirations where he vividly dreamt he was a great leader, delivering powerful speeches to the people.

Then people would shout his name, "Jerrick! Jerrick! Jerrick! . . ."

One weekend, Jerrick was particularly lonely and reached out to his old friends.

Jerrick tried calling Larry, but Larry was never home. Next, he called Tommy, and Tommy answered after the third ring.

"Hello," Tommy said sluggishly.

"Hey Tommy," Jerrick replied cheerfully.

After a pause, Tommy recognized his friend's voice and hollered, "Hey Jerrick, what's up?"

Tommy didn't sound drunk or high, but the constant partying made him sound slow as if he became stuck an eternal stupor. Daily partying was reducing Tommy's intelligence.

"What are you and Larry up to?"

"Ah dude, you're missing some awesome fun. Larry is crazier."

"Crazier? What's he doing now?"

"Ah dude, last weekend we're drinking, smoking, driving around in his old pickup truck."

"Yeah, yeah," Jerrick became excited as he clutched the phone receiver tightly.

"We drove by his old girlfriend's house, Tanya. He saw a strange car parked in the driveway. Larry is so messed up. He thinks some guy is in there fucking her. I'm like dude, she's not your girlfriend anymore. He stops the truck and puts it in reverse, 'he's in there, he's fucking her, he's fucking her.' He backs the truck up and rams the car."

"You gotta be kidding?"

“He rammed the car several times with the truck’s back end. Then we got out of there fast.”

“Damn, that’s crazy!”

“It gets better. Next day we went to Ed’s house. We wanted to smoke some weed. Ed is like ‘Larry, did you hear, Tanya bought a new car?’ Larry says, ‘Ah I think I’m getting sick.’ Then he pucks in the bushes.”

Afterwards, Tommy burst into laughter for several minutes.

“So Larry didn’t get caught?”

“No, we didn’t hear anything.”

“Damn, a guardian angel is watching over you two.”

“When are you coming home?”

“I don’t know. I’m so far away.”

“How’re the college parties? College women?”

“Dude it’s great. Parties are awesome.”

“Ah, I must go. I must meet Larry at the pool hall.”

“Later.”

“Later,” and the phone line went dead.

Jerrick felt a tinge of sadness because he wished, he was home partying with his friends. He also felt bad about the lie of the college parties and college girls.

During his first semester at college, a burly guy always stopped Jerrick from entering the front door. Who could blame him? Guys despise other men who crash their parties, disturbing the male-female ratio. More guys mean more competition.

Jerrick thought about joining a fraternity and attended several rushes, but he shook his head in disgust at paying membership dues to befriend a group. He also despised rushing because the inductees became slaves to the fraternity, satisfying every whim and fancy of the fraternity brothers.

Jerrick was no one’s slave.

During Jerrick’s junior year, he learned about the world’s dictators.

On April 3, 2001, Jerrick headed to his political science class.

Jerrick didn't like political science, but he had a brilliant professor, Dr. Szulcheck.

Towards the end of the last class, the professor said we would do an experiment. His experiments always turned the students' world upside down as the professor tore at the students' beliefs, shaking up their convictions.

Jerrick arrived early to class and sat in the second row, dead center. He would see everything unfold.

Fifty students attended this class, but half always skipped. Students knew the true attendance during exam time as professors rarely let students miss exams.

As the university's clocks chimed 9 o'clock in the morning, Professor Szulcheck popped in, slamming the door behind him. He had taught at this institution for a long time; he knew when to leave his office and arrive at class at the exact time.

Dr. Szulcheck approached the podium with his long gray hair sticking up in all directions, like a crazy, mad scientist. He wore slacks, a polo shirt, and brown leather shoes. At least, he dressed better than the other professors did. For example, the odd, economics professor, Dr. Okins, wore t-shirts and shorts with his school colors, Louisiana State University.

When temperatures dropped below freezing in Michigan, Dr. Okins added a sweater and jogging pants to his attire.

Dr. Szulcheck glanced at his watch, allowing for late students. Then he began his lecture.

"Today class, we'll begin with the Butler Shaffer's election test."

Professor turned to the board and used a chalk to write neatly Candidate A on one side of the board as the chalk screamed like ants as letters appeared on the chalkboard. Then he wrote Candidate B on the other side.

"Candidate A," the professor began with his voice rising to a crescendo, "Is a critic of government. He was involved in numerous tax protests and evaded taxes. He wants to restrict immigration and limit the government's power. He is a strong

supporter of the Second Bill of Rights; all Americans have the right to own a firearm. Candidate A is also a businessman, who earned his money from smuggling, tobacco, and alcohol.”

As Dr. Szulcheck spoke, he wrote every point under Candidate A on the chalkboard.

“Candidate B is a war hero. He does not smoke or drink. He believes in using government to foster medical research and to cure cancer. He opposes animal cruelty and wants stronger restrictions on gun ownership. Finally, Candidate B does not mind sending troops to a foreign country to establish order or enhance national security.”

Finishing writing, professor turned to the class and stated, “Your task is to vote for one of these candidates and list your reasons why.”

A student in the background vociferated, “Doctor; that’s easy. Everyone hates the Republicans, which, of course, is Candidate A.”

Infectious laughter erupted in the classroom. Educational institutions were havens for liberal thinking. Candidate A would garner few votes on this campus.

“Now, now, let’s still vote,” the professor demanded.

Jerrick scanned the room and noticed several students scribbled in their notebooks.

After a pause, the professor stated, “How many voted for Candidate A?”

Jerrick looked around and only saw several hands rise hesitantly into the air.

Professor wrote seven votes under Candidate A.

“How many voted for Candidate B?”

Jerrick looked around and saw the majority of hands shoot up into the air like patriotic salutes, including Jerrick’s hand.

Professor counted and wrote 28 votes under Candidate B.

“Congratulations,” exclaimed the professor. He wrote ‘founding father’ under Candidate A and “Adolf Hitler” under Candidate B.

Students’ mouths dropped in awe, and then they burst into nervous chuckles.

Professor snapped, “Why are you guys laughing? Didn’t you see the results?”

“Candidate B was doing more for his country,” one of the students exclaimed weakly, rationalizing her obvious bad choice.

“Adolf Hitler did a lot for Germany. He plunged Germany into a world war, executed millions of German citizens, tried to exterminate the Jewish race, and almost wiped Germany off the face of the earth in the process.”

Professor looked around the room, “Which one of you voted for Candidate A?”

Then the professor pointed to one of the students in the fourth row.

“My parents would kill me if I had voted for the Republicans,” the male student mumbled.

Several students hissed and heckled in disapproval.

“Class, don’t worry. Everyone fails the Hitler test. I have given the Hitler test for 20 years. Everyone publicly hates and despises Hitler, but they don’t hesitate to vote for him as President. Hitler always gets 70 to 80% of the votes. Always!”

Professor paused, and the classroom became eerily silent. He pushed the students towards thinking, which now days was difficult. Professors and teachers competed for a student’s attention among the myriad distractions of cell phones, rambling emails, violent computer games, bad movies, and profanity-laced music.

After Jerrick’s class had ended, he rushed to the library. He had read thousands of books, but he never read the biographies of dictators.

Jerrick immediately checked out the biographies of Adolph Hitler and Napoleon Bonaparte from the library, devouring these large books in two days.

Jerrick had no idea. Germany was a developed European country. Which crisis is so severe, the people voted for a non-German leader who dropped out of high school and spent his youth, wandering the Vienna streets as a homeless man? That was equivalent to Americans handing the U.S. presidency to a homeless, high-school dropout from Canada.

Jerrick snickered at his analogy because Michigan's citizens voted a Canadian for governor. She promised to turn the Michigan economy around, but the Michigan economy resisted and continued sinking into the abyss.

Jerrick noticed four things about these two dictators. First, they, obviously, were brilliant. Hitler, the greatest orator in the 20th century, seduced audiences with his speeches, and Napoleon, a brilliant general, won major battles for the French Republic. Second, they were never career politicians. They founded their political parties, but they never held a political office before seizing power. Third, they beat the odds as if a divine hand of providence came down from the heavens and pushed aside their obstacles. Finally, most people didn't know this observation. These dictators rose out of republics that were destroying themselves. People turned to the dictators as a last measure to save them. Nobody hands power to a dictator, when times are good. People must be desperate to hand power to one person.

For example, the German government destroyed the German economy with hyperinflation in the 1930s. Prices increased a million percent in one year, drowning half the German people in poverty and homelessness. Thus, Hitler easily seized power and blamed the Jews for all of Germany's problems.

The French Republic expropriated property, turned social classes against each other and invaded its neighbors. When the war went badly, the French Republic turned on its citizens, accusing thousands of being spies. Then the French Republic executed the spies with guillotines. The French call this the Reign of Terror. Napoleon rose up and stopped this insanity. Although the French Republic had noble ideas, Napoleon brought them to fruition.

Jerrick discovered the same pattern with other dictators, like Benito Mussolini and his soon to be favorite, Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, otherwise known as Augustus I, the first emperor of the Roman Empire.

Removing the dates and names from Roman history, history was repeating itself. Same problems plaguing Rome 2,000 year ago were occurring in the United States today.

The Roman Republic was killing itself. Taxes became out of control as the Roman government taxed everything and anything including every door, window, and column. Rome's few wealthy citizens controlled the machinery of government, bribing the corrupt Senate and juries and judges while lawlessness erupted throughout the Republic. Bandits roamed the countryside while pirates roamed the seas.

Augustus rose up and saved his country by reforming his government and building the Augustan Empire that lasted 500 years, even with several centuries of bad emperors.

Now Jerrick understood his mission. Those daydreams mapped out his destiny, being similar to Augustus's.

Jerrick must rise and save his people, the Americans, creating an empire in the process. Jerrick faced many obstacles and knew he must be cunning.

Augustus inherited his adopted uncle's wealth, his uncle, of course, being Julius Cesar. Augustus used his wealth to finance an army and crushed all opposition to his rule.

Jerrick's family didn't have the money to reform the U.S. government or to raise an army.

Jerrick started his senior year in college and enrolled in several tough classes.

Then it happened two and a half weeks into the semester. On September 11, 2001 about 9 o'clock, Jerrick grabbed his notebooks and left his dorm room. Locking the door, he saw a commotion in the TV room, which was unusual this early in the morning. Usually half the residents slept until noon, recuperating from a night of drinking and partying.

Jerrick walked to the TV room and sat on the couch with everyone else, mesmerized by the images on the TV, showing black smoke bellowing out from one of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City.

Then a Boeing Jet struck the other tower.

Jerrick squawked, "What in the hell?"

No one knew who did it. Did homegrown terrorists or radical Muslims hijacked the planes and crashed them into buildings?

Missing his morning classes, Jerrick remained on the couch, spellbound by the images sweeping across the TV screen.

Then the final images flashed on the TV screen as both the great towers crashed to the ground, spewing thick dust clouds into the air and destroying the surrounding neighborhoods. An icon of America's greatest capitalistic institutions came to an explosive end.

Then another plane crashed into the Pentagon while another went down in the fields in Pennsylvania.

Jerrick walked around the campus in deep thought.

Attack impacted the whole campus. Women walked around with tears in their eyes while the men were in a state of shock. Occasionally, an angry fist shot up in the air as the men vented their rage.

Jerrick noticed the price at the gas stations, had jumped to \$5.75 per gallon. Terrorist didn't attack the refineries were, but the gas-station owners profited from a country's misfortune.

Several months after the terrorists had attacked America, President Bush sent troops to Afghanistan as the U.S. military chased the terrorists, and President Bush passed the Patriot Act, expanding the surveillance powers of the federal government, limiting our civil rights.

Although President Bush carried himself brilliantly with Afghanistan, Jerrick thought the President faced a special occasion. A dictator utilized an unfortunate event to seize the moment and grab all the reins of power. Dictators have used less traumatic events to seize power, imposing their will on the people.

President Bush never grabbed the reins of power. Instead, he tarnished his reputation from opening another front in Iraq. The President threw soldiers and resources at the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq with little afterthought. Then the 2008 Financial Crisis struck the U.S. economy hard, marking the official beginning of America's Second Great Depression.

After a long, lonely Christmas of reading books, Jerrick's last semester of college had arrived.

Jerrick entered a small classroom and sat at the front of a long, large table in the center of the room. Lengthy table followed the walls, and students had about two feet of clearance to squeeze in and sit in their chairs. Classroom had no windows, appearing as a storage closet converted into a classroom.

Class was History of Economic Thought.

Then she sat on the other side of the table in the front too. Her name was Lidya.

Lidya had long, wavy blonde hair, a thin face with kind blue eyes. She didn't wear any makeup. Her beauty was 100% natural. At least, she wouldn't give any men any rude surprises in the morning, like a guy bedded down with a gorgeous woman at night, and awakened to a nasty, sea hag in the morning as her makeup smeared over her face and pillow.

Lidya was not drop-dead gorgeous, but on a scale from one to 10, she was a strong eight. She was smart too and dated intelligent men. Women valued intelligence more than brawn and rugged good looks in Russia.

Lidya started the conversation. She asked with a slight Russian accent, "Is this History of Economic Thought,"

"Yes, and it'll be a small class."

Jerrick looked around at the empty chairs and continued, "No more than 10 students will attend this class."

Jerrick looked at Lidya, being friendly, normal. He hid his desire to rip her clothes off and make love to her on that table. He played it cool and blurted, "Where are you from? Well, I mean, I can hear a slight accent. So, I know you are not from around these parts."

Jerrick felt beads of sweat forming on his forehead while his armpits become damp. He tried not to sound desperate.

Women possess a sixth sense, smelling desperation in a guy's sweat like cologne and avoiding him like the plague.

"I'm from Moscow, Russia."

“Russia! You’re a long way from home. What brings you here?”

“I wanted to study in America.”

“Wow, what brings you up here, to the back woods of Michigan?”

“When I was a little girl, I saw pictures of Michigan with its beautiful lakes and forests. I also saw a picture of Lake Superior; the water was so blue and clean looking.”

“You’re right, Lake Superior is one of the cleanest and bluest lakes I have ever seen, but you cannot swim in it. It’s way too cold, even on the hottest summer day.”

“I know. I already tried. I made it to my knees, and then I quickly ran out, shivering.”

“Why did you take this class?”

“I thought this class would be an easy A. I grew up under the Soviet Union, and this class spends about five weeks on communism.”

“Ahh; I see.”

“How do you like Upper Michigan?”

Lidya frowned a little and added politely, “Let’s say; it’s been interesting.”

Jerrick detected her dislike for Upper Michigan, an outcast just like him.

Jerrick rubbed his sweaty right hand on his jeans, mopping up the extra moisture. Then he extended his hand across the table for a handshake.

Lidya grabbed his hand lightly, shaking it.

“My name is Jerrick, Jerrick Ray Davis.”

“My name is Lidya Karokina.”

Jerrick withdrew his hand and scanned the room. He noticed five more students sat down while he talked to Lidya. He saw one male student giving him a sly smile.

That smile said it all. You’re the man! Congrats!

Then the professor walked in.

Jerrick glanced at Lidya and saw Lidya smiling at him.

Then Jerrick smiled. With both hands under the table, he used his right hand to pinch himself on his right leg, ensuring he

was not daydreaming again. Sometimes his daydreams were intense, but he had never dreamt up a completely imaginary woman before or at least with her clothes on.

Jerrick began arriving early to his class, the History of Economic Thought, and like clockwork, Lidya always sat there.

This became Jerrick's favorite class because Lidya and he always shared a pleasant conversation.

After three weeks, Jerrick broke the ice, playing it cool and asked, "Lidya, we have a quiz for the next lecture. Are you ready for it?"

"I studied a little for it. How about you?"

"I don't think it'll be too difficult. Perhaps we should study together. We could meet at the library?"

"I think that's a good idea, but I don't like the library. I listen to classical music when I study. Why don't you stop by my dorm room?"

"Okay; that sounds great."

Jerrick glanced across at Lidya and saw she dabbed a little makeup, more than usual. Her blonde hair was long and straight. A few strands of hair found their way to the front, but most of her hair draped along her back, looking quite delectable.

Thank god, a large table separated them because Jerrick felt a warm sensation in his crotch area as his little monster was awakening.

Playing it cool, Jerrick asked, "Which dorm do you stay in?"

Lidya tore a blank page from the back of her notebook, writing both her phone and dorm room numbers. Then she folded the paper and pushed it across the table to Jerrick.

Jerrick slid the paper towards him, opening it a little, peeking inside. Then he folded the paper and shoved it into his front jeans pocket.

"Cool, I'll be in touch," Jerrick said nonchalantly, like an expert player as if he had received hundreds of phone numbers from women.

Then the professor walked in, standing in front of the class. He pulled out his lecture notes and started writing on the blackboard.

Jerrick glanced across the table at Lidya.

Both Lidya and Jerrick exchanged beaming smiles.

Thank god, the table's surface hid his crotch area. Little monster became so large; it wanted to rip a hole through his jeans.

That night, Jerrick sat in his dorm room, holding the paper with Lidya's phone number and address in front of him. He studied it like a treasure map.

Jerrick wanted to pick up the phone and call her but knew that was not proper etiquette.

Larry always said you wait two or three days to call after getting a girl's phone number. If you call her within a day, then she may think you're desperate. Larry said the secret was to make a woman want you and not vice versa. It was difficult to do, but if you accomplished that, then you can wrap her around your little pinky like a love slave.

Next day, Jerrick waited until 7 o'clock at night. He showered and changed into a polo shirt and blue jeans. This was not a date but a study session.

Then Jerrick grabbed his notebook and textbook and headed to Lidya's dorm room.

He arrived at her door within several minutes.

Jerrick's heart began racing while he broke out in a cold sweat as perspiration cooled his skin.

Jerrick reached out to knock on the door but hesitated. Then he withdrew his hand and almost turned to walk away.

"Oh Jerrick, you came to study," Lidya said as she walked out of the women's bathroom, seeing him at her door.

"Oh yeah; I thought we could study together. Quiz is tomorrow."

"Great," Lidya said, and she walked to her room door and opened it.

Lidya gestured for Jerrick to enter.

Jerrick noticed Lidya wore a long, yellow t-shirt, and short, skimpy pink shorts, granting a nice view of her slender, light creamy legs. She pulled her hair into a ponytail.

Jerrick positioned his notebook and textbook over his crotch area. He didn't want Lidya to see any unexpected bulges.

Jerrick walked into her dorm room and noticed Lidya had few possessions. He saw books, makeup, and a small radio on her desk, a bed, and clothes hanging in the closet.

Jerrick noticed a bare bed and asked, "Lidya; do you have a roommate?"

"Yes, I have the room to myself. I grew tired of messy roommates and their problems. I pay extra for a single room."

Walking in, Jerrick noticed a picture on the desk. He picked up the picture and saw a dark, middle-age man standing with a blonde woman. Middle-aged, blonde woman was still attractive.

Lidya closed the door and noticed Jerrick holding the picture, "They're my parents."

"Your dad is dark. He looks middle eastern."

"No, my dad is Georgian, and my mother is Russian."

"Really; that's interesting. You definitely take after your mother. You're beautiful like her."

Lidya's face reddened, blushing a little.

Jerrick realized he broke Larry's Rule Number 2. Under no circumstances do you ever compliment a woman, ever! Jerrick thought to hell with Larry because he's not here right now.

Jerrick sat at the desk while Lidya sat on the edge of the bed.

"Do you know how they met?" Lidya inquired mysteriously.

"Okay, I'm game. How did they meet?"

"My mom worked as a school teacher in Georgia, in the Caucasus mountains. The Soviet Union required teachers to start their careers in rural villages to fulfill the needs and duties of the state. My father worked as a manager in that district's provincial government. My dad fell in love with her on first sight."

"Then they dated, fell in love, and got married."

“Not quite. In Georgia and Central Asia, men must pay a dowry to the wife’s parents.”

“A dowry? What’s that?”

“Families want sons to carry on the family name. Daughters do not. Daughters move away and start new families, so parents want to be compensated for raising someone else’s wife.”

“Interesting, so your dad paid a dowry?”

“No! It’s a long tradition to kidnap a girl to avoid paying a dowry.”

“Your dad kidnapped your mother? Wow! Couldn’t she run away and go to the police?”

“No, she lived in rural Georgia, and my dad joined the communist party. My mother could do nothing, except marry him.”

“That’s interesting. I don’t know what to say. I have never heard of that tradition, especially in this century.”

Jerrick opened his textbook, placing it on her desk. Then he turned to Lidya and asked, “Okay, are you ready to study for tomorrow’s quiz, or do you have more interesting stories?”

Jerrick thought, good thing we don’t have that tradition of kidnapping wives. No way in hell, Lidya would leave Michigan single.

Lidya reached over and turned on the radio as Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture filled the room.

Jerrick looked at Lidya, and she crossed her legs. He glanced down at her legs, looking so soft, silky, inviting. He scooted the chair closer to her.

“Are you ready to study?”

She looked at him with strange, dreamy eyes.

Jerrick recollected something Larry said a long time ago. Once a month, women go into heat. At that point, they want sex. Larry stated the window of opportunity is small, but if you face it, go ahead. That opportunity may never surface again.

Jerrick took a risk as he reached out to her. He caressed her ear and neck with his right hand. She felt so smooth.

Lidya closed her eyes.

Then Jerrick scooted closer. He used his right hand to turn her face gently in his direction, moving in for the kiss.

She kissed him.

After several minutes of kissing, Jerrick reached into her t-shirt. His hand became a fighter pilot flying into enemy territory, anticipating the shoot down, but it never came.

Jerrick felt her breasts while her nipples stiffened. Then he reached down into her honey pot.

Lidya uncrossed her legs and lay back on the bed.

Jerrick gently slid her shorts and panties off. Then he turned off the light, undressing himself.

Jerrick mounted her and made hot passionate love to her as Tchaikovsky played silently in the background, rising to a crescendo of victory.

Jerrick wished Larry and Tommy could see this. They would be proud of him. His first lover was a high-quality specimen. Not those hood rats they always picked up at the pool hall.

Jerrick made love to Lidya several times.

Then Jerrick fell asleep with Lidya in his arms.

In the morning, after they had awakened, he studied Lidya.

Damn, she still looked good, even with her hair being disheveled from the sleep.

Jerrick mounted her again and made love to her.

Then he lay back, feeling his little monster itch. Little monster was happy, eating a high-quality steak dinner.

Lidya kissed him on the cheek and whispered in his ear, "Sludky."

Jerrick asked jokingly, "Excuse me? You're not insinuating anything, are you?"

Lidya giggled then stated, "No, sludky means 'sweet' in Russian."

"Oh!" Jerrick said. He would adjust to 'sludky.' Of course, he could get used to the word 'slut,' since it sounded so similar.

Lidya became Jerrick's first girlfriend.

Jerrick studied hard in the library until the clock struck eight. Then he would meet Lidya at his or her dorm room.

They were rabbits, making love three times a day, twice at night and once in the morning.

Larry said the window of opportunity was narrow for a woman in heat, but Lidya's window became stuck open. Jerrick was very happy. He would chase Lidya half way around the world if he had to.

One night, finishing making love to Lidya, Jerrick began probing, "Lidya, why did you fall for me? I mean you are pretty cute. You can have any guy on this campus. Why did you choose me?"

Lidya giggled, relaxing her head on her fluffy pillow, staring at Jerrick. Then she blurted, "You're different than the other guys. In Russia, women love men who have potential. Men who plan to accomplish something in life."

A smile crept across Jerrick's face because he loved beautiful women complimenting him.

"Ah, I see. Looks are not important, but brains and potential are."

"Looks also count," Lidya said, rolling over, wrapping herself around Jerrick. Then she tucked her head between his arm and chest.

"I really don't like people with that stupid Yupper accent. They say AYE at the end of every sentence. It sounds so unintelligent."

"I agree with you because I don't like it either. They are saying the punctuation mark at the end of a sentence. Sun is shining-period. How are you doing, question-mark."

Lidya whispered, "Jerrick, I must return to Russia at the end of May."

"May, why?"

"I will graduate, and my visa expires."

Jerrick glanced over at Lidya, feeling a small ping in his heart. May would be a bad month, indeed, when she had left while he remained stranded in Upper Michigan.

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Not really. I miss my parents, and I miss Moscow. I have lived here for four, a very long four years."

After several minutes of silence, Lidya whispered, "You can come with me if you like."

That statement bitch slapped him across the face. How can I leave Michigan, leave the United States? Focusing on Lidya's slim figure, Jerrick thought it was a good idea.

After several minutes in thought, Jerrick retorted, "Okay."

Then Jerrick fell asleep with Lidya in his arms. He would travel to Moscow, Russia, leaving Michigan behind.

Next day, Jerrick called his mom from his dorm room.

Jerrick and Lidya sat on the bed. Lidya wanted to be with him when he dropped the bombshell of Russia.

After several rings, his mom answered with a tired voice, "Hello."

"Hello, mom."

"Jerrick, how are you? Are you okay?"

"Yes mom. Everything is fine. I met a girl, and her name is Lidya."

"That's great son. She has an unusual name. Which part of Michigan is she from?"

"Mom, she's not from Michigan. She's from Russia."

"Russia? Another country? Why can't you meet a nice Michigan girl?"

"Mom, stop it. Michigan women aren't interested in me. I called because Lidya must return home and she wants me to go with her."

"You mean over there?"

"Yes mom."

A long pause accentuated the static on the phone.

Then Jerrick said, "Mom. Mom, are you still there?"

"Yes, but it's so far away from home."

Jerrick heard the tension in her voice as a foreign woman was abducting her son.

"I know mom, but I want to go with her."

"Do you love her?"

"I think so? I wanted to ask because I must get a passport and a plane ticket. It will cost about a \$1,000."

"Jerrick, I must speak with your dad. Will you graduate?"

"Yes, mom, graduation is on Saturday, May 18."

"Bye mom."

“Bye Jerrick. I love you.”

Then the phone line became silent.

Jerrick felt uneasy with butterflies fluttering in his stomach. He wondered how his mom took the news.

A few days later, Jerrick snatched a letter from his mailbox with a return address, Holland, Michigan.

He tore open the envelope, and pulled out a money order for a \$1,000 and a note. Money order was from the SuperSaver grocery store in Holland, a little independent grocery store that fought the big corporations for survival.

Jerrick unfolded the note and recognized his mother’s fancy cursive handwriting with letters having exaggerated loops.

‘Your dad took out a loan from the bank. He did that for your graduation gift. We both want to meet your girlfriend before you leave in May. We’ll see you at graduation. Love Mom.’

Jerrick and Lidya walked three blocks to Main Street, where all the major businesses in town were located. City tried to lure the big chain stores, but they avoided this place because Upper Michigan was dying since the closing of the iron mines in the 1960s.

The university is the only thing growing in this small, dying town. University administration constructed a large 10-story administration building, the tallest building in Upper Michigan. Building was encased in a dark, opaque glass and visible from everywhere on campus as the dark tower projected its menacing presence over the campus, letting the students and professors know who was in command.

Jerrick and Lidya walked to the bank and cashed the money order. Then they stopped at the drug store for passport photos and ran to the passport office in the post office.

After the post office, Jerrick took Lidya to a restaurant.

“Nothing too fancy Jerrick, you still have some expenses coming up,” Lidya said sweetly.

“Expenses, like what?”

“You need to buy airline tickets and a Russia visa.”

“Ah; I thought the hard part was over.”

“Nope, it gets harder.”

They stopped at Jay's Place, a relic from the last century. Jay's was popular with the students because it served the cheapest beer in town. After 10 at night, students would fight the crowds to get into this place.

However, Jerrick and Lidya came in around two in the afternoon. Only a couple of patrons were there including Professor Okins, who sat alone eating a hamburger and reading a book. He wore his school's colors, Louisiana State University.

Jerrick heeded Lidya's advice. He ordered himself a burger and fries while Lidya ordered a salad drizzled with honey-Dijon dressing with strips of crispy chicken.

Three weeks later, Jerrick received his passport in the mail. Next, Jerrick and Lidya quickly departed for the travel agency near the campus. Jerrick pulled out a thick wad of cash and counted \$700 for the airline tickets to Russia.

They faced the hard task, obtaining a one-year Russia visa.

Lidya wrote a letter in Russian and slid Jerrick's passport, a photocopy of her passport, and a money order for \$80 into a large manila envelope. Next, they paid express service at the post office to rush the envelope to the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Jerrick meted down his parent's graduation gift to a meager \$100. He looked at Lidya and asked, "Are you still hungry?"

"Yes, let's go. We can get a bottle of wine."

Jerrick learned his first lesson about Russia. It possessed the strictest and strangest immigration laws in the whole world. Although the walls of the Soviet Union crashed down, the Russian government remained suspicious of outsiders. Travelers can't hop on an airplane and enter Russia. Outsiders need a 'Preglashenia' or an invitation in English. A tourist agency, relatives, or a business must invite the traveler to Russia.

Arriving in Russia, the foreigner must register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, known infamously in Russia as OVIR.

Before your visa had expired, then the traveler must leave. Staying an extra day, Russian Passport Control won't let the traveler leave as he or she fights numerous government agencies to get an exit visa.

Two weeks later, Jerrick pulled an envelope from his mailbox and noticed the return address was the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Opening the envelope, his heart rate accelerated, and he became nervous because the envelope was light with no documents in it.

When Jerrick tilted the envelope, his passport slid out.

He quickly scanned through his passport and spotted the Russian visa on page 11. The Russian government had approved his visit to Moscow. Jerrick would chase the woman, whom he loved, half way across the world.

Night before graduation, May 17, 2002, Jerrick's parents arrived at Jerrick's dorm room at six at night.

Lidya trembled a little and sat quietly on the couch, picking her nails. She spent almost an hour at the mirror in her dorm room, dabbing makeup on her face and styling her hair. Meeting Jerrick's parents for the first time, she wanted to make a good first impression.

Jerrick and Lidya heard a soft tapping at the door and then a muffled, "Jerrick! Jerrick! Are you there?"

Jerrick recognized his dad's voice anywhere.

Jerrick rushed to the door. He hesitated for a second as he glanced at Lidya, ensuring everything was perfect.

Then he opened the door, letting his parents walk in.

Before Jerrick had said a word, his mom grabbed and hugged him, "Son; I've missed you."

Then she planted a wet kiss on his cheek.

His dad came in second, shaking his hand, "You did it boy!"

Then Lidya stood up and greeted his parents, "Hello; my name is Lidya."

Lidya shook his mom's hand first and then his dad's.

Subsequently, his dad turned to Jerrick and mouthed the word ‘Wow,’ making sure Lidya didn’t see the exchange between two men.

Jerrick’s dad asked jovially, “Are you guys hungry?”

“Yes; I thought you would never ask,” Jerrick replied.

Everyone left the dorm room and piled into the car. Lidya and Jerrick sat in the back seat.

Lidya reached over and held Jerrick’s hand.

Jerrick’s dad drove them to an old-fashioned steakhouse. Pulling into the parking lot, they saw an old ranch styled building with old, sun faded wooden paneling on the outside.

As Jerrick’s dad pulled into a parking spot, he turned his head to look at Jerrick and Lidya and uttered, “You guys can have anything you want. It’s my treat.”

“Ah right, I want a t-bone steak,” Jerrick declared.

His mom turned, shooting him a dirty look.

Mr. Davis drove through the full parking lot, searching for an empty spot.

Then they exited the car and strolled into the restaurant.

Walking through the main door, they smelled sizzling hamburgers, grilling steaks, and bread baking in the oven.

Group marveled over the 1950s advertising metallic signs that adorned the walls. Restaurant had a rustic, at home type of feeling as if we were visiting grandma’s and grandpa’s house in the country.

Although the restaurant was packed with patrons, the waitress found them a booth near the entrance.

Jerrick and Lidya never ventured into this pricey restaurant, beyond the means of a poor college student’s budget.

Jerrick studied the old signs on the wall that advertised brands of soda he never seen before. Then he noticed the brand, Nehi.

His dad caught him staring and asked, “You never saw Nehi? You had it as a kid before they went out of business. They made grape, orange, lime and other flavors.”

Waitress led them to a booth and handed everyone a menu.

Jerrick ordered a Jamaican chicken, Lidya, a smoked salmon; Jerrick's mom, lasagna while his dad ordered a filet mignon.

The waitress set a plate of freshly baked bread on the table's center of the table and placed a bowl of Caesar's salad with homemade croutons and salad dressing in front of us.

Waiting for the main entrées, Jerrick's parents quizzed Lidya as if they were KGB agents, eliciting secret information.

Jerrick's dad began the interrogation and asked, "Where are you from?"

"Russia, outside of Moscow."

His mom inquired, "Where will Jerrick live?"

"My parents own an extra apartment. I'll stay with my parents and see Jerrick during the day at the apartment."

Jerrick glanced at Lidya with a sly grin. She was good, but she raised a good point. Lidya's parents might not let Lidya spend the night with him.

Mr. Davis persisted, "What will Jerrick do in Russia?"

"He can teach English. Schools pay okay while he works towards his Master's degree. We have an institute a few blocks over from the apartment."

Jerrick's mom shot Lidya a dirty look because she didn't know anything about an institute, or whether a Russian degree held any weight here in Michigan.

Waitress brought their meals over.

Lidya used the distraction to excuse herself from the interrogation. She stood up and said, "I must go to the ladies' room."

After Lidya had walked out of earshot, Jerrick's mom turned to face him and whispered, "Are you sure you want to go to Russia? I like her, but Russia is so far away"

For the first time, in a very long time, his dad stomped his foot onto the ground, and he turned to face his wife, "Let him go, Dorothy. More factories are closing in Michigan. I heard rumors that more trucking routes may be cut. Perhaps he can have a good future over there. There isn't much over here for him anymore."

Then his dad faced Jerrick, and added, “Jerrick, if you get into trouble, we can’t help you. We could scrounge money for a plane ticket, but you know we’re not rich.”

“Thanks dad,” Jerrick replied; he knew his dad meant it, and from the male-to-male subliminal communication, his dad liked his girlfriend.

If Jerrick only knew, what his dad really thought. Jerrick didn’t know, but his dad was experiencing a mid-life crisis.

Each mile his dad drove on the road, he aged. Sometimes, on long hauls, he picked up the nasty, street women who serviced the truck stops, reliving his youthful exploits. If he were just a little younger, he would be buying a plane ticket and head over to Russia with his son. If all Russian women looked like Lidya, he would never leave. If Lidya were a tad prettier, she would make a perfect, trophy wife.

Rest of the meal went smoothly.

Jerrick wished he had a camera. He never saw his dad pay a \$100 food tab. His father usually complained about a light meal at McDonald’s. Of course, it wasn’t every day that your only son graduated from college and would chase a beautiful woman around the world. If anything, that made great conversation. It beats the ole, ‘I had to bail my boy out of jail again.’

Group left the restaurant and climbed back into the car.

Mr. Davis arrived at Jerrick’s dormitory, parking the car near the main entrance.

Mr. Davis turned his head to look at the back seat and asked, “If you want, we can drop Lidi off at her dorm?”

“Dad; her name is Lidya. Her name has a ya on the end. You don’t need to drop her off. Her dorm is right over there,” as Jerrick pointed to a building in the distance and added, “I’ll walk her home.”

His dad smiled because he knew better. He wondered if his wife bought that lie. His dad knew that once he had pulled away, Jerrick and Lidya would head up to his room.

Both Lidya and Jerrick got out.

Before Jerrick had shut the door, his dad stated, “I’ll see you tomorrow, exactly at 8. We’ll have breakfast.”

Then his parents drove away into the darkness.

Just on schedule, Jerrick's parents picked them up at eight, and they ate breakfast at the local diner, Shortcakes.

His dad pulled up to the old, worn out diner, his favorite places. Jerrick and Lidya cringed because the restaurant was housed in an ancient trailer, but the best part was breakfast for four did not exceed \$20.

Jerrick cut his omelet with a fork before shoveling it into his mouth, inspecting every nugget of food, searching for 'special' ingredients. Shortcakes was famous or infamous, depending on the customer. A dirty, run down place infested with cockroaches served the breakfast in town and the best in the state of Michigan.

At nine, they headed to the university to the indoor basketball stadium.

Both Lidya and Jerrick donned on their caps and gowns. Then they entered the basketball court, where the ceremony graduated a class of 900 students.

Parents filled the balconies and bleachers, row after row of chairs lined across the basketball court.

Although Lidya and Jerrick studied in the school of business, Lidya sat five rows behind him.

College graduation ceremony was much larger than his high school and much longer. Some doctor from Chicago gave the opening speech. After he had spoken, the audience clapped loudly, and the university president handed him an honorary doctorate.

Then the president gave a speech. Then the announcer began calling out the graduates' names.

Ceremony was similar to high school.

Announcer called Jerrick's name, and he walked down to the stage, walked up the three steps, and approached the university president.

President shook his hand and then handed him a blank diploma.

Jerrick met the university's president for the first time. He only saw him in college and local newspapers. With the high school principal, Jerrick and he were on a first-name basis.

Jerrick graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor's degree in finance and a minor in mathematics.

Lidya earned with high grades, graduating magna cum laude with a Bachelor's degree in management.

At about two, the ceremony had ended, and Jerrick's parents were leaving the bleachers.

Jerrick and Lidya fought the crowds to find his parents.

Then the group walked to his parents' car. After they had made it to the car, his dad turned to Jerrick and embraced him, "Sorry son, I have a long-haul tomorrow. We must return to Holland. Good luck, Jerrick and Lid-Ya."

Climbing into the car, his dad glanced at Lidya, scanning her from head to toes. His dad approved Jerrick's choice in women.

Then Jerrick's parents drove away.

His Life Abroad

Jerrick was nervous about leaving the United States because he never left the State of Michigan. Now, he hopped on a jet to fly half way around the world, chasing after a Russian woman.

Jerrick viewed this trip as a way to further his education about the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet Union collapsed over 10 years ago, he would witness first-hand the impact, when government controlled a whole economy.

Lidya returned to Moscow, Russia first, and Jerrick arrived a week later.

Lidya picked up Jerrick at Sheremetyevo International Airport in Moscow, located on the western outskirts of Moscow.

After Jerrick had passed through Passport Control and Russian Immigration, he saw Lidya standing in a waiting area. Boy, did she look good. She wore a skimpy blouse, fixed up her long, blonde hair, and her jeans were so tight; they outlined the contours of her long, thin legs perfectly.

If Jerrick could get away with it, he would rip her clothes off right there and make hot, passionate love to her on the bench; right next to the old Russian couple.

Jerrick grabbed his luggage and raced over to her. He dropped his luggage and hugged her tightly. Boy, did she smell good too.

Then he let her go.

“How was your flight, Jerrick?”

“Boy it was incredible. I sat on a plane for three hours from Michigan to Washington, D.C. and another 13 hours to Moscow. I am jetlagged but not tired. I had trouble swallowing the airplane food.”

“Let’s go to my parent’s extra apartment. You can change and shower there, and then we can get something to eat,” Lidya said, leading Jerrick from the airport and to the parking lot.

Jerrick picked up his suitcases and trailed after Lidya.

Jerrick felt his crotch itch and thought ‘wait until we get to the apartment.’ My little friend wants to say hi to you too.

Jerrick and Lidya walked a long distance until they reached the far side of the parking lot, where Lidya parked an old Lada.

“Wow, an old Soviet car from the 1960s.”

“Nope, my parents bought it new in 1989. Once a Soviet factory starts making a product, the Soviet planners rarely change the design.”

“I guess if it ain’t broken, then don’t tamper with it,” Jerrick replied, feigning cleverness.

Lidya stared at Jerrick, and she smiled slyly.

Jerrick put his luggage into the trunk and hopped in the passenger side.

Lidya sat in the driver’s seat and started the car.

Engine turned over a couple of times as several plumes of black smoke coughed out the exhaust. Then it started.

Jerrick snickered a little because the engine sounded similar to a loud, weak lawnmower engine.

Lidya pulled the death machine onto the highway and headed south.

Jerrick stared in awe at Russian architecture. Moscow was the center and capital of the Soviet Union, and the Russians built impressive public buildings that were over 500 years old.

Jerrick learned the center of Moscow is the Kremlin and Red Square, the power center of the Soviet Union. Then the rest of Moscow emanates out from the center in waves. Approaching the outskirts, the buildings become more modern, more Soviet.

Moscow has three styles: pre-Soviet, early Soviet, and ugly Soviet. Pre-Soviet architecture mirrors the baroque style of Europe while Soviet planners spared no expense constructing buildings during the early Soviet architecture. They call this era the Stalin Empire Architecture. Theaters, concert halls, hospitals, and government buildings used tall impressive Roman columns, marble steps, ornamental terra-cotta designs complete with statues. If you were to peek inside these buildings, they had 10-foot chandeliers, elaborate crown molding, marble floors and walls. The Communists leaders impressed their citizens, showing how communism improved everyone's lives.

Jerrick described late Soviet architecture with one word, boxy. Buildings were tall, square, and quite simple as if the Soviet planners used large concrete dominoes to piece those buildings together. Inside, it became worse. Pipes and wires snaked along the walls, completely exposed to the outside world.

At first, Jerrick felt completely lost in Moscow. Lidya's parents had an extra apartment in the far, far south of Moscow in a 1970s Soviet neighborhood. All the apartment buildings were rectangular and five stories tall and constructed from concrete that emanated a dreary, dirty pastel white.

Small apartment had one main room, serving as the bedroom and living room, a kitchen, a tiny hallway, and a bathroom straight from the Middle Ages.

After Jerrick had placed his luggage on the floor in the hallway, he entered the bathroom for the very first time and almost tumbled to the floor in shock.

Jerrick thought to himself 'what did I get myself into?' Bathroom was small, and had all the amenities, a bathtub, sink, and toilet, but long pipes ran from the ceiling to the floor in two

corners, and smaller pipes ran along the inside wall connecting all the plumbing to the fixtures.

Finishing his business, Jerrick returned to the living room and saw Lidya staring out the window into the courtyard.

Jerrick was tired from the long flight from the United States, but he was not sleepy. He gazed at Lidya, and she was looking good.

He approached her and embraced his arms around her.

Lidya faced away him, and Jerrick started kissing the nape of her neck, tasting the sweet nectar of honey.

She turned to him, and they both started kissing on the mouth.

Then they both quickly undressed, and Jerrick made hot, passionate love to her on the bed.

Afterwards, Jerrick became thirsty and said, "Let's get a Pepsi."

They both dressed and walked outside.

Jerrick didn't believe it. He was completely lost and asked, "Lidya, how do you remember where you are? Everything looks the same. Everyone lives in these rectangular, five-story buildings, and all these buildings are white."

"Don't worry Jerrick, you'll get used to it."

"Everything looks monotonous."

"This was a gift from Secretary Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union in the 1950s. He started the large-scale construction of these apartments. Russians call them Khrushchev's slums in his honor."

As Lidya and Jerrick strolled towards the main street, he saw the stores. All the buildings on the main street were also rectangular and five-stories tall, but to add a different hue, some buildings were painted a dull yellow or dreary pink color. First floor contained the stores and businesses while the upper floors were living quarters.

Approaching the entrance to the store, Jerrick saw several old Russian people hobble out of the store.

Jerrick walked up the one-step to the stoop of the door and grabbed the handle. He would open the door for his lady.

Just then, a middle-aged, heavy-set Russian woman locked the door from the inside and flipped the sign on the door. Afterwards, she walked into the interior of the store.

Jerrick jerked on the door, but it wouldn't open, and he shouted, "What the fuuuu." Then he caught himself before cussing in front of a lady.

"Ahhh, I'm sorry Jerrick. It's one o'clock. All the stores and shops close down for lunch between one and two."

Jerrick muttered, "Really?"

Lidya and Jerrick would return when the store re-opened. They walked around the neighborhood, killing some time.

Jerrick noticed the Russian women, and they were drop-dead gorgeous. They could be models.

Jerrick brushed his lips with the back of his right hand several times, ensuring he didn't drool on himself. He thought, God's cruel fate would be born an ugly woman in Moscow, Russia.

Jerrick noticed the older Russian women; they hunched over and hobbled as they walked. They also had long crooked noses, and faces covered with warts and moles.

Jerrick blurted, "Why do the young Russian women look so vibrant and healthy while the old women don't look so good?"

Lidya stopped walking, turned to Jerrick, and said, "Russian life is hard on a woman. She must cook and clean for her family, and take care of the man. In America, you have all those conveniences. Life is easy and simple. Did you notice anything missing in the apartment?"

Scratching his chin, Jerrick paused in thought. What could be missing?

Then he asked, "I give up Lidya. Surprise me."

"Wait until you wash your clothes. I have a big surprise waiting for you."

Thinking about it, Jerrick noticed something missing from the apartment, a washing machine. Jerrick loved surprises, but surprises, wrapped up in a box with a pretty bow, not surprises that entailed hard work.

They started walking again.

“Women in America used to cook and clean and take care of their men, but our grandmothers don’t look this bad.”

“Jerrick, when I mean cook and clean. I mean women make the food from scratch: flour, eggs, and butter. When I said clean, a woman gets on her hands and knees and scrubs the floor with a rag.”

“Oh,” Jerrick uttered, speechless, definitely not ready for that surprise about washing clothes.

Lidya and Jerrick walked farther until they had noticed three Russian men sitting on a bench, drinking vodka, straight from a bottle.

“Damn, it’s only noon, and those guys are already drinking the hard stuff.”

“Welcome to Russia. Most men are alcoholics here. They drink all day and don’t work.”

In Jerrick’s hometown, most men were druggies and/or alcoholics too, similar to Russia.

Passing by, Jerrick smelled a strong order emanating from the men. They haven’t touched a bar of soap in centuries.

Jerrick noticed the dust and dirt caked into their skin, making the men much older than they actually were. They looked worn down, beaten.

“Jerrick, you can learn your first Russian word today, Troyka!”

“Troyka, what’s that?”

“It means a group of three.”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“How many drunks do you see over there?”

“Three.”

“Three men have enough money to buy a bottle of vodka and share it. They have plenty of vodka for them to get drunk, but if they had a fourth person, they wouldn’t have enough vodka.”

“Wow, I see your point. Lidya, I don’t understand one thing. Young women look so attractive here. They fix themselves up. On the other hand, Russian men look terrible. Why is that?” Jerrick asked, wanting an answer to this dichotomy.

“Competition! Women compete for the good men. You know, a man with a job and doesn’t drink alcohol. They’re hard to find around here. Why do you think I brought you here? I imported my own man.”

Jerrick smiled because a man felt good when a sexy, attractive woman had thrown a compliment in his direction.

Jerrick added, “I wish American women thought that way.”

“What do American women want in a man?” Lidya asked teasingly.

“I have no idea. Probably most American men are in the same boat with me, quite clueless.”

At two o’clock, Jerrick and Lidya finished walking around the long Soviet neighborhood. They stood in front of the store.

Jerrick hopped up on the step, and the door easily opened. Then he held the door open for Lidya.

She sauntered in first, then Jerrick.

Jerrick experienced his second surprise of the day. He thought the bathroom was bad, but the store was not much better. Ancient store had old and worn floor tiles. He wasn’t sure if the tile pattern were dirt or dark colors. Walls looked like they had not seen a coat of paint in a century. Perishable food was stored in old, refrigerated glass showcases and coolers, and the coolers’ compressors rattled loudly.

Lidya noticed the shocked expression on Jerrick’s face and said, “Welcome to a Russian state store.”

“You’re kidding, right? Right Lidya?”

“No, you’re standing in an authentic state store, right out of the Soviet Union. Only difference is this store has products on the shelves. When I came here as a little girl, I always saw bare shelves.”

Jerrick noticed one cooler had sodas while the other four coolers had various types of beer and liquor drinks.

Both Lidya and Jerrick headed to the soda coolers.

Jerrick noticed one brand of soda, a ½ liter of soda with the Soviet Union’s hammer and sickle blazoned on it. He asked, “What’s that?”

“Soviet Lemonade. You wanna to try it?”

“Sure, I’m game.”

Jerrick grabbed two bottles, and they approached the cashier.

Nobody stood in line.

Cashier sat on a chair reading a book.

Jerrick and Lidya stood at the cash register.

Jerrick noticed the Cashier had no cash register. Instead, she had a box of money and an abacus that Jerrick only saw in books. He actually stared at an actual abacus that looked old with years of dirt and grime embedded into the wooden disks on the metal racks.

Woman sat and read her book, and she didn’t show the slightest interest in her customers.

Jerrick glanced quizzically at Lidya. Then he cleared his voice. That way, the woman would know someone is in line.

Woman continued reading her book.

Then Jerrick hollered in English, “Excuse me, can you do your job!”

Lidya grabbed Jerrick’s arm, hushing him up.

Old woman thrust her book down and replied, “Nye ponimayu tebye!”

Jerrick didn’t understand, and Lidya started speaking Russian to her.

Old Russian woman grabbed the abacus. Her fingers slid disks lightning fast, tabulating their total for two sodas.

Then she said something in Russian.

Lidya whispered, “5,000 rubles.”

Jerrick pulled currency from his pocket and handed it to the cashier.

Then they hurried out of the store.

Jerrick gulped down half the Soviet lemonade and was surprised. It was actually quite good, but it tasted like ginger ale! Apparently, the brilliant Soviet planners didn’t get the correct flavor.

“Lidya, why did you grab my arm in the store?”

“I didn’t want you saying anything rude to the woman. They know some English cuss words.”

“I’ve never seen anything like it. We might still be in there if I didn’t speak up.”

“If you had offended her, then she wouldn’t sell us these drinks.”

“Really?”

“Is this how Russians do business?”

“Jerrick; you must remember; the Soviet state controlled everything for 70 years. No one had any incentive to get anything done. In America, if you get bad service, you can always go somewhere else. Here in the Soviet Union, you get awful service here, then you go to another state store with bare shelves and lousy service too.”

Jerrick snapped, “How did the Russians get anything done?”

“They didn’t. That’s why the Soviet Union had collapsed.”

Lidya glanced at Jerrick strangely. He was supposed to be smart, and she was teaching Jerrick the obvious.

Jerrick lived in Moscow for three weeks, and he would meet her parents tonight for dinner.

Lidya stopped by the apartment at four to pick up Jerrick. Her parents lived further out of town in the suburbs, approximately 10 miles away.

Jerrick became nervous because Lidya’s dad looked like a powerful, imposing man. A man used to getting what he wanted. Jerrick hoped he made a strong first impression.

As Lidya approached the neighborhood, the roads became worse, transforming into dirt, uneven roads filled with potholes. Car’s suspension creaked and groaned each time Lidya hit one of the potholes.

“This car is ready to fall apart,” Jerrick joked.

“Welcome to brilliant Russian planning.”

Jerrick noticed several homes. They were not mansions, but the homes were two-stories, tall, and new. Then he noticed the styles. One home looked like a castle complete with turrets, and

small octagon-shaped towers. Other homes were Italian style, two stories tall and shaped like a box. Each side had exposed balconies complete with potted trees and plants scattered throughout the porches and patios.

Jerrick blurted, “Lidya; these homes are nice, but why are the streets so crappy?”

“This place was originally for dachas.”

“A dacha, what’s that?”

“During the Soviet Union, everyone lived in those cramped apartments in the city, but some people owned land outside of the city. They put up a hut, which we call a dacha. People would get away from the city on the weekends and grow vegetables in their gardens. When the Soviet Union had collapsed, people built homes on their land. Then they moved here, renting out their apartments in the city. The Russian government never got around to paving these streets.”

“Ah, I see. That’s weird because rich neighborhoods in the United States have the best roads and sidewalks.”

Lidya suddenly stopped at one of the houses.

Jerrick didn’t see the house because a six-foot solid, blue fence hid it while apple and pear trees poked above the fence, displaying their unripened fruit.

Lidya and Jerrick climbed out of the car and approached the fence.

Jerrick asked in jest, “Look at this fence. Are you guys expecting robbers and thieves?”

“No, this is only what my father could find. Solid metal sheets for a fence.”

At one spot on the fence, Lidya grabbed a door handle and pushed the door open.

Jerrick glanced inside and saw a cozy, one-story house sitting in the middle of the property, hidden behind the fence. Apple and pear trees surrounded the house. In the far right corner, a garden of tomato and cantaloupe plants was growing.

Approaching the house, Jerrick saw Lidya’s dad sitting on a recliner on the front porch. Photograph didn’t exaggerate one bit. He was a large, imposing man.

As Lidya and Jerrick walked onto the porch, her dad quickly stood up and held his hand out for a handshake and said exuberantly, “Zdrastivutye!”

“Hello,” Jerrick replied, and reached out, and shook his hand.

Her dad led them inside into the first room, the kitchen.

Lidya’s mom slaved over the stove. Seeing the guest enter, she wiped her hands on a towel and approached Jerrick.

She reached out to shake Jerrick’s hand and said, “Dobro pozhalovat nash dom.”

Jerrick shook her hand.

Lidya translated, “Welcome to our home.”

Lidya’s dad led the kids to the living room, where Lidya’s grandmother sat on the coach.

She didn’t get up, but she glared at Jerrick.

After several minutes, grandmother asked something in Russian.

Lidya immediately replied, “Nyet,” or ‘no’ in Russian.

Jerrick asked, “What did she say?”

“Grandma wants to know if you work for the CIA, and she doesn’t trust you.”

“Oh, that’s interesting. You should tell her yes, and her name is in my file.”

Jerrick saw a long table pushed against the wall with various types of food on it that Jerrick had never seen before.

Lidya’s dad disappeared into the bedroom and returned with a bottle of vodka and two shot glasses.

Then he sat at the head of the table. Next, the dad directed the guest of honor, Jerrick, to sit next to him.

Then both Lidya and grandma sat to Jerrick’s left. Luckily, grandma sat on the other side of Lidya, away from Jerrick.

Lidya’s mom brought in plates of food, placing them on the table. Then she trotted to the kitchen for more plates of food.

Lidya’s dad opened the bottle and poured out two shots.

Jerrick noticed the label, Smirnoff’s Vodka.

Jerrick asked Lidya, “Why is he drinking American vodka?”

“Russians think American vodka tastes better,” then Lidya translated this information to her father.

Her dad nodded his head in approval and placed one of the shot glasses in front of Jerrick.

Lidya said, “It’s Russian tradition to share a toast with the father.”

Jerrick and her dad picked up the shots; her dad made a toast, and they both gulped down the vodka.

Vodka burned Jerrick’s throat like liquid fire making its way to his stomach.

Before the vodka settled in Jerrick’s stomach, her dad had poured another shot of vodka and proposed another toast.

Lidya noticed Jerrick didn’t finish the entire shot and whispered into his ear, “Russians get offended if you don’t finish the whole shot.”

Jerrick swallowed the vodka, making a large grimace.

Lidya said something to her dad in Russian.

Her dad removed Jerrick’s shot glass, and he just started pouring shots for himself.

Lidya’s mom sat at the other end of the table, and then they began eating.

Jerrick became impressed with the simple, delicious food. Russian potato salad contained sliced apples, making it sweet. Salty, marinated red tomatoes were quite good. Main entrée was monti: steamed noodles stuffed with ground beef, carrots, onions, and potatoes, a smart way to slip healthy vegetables into a good-tasting dish.

Lidya’s parents wanted to talk to Jerrick, but they had a language barrier. They only spoke Russian while Jerrick only spoke English.

Lidya did most of the talking and translating.

Occasionally, Jerrick nodded his head in approval.

After a few hours, Lidya drove Jerrick to the apartment.

Jerrick wanted Lidya to come inside, but Lidya pulled herself from his arms and returned home.

Jerrick heeded Lidya's advice and went to the Moscow Institute of Business, located a few blocks over from the apartment.

Approaching the building, Jerrick saw a dusty white building that looked more like an industrial complex than a place of education. However, he didn't speak Russian, which limited his employment choices.

Jerrick opened the front door and walked in.

A security guard sat at a desk near the front entrance. He spotted Jerrick and knew he was a foreigner, rushing him to the director's office on the second floor.

Jerrick didn't wait.

Director, Alexander Fedoseev, emerged from his office, eager to hire Jerrick.

Institute taught courses in English, and native English speakers were rare in this part of Moscow.

Director proudly showed Jerrick the building, giving him a grand tour of the facility.

They strolled through the corridors, inspecting various classrooms and computer rooms. Although the exterior of the building looked like hell, the inside was clean and modern, talk about a first bad impression.

Although Jerrick only had a Bachelor's degree, he would teach business English.

Director insisted that Jerrick enroll in the Masters of Business Administration program. Instructors taught all the courses in English.

Institute paid Jerrick \$750 per month for teaching English, and waived the tuition and fees for Jerrick's classes.

Director's reason was simple. Russian regulations were simpler for students while work visas and permits were tough to come by.

Through normal channels, even if one has the proper paperwork, the bureaucrats rejected all applicants; they always find problems with the documents. Only way to solve problems was the

applicant paid a bribe, which could be as high as \$5,000. That was an ungodly sum for the poor colleges and poor students.

The Russian people became masters in circumventing the monstrous Russian rules and laws, an everlasting gift from the Soviet legal system.

Both Lidya and Jerrick scanned the list of documents they needed for a student visa. They needed certified translations of Jerrick's college transcript, a medical exam, an HIV test, a taxpayer's ID number, a rental agreement that covered the duration of his stay in Moscow, and many other documents.

Jerrick was dumbfounded.

Then the fun began dealing with the various Russian bureaucrats.

At each agency, Lidya and Jerrick waited in long lines. During their turn, Lidya always argued with the bureaucrats in order to get the documents.

Bureaucrats didn't do any work. They always shooed the people away.

Each time, they received a document; Jerrick inspected it. Documents were simple. A bureaucrat completed a form, signed it at the bottom, and then he stamped his signature with a blue seal of the agency.

"Lidya, I have never seen anything like this."

"Welcome to the Russian bureaucracy. All this is left over from the Soviet Union."

"Lidya, it'll take weeks to get all our documents."

"I know that is how the Soviet planners designed the system. Remember Jerrick, nobody worked in the Soviet Union. People had plenty of time to stand in lines and collect these documents. I suspected many gave up."

"I wouldn't be surprised the people didn't protest their government."

Lidya laughed and added, "Jerrick; Stalin executed any troublemakers. I heard rumors from Central Asia where people disagreed with the bureaucrats about their nationality. Then during the night, they disappeared forever."

"Lidya, what do you mean over nationality?"

“The Soviet Union was composed of hundreds of ethnic groups. For instance, the Soviet government says a person is Kazakh, but he’s Uzbek. Central Asian people are proud of their heritage. If this person argued with the bureaucrat and tried to change his nationality on his documents, then he would disappear. Stalin didn’t want any troublemakers around.”

“Damn, that’s really harsh.”

“Stalin united all people under the Soviet Union. He didn’t want anyone to disagree with him. He designed the Soviet Union, so it would never break up.”

“How do you design something that could never break up?”

“For instance, workers assembled Soviet TVs in Moscow; the workers made tubes in Georgia, and they made the circuit boards in the Ukraine. If these countries broke apart, then the whole TV industry shuts down because the factories couldn’t get the parts they needed.”

“Damn, I must admit, that was clever.”

“Jerrick, that caused many problems when the Soviet Union broke up. Russia’s recovery was a miracle. Our whole economy was thrown into chaos in the early 1990s! All our factories shut down!”

Consequently, Lidya and Jerrick spent weeks collecting all the documents.

Jerrick saw eight specialists for his gruesome, medical exam.

Old Soviet doctors checked every hole and crevice on Jerrick’s body.

One doctor took a chest x-ray; another checked his eyes; another inspected his joints, et cetera. Finding no problems, the doctor signed his medical document and stamped it with a blue seal.

Finally, Jerrick saw the last doctor, who scrutinized his document.

Doctor asked Lidya several questions and stamped two more blue seals onto the document.

Afterwards, Jerrick counted three blue square stamps and seven small blue circular stamps with numerous signatures spread randomly throughout the document.

Lidya and Jerrick returned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and submitted his documents.

Jerrick noticed the bureaucrat carefully inspected each document, ensuring every document had its requisite blue stamps and signatures.

After four weeks, Jerrick received his new visa to study at a Russian institute.

Both Lidya and Jerrick returned to the apartment, crashing on the couch, consumed by exhaustion.

Jerrick's mind turned over the day's events about the accumulation of those damn blue stamps.

He thought, 'Didn't Americans realize that every law that Congress passed, and every new bureaucracy they created brought the United States one step closer to this insane system of handwritten government documents with blue stamps?'

Afterwards, Jerrick complained loudly to Lidya, "Damn; those Russian bureaucrats are unbelievable. You need a goddamn stamp for everything."

"Welcome to the Soviet bureaucracy. Remnants of the Soviet machine still function in Russia."

"But the Soviet Union collapsed over 10 years ago. Why can't they change?"

"The Soviet Union had collapsed, but the Soviet law is the source of Russian law. Did you notice the bureaucrats are in their 40s and 50s? They started working in that agency when they were young and were trained to process documents in that way under the Soviet Union."

Jerrick's anger and frustration melted away as he replied, "Lidya; you're right. That's all they know, but it's so frustrating. A bureaucrat handwrites all the documents. Then he signs and stamps it with a blue ink seal. If I knew what to write and had that damn stamp, then I can make my own documents."

Jerrick hesitated and then added, “Thank god they did not ask me to prove I was a male. Then I would whip out the little monster and show it to them.”

Lidya started to giggle. Sometimes Jerrick was a little coarse, but he was different from the Russian men she had dated.

Lidya replied, “Jerrick; it wouldn’t do any good. Not unless you have a blue stamp on the little monster, and a doctor’s signature authenticating it.”

Now Jerrick joined the laughter. Then he placed his hand around Lidya, pulling her closer.

Jerrick started kissing her on the mouth and massaging her legs. A good idea popped into his head about how to release his frustrations and stress of dealing with the post-Soviet bureaucracies.

Lidya and Jerrick were driving back from her parents’ home in mid-October around 10 o’clock at night, pitch black.

Jerrick always let Lidya drive because Russians were rude drivers.

During the Soviet Union, nobody had cars. Now, many Russians owned cars, and they always sped to where they’re going. The Russians were determined to make up for the deprived times when no one had cars.

Russian drivers would cut other drivers off, form three-car lanes on two-lane roads, and sporadically and habitually change lanes, always moving and swerving ahead of the other drivers. Michigan police and troopers would have a busy day in Moscow as officers would write thousands of tickets a day.

Lidya turned on a side street to approach the apartment.

Before they knew it, a Soviet Jeep with four soldiers pulled in front of them, cutting them off.

Both vehicles stopped, and four soldiers hopped out of the jeep and surrounded the car.

Soldiers’ didn’t draw their guns, but they slung AK-47s over their backs. They wore long, dark-green trench coats, and

round, black, fur hats with flat tops. An emblem or badge of some type was pinned in the center of the hat, and various badges and stripes decorated their lapels and left, top areas of their coats.

Jerrick didn't miss the imposing, threatening AK-47s.

One of the soldiers said something in Russian.

Lidya turned to Jerrick and said, "Get out of the car."

They both climbed out slowly.

Lidya approached one of the soldiers, almost screaming something in Russian.

Jerrick stood there with his mouth hanging open.

One of the soldiers asked Jerrick something in Russian.

Jerrick understood the word, passport since it's the same word in both languages.

Jerrick tried to say in Russian, "My passport – in safe at work," but the soldier frowned in confusion.

Lidya climbed into the car and reached into her purse, pulling out several documents. Then she tucked two, new, crisp twenty U.S. dollar bills into the folded pages of the car registration. The U.S. dollars are the currency of choice for corrupt Russian public officials and racketeers.

She then got out of the car and shoved the documents into one of the soldier's hands.

Soldier studied the documents.

Jerrick saw one soldier point his finger at him and asked Lidya something in Russian.

Jerrick didn't understand the conversation, but he recognized one word, American man, or 'Amirkanets' in Russian.

Soldier in command returned Lidya's documents. All her documents were in order, minus the money of course.

Soldiers piled into the Jeep and pulled away.

Lidya and Jerrick climbed into the car.

Jerrick snapped, "What the hell was that?" He wasn't angry at Lidya but surprised.

"That was GUY."

"GUY? What is GUY?"

"State Automobile Inspectors. They are road police. They drive around and search for drivers violating the traffic laws."

“They looked like soldiers who carried some awesome fire power for street cops.”

“GUY is a remnant of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had plenty of AK-47s and jeeps, so that is what the police got. AK-47s and jeeps. When they pull you over, you pull over.”

“What would happen if a driver didn’t pull over?”

“Then they turn the driver’s car into Swiss cheese with those guns.”

Jerrick was not shocked, but the Russians didn’t mess around when it came to important business. He knew Lidya didn’t joke about the police firing upon people, fleeing.

Lidya turned the car ignition on and pulled away to drive the last block to the apartment.

Jerrick realized every day in Russia would be an educational experience. He was learning more here than he ever could learn from a book.

Early November, Lidya and Jerrick wore winter coats with fur hats.

Jerrick didn’t like his black mink fur hat, but his hat kept his head warm during Moscow’s bitterly cold winters. Somehow, the Muscovites learned to adapt to these harsh winters.

“I have a treat for you Jerrick.”

“What do you want to do?”

“Let’s head down to the GUM, the State Universal Store. We can walk around and see what they have. Besides, New Year’s Eve is approaching. You are supposed to buy presents for your family, and give them on New Year’s Eve.”

“You don’t give presents on Jesus’ birthday, December 25?”

“Actually, we celebrate Jesus’ birthday on January 7.”

“That’s interesting. That’s my birthday. Are you planning anything special for me?”

“Ah, Jerrick; don’t worry. I have a special treat for you on your birthday,” then Lidya glanced at Jerrick, winking at him.

They approached the GUM as shoppers dashed in and out of the entrance.

Lidya and Jerrick walked inside, brushing off the cold Moscow air. Place was quite warm.

Jerrick even removed his warm fur hat as beads of perspiration formed on his forehead.

They headed to the café section to order hot tea and cookies.

Then Jerrick saw her. A petite woman with long luscious jet-black hair standing behind the cash register. She used a scarf to pull her hair back. She had light, creamy brown skin with the brightest hazel eyes.

Lidya and Jerrick approached the cashier.

Jerrick stuttered, "I I I'll have a hot tea." He didn't take his eyes off the cashier girl as his words became stuck in the back of his throat.

Lidya faced Jerrick, "Jerrick, are you all right?"

Jerrick turned to face Lidya, "I'm fine. I was caught off guard. She looks so unusual. She doesn't look Russian."

Lidya frowned and snapped, "She's probably Tatar. Supposedly, Tatar women are very beautiful. Do you think she's pretty?"

"She's okay. She's attractive, but she looks different, exotic."

"Exotic? You like her, don't you?"

"Lidya, no, I said she's okay."

Jerrick reached for Lidya, pulling her closer, giving her a reassuring hug. Of course, he lied. He really liked that exotic looking woman.

If she told Jerrick to leave his girlfriend, he would drop Lidya like a sack of potatoes. Obviously, he would become homeless in Moscow.

Cashier glanced at Lidya and then Jerrick. She didn't speak English, but she knew a conflict arose between them. Of course, she suspected she knew the conflict had arisen over her. Jerrick shot her a strange look. Few Russian men dated and married

outside their race, but some would salivate all over themselves, when they looked at her.

“Two teas and some cookies, please,” Lidya demanded in Russian.

Jerrick studied the cashier’s chest, reading her name tag.

Lidya noticed and asked, “Jerrick; what are you doing?”

“I’m trying to read her name tag. Her name is unusual.”

“Her name is Amaliji. Here, you can talk to her.”

Lidya told the cashier that Jerrick wanted to know her name.

“Lidya; please stop.”

Amaliji said in Russian, “That’ll be 7,000 rubles.”

Jerrick pulled out his wallet and passed the money to Amaliji.

As Amaliji reached for the money, she smiled at Jerrick.

Jerrick studied her. She was so cute; she could be Selma Hayek’s younger, cuter sister. How could this be possible?

Then Amaliji placed a tray with the teas and cookies onto the counter.

When they sat down, Lidya snapped, “Honestly Jerrick, do you like that girl?”

“No Lidya, I love you,” then Jerrick reached across the table to hold Lidya’s hand.

Jerrick continued, “Besides, how stupid do you think I am to run away with a cashier from another country?”

“Lidya began smiling, “Jerrick; I guess you’re right.”

Little did Lidya know; guys are quite stupid when it comes to matters of the heart. A guy simplifies his world. Is she cute or not cute? If she’s cute, is she worth marrying and taking home to mom? Of course, Jerrick would not hesitate to take Amaliji home with him to Michigan. Jerrick knew his mom and dad would approve.

Finishing their teas, Lidya and Jerrick stood up and strolled through corridors of the GUM, window-shopping.

Amaliji watched them leave, sneaking another peek at Jerrick. Several men have already proposed to her whom she

turned down, but she never dated an American. She would go out with Jerrick if he asked her.

Jerrick wanted to turn his head and observe Amaliji, but he knew this would spark an argument with Lidya.

Later that evening, Jerrick made hard, vigorous love to Lidya several times as images of Amaliji swirled in his head. Bed rattled so loudly, it almost collapsed.

Lidya noticed a difference.

Afterwards, she asked, "What were you thinking about? This time, your loving making was stronger, more vigorous?"

"Nothing, I'm under a lot of stress at school. I'm trying to release it."

"Are you thinking about Amaliji?"

"Who? No, Lidya. I already forgot her name."

"I must return to my parents."

Lidya rolled out of bed, dressed, and bent down to kiss Jerrick good-bye.

"Bye, Lidya. I'll be at school until 5 o'clock tomorrow. We can have dinner together."

"Okay, I'll see you then."

Before Lidya had left, she studied Jerrick, giving him a cold look.

During the next week, Jerrick thought constantly of Amaliji, and he pulled his Russian language book off the shelf to study it.

Russian was such an incredibly hard language, but Jerrick benefits in one regard. Jerrick's English improved greatly. Jerrick's brilliant mind stumbled over the convoluted, complex English grammar rules, and he once thought Englishmen were foolish in creating their language, but when you compare English to another language that is 10 times more complex, then those Englishmen were quite clever.

If the Englishmen kept the pronunciation consistent, then English would be the perfect language, being the world's language.

Jerrick smiled because he thought in global terms.

Lidya arrived one day and saw Jerrick studying Russian.

"So, you actually want to learn Russian?"

“Hi, Lidya, I’m trying to learn, but this is so damn complicated.”

“What’s wrong?”

“A noun can be used in six ways in Russian. Then each way has its own method to make the noun plural. I must remember 12 variations for one word in Russian. Then most common nouns in Russian like mother, father, and chair are exceptions to the rule.”

Lidya giggled.

“What’s so funny, Lidya?”

“All Russians go through this. We all know Russian is complicated. Wait until you start reading Dostoyevsky. He twists all the Russian words around. You don’t even put the words in order like in English,” Lidya said through a burst of laughter.

“What do you mean?”

“In English, the subject comes first, then the verb, the indirect object, and finally, the direct object. In Russian, you are free to scramble the order. Usually, you put the most important word last in the sentence, emphasizing it.”

Jerrick slammed his Russian language book down onto the table. He used his right hand to massage his temple, feeling the small pin pricks in his head, signaling an approaching headache.

“Razdevaisya, ya hochoo tebya!” Lidya said to Jerrick.

Jerrick looked over at Lidya in confusion and asked, “What?”

“I said in Russian, Undress, I want you!”

Jerrick would comply happily, helping to cure his impending headache.

After a week, Jerrick headed to the GUM because he wanted some hot tea and cookies.

He approached the café, and lo and behold; Amaliji stood at the cash register again.

Jerrick approached the counter, trying to be cool and said, “Hello, Amal-i-ji.”

Amaliji smiled at him.

“My name is Jerrick,” he said slowly in Russian.

She asked something in Russian.

“I don’t understand.”

She repeated slowly, and Jerrick recognized the word, young woman.

“Oh, we broke up,” Jerrick replied in English, spreading his hands apart, indicating Lidya and Jerrick went in separate directions.

Her smile strengthened.

“I’ll have a tea with cookies, please,” he asked in Russian.

Amaliji arranged his order, placing tea and cookies on a tray.

“That’ll be 5,000 rubles,” Amaliji said.

Jerrick understood numbers, his first breakthrough in Russian.

He fished the money from his wallet and handed it to her. He added an extra 2,000 rubles for a tip.

Amaliji tried to return the tip, but Jerrick insisted that she keep it.

Jerrick thought what in the hell and said, “Good bye beautiful,” in Russian.

She reddened a little and used her right hand to wave good-bye.

Jerrick sat down and drank his hot tea with cookies. Finishing the last sip of tea, he put the tray away and threw away his trash.

He glanced back at the counter and saw Amaliji helping a group of customers.

Before he had turned, he saw Amaliji bent sideways to glance at him and waved good-bye again.

Jerrick returned the gesture and waved good-bye to her.

Lidya worked long hours at a construction company as a finance specialist in January 2003.

Jerrick rarely saw her anymore. If he were lucky, he saw Lidya once or twice on the weekend. Other days, Jerrick was alone and isolated in Moscow. Killing some free time, Jerrick spent time

at the café, and, every time, he flirted with Amaliji. Of course, if Lidya found out, he would be in trouble.

Lidya would toss him out on the street, making him homeless in one of the most expensive real estate markets in the world.

It was March 8, International Women's day in Russia. All Russian men show their appreciation to the women in their lives, whether it was their mother, sister, wife, or girlfriend.

Jerrick bought a bouquet of 11 red roses for Lidya, following the Russian tradition. An odd number of roses indicated a romance while an even number indicated a funeral.

This year, March 8 fell on a Saturday, and Jerrick prepared dinner for Lidya and bought her a bouquet of red roses.

It was late, and Lidya still didn't arrive.

Jerrick worried and picked up the phone to call her.

Lidya answered after the second ring.

"Hello, Jerrick. How are you?"

"I'm doing fine. I thought I could show you my appreciation for you by making you dinner."

"Ah Jerrick, that's wonderful, but I forgot to tell you. My company has a party tonight, and I planned on going. I'm sorry. I've been so busy at work. How about you make me dinner tomorrow night?"

"That'll be okay. I'll see you tomorrow then."

Jerrick slammed down the phone.

Jerrick was disappointed and heartbroken because Lidya went to a party without him.

Jerrick noticed Lidya was acting strange lately. She rarely came over anymore, and if she did, she wouldn't let him touch her.

Jerrick learned a hard lesson about Russian women. When a Russian woman is in love with you, she puts you on a pedestal and worships you, following you around like a little puppy-dog. When she falls out of love with you, she turns into the cold, icy waters of the Arctic.

Jerrick knew something bothered Lidya, but at this point, he didn't know what.

Jerrick glanced at the bouquet of red roses and recycled his present. He glanced at his watch and saw it was 3:30.

Jerrick picked up the bouquet and headed to the GUM.

As fate would have it, Amaliji was working.

Jerrick proudly maneuvered to the counter and handed the bouquet to Amaliji.

Jerrick noticed the other women in the store were casting evil, jealous eyes at Amaliji.

Amaliji blushed and reddened. She pointed at the clock and told Jerrick she finishes work at nine.

Jerrick's Russian was limited, but he understood the number nine.

Jerrick returned to the GUM at 8:45 and saw Amaliji cleaning the counters and tables. He sat at a table and waited for her.

After she had finished, she removed her apron and the scarf from her hair. Her black hair flowed down, and around her shoulders. Some strands found their way to her front while most draped along her back. She was gorgeous.

Amaliji put on her coat and grabbed her bouquet of flowers that Jerrick had given her earlier.

Lidya did not kid, when she said Tatar women are famous for their beauty.

As she approached Jerrick, he stood up, and shook her hand.

Then they headed outside.

Jerrick being a perfect gentleman, opened the door, and let Amaliji walk out first.

Although Moscow was chilly, they didn't wear their fur hats as a light snowfall pelted the ground.

Amaliji asked Jerrick to walk her home.

Jerrick saw Amaliji's petite figure. He stood at 5 feet 10, and she was 5 inches shorter than he was.

They walked side by side in the direction of Amaliji's apartment building.

Being a perfect gentleman, Jerrick walked Amaliji to the stoop of her apartment building.

They both paused and stared at each other.

Then unexpectedly Amaliji stood on the tips of her toes and kissed Jerrick on the cheek.

Jerrick smiled and blushed. He didn't brush the kiss away, and would not wash that cheek for a week.

Jerrick lightly grabbed her hands to pull her close, but she pulled away. She ran up the three steps to the apartment door.

Before she entered, she turned to face Jerrick and said in Russian, "I don't work tomorrow. If you want, you can take me out tomorrow."

Jerrick asked, "How?"

Amaliji pulled an old store receipt from her pocket and wrote down her phone number. She walked back to Jerrick and handed it to him. Then she disappeared for the night in her parent's apartment.

Sauntering home, he was in a state of bliss; he could have walked home naked, and not felt the stinging coldness of a Moscow spring.

Next day, he thought only about Amaliji, but he told Lidya he would make her dinner.

Jerrick waited and waited and still no sign from Lidya.

At 2:30, he called Amaliji.

An older woman answered the phone with an angry, questioning voice.

Then Amaliji snatched the phone away from her mother.

"Hi Amaliji, let's go do something."

"Okay, come over here."

Jerrick heard her mother's angry voice in the background, demanding answers in Russian.

Jerrick met Amaliji at the apartment door.

Waiting for him, she wore a short red dress with black poke-a-dots. She didn't button her coat, revealing her slim figure. She also dabbed a touch of makeup, and used a curling iron to put a little weave in her hair.

Amaliji grabbed his arm and said, "Let's go."

They walked to the nearest Moscow substation, and Jerrick was at a loss of words. The Soviet engineers constructed an impressive subway station where every station had a theme. Soviet planners dedicated one station to the Soviet cosmonauts and another to the Soviet scientists and writers. They spared no expense. They constructed the stations using marble steps and floors, tall columns, statues, and elaborate crown molding. Some stations had large, ornate chandeliers and painted murals.

Amaliji directed Jerrick to the center of Moscow, Red Square, the power center of the Soviet Union.

They visited Lenin's mausoleum, the Russian fine arts museum, and finally, the underground mall that bordered the Red Square outside the Kremlin walls.

Jerrick was surprised because Vladimir Lenin's body laid on display in his mausoleum. Followers could pay homage to the god of the Soviet Union.

Although Amaliji and Jerrick didn't speak much, this became one of Jerrick's happiest days. He skipped an extra step as his smile froze on his face.

Several Russian men exchanged dirty looks as Jerrick passed by with an extremely hot Tatar woman.

Jerrick could adjust to life in Russia. Every year, he could trade in his Russian girl for a newer one, like some wealthy people who trade in their cars. Every year, he would date a younger, prettier woman with fewer miles and less baggage.

At the end of the day, Jerrick returned Amaliji safely to her apartment.

They stood outside the stairwell to the apartment.

Jerrick reached down to grab her hands and reeled her in.

Then he bent down to kiss her.

Amaliji kissed him, and, afterwards, she broke away. She ran up the stairs and turned to Jerrick and said sweetly, "Thanks for the wonderful time." Then she disappeared into the apartment.

Jerrick waved good-bye to her and returned to his apartment.

Opening the door, he saw no sign of Lidya. He wondered about her as his intuition screamed at him that it was over. He

wondered if she even called him today. He sat on the couch and opened a book to start reading. With Lidya acting strangely, what could he do?

The next day, Jerrick asked the director if he could rent a room at the institute, so he could complete his studies in Moscow. He felt his relationship with Lidya had ended, and he doubted Lidya would let him stay in the apartment and see another woman.

During April, Jerrick hadn't seen Lidya in weeks.

Finally, Lidya called him unexpectedly and told him that they must talk. Her voice was so cold on the telephone that Jerrick's ear caught frostbite.

When Jerrick returned to the apartment after work, Lidya sat quietly on the couch in the living room with a cold, mean look on her face.

"Jerrick, I'm sorry to tell you, but we're breaking up."

"Why Lidya? What happened?"

"I met someone at work. He is a manager, who owns his own apartment and drives a new black Mercedes."

"A black Mercedes? Ah, I see. I guess I cannot compete with that. My Mercedes is just a remote control car."

"Jerrick, you and your stupid jokes. This guy is serious and has goals; he is building his career and wants to marry me. He has already proposed, and I accepted, of course."

Then Lidya held out her right hand and showed Jerrick the one-carat engagement ring. He spent a small fortune on her. Odd thing about Russia is men and women wear their wedding bands on the opposite hand.

"I guess you want me to move out?"

"I know I dragged you to Moscow. My parents and I decided to let you stay until June 1. Then you either return to the United States or find another place to live in Moscow."

Jerrick was crushed. He sensed something was happening with Lidya, but damn, the guy already proposed to her? When a Russian man wants something, he just reaches out and snatches it.

He was also hurt and wanted to tell Lidya about Amaliji but dropped it. If he reciprocated and hurt Lidya's feelings, then she'll kick him out sooner. At least she granted him two months to live rent-free in Moscow.

"Lidya, I wish you good luck. I really mean it. You come by on June 1st, and I'll hand you the keys. I'll clean up the place, and leave it the way I found it."

"Thank you, Jerrick. I hoped you would understand."

Then Lidya sprang up from the couch and dashed for the exit.

Jerrick kept his promise. On May 31, he cleaned the apartment for the whole day.

He bought Lidya's dad an expensive bottle of Smirnoff's vodka, leaving the bottle on the kitchen table in the apartment.

He wrote a note and thanked Lidya's father for his hospitality, tucking the note under a vodka bottle. Sometimes, he wondered if Lidya ever gave him that bottle.

Although Lidya broke Jerrick's heart, and he felt guilty about dating Amaliji. However, it made no difference in the end. Lidya and Jerrick fell out of love with each other, and they must move on.

Jerrick and Amaliji were poor, trapped in one of the most expensive cities in the world. They both worked long, grueling hours.

During good weeks, Jerrick spent a whole day with Amaliji, exploring Moscow. Then he would often drop by the café several times a week for lunch.

Amaliji was always happy to see him.

Jerrick continually tried getting to second base with her, but she always struck Jerrick out like a pro baseball pitcher. She was a tough nut to crack, but in the end, Jerrick didn't care.

Although they had trouble communicating, he enjoyed being around her. What difference did it matter if she never slept with him. He liked her draped at the end of his arm, and then he showed the public his beautiful girlfriend.

Of course, Jerrick must admit. He would never study Russian if he never had met Amaliji. Incidentally, his English language improved also.

Jerrick's second year in Moscow came to an end. He finished his Master's Degree from the Moscow Institute of Business.

Drifting into sleep, Jerrick heard Michigan calling him home every night. He must tell Amaliji.

Jerrick's Russian improved greatly during his second year in Moscow. He spoke Russian with Amaliji almost fluently.

One day, they sat on a bench outside Amaliji's apartment building near the playground.

Jerrick blurted, "Amaliji; come with me to Michigan."

"Jerrick; I don't want to live in the United States."

"Why, Amaliji? That's my home. Come with me?"

"No Jerrick. Moscow is my home. Mother Russia is my country."

"Amaliji, I love you. I want to take you with me to Michigan."

"If you love me, then stay in Moscow with me."

"But Russia is not my country."

"It can be your country too. I'm not Russian, but I was born and raised here."

"Amaliji, I don't expect you to understand. My whole life, I thought I was meant for something great. God came down and touched me, giving me a special gift. I lived a lifetime figuring out what that gift was. I think I know what god wants me to do. I must return to America, save my country, save my home state, Michigan, and leave my mark on humanity."

Amaliji just stared at Jerrick blankly. She stood up and took Jerrick's hand, leading him to the sidewalk.

"Show me your dorm room."

Jerrick was surprised. Dating Amaliji for a year, Jerrick never showed her his dorm room.

Jerrick obeyed her. He led her to his tiny dorm room, that contained a single bed and small desk.

Jerrick shared the community bathroom with the floor's residents and prepared his meals in the community kitchen. If it weren't for Amaliji, he would flee this dump months ago, returning to Michigan under night's darkness.

Jerrick closed the door and Amaliji started undressing.

"Amaliji; what are you doing?"

She slipped naked under his covers and stated, "You're a man; you figure out what to do?"

Jerrick undressed and slipped under the covers with her. Then he gently made love to her.

Afterwards, Jerrick experienced the shock of his life.

"Jerrick; I don't care that you're not rich. I'm not rich either. If I must be poor for the rest of my life, then so be it. Russia is my country. It's my home. It's the only home I know. You can stay here with me. I'll let you marry me if you want, but you must promise me that you'll stay here in Moscow with me. I only let you sleep with me, so you know what you would miss in Michigan."

Jerrick thought how cruel God was.

God gave him a mission and ah, by the way, God threw some kinks and curves along the way to shake him up, ensuring Jerrick was paying attention. God checked if Jerrick were sticking to the master plan.

"Amaliji, please don't be that way. Try Michigan for a year. If you hate it, then we'll return to Moscow together."

Amaliji slid out of bed and quickly dressed. She turned to face Jerrick and said, "Jerrick; you have a choice. Stay with me or return to Michigan. If you choose Michigan, then I never want to see you again. I was born in Russia, and this is where I'll die. I can never call Michigan my home."

She unlocked the door and walked out of Jerrick's life forever.

Jerrick was crushed as he felt someone take a red-hot cattle branding iron and plunged it into his chest.

Jerrick knew he must return to Michigan as destiny called him; destiny can be a cruel mistress indeed.

Jerrick never saw Amaliji again as his second love walked out on him. He knew she was serious about her decision; Jerrick must choose between her and Michigan but not both.

Jerrick had returned home. It was time for him to build his empire, leaving his mark on history.

Part 2 – The Collapse of the Democracy

The Journey Home

Jerrick finished his Master's degree from the Russian institute in 2005 and returned to the one place he called home, his birthplace, Holland, Michigan.

Jerrick drove to Larry's parents' house, searching for Larry and Tommy.

They didn't change one bit; they still partied like there was no tomorrow.

Although they were the same age, Tommy and Larry had aged.

Tommy had aged to 40 as the smoking and drinking dried his skin like cracked leather. Skin on his face was rough and covered with many fine lines and cracks, and he had dark circles around his eyes. He hadn't a good night sleep in a decade.

Larry aged to 30 as the partying life hadn't severely hit him yet, but Larry had a beer gut as if he were already five months pregnant. His face became rounder, and gray stubbles poked from his beard.

Larry pulled out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and lit one up. He then tossed the pack to Tommy.

Tommy offered the pack to Jerrick, but Jerrick shook his head no. He hadn't smoked anything in years, and he never smoked cigarettes.

After Larry's third puff from the cigarette, he went into a coughing spasm. Cough was liquidity as if he coughed up chunks of lungs as lungs cells made a dash for fresh air.

Jerrick asked as an attempt to develop rapport, "What have you guys been up to?"

"You know; the same-o same-o," Larry replied as he exhaled a cloud of smoke.

"I guess you, guys, didn't know, but I met a Russian girl in college and followed her to Moscow."

Both Larry and Tommy turned to stare at Jerrick in awe, thinking Jerrick was pulling their leg.

After Jerrick had met Lidya at college, she became the center of his world; he lost contact with everyone, including his mom and grandmother.

“Was she hot?” Tommy asked, feigning some interest.

“Oh yeah, she was super cute. You wouldn’t believe it, but her hometown looks like a dump. But damn; Russian women are hot!”

Larry sounded like a prosecutor ready to expose the defendant’s lie to the jury, and he snapped, “Why did you come back then?” Larry clearly remembered several fat skanks shooting Jerrick down at the pool hall. Now he claimed he dated hot Russian women.

Jerrick continued, “Well, she cheated on me, and then, I cheated on her too; so we broke up. I couldn’t afford to live in Moscow on my own, so I came back. It costs over a grand to rent a cockroach infested apartment for a month.”

Larry’s interest strengthened as he asked, “You cheated on her, with who?”

“She is Tatar and has long, straight brunette hair, dark creamy complexion, and a tight petite body. She has an unusual name, Amaliji.” A little drool formed on Jerrick’s lip because he wished, he could reach out and snatched Amaliji from his thoughts and hold her in his arms.

Tommy and Larry stared at their old friend, or former friend. They remained in their hometown and accomplished nothing. However, Jerrick elevated himself. He went off to college and then to a foreign country, sleeping with hot exotic women.

Tommy and Larry finished their cigarettes and then pluck two more from the pack.

“You guys smoke too many cigarettes,” Jerrick stated the obvious.

“You know, we have no drugs, and we have no money for beer,” Larry added, making cigarettes the most logical choice.

“Larry, your cough doesn’t sound good.”

“Who are you, my mom?” Larry screamed as irritation invaded the undertones in his voice.

“Larry always in trouble with his mom. She wants to kick him out, again,” Tommy added meekly.

“Again?”

“Yeah, last time, Larry lived in an abandoned trailer in the woods for a month.”

Larry turned to Tommy and shouted, “Fuck you!”

Jerrick sensed the tension in the air. Then the cigarette smoke bothered him, stinging his eyes, and he coughed several times.

Then Jerrick glanced at the TV set to see which show they were watching. He shook his head in disgust as two grown men watched cartoons.

Jerrick relaxed in his chair and watched about five minutes of the cartoon.

Larry and Tommy just stared at the TV in a stupor.

However, the cigarette smoke kept bothering Jerrick. He sprang up and bolted for the front door. Jerrick turned to say good bye, but he noticed Larry’s and Tommy’s eyes were glued to the TV.

Jerrick opened the door and walked out, gently closing the door behind him.

Tommy and Larry never noticed that Jerrick left.

Jerrick felt a little ping in his heart because he knew he would never see his two friends again. Three bandits, Larry, Jerrick, and Tommy were great friends but had become strangers. Of course, Jerrick knew the reason. Tommy and Larry didn’t change one bit. They acted like kids, living at their parents’ house, always searching for the next party. Jerrick had changed and had grown up. Now he wanted to change the world.

Jerrick stayed at his parents’ house for a week. As usual, his dad drove his truck again, making another long haul across America.

His mom and grandmother were happy when he returned.

Jerrick spent this week talking with his grandmother, and he asked questions about the old Michigan.

His grandmother enjoyed this immensely as she recollected the old days.

Jerrick didn't believe his grandma's stories about Michigan. Michigan sounded like heaven on earth, a place, where hard-working people could find paradise. They could find a good job, build a family, and enjoy a prosperous future.

Jerrick would do something about it and would move across the state to Detroit, Michigan.

Last day at his mom's house, Jerrick broached the news.

Mom, grandma, and Jerrick sat around the dinner table, having a Sunday supper: roasted pork chops, mashed potatoes, green beans, and cornbread.

After Jerrick's mom had said grace, she started pestering Jerrick.

"Jerrick, what happen to you and Lidya?"

Jerrick's face went blank, and he dropped his fork on his plate with a clank.

Then Jerrick retorted, "Mom! I don't want to talk about it!" Of course, he never told his parents about Amaliji or explained what happened with Lidya.

Jerrick's mom stopped her interrogation. She sensed Lidya broke her son's heart, and he was too hurt to talk about it.

Then Jerrick picked up his fork and shoveled some mashed potatoes into his mouth. Then he blurted out between bites, "Mom, I'm moving to Detroit."

His grandmother almost choked on her cornbread while his mom gasped, "What?" displaying the food in her mouth.

His mom spent several minutes chewing her food and composing herself.

"Jerrick, of all places on earth, why Detroit? Don't you know about all the murders and shootings that occur there? Detroit is a very dangerous city."

"Mom, I know. Everyone thinks Detroit is a dead city, but I see plenty of opportunities. "

Family ate the rest of their dinner in silence. In the end, what could Jerrick's parents do? At least, Detroit was much closer than Russia. At least, he could return for the holidays.

After dinner, Jerrick's mom gave Jerrick a farewell gift; she handed the keys to her 1990 white Buick Regal. Old Buick didn't

get great mileage, but the car was reliable. At least she wouldn't worry that Jerrick would become stranded in the wrong neighborhood in Detroit. Being stranded in the wrong neighborhood in Detroit could be fatal to one's health.

After Jerrick had packed his suitcases in the morning, and placed them in the trunk of the car; he went to give his mom and grandmother a good-bye hug.

His mother shed a tear that flowed from her right eye. She wanted Jerrick to stay in Holland.

Then Jerrick jumped into the car and drove east to the other side of Michigan.

Jerrick chose a dying, all-American city, Detroit. Race riots in the 1967 Detroit Rebellion sent the first deathblow to this great city. Scared white people fled Detroit and moved outside the city to the suburbs, like Dearborn, Farmington Hills, and Sterling Heights. White people took their wealth and jobs with them, leaving the poor and destitute stranded in a decaying Detroit.

Second deathblow came from international trade. More factories shut down in Michigan, especially the factories that surrounded Detroit. As the jobs disappeared, more people fled Detroit. Every year, Detroit's population kept decreasing until it dipped below a million inhabitants in 1990.

Jerrick believed international trade, outsourcing, and a punitive legal system would bring all of America's great cities to their knees. Detroit was the precursor of what would come to America.

Jerrick still daydreamed, where he delivered great speeches to the people. In Detroit, they would listen. Detroit would become his launching platform to the nation. Then one day, the whole nation would listen to him, and the entire world would bow down and tremble at his sight.

A revolution was imminent. Jerrick would rise out of the wreckage and ashes of Detroit, making Detroit a great American city again.

Jerrick drove across the state in his car, arriving in Detroit for the first time. Driving through the city, he was shocked to see Detroit had become a war zone. Residents boarded up and

abandoned every other house on every block. For the homes still occupied, homeowners covered every window with bars and strung barbwire on the top of seven-foot high fences that surrounded their properties. Barbwire's razors reflected the sun's rays maliciously. Residents lived in prisons to protect themselves from the outside criminals.

In Jerrick's world, the criminals would be living within seven-foot high fences strung with barbwire, not the other way around.

On the outskirts of Detroit, on the edge between Dearborn and Detroit, Jerrick saw an abandoned Moose Club. Building was in good condition and had ample parking. He pulled the car over to investigate.

Jerrick stared through a dust-covered window in the front, cupping his hands around his eyes to block the outside light. Patrons hadn't entered the place in years.

Jerrick's heartbeat quickened from the excitement of his discovery. He saw plenty of chairs and tables, covered in a thick layer of dust. Along the far wall, he noticed a two-foot high stage.

The Moose Club was perfect because it could sit at least a hundred people; a hundred people would listen to Jerrick's speeches.

Then Jerrick noticed an old, yellow sign, "For Lease," bleached by the sunlight. He barely read the phone number. In another year or two, the sun would completely fade the phone number.

Jerrick's life plans were coming to fruition. He found a perfect spot to form a political party, and he needed a way finance it.

Jerrick climbed into the car and began searching for a job.

He searched and searched for a job in Dearborn, which was several miles away from the Moose Club. Unlike Detroit, Dearborn was an affluent suburb with a low crime rate.

He found a job at a small electronics store on 223 Main Street. Driving by, Jerrick almost missed the tiny store that sold computers, televisions, and stereos. One-story building was old but

maintained well. Building's facade was clad in a light red brick, and large display windows without the bars spanned the front.

As Jerrick walked through the front door, he literally bumped into the owner, Gary, who towered at 6 feet 2. He was a heavysset man in his 40s. He was an honest, hardworking, and nice man.

Jerrick suspected Gary could be mean if someone were stupid enough to piss him off. Although Gary was fat, weighing at 350 lbs, his body was built like a grizzly bear minus the fur.

Gary's store didn't have a good location, and he sold few electronics. He earned his income from fixing computers.

Most people could barely turn a computer on. If they had a problem, then many people were clueless. Consequently, everyone in the area brought their computers and laptops to Gary because he charged the best rates in town, and everyone knew it.

With a new job, Jerrick headed back to the Moose Club and called the owner.

Owner agreed to meet him at the club at 4 o'clock.

Jerrick sat on his Buick's hood and waited for the owner,

Owner arrived in an old Ford, mint-condition, '69 Thunderbird as if he drove the car off the dealership's lot yesterday, brand new.

As the owner climbed out of the car, Jerrick rushed to the owner to help catch the old man in case, he fell.

Jerrick broke the silence and stated, "That's a nice car!"

"Yeah, I bought it back in '69. Ohhhhh, I had to be 32 back then. I drive it once a week, and the rest of the time, I park it in a garage."

Then the owner eyed Jerrick suspiciously from head to toe. He hoped this young kid wouldn't waste his time. He asked warily, "You really want to rent this place?"

"Yes, this place would be perfect."

Owner didn't believe it, but he came. His hand trembled as he reached in his pocket for the door key.

Then the owner unlocked the door, and the door moaned and screeched loudly as it opened as flakes of rust fell from the door's hinges.

Jerrick saw a layer of dust covering everything, and fine particles of dust floated in the air, illuminating by the sunlight.

Jerrick let the owner walk in first into the Moose Club.

Main room was rectangular, long, spanning 70 feet and 30 wide. Room had a two-foot stage at one end, and at the other end, near the two bathrooms, was two old pool tables. A long bar stretched along the long wall on one side, and the other side had a row of windows. Behind the bar, the Moose club had a small kitchen and a little office.

“How much?” Jerrick asked, barely containing his excitement.

“\$500 a month.”

“I’ll take it.”

“You know you must pay \$500 each month for this place. If you are a week late, then I’ll toss you out.”

“Sir, I think I can do it.”

“Son; what do you plan to do with this place? I must approve all renovations.”

“I’m concerned about Michigan’s future, and I want to start an organization to stop it.”

Old man walked hunched over, but then he stood up straight, getting a better view at Jerrick.

Old man retorted, “Son, you’re too late. Michigan is old like me. She had her glory days long ago. Now Michigan is returning to the dust from whence she came. You should have been here in the 70s, when it mattered!”

“At least I want to try,” Jerrick persisted and continued, “Michigan was a great state once, and I believe Michigan can rise and become a great state again!”

Owner didn’t argue with Jerrick. Besides, he would earn several months of rent from him.

The Moose Club destroyed his finances since he closed it 15 years ago. He tried to sell it numerous times, but nobody wanted to buy a business with a Detroit address. If the business were located 10 miles further west, he would easily fetch a million dollars for the place. He would burn the place down, but he knew

the police would know better. They would check if the owner insured the business.

“What kinda renovations are you planning?”

“I’m thinking about cleaning the place up and adding a new coat of paint. I’ll keep the bar, tables, chairs, and pool tables but get rid of everything else.”

Owner would rent the Moose Club to Jerrick. Besides, what harm could he do? If Jerrick cleaned and painted the place, he’ll put the property back on the market, and try to sell it again. The U.S. real estate market was red hot as Americans made tons of money flipping houses.

Old guy stated, “Meet me here tomorrow at three. Then you sign a six-month lease. Bring your first month’s rent.”

Then he climbed into his classic Ford and drove away.

Jerrick returned to his motel, which was the usual kind that cost \$20 per night. On the right days, the motel staff washed the bed sheets. As he turned on the room’s light, the cockroaches scampered for the dark corners and crevices.

Jerrick was excited and oblivious to his accommodations. He used three pillows to form a headrest. Then he lay in deep thought with a pad in his right hand and a pen in his left.

Jerrick wanted to build an empire, bring our factories back, and put Americans back to work, of course, preferably in that order. Which name embodied all three ideas? Only one name made sense, and people rarely used it. Jerrick named his organization the National Workers’ Party.

People formed the National Workers’ Party in Great Britain and Spain. Although both parties were small, they were both pro-business and pro-labor, just like the nature of Jerrick Ray Davis.

Which ideas would distinguish his party from the others?

Jerrick began writing the mission statement. First, a state helps its workers find jobs. If a worker cannot find a job, then a worker creates his own job. Thus, government rules and regulations must be pro-business which means government imposes low tax rates, limits regulations, and limits its interference. A government doing the opposite stifles businesses’ growth.

Jerrick detested the large governmental bureaucracies. They reminded him of his life in Russia, fighting the Russian bureaucrats for those damn blue stamps and signatures.

Since taxes are limited, then government must limit its spending. Government should provide some social programs to help the poor and disadvantage but only temporarily.

Jerrick knew a few people from his hometown, who abused the system. Some people intentionally injured themselves, slipping and falling at work, then going to a doctor, claiming they were permanently injured. Every week, these charlatans collected a disability check from the state.

Fraudsters didn't know where this money came from. State forces businesses to pay insurance for this program, another cost that government hurls onto businesses. Government should call it a tax because paying the insurance isn't voluntary.

Jerrick continued his thinking. High-tech industries created jobs in the 80s and 90s. Thus, government must support and maintain a strong education system, encouraging students to study engineering and the sciences.

Finally, government should limit free trade. Jerrick wasn't against free trade per se as long it was really free trade. True free trade was Americans made cars and sold them to the Japanese. Then the Japanese makes televisions and subsequently sells them to us. Consequently, true free trade involves a mutual exchange of products.

Our politicians defined free trade differently. An American company shuts down its factories in the USA and produces their products in China's factories using cheap corporate slave labor. Then they shipped the cheap products to the United States, making huge profits, even paying off the politicians. This free trade embodied no mutual exchange of products.

Jerrick knew profits from outsourcing were only temporary. Margaret Thatcher stated, "First we produce, and then we consume." The U.S. politicians transformed the United States into a nation of consumers, who financed their purchases with a mountain of debt. This system was not sustainable. Once Americans hit their debt limit, then hell would release its fury upon

the U.S. economy. It would be cruel and unfathomable as millions of Americans fell into the pit of poverty, perishing into the chaos.

Next day, Jerrick met the old man at the Moose Club and signed the lease.

Old man gave Jerrick the keys, but he didn't know Jerrick planned to live there too.

Jerrick bought a twin-size air mattress that barely fit in the office. However, the mattress provided some protection from burglars. If a burglar entered the office, the door would swing inward, bumping the mattress, waking Jerrick up.

For the first three days, Jerrick slept in the dark because the City of Detroit took a while to turn on the water and electricity.

Accommodations were not bad. Jerrick prepared his meals in the kitchen. He had a problem taking showers because the men's room had two sinks, two urinals, and a toilet stall. He used washcloths and a plastic pitcher to wash his hair and body in the sink.

Jerrick worked hard at the electronics store, and Gary paid him \$8 per hour.

Of course, Gary worked Jerrick and his employees 39 hours per week so he didn't pay for health insurance.

After work, Jerrick returned to the Moose Club. He cleaned and scrubbed the place; he also painted the walls, and rearranged the ceiling panels. Ceiling panels in the kitchen were in good condition, so he exchanged these with the broken ceiling panels in the bar area.

Then around 10, Jerrick lay on his air mattress for an hour and studied the speeches of famous Americans, such as President Ronald Reagan, the Great Communicator, and Malcolm X, the infamous troublemaker.

Sometimes, Jerrick thought of Amaliji. He wished she had come to Michigan, but Jerrick knew she wouldn't like his accommodations, sleeping on a floor in an old bar.

Of course, many Russians considered these accommodations a luxury. At least, the plumbing and wires were tucked neatly inside the walls and swarms of cockroaches didn't scatter as one turned on a light during the night.

After three weeks, Jerrick had cleaned the old Moose Club. He scrubbed the floors, wiped down the dusty walls, and cleaned all the chairs and tables. The Moose Club was ready to receive guests.

Jerrick called in sick on an early Saturday morning. Next, he arranged all the chairs into 10 rows with 8 chairs each. Along the long wall with the windows, he pushed three tables together.

Afterwards, Jerrick donned on a white dress shirt, blue slacks, and a red tie and spent the day at several shopping plazas, passing out pamphlets to the public.

Most people avoided Jerrick, but he was determined to get his message out. He designed simple pamphlets.

The National Workers' Party

Building Michigan's Future

Putting Hard Working Americans Back to Work

Meeting starts at 7:00 P. M.

September 24, 2005

The Moose Club, 1915 LaSalle Avenue

Refreshments will be served.

Spending an exhausting day passing out pamphlets, Jerrick glanced at his watch and saw it was 5 o'clock. He returned to the Moose club and opened the club to the public for the first time in 15 years.

Jerrick placed an assortment of refreshments on the long table. He neatly laid out small plastic plates, paper napkins, plastic cups, and disposable silverware at the beginning of the long table.

Then he placed several bowls of chips, a bowl of pretzels, cans of cold soda sitting in a bath of ice, a box of cookies, and a coffee pot.

Finally, Jerrick turned the coffee pot on, filling the air with freshly brewed coffee. Nothing stated a warm welcome better than walking into a cozy place and smelling the aroma of freshly brewed coffee.

Jerrick glanced down at his watch and saw it was 7:05.

Ten people sat in the audience.

Jerrick wondered if Augustus experienced the same problem. Augustus planned his first speech, and only 10 Romans showed up. Augustus screamed ‘to hell with it,’ I would raise an army and take the power.

Jerrick advanced to the center of the stage and started his first speech.

Global warming is a scam, perpetuated by our political leaders.

Most people do not care if the earth is warmer.

That most of Florida will be under water in 100 years.

We will not be around in a 100 years.

Plus, I thought global warming made the earth warmer.

Why I am wearing a light jacket in August in Michigan?

Summers in Michigan used to be hot and humid.

People would go cool off at Michigan’s beautiful lakes.

Even if global warming is true, most people do not care about
global warming.

People want good-paying jobs to support their families.

People want to pay off their homes and buy cars.

People want to send their children off to college.

Jerrick placed pauses in his speech, when the people shouted his name in approval. Today, nobody shouted his name, and two people yelled, “Alright.”

Government punishes the hardworking.

Government is pushing for new regulations to stop global
warming.

Government is pushing for new taxes and fees.

Government has punished our factories enough.
Local government imposes high property taxes on them.
Government even levies property taxes on their machines and
equipment.
Government taxes their products.
Government taxes their profits.
Government forces them to pay for unemployment insurance.
Government forces them to pay for disability insurance.
Factories must comply with numerous environmental regulations.
No wonder why our factories are leaving and moving to China.
The Chinese government does not impose all these taxes and
regulations on their businesses.
The Chinese government is happy that the businesses produce
there.
Our industries are creating jobs and wealth in China.
Now here is the real kicker.
Government passes these laws to slow down global warming.
Our factories head to China, creating even more greenhouse gases,
making the earth warmer, supposedly.
Then those Chinese factories ship their products into the United
States.
Thus, these stupid laws accelerate global warming!
Our stupid politicians do not see the fallacy of their policies,
making things worse in the U.S., putting good, hard-
working, decent Americans out of work in the process.

Jerrick ended his speech and scanned his audience of 10 people. Eight nodded their head in approval while two had blank expressions on their face.

Then eight people, including the two with blank expressions, stood up, and dashed for the front door.

Remaining two, Dan Bigler and Chad Hendricks, became the core leadership in Jerrick's party and stuck with Jerrick to the end. Besides, what did they have to lose? Nothing else occurred in their lives, and they were tired of the regurgitated crap that talk shows and news reporters spewed on the people every day. At least, Jerrick spoke the truth, unlike everyone else in the media.

Jerrick fixed himself a plate of pretzels and grabbed a soda, joining the audience. He suspected they were using him because he had this awesome hangout pad, a place to hang out and party. Over time, they became true, close friends, forming a tight circle.

Dan, a smooth-talking law student, was a poster child for an attorney. He stood at six feet tall with jet-black hair and dressed well. He always wore dress shirts and slacks.

Chad stood at 5 feet 9 and had curly brown hair with a muscular build. He participated in sports and has an unusual characteristic. Whatever one hand did; his other hand mimicked the same movements as if both hands were wired to the same spot in his brain.

Dan started talking politics.

At certain key points, Chad blatantly disagreed with Dan on several issues while Jerrick sat back and listened.

It was nice spending a Saturday night in the company of friends. A large, cavernous place like the Moose Club intensified the feelings of loneliness when no one was around.

After two weeks, Dan's parents kicked him out, and he packed all his possessions in his car and drove over. He arrived at the Moose Club on a Wednesday night.

Jerrick opened the door for Dan as Dan sauntered through.

He carried a large duffel bag filled with his clothes. He had a long look on his face because he had nowhere to go.

Before Dan said a word, Jerrick said, "Dude, I don't have a problem with you crashing here but no wild parties!"

"Thanks," Dan said while placing his duffel bag in the corner.

Before the end of the night, both Dan and Jerrick laid their mattresses out, placing them near the stage about two feet apart.

Dan and Jerrick became brothers, spending many nights talking.

Dan was neither a loser nor a druggie. He enrolled at the University of Michigan's Law School and worked full time. Unfortunately, his earnings went to the university.

A top rated law school was expensive. University took every penny and nickel from Dan. He would donate several pints of blood if the university would accept it for payment.

All universities promise their students. Pay your exorbitant tuition bills and then graduate. Good-paying jobs are waiting for you at the campus exits. That was partially true before 2008, but, after 2008, a student needed a miracle to find a job, especially a job that paid enough to cover living expenses and student-loan payments.

Dan's parents didn't agree with his decision to go to law school. They wanted Dan to drop out and find a factory job. High-paying factory jobs were everywhere in Michigan. Dan needed to get off his lazy ass and find one.

Dan explained, "Good-paying factory jobs are leaving Michigan."

His parents were in a state of denial and replied, "No factory jobs? How can that be?" You come from a very long line of factory workers. Those factories were always there, and they'll always be there!"

One night, Jerrick and Dan were lying down on their inflatable beds, making small talk. They usually put their drinks on the floor between the mattresses.

Jerrick asked, "What are your plans after you had graduated from law school?"

"I'm thinking about going to California to practice."

"California? You'll ditch Michigan, your home state?"

"Yes buddy; I'm going for the jobs. People are making tons of money from real estate out there. They need lawyers to help with the mortgage paper work and title transfers."

"This real estate bubble can't last forever."

"I don't give a shit. When the bubble bursts, then I will help people with bankruptcies and foreclosures. People always need attorneys. If people have no demand, then we as lawyers create a demand for our services."

“Like what? Give some examples.”

“One attorney stole from his client. Client tried to dump the attorney, and the attorney turned around and sued his client. Attorney claimed his client wasn’t acting in his best interest.”

Jerrick and Dan burst out laughing. After several seconds, they quieted down.

“Dude that’s dishonest,” Jerrick retorted.

“I’m studying to be an attorney. That’s what we do. We have a slow day at the office, and no clients are coming in. So, I pull out the files and glance through the paperwork. Then I send my clients a bill for services rendered.”

Now Jerrick understood why he hated attorneys. Along with the government bureaucrats, the attorneys became a blight on the American society. However, Jerrick liked Dan a lot, even though Dan wanted to become a scum-bag attorney. At least, Dan was honest about it and planned to twist the law into his financial gain.

Jerrick established the pecking order for the National Workers’ Party. Jerrick became the chairman while Dan became the vice-chairman. They evolved into the driving force behind the National Workers’ Party.

Jerrick scheduled speeches every two weeks, and Dan helped and gave speeches too.

Jerrick suspected Dan wrote speeches to hone his speaking skills, becoming an effective attorney in court. Then he could brilliantly sway any jury or judge with his rhetoric. However, Jerrick must admit. Dan gave speeches from the heart. He came from a long line of Michigan factory workers, and he developed a rapport with his audience.

Over time, Jerrick improved his speaking and improvisation. He possessed an advantage over the politicians and political leaders. He believed what he said in his speeches because his words came from the heart.

Politicians and political leaders are used car salesmen. They tricked the customer to buy the junky cars. As the customer drives onto the street, the car engine would blow up, or the transmission would fall out of the car.

Jerrick noticed more people attended his speeches. One person, Jennifer Adams, in the crowd caught his eye.

Jennifer graduated from Indiana University with a Bachelor's degree in computer science. She would be attractive if she styled her long blonde hair, changed the style of her clothes, and added a touch of makeup in the right places. However, Jennifer pulled her long hair back in a ponytail and wore t-shirts and blue jeans. Although tall and slender with small peach-like breasts, she wore thick, brown, horn-rimmed glasses that covered half her face, making her eyes large and buggy.

Jennifer was a typical nerd, a lost soul, a leaf at the wind's mercy. She had no friends and worked several jobs below her talents. She entered data into a computer for a warehouse supplier.

Jerrick knew something was special about Jennifer, but he didn't know what it was, but Jennifer would become an integral member of the National Worker's Party.

Jennifer was the best computer hacker around. If you gave her ample supply of soda, junk food, and a fast internet connection, she could break through any computer's defenses. She was known infamously in the dark world of computer hackers as the 'silent thunder.' By the time, a computer administrator detected her presence; she was already gone, and the damage was immense.

Most people don't realize. They think the key to a successful revolution is guns and soldiers. That's true. Guns and soldiers are important, but a successful revolution relies on information. A revolutionary leader must know whom he can trust and not trust. Who will follow orders and not become a traitor at the last minute? A dictator appointing a wrong person at the wrong place and wrong time could jeopardize a coup. A wrong person at the wrong time is building a sand castle during a torrential rainstorm. Wrong person fucks everything up.

After the revolution, the dictator must keep his eyes on his own people. He ensures an ambitious captain wouldn't push him

off the hill and claim his power. Path to total power is a treacherous one filled with many twists and turns.

During one of Jerrick's speeches, he noticed Jennifer sat quietly in the audience. This was her third time.

Once Jerrick finished his speech, he rushed to her and broke the ice first, "Hello. My name is Jerrick Davis. May I get you a refreshment?"

Jennifer turned slightly reddish and replied, "No! I'm fine." She tried to tuck her head into her shell like a turtle.

Jerrick persisted, "I know this great coffee shop. Please be my guest of honor."

How could Jennifer refuse? Many men walked past Jennifer without a single glance. She felt invisible. In her sheepish voice, she said, "Okay."

Jerrick offered his hand to Jennifer, helping her out of the chair and leading her to his car. He drove to his favorite coffee shop, the Jitterbug.

Owner of the Jitterbug, Cindy, restored a 1920s store to its original condition. She sanded and stained the dark wooden floors, painted the crown-molded ceilings a cool, light yellow, and restored the novel wooden-glass display cases. Décor projected a friendly ambiance, giving it style and grace.

Jerrick and Jennifer sat at a table in the front, near the large shop windows, where they had some privacy.

It was 9 o'clock at night, so Jerrick ordered a black tea with no sugar, and no milk while Jennifer ordered herself a hot chocolate.

Jerrick fidgeted, like was on a date, and Jerrick didn't want to give any wrong impressions. "Where do you work?" Jerrick asked.

"Wooden Instruments Industries," Jennifer mumbled as her face reddened.

"What's wrong? You don't like your job?"

"Pay is low, and I must sit at a computer all day next to a conveyor belt. As a package goes by, I scan the label and check the contents. Then compare the contents to the customer's order in the computer."

As Jennifer completed her sentence, the barista brought their drinks.

Jerrick saw a hot, mist rising from his tea, so he left it on the table to cool.

Jennifer picked up her hot chocolate and tried sipping it.

“Why are you ashamed of your job? You’re doing honest work,” Jerrick replied firmly but softly.

“It’s not the work, but I graduated from college with a degree in computer science. I was the best programmer in my graduating class. I wanted challenging work. A high salary is nice too!”

Jerrick’s eyes brightened as if a gold prospector studied a nugget of gold at the bottom of his pan.

Jerrick whispered, so the other patrons didn’t hear, “Have you ever hacked into a computer system?”

Jennifer started blushing again and giggled. Jennifer would make a horrible poker player. If she held a royal flush, everyone sitting at the table would know.

“I asked because I’m curious. I know some things about a computer, but a computer expert must eat, sleep, and shit computers 24 hours a day. I don’t have that dedication. I have other interests like expanding my political party.”

Jerrick and Jennifer sipped their drinks, and Jerrick continued, “I designed my party’s website, and I think it’s okay. However, I need someone to assist me with computer security and data mining.”

“Data mining?” Jennifer asked as her voice strengthened with interest.

“Information is power. I listed all the political leaders in the United States. I want to know, who is corrupt or honest. Who can be trusted or not?”

“They’re all corrupt!” Jennifer yelled and began laughing.

Jerrick joined her.

A couple sitting at the next table glanced in Jerrick’s direction, frowning at the laughter. Clearly, the couple was on a date, and they resumed their intimate conversation.

Jerrick continued, "I don't think they're all corrupt; some are honest, but a corrupt system entraps them."

"How much information do you have?"

"Right now; I have little information. Good information is hard to find. News reporters are scared of the politicians, and they never challenge them or their policies. Only time a reporter will say something negative about a politician if the politician is arrested for a crime. Then the reporters will report the dirt and shady business dealings."

"You can use a robot from a search engine to search through blogs and complaint websites," Jennifer replied cheerfully.

"That's true, but I need accurate information. Anyone can post a negative blog or complaint. Some people lie or seek revenge because the politician voted against a person's favorite bill or law."

"Only way is to hack into a government's computer system, like the FBI's or Inspector General's computer systems...."

At that moment, Jennifer stopped talking because she realized what Jerrick wanted.

Jerrick had a sly smile draped across his face.

"How much can you pay me?" Jennifer asked.

"Right now, I can't pay well. I can afford \$5 per hour under the table in cash. I can help you locate fast, untraceable, internet connection points. That way, you don't compromise your identity."

Jennifer reached across the table with her right hand, gesturing for a handshake.

Jerrick reached and firmly shook her hand, sealing the business deal. He noticed her limp handshake, feeling like a wet noodle, but he didn't mind one bit.

Jennifer knew the pay was terrible, but she grew tired of her data entry job. Besides, she earned money for something she did at nights anyway.

They finished their drinks, and Jerrick dropped Jennifer off at her house.

Two weeks after the coffee shop, Jennifer and Jerrick met at the food court at 2 o'clock in the mall.

Mall was in Dearborn, a rich suburb of Detroit. It was a pristine white mall with large wide-open spaces spanning across two floors.

In the morning, the elderly walked back and forth through the mall for their exercise, and in the afternoon, the teenagers invaded the mall after school.

Jerrick and Jennifer sat at a table in the far corner in the food court, opposite the children's play area and the food counters. They wanted to be as far away from the crowd and the screaming children as possible.

Jerrick, being polite, pulled the chair out for Jennifer. Then he sat down across from her.

"How are you?" Jerrick asked politely.

"I'm doing well; how are you?"

"Not bad. I brought you a present."

Jerrick reached down into his duffel-briefcase and pulled out a new laptop.

Jennifer's face brightened as if she were a good child being awarded an unexpected present. She grabbed the laptop and opened it.

"I work at an electronics store, and I used my employee discount to buy that for you. I read this laptop has the best battery life with three hours surfing on the internet."

Jennifer turned the computer on. Next, she pulled out a CD case, opened it, and started flipping through CDs.

Jerrick saw the homemade CDs and DVDs with weird names and codes scrawled on them using a permanent marker.

"Jennifer, would you like something to eat and drink?"

"Are you buying?"

"Yes, of course!"

"I'll order French fries with mayonnaise on the side and a mineral water."

"Mayonnaise? Did I hear you correctly?"

"Jerrick, believe it or not, it's quite good. I read in a Dutch magazine that they eat it that way in Amsterdam, and I tried it.

Since then, I'm hooked. Besides, all the Dutch women are tall and slim, so mayonnaise can't be bad for you."

Jerrick turned and walked to the food counter. He ordered Jennifer's unusual snack and a pastrami sandwich with everything on it, including the mayonnaise.

Next, he headed to the coffee shop counter to buy himself a tea and get the Wi-Fi code. This coffee shop changed the Wi-Fi code daily, stopping the free loaders from using its internet service.

Jerrick placed the food and drinks on a tray and glanced around. He had already scoped this place and didn't see any cameras. This mall was located in the rich suburbs of Detroit and rarely had any crime. Although he didn't spot any surveillance cameras, they were so small now; agents can hide them anywhere.

Jerrick knew the KGB recruited smart, average-looking people. If an agent were too handsome or too ugly, people would notice and would remember. If a person is average looking, people cannot recollect anything about them. Average-looking agents slip in and out of the crowd unnoticed.

He approached the table, carrying the food and drinks to Jennifer's table. He knew he was average looking, but Jennifer fixed herself up today. Although she pulled her hair back in a ponytail, she wore a pink blouse with a touch of eye shadow and a dab of blush on her cheeks. She looked attractive today. Thus, people in the mall might remember them if agents had questioned them.

Jerrick dispensed the food and placed the tray on the other table.

He sat down and gave her the Wi-Fi code. Next, he nibbled several bites from his sandwich and sipped his tea several times.

Jennifer didn't touch her French fries yet. She became engrossed with the computer.

After several minutes, she popped her head up from behind the notebook computer and asked, "Do you have any names?"

"Names?"

"Like a Congressman or governor?"

Only name Jerrick remembered was Margaret Hayworth, the powerful U.S. Senator from Arkansas. She chaired the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee.

Jerrick remembered her because he saw her picture in his college textbook, and she looked like his dear, sweet grandmother.

Margaret neared 65 with short gray hair, a round face, and 40 lbs overweight. She wore loose fitting suits to hide her width girth.

After several keystrokes, Jennifer said, "Look at this," and turned the laptop, so Jerrick read the screen.

Jennifer started eating her fries; she grabbed a French fry, dipped it in mayonnaise, and ate it.

Jennifer hacked into the Inspector General's database. The Inspector General monitors federal employees and traces federal grant money.

Margaret had her hands in everything. She brought tons of federal money to Arkansas. She helped school districts expand and build more school buildings, helped police departments get grants for squad cars and equipment, and helped organizations get grants for community development.

Of course, this was not free money. The Inspector General believed Margaret earned kickbacks from these grants.

If Jerrick only knew whom Margaret Hayworth really was. She hid behind a facade, being polite and acting as everyone's best friend. Underneath, she was extremely cold, calculating, ruthless. If you crossed her, she struck back but not like a cobra directly. She waited and plotted and schemed for 20 years if she could destroy her opponent.

Margaret expected her constituents to donate money to her campaign fund and shower her with gifts. For example, a school district in Little Rock wanted federal money to renovate and expand a high school. Margaret worked hard and managed to secure a \$250,000 grant. What did the ungrateful school do? They donated a meager \$1,000 to her campaign. The school should have donated at least \$5,000 by Margaret's calculation.

Margaret still talked to the school's superintendent and always accepted his grant proposals. However, she ensured the

committee tabled the proposals, and the committee never saw the proposals. Whenever the superintendent called and asked about the grant, she said the committee is studying it.

Jerrick and Jennifer hung out more, and as promised, Jerrick paid her for services rendered.

Jennifer became a wealth of information.

American people suspected, but they didn't know the extent of the corruption. At least half the state and local politicians were outwardly rotten while 60% of the Congressmen and federal judges were dirty. Our political leaders did anything and everything to supplement their incomes, all at the taxpayers' expense. They were maggots feeding off a dead carcass, picking it clean.

Jerrick understood why a system flourished in America. Politicians loved other dirty politicians. First, they don't feel bad doing dishonest stuff themselves. Second, the politicians used the dirt to keep party members in line. If a junior politician gets out of line, or ticks off a senior member, then the party would feed the out-of-control politician to the wolves. Press would expose all the dirt and corruption on them while the FBI and federal prosecutors would convict and imprison the politician.

Jerrick still delivered speeches at the Moose Club every two weeks and experimented with the topics and delivery of his speeches.

One particular speech upset his political party as Jerrick started:

Americans are the superior race on the earth.

Reason is very simple.

Americans are the mixture of all cultures and all peoples.

We are a melting pot of the whole humanity.

Americans studied the vast cultures of the world and took the best from them.

Americans took Britain's Common Law System.

And her traditions of Justice, Laws, and Equality.

We took the hardworking spirit of the Germans and Polish, and used their talents to build our factories and engineer high-quality products.

WWWee tooook...

Jerrick started to stammer, which he hasn't done in a while. He saw the shocked expressions on the audiences' faces.

Jerrick didn't develop rapport with them and stopped his speech.

"I'm sorry. I don't feel well today. Let's welcome Dan, the vice-chair of the National Workers' Party."

Jerrick left the stage with his head bowed down and dashed to his office.

Tonight, Jerrick thought he written a good speech, but he had failed.

He placed his elbows on the desk and tucked his face into the palms of his hands.

In the background, he heard Dan's booming voice as he made key points in his speech about putting Americans back to work.

After 20 minutes, Dan opened the office door and sat down on the chair across from Jerrick.

Dan had a perturbed look on his face and snapped, "What was that about, Jerrick?"

"I thought I wrote a good speech," Jerrick said as he lifted his face from his palms and looked at Dan.

"Superior race? Where did that come from?"

"I believe it to be true. I thought I wrote a good theme for a speech."

"Whenever a person says the superior race, they think of only one man, Adolf Hitler."

"Dan, I'm not a racist. I don't hold any prejudices against any race."

“That doesn’t matter. Your enemies will compare you to Hitler and scare everybody. Then members of our party will think you are crazy and leave.”

“You know I’m not a Nazi. If I must emulate a dictator, I choose Augustus, the first Emperor of Rome.”

“Jerrick, not that crap again! Although Augustus was the greatest ruler of the ancient world, he ruled over 2,000 years ago. Today we live in different times.”

Dan glanced at Jerrick and noticed his words sunk in. Dan hoped Jerrick would bury that speech in a deep grave, ensuring it never sees the light of day again.

Then Dan stood up and rushed out of there before Jerrick started outlined Augustus's achievements. Please, we live in different times!

Before Jerrick had started his discourse on Augustus, he stared at an empty chair, where Dan occupied seconds ago.

Jerrick knew better. People confused technology with human development, but the human mind had not evolved. People’s psyche today is the same as it was, 2,000 years ago.

Families from ancient times wanted jobs to feed themselves and start families. They wanted the best for their children. They gossiped and spread vicious rumors about relatives and foes. Ancient people always struggled with their governments as government seized property, assessed taxes, and recruited soldiers to fight in wars.

Technology allowed armies to kill more people and granted governments the means to monitor and control their people.

Technology extended the human mind; it didn’t help the mind evolve and grow. It only confused people, letting modern people think they were better off than their ancestors were.

Dan’s criticism perturbed Jerrick, but Jerrick encouraged that. He didn’t surround himself by yes-men. He wanted different viewpoints as he weighed the pros and cons of each decision, choosing the best course of action. Dan was right. Jerrick shouldn’t use the superior race, so people didn’t confuse him with Hitler.

Jerrick noticed Dan had used the words ‘our party.’ Jerrick keep a close eye on Dan.

Dan could be one of those ambitious captains.

Jennifer called Jerrick urgently one day and needed to talk to him immediately.

They met at the Moose Club at five o'clock.

Jerrick sat behind his desk.

Rest of the party like Dan and Chad played billiards in the common area of the Moose Club.

Jennifer burst into Jerrick's office at five exactly, leading a young teenager by the hand.

Teenager looked like a common teenager: too skinny, a rash of pimples on his face, and he didn't tuck in his Metallica, black t-shirt.

"Hello, Jerrick."

"Hi, Jennifer. Who's your little friend?"

"His name is Mikey."

"Hello Mike."

Mike didn't say a word. He leaned close to Jennifer, and Jennifer wrapped her loving arm around him.

"He does not talk much."

"No, he's had a tough life. His mom left him, when he was a baby, and his dad was a tyrant who beat him severely."

"Okay, he had a tough life. What can we do for him?"

"He's the best computer virus writer."

Jerrick studied the boy closely. He would have never guessed. Boy looked normal in every way, except he didn't speak.

"What damage has he done?"

"Remember that computer virus last year? You open your email and bam; your hard drive is wiped clean."

Boy began smiling with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

Jerrick started laughing and added, "That was a nasty little computer virus. Jennifer, what do you have in mind?"

"He needs a place to stay."

"I think I can find a place for him. What about school?"

Boy started frowning.

“I don’t think he likes school,” Jennifer replied.

“Oh, I see. What other computer viruses has this kid dreamt up?”

“You wouldn’t believe it. He wrote a virus that hits cell phones.”

“What? Are you kidding?”

“No, it’s true. A cell phone sends a signal to a cell tower every five minutes. That tells the computer where the cell phone is. Tower can also send text messages to the cell phone. Mike thinks he can embed a simple program into the text message that infects the cell phone with a virus.”

“Unbelievable! We have no protection from a computer virus for anything with a computer chip.”

“If it has a computer chip, then someone can write a computer virus that messes it up.”

Mikey started to giggle.

Jerrick joined in and laughed a little too.

“Jen; you can take him out to the farm. I know this old man, who is helping us. He has plenty of room.”

Then Jerrick studied the boy, “I only have one condition. You’re not to release any computer viruses without my approval. I don’t need the federal government breathing down my neck because someone in the National Workers’ Party unleashed a nasty virus across the world that disrupted computers for a day. Government can use that as an excuse to imprison me and dissolve my political party.”

“Thanks Jerrick. I’ll see you later.”

“Bye Jen. I will see you in a couple of days. I’m curious about your progress. Please check back with me.”

Mikey waved good-bye and left with Jennifer.

Jerrick sat back in his chair and began thinking. What would he do with a computer virus writer? It can’t hurt to have too much talent in one’s organization, but Jesus, a virus that wipes out the cell phones. What’s next?

The 2008 Financial Crisis

Jerrick waited and waited for the collapse of the U.S. economy. He didn't know when, but he knew it was coming. The U.S. economy experienced the greatest housing bubble that humanity ever saw. Eventually, this bubble would pop and transform into a tsunami wave that would drown the U.S. economy. Most people would never spot the wave until it was too late. Then, chaos would inundate everything.

Jerrick was working on a normal September. He still worked at the small electronics store as an assistant manager.

He went to the break room to eat his lunch. He opened the door to a small room, containing a tiny table with three chairs, and an old Frigidaire refrigerator in the corner. Refrigerator hummed gutturally as it cooled the food.

Discarded food containers littered the table and the floor near the trashcan. An old color tube TV was mounted low on the wall, so workers could change the channel. As usual, the previous viewer switched the channel to MTV, the channel of choice in this place.

Jerrick walked to the TV and switched the station to CNBC.

Jerrick stopped halfway to the refrigerator because a sound bite from the news reporter caught his attention.

“The U.S. government will not bail out Lehman Brothers today. Wall Street is jittery, and investors are selling off their stocks. The Dow Jones has fallen almost 500 points.”

Jerrick sat down at the table, flabbergasted. It finally happened. His chance had come. Don't misunderstand Jerrick. He didn't want good people harmed, but without a major financial crisis, nobody in their right mind would hand all the power to one man and follow him on his mad quest to build an Empire.

Jerrick had much planning and thinking to do.

The 2008 Financial Crisis became the springboard, launching the National Workers' Party into the spotlight. More and more people noticed Jerrick Ray Davis because he was right.

Factories were a source of wealth, and Jerrick Ray Davis will put everyone back to work.

Jerrick planned his next speech for Saturday, October 25, 2008.

As Jerrick suspected, the people were listening. As he stepped onto the stage, he saw 70 people in the audience, occupying all the seats.

Crowd's curious eyes fell upon Jerrick as he stood in the center of the stage.

Then the murmuring of the crowds died down, and Jerrick started his speech:

Mexico is a mess.

Kidnappings and mass murders occur daily along the border towns. Thousands of Mexicans are jumping the border fence to escape the chaos.

They come here searching for food and jobs.

It's just that Mexico does not have any jobs, and the jobless

Mexicans come here, searching for work.

Don't get me wrong.

I am not anti-Mexican.

I do not blame the Mexicans for coming here.

Mexicans want the same as Americans.

They want to own a house, start a family, and own some possessions.

In fact, they are Americans too.

They want to live under the flag of freedom and belong to something great.

They escaped the poverty of Mexico because Mexico is a mess.

Mexico has 31 states.

Mexico has resources.

It has petroleum, minerals, and vast agricultural lands.

Instead of Mexicans jumping the fence, we should be sending tanks and troops down there, annexing Mexico to the American Empire.

We bring Mexico up to our standards.

Institute a good legal system, build highways, roads, bridges, dams, and schools.

Bring law and order to a country riddled in violence and drug wars.

Then Mexicans and Americans will live in harmony.

We are not invading Mexico but developing it.

Mexicans will not be prisoners of war, but citizens of the American Empire.

Mexicans will have the same rights and obligations as other citizens of the Empire.

Imagine all the jobs and wealth we will create.

Instead of being an Empire of 50 states, we become an Empire of 81 states.

As Jerrick finished, he scanned his audience.

Most people hooted and hollered, shaking their angry fists in agreement.

Then Jerrick saw his second in command, Dan, sitting in the first row, last chair on the left with a blank face and a stern look in his eyes.

Dan became upset with his speech again. It was not the first time, nor would it be the last. He warned Jerrick about projecting himself as a conqueror.

Audience was growing. More and more people were dissatisfied with their government. They were angry at President Bush's and President Obama's bank bailout.

In the meantime, the U.S. economy continued shedding jobs. The 2007 Great Recession was the worst recession since the Great Depression. However, the experts claimed the U.S. economy would turn around in 2010 and start creating jobs again.

Of course, the economy never recovered as stagnation and resignation settled in as the U.S. economy sank lower and lower.

After the speech, Jerrick and his top captains of the National Workers' Party walked to the bar across the street.

Bar was old, rustic and was not painted in 10 years. Bar probably had a name, but the sign hanging above the door faded years ago. Place attracted the rougher crowd.

As Jerrick and his party walked into the bar, a jukebox played Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Freebird* while several stocky patrons with scraggly beards and tattooed covered bodies played pool.

Jerrick and his captains scooted several tables together.

Jerrick sat at the head of the table.

Dan sat in the first seat to Jerrick's left while Jennifer sat on the other side to the right.

Then Jerrick bought several pitchers of Budweiser, the beer of choice for Michiganders.

Jerrick and several party members poured beer into everyone's steins.

Jerrick raised his stein for a toast and started, "Here's to the party's prosperity. May God look down upon us favorably and allow the National Workers' Party to grow into a force to be reckoned with; cheers."

As Jerrick finished the toast, everyone clanked their steins together, drinking large gulps of beer.

After Jerrick had sat his stein down, he blurted, "Dan, I noticed you didn't enjoy my speech this evening?"

"It's not that I didn't enjoy it. It's just the speech has the wrong timing. We have troops dying in Iraq and Afghanistan, returning in pine boxes. When you talk about invading Mexico and building an Empire, the people will think you'll start another messy war. Then American families will lose more sons and daughters to the casualties of war."

"I see your point. You made a good point, but I have two reasons to invade Mexico. First, Mexico is easy pickings. Mexico's military is weak, and Mexicans are tired of their political leaders, the gang violence, and a corrupt government. If we made Mexicans full citizens and restored law and order, then they wouldn't mind being invaded. Second, and most important for us to be successful, we must create jobs. Adding 31 states and investing in their infrastructure would create a massive, economic tide that would raise the economic boats for all Americans."

Chad, Jerrick's third in command, sat next to Jennifer. He raised his stein, proposing a new toast, "Amen brothers."

Beer steins clanked again, and people gulped their beers.

Jerrick grimaced as the second gulp of beer went down the hatch. He didn't drink much.

One of the party members at the far end of the table, piped up, "But doesn't the invasion create a temporary expansion? Look at the crash of the housing bubble."

Jerrick continued with his discussion, a professor teaching his pupils, "That's true; all economic expansions are temporary. We had the housing bubble for the last seven years. Then we saw the rise of the internet and communications industry in the 1990s, and finally, the adaptation of the computers in the 1980s. Technology kept the U.S. economy afloat, even with a large, stupid government intent on regulating, taxing, and destroying it."

Jerrick raised his stein for a toast, "However, we don't have the luxury of new technology or voodoo financing to grow the U.S. economy. Only method we have is to build the American Empire! Cheers!"

Everyone at the table hollered, "To the American Empire! To the American Workers!"

Steins clanked so hard together; it was a miracle that one didn't shatter.

Other bar patrons turned, searching for the source of the raucous.

Bartender, who doubled as the bouncer, looked over. Bartender weighed 300 pounds and kept an observant eye on his patrons. A ragged scar twisted from his left eye down the center of his cheek, a souvenir from a drunk. Drunk broke his beer bottle on the table and jabbed the ragged bottle toward his eye. Luckily, the bottle missed and sliced open his cheek.

Bartender stared at Jerrick and his crowd, and then he began washing beer steins in the sink. The 2007 Recession both blessed and cursed the bar. More people were drinking and getting drunk at his bar, but they were mean drunks. Bartender broke up more fights, tossing the rowdy drunks onto the streets.

"What is voodoo finance?" Chad asked perplexed.

"Investment banks created a variety of exotic securities that nobody understood or comprehended. Then the banks dumped money into the housing mortgage market, accelerating housing

prices to new heights. Unfortunately, this whole system depended on homeowners paying their mortgages. When the economy soured in 2007, many people defaulted on their mortgages, causing this entire system to collapse. Of course, one could argue that banks shouldn't have loaned to some homeowners, but the banks loaned money to anyone with a heartbeat and paycheck stub in his pocket. Consequently, the banks artificially created the housing bubble. This whole process I call voodoo finance. Its power is both mysterious and powerful, but, in the end, quite deadly to everyone involved," Jerrick stated eloquently.

Dan wanted to add asset-backed securities and Collateral Debt Obligations to the conversation, but Jerrick's definition would suffice. Dan didn't want to trigger a heated debate about complicated financial securities with a bunch of drunks.

Dan lifted his stein and gulped of beer.

The 2008 Financial Crisis was wreaking havoc on the U.S. economy as the unemployment rate soared to the stratosphere, climbing from 10% in 2009, to 15% by 2013.

Recession hit Michigan the hardest because its economy was stuck in a perpetual recession since 2001.

However, the other states quickly joined the ranks with Michigan after 2009. All state economies were collapsing, imploding under the weight of their bureaucratic governments and a shortage of good-paying jobs.

Many people didn't know the federal government was worried about the financial crisis. The U.S. government secretly built large internment camps, hidden in the countryside, located near the largest cities in America.

Federal government detained millions of people, when protests, riots, and chaos erupted in the cities.

Unfortunately, the corrupt politicians refused to change the system or relinquish their power. Only one outcome was imminent; a revolution loomed over the horizon.

As Jerrick predicted, the financial crisis promoted the National Workers' Party as membership soared, and the donations poured in.

Dan burst into Jerrick's Office at the Moose Club.

Jerrick hunched over his desk, writing a new speech. He placed a cup of Jasmine tea with a dollop of honey on the corner of the desk. Scent of Jasmine flowers filled the office air.

"Jerrick, I have some good news and bad news," Dan began excitedly, panting from the brisk jog from the other room.

"What's the good news, Dan?"

"Eighty more people signed up for the National Workers' Party. I could have signed more, but they don't want their name listed as a member. They're afraid the government will find out and go after them."

"I see. We can solve this problem."

Jerrick opened the bottom drawer of his desk and grabbed a stack of thick, heavy paper.

Dan saw the top sheet with 10 business cards, laid out in five rows and two columns. Each card had a Roman column on the left-hand side, and Jerrick wrote Augustus across the center in large block letters. Below Augustus, he numbered every card, starting from one and ending at 10,000.

"I have exactly 10,000 business cards printed on a thick, cotton paper with a distinctive watermark."

Jerrick removed the top paper and held it in front of the window.

Watermark showed clearly through the business cards. Appearing as a small, lit torch, the contours of the image softened and became indistinguishable over several decades. It could be anything.

"Augustus; I should've known," Dan said with laughter in his voice. Then he asked, "Where did you get the paper?"

"A long time ago, I bought textbooks at garage sales. This old lady had this old paper and said they don't make it anymore. I liked the style and the distinctive watermark, so I bought it."

“You know that’s not a bad idea, Jerrick. We can raise our membership dues to \$25 per year and hand them a membership card. That way, we’re not listing their name, and we have proof, they joined our organization. By the way, why did you numbered them?”

“I figure once we get the power, we’ll reward our party members. We choose the most talented first, and then go by seniority. These numbers list the seniority.”

“That’s great,” Dan said.

Dan’s excitement strengthened, “Jerrick, you should sign each business card on the back, making it difficult to duplicate.”

“Okay; I can do that. Could you take these cards to the copy center and cut them neatly?”

Dan grabbed the large stack of business cards and retorted, “Okay buddy, get that signature hand ready. You have much signing to do.”

Dan and Jerrick exchanged laughter.

The State of Michigan noticed the National Worker’s Party on December 2011.

Jerrick, Dan, and Chad were hanging at the Moose Club on a Saturday night. Three were drinking wine coolers, talking about politics, playing a friendly game of billiards.

They were having a great time, although they used crooked pool sticks to shoot the cue ball over the felt surface with many tears and stains.

BOOOMMM! Front door banged open and slammed against the wall.

Before they blinked their eyes, four Michigan State Troopers rushed in with their revolvers drawn.

“Freeze,” the first officer yelled, pointing a gun at Jerrick.

Jerrick put his drink down slowly on the pool table and put his hands halfway up, level with his shoulders, showing the officers his empty hands.

Dan and Chad followed suit.

Officers slowly approached the three.

First officer watched the three while the other officers scanned the club for more perpetrators.

“Sir, do you have a license to serve the public?”

Jerrick answered, “This is our organization, the National Workers’ Party. I didn’t know we needed a license to operate.”

“Are you serving alcohol?”

“No,” Dan stated strongly and added, “Sir; we’re just playing pool. We’re not open to the public.”

“This address is zoned business, and you need a permit to operate,” the officer said and demanded, “Please put your hands up. You can talk to the judge tomorrow.”

First officer circled behind the suspects, pulling their hands behind their back and snapping on the handcuffs.

Other three officers kept their guns pointed at Jerrick, Chad, and Dan.

Then they led the suspects to the police car in single file.

Police escorted Jerrick last. Passing the front door, Jerrick turned his head and asked politely, “Sir; could you please lock up for us. Door keys are on the bar.”

One of the troopers retrieved the keys, turned off the lights, and locked the front door.

Police parked two large Ford Crown Victorias near the door with their red and blue lights, flashing. Michigan’s finest was keeping the violent Detroit neighborhoods safe.

Before Jerrick climbed into the squad car, he looked at the officer and said, “Thank you.”

Jerrick, Chad, and Dan were sitting comfortably in the back of one of the squad cars.

Two officers climbed in the front while the other two got into the other car.

A black steel mesh separated the prisoners from the officers while Steppen Wolf’s *Born to be Wild* filled the car as the troopers drove the guys to the Detroit city jail.

Other squad car drove in the opposite direction, protecting the citizens of Michigan; they had more crimes to solve and more people to arrest.

After the police had checked the three in, an officer led them to a small drunk tank. Police separated Jerrick, Chad, and Dan from the dangerous Detroit criminals.

As the officer grabbed the handle of the door, the metal door hummed, filling the corridor with a buzzing sound.

Then Jerrick, Chad, and Dan stepped in while the large metal door slammed shut.

They stood in an 8 feet long and 6 feet wide cell with concrete benches following along the long walls. Although the walls were freshly painted, the place reeked of urine and dirty sweat. A filthy metallic toilet and sink were in the corner, adjacent to the door.

Jerrick, Chad, and Dan sat on one side while another occupant lay face down on the other.

Jerrick scrutinized the occupant. He looked mean, raised and bred on the tough streets of Detroit, definitely not a stranger to the Michigan Penal System.

“What are you in here for?” Chad blurted to the stranger in a friendly manner.

Stranger turned on his side and glared at Chad with his mean eyes focusing its hatred, frustration, and anger on him.

“Murder! I tried to kill a cop.”

Chad’s eyes widened while his mouth hung open in awe.

Jerrick and Dan turned to face the stranger.

Then the stranger erupted in laughter and said, “I’m kiddin. I tried to steal a six-pack of beer. What are you guys in for?”

“Operating a business without a business permit,” Dan stated in dry emotionless tone.

“Say what?”

“Operating without a business permit,” Dan stated again, in jest with a wide grin spreading across his face.

“What kind of business do you have?”

“We don’t have a business. We live in a former business.”

“That’s fucked up,” the stranger replied and laughed again. Then he added, “That’s Michigan for you. State follows its citizens around, looking for violations.”

Then the stranger put his head down on the concrete slab, falling asleep.

Dan turned to Jerrick and uttered, “Thanks buddy for the trouble. I hope it doesn’t prevent me from taking the bar exam and becoming a lawyer.”

“Don’t worry Dan. I’ll tell the judge tomorrow that it’s my business. I’m responsible for my actions. You guys are innocent.”

Next morning, Chad, Dan, and Jerrick awakened.

Sometime during the night, the police released the other occupant.

Jerrick stood up, stretching his back.

“Damn guys, my back is killing me.”

“Chhhddd,” Chad mumbled with a blank stare on his face. He lay on that concrete mattress, an animal caught in a trap, waiting for a hunter to put him out of his misery.

Dan sat up with a large frown on his face as he moaned and rubbed his lower back with his hand.

Jerrick tried to be cheerful, and a deputy brought breakfast: Soggy toast, dried leather strips of bacon, reconstituted eggs, and day old cold coffee from the Sheriff’s Office; the state serves nothing but the best for Michigan’s criminals.

Dan in his usual cocky manner added, “This jail food should be ruled cruel and unusual punishment.”

However, nobody smiled or laughed during breakfast.

At 9 o’clock, two sheriff duties lined the three men in front of Judge Fields.

Jerrick glanced behind him and saw another 20 inmates of the Michigan Penal System. They wore the bright orange sweat pants and orange t-shirts with the backs spray painted in large black letters, Detroit City Jail.

Judge neared 60 years old and was bald with puffy, reddish cheeks. He wore glasses and glared at the defendants. Judge hadn’t experience joy in his life for decades.

Dan, Chad, and Jerrick stood in front of the judge with two large bailiffs standing behind them.

Judge read off the charge, “Operating without a business license.”

“Not guilty, your honor,” Dan strongly stated.

The judge glared at Jerrick and demanded, “How do you plead?”

Jerrick started, “Your honor; these two have nothing to do with a business. Sir, I take responsibility for my actions. I rented the Moose Club to start my political organization, the National Workers’ Party. I want to return the factory jobs to American, to Michigan and limit free trade. I believe every hard-working American deserves a good job. A good job defines a man, elevates his self-esteem. Then he can marry a woman and build a future with her. Only good-paying jobs can make this happen and are the backbone of a rich, enlightened society.”

Jerrick paused a second to catch his breath.

“Guilty,” the judge declared and uttered, “Bailiff; release those two,” while pointing at Chad and Dan.

Judge scrutinized Jerrick as if he were studying a bug under a magnifying glass. Then he yelled, “Your fine is \$200 or 20 days in jail.” Next, the judge slammed the gavel hard on this desk.

Bailiff let Chad and Dan go.

Dan turned to Jerrick and said, “Don’t worry, we have money in the party’s account. We’ll get you out.”

Then the bailiff led Jerrick to the holding cell next to the court. In the background, he heard the judge sentence other criminals for their crimes.

After several hours, the bailiff brought Jerrick two bologna sandwiches.

Before the bailiff left, Jerrick snapped, “Sir, when will I be released?”

“Your friends paid your fine, but the judge set your release to 6 o’clock tonight.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know.”

“What time is it now?”

“It’s three,” then the bailiff turned to leave.

Jerrick heard another large door slam shut and echoes from a large key locking it.

Jerrick heard his growling stomach, echoing in the cell. He grabbed one of those sandwiches and forced it down. Bread tasted like a sponge while the bologna was aged luncheon meat from a can.

Starting on the second sandwich, he hiccupped, and that nasty bologna sandwich tried to escape up the esophagus and into his mouth.

Jerrick kept that food down and patted the aches of his stomach.

He sat in the cell alone and heard the sounds of silence.

Jerrick waited an eternity for 6 o'clock until the bailiff had returned. He led Jerrick from the cell and opened another door, leading to the inside chamber.

"Where are we going?" Jerrick asked suspiciously. It was too early for the government to assassinate Jerrick. He wasn't powerful enough yet.

"Judge wants to speak to you."

Then the bailiff led Jerrick to the judge's tiny office, directly behind his court.

Judge sat behind an old, worn wooden desk with a stack of papers in front of him. Behind the judge sat with his back towards a window, and Jerrick sat in one of the two vacant armchairs in front of the desk.

"Bailiff, please leave us."

"Sir, are you sure it is okay?"

"Yes, I'll be safe. His friends paid the fine, so he can leave after our conversation."

Bailiff obeyed and closed the judge's door.

Judge stared at Jerrick and began, "When I looked down at you in the court today, I saw myself 35 years ago. I just graduated from law school then. I loved the law; the law burned a passion in my heart. During the 1960s, I worked on equal rights for women and minorities. Sometimes I was so poor; I didn't have money to pay the rent, but it didn't matter. I believed in what I was doing. I was helping people, making a difference."

Judge paused, collecting his thoughts.

"What happened, sir?" Jerrick asked softly.

“At one point, the passion died; the fire burned out. I became concerned about making money. I’m not sure when the transition happened, but it did. I’m partly responsible for some of the job losses in Michigan. I sued many corporations and factories. They were easy prey. A client would come to me and claim they were hurt at the factory. Then I filed a lawsuit. If a company fought it, a jury always ruled in my favor.”

“Do you regret it, sir?”

“In the beginning I didn’t. I was helping people. However, over the years, I suspected many of my clients greatly exaggerated their claims, or they hurt themselves somewhere else. Then they lied about their injuries and claimed they were hurt at work. I made easy money. Then I noticed some factories declared bankruptcy and shut down. Then the jobs started leaving Michigan.”

“If you knew the outcome, do you think you would have stopped?”

“It would make no difference. If I didn’t sue, then a dozen lawyers would take my place and do it anyway. It was inevitable. I love the law; it is my life, but the law grew into the 500-pound gorilla in the room, beating everyone up.”

“Sir, why are you telling me this?”

“I need to warn you, Jerrick. I’m required to report troublemakers to the FBI. This financial crisis has everybody worried, and the FBI is monitoring the troublemakers. I won’t report you because this was a business permit violation but watch your back. On your NCIC report, you have a weird code that I had never seen before. You’re not being watched, but you’re no body either.”

“It must be for living in Russia for two years.”

“Ah, you lived in Russia? How interesting? That’s probably what it is. An American has friends and connections with a former enemy state.”

“Thank you for the warning, sir.”

“Jerrick, words are circulating in the Michigan state government. You talk about creating jobs and creating an empire.”

“Sir; this is the only way we can save our state and country. If we take any other course of action, then we’re doomed.”

“I see, it’s hard to say, but you’re right about one thing. Something must be done.”

“Sir, you can join us, the National Workers’ Party.”

Judge chuckled and continued, “Jerrick; I have already fought all my battles. I’ll remain here in this court until I die. Even if the State of Michigan runs out of money and can’t pay me anymore, I’ll still be here, every day. That is the reason I must find you guilty. Governor’s office told all state agencies to collect as much money as they can. Budget is much worse than we anticipated. Unfortunately, the budget is going in one direction – down.”

“Thank you sir for this information.”

“Wait,” the judge said while he opened the top drawer to his desk, pulling out a homemade CD case.

Then the judge placed the CD case in front of Jerrick on the desk.

Jerrick grabbed the CD case to study it.

“Like I said. I love the law, and I spent a lifetime studying it. That CD has a legal system for a new country with a balance of powers between the federal, state, and local governments, a fair tax system, and strong rights for citizens and businesses. Rules and regulations for all the government agencies are well defined. I took the best laws, starting with Emperor Justinian.”

“When he codified all Roman laws in the sixth century,” Jerrick interrupted.

“I see you know your Roman history. I also took the best from British Common Law, and the Germanic and Napoleonic Legal codes. If I redesigned a country’s legal system, then I would use that legal system on that CD.”

“Your honor, why are you doing this?”

“For my grandchildren’s future. I can only give them my house and my money, but I can’t give them a future. By the time the politicians in Lansing fix our problems, it’ll be too late. Who knows, one of Michigan’s brightest could stand up and fix everything, and Michigan can rise and become a great state again.”

“Thank you sir,”

“Jerrick, watch yourself. Government will put you on the watch list. If you and your party ever make it, make sure you give me credit for my legal system if you’ll ever use it, of course. We also didn’t have this conversation.”

Jerrick stood up and offered his hand for a handshake, but the bailiff returned.

“Escort him out,” the judge snapped.

“Thank you, your honor,” and Jerrick turned, and the bailiff led him outside.

Dan and Chad stood right outside the door on the sidewalk. As the door opened, they saw their friend Jerrick emerged.

“Jerrick, what happened?”

“I spoke with the judge. He’s nice once you get past his cold exterior.”

“I was worried,” Chad replied and added, “I thought they’ll do something to you.”

Jerrick replied, “No, they were nice, but you guys are right. We must be more cautious. By the way, I’m starving. All I eaten was a lousy breakfast and two crummy bologna sandwiches.”

“I hear you; let’s go for pizza,” Dan said as Jerrick’s stomach growled angrily.

Next day, Jerrick and top members of his party stood inside the Moose Club.

Jerrick scanned the stage, and then the bar and pool tables, reliving his memories for the last five years.

Then Jerrick faced his captains and said, “We must say good bye.”

“I know; this place was too awesome. We had some good times here,” Chad replied.

“Jerrick; what will we do?” Dan inquired

“Thank god our party is growing. We have some party members helping us. One owns a farm in the country. We’ll put our technical support out there.”

“You mean Jennifer and Mike,” Dan asked.

Jerrick noticed Dan was a little perturbed by this decision. He had another reason to separate Jennifer from Dan. He noticed

Dan occasionally flirted with Jennifer, so Jerrick was a little jealous.

Jerrick can't have a relationship with Jennifer because the first lady complements the empire, defining its feminine character. Jerrick didn't think Jennifer would make a good First Lady. Besides, Jerrick already knew what his future wife looked like, and she wouldn't have blonde hair and fair skin.

Jerrick continued, "Yes; then another party member will let us use their house in Farmington Hills. It was his grandmother's house until she had died. He'll not sell it, unless he offered a good price."

"Not likely in this economy. Housing prices have been falling since 2008," Dan added.

Jerrick persisted, "We can organize our activities there and do a blitzkrieg for speeches. We'll spend two days passing out fliers and posting messages on Twitter, Facebook, and our Party's website. Two days should be enough to get the message out."

"Our government may be stupid, but agents and police know how to surf the internet," Chad added, imparting some reasoning into the discussion.

"That's the best we can do. Let's hope our government has better things to do than follow me around."

"Jerrick, be real. You're talking about building an empire. Only way to build one is a revolution must take place. A revolution demotes or fires all the government leaders. I use the term 'fire' loosely. Usually, mass executions occur during a revolution," Dan said firmly.

"Your point is well taken, but I must deliver speeches. Our party is still small with 10,000 members strong, and we need dedicated party members to follow our orders. Once we take over, we'll replace our party members at all leadership positions in government. We start at the top and work our way down. We'll fill Congress and the top federal agencies first, then the state governors and state legislatures, and finally, the mayors and county commissioners."

"That's a lot of people. How long do you think it'll take to get all those people?" Chad asked.

“To be honest, I don’t know. We capture the largest states first like New York and California, and work down the list. Last states, we take are Alaska and Hawaii. It depends how much resistance the state governments give us.”

“In theory, a governor can call up the National Guard, but I hope the people are so sick of their government that they’ll never stand up to protect it.”

“You’re right, Jerrick. People complain about their government, especially after the 2008 Financial Crisis. People are furious over the bailout package for the banks and financial institutions. Many people hate their representatives, and they stopped voting. People also hate all those damn taxes and complicated laws,” Dan elucidated.

“Congressmen have some of the lowest public opinion polls ever recorded,” Jerrick said with a beaming smile and continued, “We’ll use that to our advantage!”

“I know. People may want to see public executions of their representatives,” Chad added.

“Benito Mussolini stated it best, ‘Democracy is beautiful in theory; in practice, it is a fallacy.’ Now, we must be careful. Eventually, the federal government will notice, and they’ll try to stop us,” Jerrick whispered as if government agents already hid in the bushes, right outside the Moose Club.

Dan changed the topic, “Jerrick, I almost forgot to tell you. A new party member signed up yesterday, and he looks like you. At first, I thought you were playing a joke.”

“Really, how close does he resemble me?”

“At first, I thought he was you, but some of his facial features differ. He has puffy cheeks with blue eyes. His hair is slightly darker.”

“Perhaps we can use him as my double.”

“Do you think the police and agents are that stupid? State knows my eyes are brown from my driver’s license picture.”

“It could be enough to create confusion. If the state came after you, this double creates confusion, so the state would grab the wrong person.”

“Let’s talk to him. Having a double isn’t a bad idea. Then I can be at two places at once.”

“Maybe we can throw in an aura of mystique. Sometimes the leader’s eyes are brown, and other times they’re blue. It depends on his mood,” Chad added in jest.

Group roared with laughter. Then they walked out.

Jerrick examined the interior before shutting the door for the last time. If Jerrick Ray Davis ever attained power, then he’ll convert this Moose Club into a museum.

Later that night, Jerrick crashed at the safe house in Farmington Hills. He pulled out the CD the judge had given him and inserted it into the laptop.

Jerrick sat on the floor with his back against the couch while the other party members gathered around Jerrick. Some sat next to Jerrick while others sat on the couch behind him.

The CD contained thousands of folders: administrative laws, state laws, municipal laws, city charters, etc.

Chad pointed to one of the folders, Bill of Rights and uttered, “Let’s look at that one.”

Jerrick clicked on it and opened a folder filled with text files. Then he said, “It looks like the regular Bill of Rights, but they differed. Look! There are 12 rights! Judge added two more.”

Jerrick clicked on Amendment 11 and read it, “citizens have the right to a fair and just tax system. Government can only impose one tax on an activity, whether it is the federal, state, and local government.”

Jerrick continued reading out loud the comments at the bottom, “Federal government should take the lead and collect an income tax; the state government collects the sales tax, and local governments collect the property tax. Tax rate is set by law and requires a 2/3 vote of the people within its jurisdiction to change the tax rate.”

“Wow; that’s interesting. Judge advocated a flat, simple tax system. Government sets the income tax at 15%; the state sales tax at 6%, and the property tax at \$200 per residential home.”

“You know how many lawyers will lose their jobs over this tax system?” Dan replied in a pretend, angry voice, at the injustice of a flat tax.

“Ah, that’s too bad. Putting all those scum-bag attorneys and IRS agents out of work,” Chad bellowed loudly.

Whole group erupted in laughter.

Then Jerrick added, “I guess the IRS and lawyers will find a real job and produce something a society really needs.”

“What does the 6th Amendment state,” Dan asked.

“This amendment hasn’t changed, but it’s much longer. Under speedy trial, the state must start the trial within six months for a misdemeanor and within one year for a felony charge. If the state cannot do so, then the judge automatically dismisses the charges. If a court appoints counsel to the indigent, then counsel must have the same workload and compensation as the prosecuting attorney.”

Dan bursts out laughing and then Jerrick.

“What’s so funny?” Chad asked with a perplexed look across his face.

“Prosecutors will hate this amendment. Courts usually pay the lowest salary and hire the most incompetent attorneys to defend the poor defendants. So prosecutors easily win these cases,” Dan explained.

“Courts overwork the court-appointed attorneys. Moreover, the courts will make these defendants wait years in jail for their trials. Most give in and take a plea bargain,” Jerrick added.

“But if we already had these rights, and government found ways to circumvent them, what’s to stop our government from circumventing these new rights,” Chad asked intelligently.

“That’s a good point. It all comes down to the people whom we place in government. They must believe in these laws and imbue a set of ethics,” Jerrick explained.

Dan laughed again and stated, “Ethics? A revolution has no ethics!”

“I know that’s the only paradox I cannot solve. We violate everything, and, turn around, and impose a new legal system.

Subsequently, we expect everyone to follow it, even requiring them to be ethical,” Jerrick uttered.

“In reality, we’re no better than the people we have thrown out of power?” Chad asked.

“That’s not necessarily true. We’ll change the system. We’ll return the manufacturing jobs to the United States. We’ll take our government and chop it in half, making the U.S. legal system friendly to businesses again,” Jerrick explained and then added, “We’ll jumpstart the engines of economic growth...”

“Then we’ll raise an army and expand our empire, creating even more jobs,” Dan added, cutting Jerrick off.

Group laughed again.

Then Jerrick closed the screen to the notebook computer and began, “Guys, the day has come. Each passing day becomes more dangerous. It’s time we begin building an armed force, not an army but a contingent of armed security guards.”

“That’s a good idea, but where do we recruit guards,” Chad asked.

“We have a variety of people in our organization. One, a former sergeant in the Army, believes we can train the homeless people as soldiers,” Jerrick continued in a serious voice.

Dan laughed sarcastically and stated, “We’re going to arm homeless people and ask them to fight and protect us.”

“We shelter and feed many homeless in our organization, so, it’s time to put them to work. Everyone contributes to the organization,” Jerrick said.

Dan stopped laughing because Jerrick was right.

We must start somewhere. Did it matter our soldiers were once homeless? A soldier following orders is a soldier. He is a pawn on a leader’s chessboard.

The U.S. Economy Collapses in 2016

Some people sensed it coming silently in 2016, like birds and animals sensing an imminent earthquake.

If only the political leaders were honest to their constituents, but the leaders prevented a panic The U.S.

government was broke. Every year since the 2008 Financial Crisis, the government collected less tax revenue. The U.S. government kept dumping massive amounts of cash into the economy, resuscitating a dead economy, which was beyond resuscitation.

Leaders and politicians didn't understand the fundamental problems with the economy. They didn't want to reform the system. Thus, only a revolution could solve these problems and could jumpstart the economy again.

Reason was simple. The U.S. legal system became sick, discouraging people from working hard or building a successful business. If someone had beaten the odds and started a successful business, then government regulators, tax inspectors, and scum-bag attorneys appeared, like schools of sharks, who thrashed out and bit anything that moved in the waters. Then once a shark tasted blood, the other sharks descended on the prey, devouring it alive.

Some people found protection from government by working for government.

Every year after the 2008 Financial Crisis, the economy worsened. By 2015, the unemployment rate reached 20%, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a measure of the size of the U.S. economy, contracted again by 3%; the federal debt reached \$20 trillion, and the Dow Jones hovered around 7,000 points. Real estate prices remained in free fall, and investors stopped holding the U.S. government debt.

Then 2016 arrived as hell released its fury upon the U.S. economy. Revolution was galloping towards us at a breakneck speed.

Prices were steadily dropping in the economy since 2008. Anyone with a job became wealthier. However, finding a job in today's economy was finding a virgin in a whorehouse – a daunting and impossible task.

Pete was driving to work, and he was addicted to gourmet coffees. He knew he should save money, but at least he didn't smoke or drink or gamble. These fantastic coffees became a bright

spot in his rather dull life. That first sip in the morning was a smoker's first puff of a cigarette, or a gambler's high from his first pull of the lever on the slot machine.

Pete worked for a government and was single, and thirty-five years old; he held a flag for his job, cautioning drivers to slow down as the crew worked on the roads and highways. He saved several thousand dollars in his bank account.

Pete saw his first surprise of the day as he pulled up to the drive-thru at 'Coffees are Us.' He fished in his pocket for \$2.50 for his cappuccino.

"Sir, may I help you," a young, feminine voice asked politely.

"I'll have a large cappuccino please," Pete retorted politely as his lips moistened in anticipation.

"That'll be \$3.03"

Two quarters fell from Pete's fingers onto the truck's floor as he asked in disbelief, "What?"

Young voice replied firmly with undertones of irritation wavering in her voice, "Sir that will be \$3.03!"

Pete pulled around to the pickup window and asked, "I was paying \$2.50 for that same coffee. Why is it over \$3.03 now?"

"Sir, I do not know why. Regional manager came in today and raised all the prices."

Pete scrounged for the extra money for his coffee by fishing more money from this pocket and collecting those quarters off the floor.

Pete handed the barista his money and snatched the coffee away from her. He usually said thank you but not today. Higher price definitely irritated him. If prices kept going up, then he would reduce his gourmet coffee consumption, the one bright spot of his day.

Pete took the first sip, feeling a little lightheaded while his irritation melted away.

Then he put the car in drive and pulled onto the street.

Driving to work, Pete noticed prices were higher everywhere. He drove by Cheap-o-Gas, and saw gas had risen to

\$3.94 per gallon for the lowest octane. Yesterday, it was \$3.25 per gallon.

Americans complained about the higher prices, but they didn't think about them as prices kept creeping upward.

A week later, Pete made his first morning stop at Coffees are Us.

He pulled up to the drive-thru and blurted, "How much for a cappuccino?"

Girl replied, "\$3.67."

He paused for a second, thinking about the higher price.

Girl asked, "Would you like a cappuccino?"

Pete inquired, "No, how much for a small regular coffee?"

"\$2.20"

"I'll take a small coffee with extra cream, please," Pete responded mechanically with his voice devoid of emotion.

Pete shook his head in disgust because he was drinking regular coffee again. No way in hell would he pay \$3.67 for a cappuccino, even if the barista was naked and added a free lap dance.

Pete didn't know, but price hikes began accelerating.

At the end of the month, that price for cappuccino soared to \$7.93, and by the end of the year, that same cappuccino was \$5,500 per cup.

At the end of the year, that one gallon of gas had risen to an astounding \$71,586 per gallon.

Hyperinflation struck the U.S. economy, like a lightning bolt striking and destroying a healthy oak tree. Inflation rate accelerated to 1,000% per year, becoming a ravenous cancer coursing through an already sick body. The U.S. economy began collapsing.

Many people like Pete gave up.

Although Pete still worked, his salary lagged severely behind inflation. His salary rose to \$300,000 per year. Oh boy! He could buy 55 cappuccinos, or four gallons of gas as the high inflation robbed Pete of his wealth and hard work.

One day Pete stopped working and didn't bother to pick up this last paycheck. Cost of gasoline vastly exceeded the meager paycheck.

Pete packed all his possessions into two suitcases and placed all his camping gear into a backpack.

Pete fled his apartment because his rent had risen to astronomical, incomprehensible numbers, and he was several month's rent behind.

Pete carried and placed all his worldly possessions into the back of the truck, leaving his apartment with the front door wide open.

He pulled onto Highway 59 and headed to the countryside with a half a tank of gas.

As Pete drove from the city, he saw every other business was closed and boarded up. Then thousands upon thousands of homeless people meandered along the streets.

Homeless people strolled along the streets like zombies, begging for food. They formed homeless camps under bridges, and on vacant lots as they scrounged wood, cardboard boxes, and old tires to make themselves a home. These homes had no running water, waste disposal, or electricity, but the homeless had no other options.

They had no jobs, no money, and thus no future. A stench of death, rot, and misery surrounded the homeless camps as they waited for God to call them home, ending their miserable existence on the earth.

Pete ran out of gas 10 miles outside of city limits. He hopped out of his truck, slipped on his backpacked and carried a suitcase in each hand. Then he walked along the abandoned road.

He would live in the country and off the land, hoping someday he would return to civilization after the chaos had ended.

Hyperinflation devastated the U.S. economy as the unemployment rate soared to 50%, shoving the middle class into despicable poverty.

The U.S. dollar became worthless as people dumped their money onto the streets. A person couldn't buy a stick of gum with a one-dollar bill.

Everybody was hurting, except the wealthy and the politicians.

The U.S. banking system also collapsed during 2016. If anyone had money in a bank, then their savings eroded to nothing overnight.

Fixed bank loans became worthless overnight. Homeowners paid their fixed-rate mortgages with worthless dollars, but the banks had closed and stopped accepting loan payments.

Jerrick's party grew fast overnight as membership rose to 1.5 million members. Then he closed the membership, attaining enough party members to fill the major offices of government.

Jerrick, however, had faced fierce competition, not from the Republicans or Democrats. Many Americans had given up on those two political parties years ago. If anything, those two parties were responsible for creating the mess of our economy.

Jerrick's competed fiercely with Benjamin Gitlow, founder of the American Communist Party.

Benjamin Gitlow sat behind his desk, listening to Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony.

On the wall behind him, he hung a large red communist flag that spanned the whole wall like wallpaper. In the flag's center emblazoned the infamous golden sickle and hammer, forming an X - the symbol of the Soviet Union, and the government cares for the workers.

Benjamin was a short, stocky man with dark, sunken eyes with short, black curly hair. Sometimes he wore glasses that enlarged his eyes, so people thought he disguised himself as a raccoon, a bandit.

Benjamin taught finance at a small college in Texas. He remembered the day the university had laid him off in 2011.

Benjamin sneered at his PhD diploma, hanging on the adjacent wall in his office as bad memories drifted into his mind.

Many students dropped out of college because they became pessimistic about the economy and their future job prospects. They stopped wasting money on excessively high tuition.

Most parents didn't have the money to pay for their children's tuition. Instead, they paid for the mortgage and food. Life's necessities outweighed the prestige of a college diploma.

In normal times, Benjamin Gitlow would easily find another job because employers demanded finance specialists. After 2008, no one studied finance anymore.

Thus, Ben never found another teaching job in his field anywhere. He never found a job in anything, not even collecting aluminum cans along a highway. Hordes of homeless people already did that.

Ben did a complete 180 degrees. He hated business, and all its representations. Antithesis of business was communism. He devoured Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and began disseminating its teachings to the public.

Although Benjamin Gitlow was fat and downright ugly, he spoke with a large, booming voice, emanating intelligence.

Destitute, homeless, and disenfranchised flocked to his party.

On Ben's desk laid a newspaper with Jerrick Davis's picture on the front page.

Jerrick became Benjamin's roadblock to power. If he eliminated Jerrick, then he can take over.

As the classical Soviet music soothed his troubled mind, he began thinking of ways to rid himself of his enemy and planned the communists' takeover of the United States.

General Ninian Edwards sat behind his desk. He was general of the United States Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) at Fort McPherson, Georgia.

General Edwards was the poster child of a general.

The General was a natural leader and commanded respect. If he were in public and out of uniform, people still respected him. He never shouted at people or soldiers. Everyone automatically obeyed him and never interrupted him when he spoke.

Staff Sergeant Ralph Brumitt abruptly entered his office, disturbing the General's thoughts.

"Sir, we found more pamphlets," the sergeant said as he placed the pamphlets on the General's desk.

General glanced down at the pamphlets for the National Workers' Party. Jerrick Davis would speak next Friday night in East Point, Georgia.

"Do you know anything about this Davis character?"

"Some of our soldiers support him. Jerrick Davis promises to put Americans back to work again. He also talks about building an empire, expanding the empire to the south."

"Not another one of those."

"Sir, I do not understand."

"No, no. I was just thinking out loud, Sergeant."

The General paused and then asked, "Sergeant, how does he plan to put Americans back to work?"

"Davis will bring the factory jobs back to America."

"Factory jobs?"

"Yes, the factory jobs. They pay well sir."

"Thank you. You're dismissed sergeant."

Sergeant quickly snapped his heels together and saluted the general. Then he left the general's office, quietly shutting the door behind him.

General Edwards relaxed by putting his feet on his desk and tilting back on his chair. General started thinking about Jerrick. He did relate to Jerrick Davis in one detail, the factory jobs.

General grew up in a small Virginia town. He remembered the textile factory closing in 1999. Then times became hard there. Then several years later, everyone made a killing from the real estate market. That escapade ended in 2008. Now everyone was hurting everywhere in the country. Jobs began disappearing off the face of the earth.

His parents still lived in that small Virginia town. He sent them money until the money had become worthless.

Now, he ships them containers of army food, building a cache of food. Once the army stops feeding him and his soldiers, he would desert the army during the night and join his parents. At least, they would have plenty of food to survive during this crisis.

The General hated thinking this because he spent his whole life in the army. Army became his adopted family but those damn politicians in Washington. They screwed everything up.

Soldiers became demoralized and fatigued after 15 years of war. President Bush started the War in Afghanistan in 2001 and the War in Iraq shortly after. We claimed victory in 2003, but the U.S. military stationed soldiers there. Soldiers were returning in pine boxes.

How did the United States win, when soldiers were still dying? We continued fighting a war on two fronts.

Every year, Congress reduced the military's budget. Then the politicians in Washington asked the military to do more with fewer resources.

Military's resources were stretched razor thin.

President Charles Gibson initiated the first draft in 2013 since the Vietnam War because we had lost too many soldiers in the wars, and riots erupted in the large cities.

General ran around the towns, ensuring teenagers signed up for Selective Service. Then if they were selected, the general ensured the teenagers came to a military recruiting station.

Many youths rebelled and refused to come in. Consequently, the military wasted resources, building internment camps for rebellious young men, who refused their duty to their country.

Now, the 2016 Hyperinflation struck the economy, reducing soldiers' pay to nothing. They couldn't pay a soda at the military store with their monthly salaries.

Soldiers became so demoralized that some fled during the night.

General tripled his staff for base security, not to keep the outsiders out but to stop his soldiers from deserting during the night.

General didn't blame them, but we need those soldiers to protect America. Their first duty was to serve their country. Everything else came second.

General planted his feet onto the floor while a large grimace swept across his face. He never had seen such a deplorable state of the troops. If a major crisis broke out, the general couldn't respond to it.

Then the general picked up a pamphlet from the National Workers' Party, reading it carefully. Then he dropped it onto the pile of pamphlets.

Next, he shoved the whole stack of pamphlets into the trashcan next to his desk. Pamphlets fell into the trashcan like an avalanche, rolling down a mountain.

General clicked a button on the intercom and uttered, "Sergeant, please have Captain Erickson from the intelligence division meet me ASAP!" Then he clicked the intercom off before the sergeant responded.

Jerrick arrived in East Point, Georgia on December 4, 2016.

He received a strange note. Opening the letter, command stripes for an army general fell to the ground. Note said, 'Meet me at 9:00 at Mad Murphy's, a small bar on the outskirts of town. Come alone and don't be late.'

Jerrick showed Dan the note, stripes, and asked, "What do you think Dan?"

Dan examined the stripes in detail, turning them over in his hands at various angles and replied, "I don't know. It could be a setup. The U.S. government knows you and could shoot you an 'attempted robbery.'"

Dan emphasized the words, 'attempted robbery' by holding up his hands, using his fingers to form double quotation marks.

“I know, but that’s one of the reasons I must speak in towns with Army and Air Force bases. I’m appealing to our soldiers. We need to win the soldiers to our cause.”

“I know, but buddy; you’re pissing off the wrong people.”

“Well as Lenin said, ‘You can’t make an omelet without breaking some eggs.’”

“But I think the government wants to break you,” Dan bellowed seriously.

Later, that night despite protests from Jerrick’s top leadership, Jerrick would meet this stranger alone. He knew a strange woman wasn’t trying to hook up with him. Women usually sprayed perfume on the letter and planted a luscious, red, lipstick kiss on the envelope, imbuing a mysterious aura of future hot passion.

Jerrick arrived early and walked into the bar, scanning for agents. He saw six patrons drinking beer.

Jerrick sat at a booth in the back, far corner.

Waitress came by, “What can I get you?”

“I’ll take a beer, on the tap, please.”

Waitress asked suspiciously, “How do you plan to pay?”

Jerrick reached in his pocket and pulled out a thick wad of bills that had at least six zeros on them.”

“Hon, that money won’t do you any good in here. What kind of commodities do you have?”

Jerrick reached in his other pocket and pulled out a new box of cigarettes, Winston’s to be exact.”

“That pack will buy you two beers.”

“Okay, please bring them.”

Jerrick didn’t smoke. After the hyperinflation, nobody accepted money anymore. Almighty U.S. dollar became fancy toilet tissue. Small valuable objects like cigarettes became their weight in gold. Gasoline also became precious, but Jerrick rarely carried it with him because of the pungent smell.

Waitress brought two brews and sat one brew in front of Jerrick and the other one at the empty seat directly across from him.

Several minutes later, a guy with a grizzly beard popped down quickly into the empty seat across from Jerrick.

A homeless man sat down to snatch that unattended beer.

However, Jerrick noticed the guy's physique and strong eyes. He knew this guy was athletic with firm lean muscles beneath those rags of clothes.

Then Jerrick looked into the guy's eyes that were strong and commanded respect. Jerrick knew this guy gave orders; he didn't receive them.

Guy asked, "Are you expecting company?"

"Yes, I was waiting for you?"

"I take it this beer is for me?"

"Help yourself."

Guy gulp half of his tasty beer. Although the army still fed him, he hadn't drunk a beer in months.

Guy drank another swig before returning the beer to the table and said, "We have a mutual friend, Richard. He recommended that I should speak with you. So, Jerrick, how do you plan to save America?"

Jerrick spoke for 15 minutes, laying out his plans about rebuilding America and creating an Empire.

Guy listened intently.

Occasionally, Jerrick paused and glanced around, ensuring no one eavesdropped. Jerrick stayed away from particulars but outlined a generic version of this plan.

"Very interesting, but how do you actually plan to seize the government?"

Jerrick sat back and stared at the guy, searching his intuition. Sometimes, when something bad would happen, he would get a funny sensation. Today, his mental radar remained silent.

Jerrick knew if he spilled his plans in front of the secret police, they would arrest and execute him for treason. Of course, this person knew the first name of one of his secret contacts in the federal government.

Jerrick knew Richard Woodland was very careful, and he was sending an important person from the military to speak with Jerrick.

“Waitress,” Jerrick hollered, “Please bring us another round.”

Jerrick fished in his pocket for the other pack of cigarettes.

Then Jerrick faced the guy and replied, “Operation Troyka.”

Guy asked, “Operation Troyka?”

“Operation Troyka has three parts, Power, Communication, and Seizure,” Jerrick began.

Jerrick explained every detail about Troyka, taking over 20 minutes to explain everything.

Guy listened with his full concentration.

Finally, the guy spoke, “Your plan could work. However, I can only guarantee five Army bases and about 200,000 soldiers, but if your plan fails, then we would plunge our country into a bloody civil war.”

“I know, but I’m willing to risk that chance. If we don’t do something now, those bastards in Washington will turn our nation into a third-world country. ”

Guy asked, “I agree. Those bastards in Washington put us into a bad spot. How do we plan to communicate?”

Jerrick reached into his coat and pulled out two satellite cell phones and added, “One cell phone is mine, and I’ll give you the other one.”

Then Jerrick slid the cell phone across the table to the guy.

Jerrick continued, “I have a computer specialist, who put a special chip in these phones. She told me it was impossible to decrypt any phone conversation without those chips.”

Guy took the phone, slipped it into his pocket, and muttered, “I see you found some military encryption-decryption chips.” He knew the military and CIA can decrypt their conversation, but a supercomputer needed a week or two to decrypt.

“Do you have a date in mind to begin Operation Troyka?”

“Yes, Thursday, July 27, 2017.”

“Why that particular date?”

“Scientists are forecasting an extremely hot day for that day.”

“It will be a very hot day indeed.”

Guy finished his second beer and said, “Thanks for the beer.”

He stood up and turned to leave.

“See you later,” Jerrick said.

Jerrick’s plans were coming to fruition. He had set a date for his power acquisition, July 27, 2017. Meteorologists had no idea how hot that day would be.

Next night, Jerrick delivered his speech in East Point, Georgia, attracting a crowd of fifty thousand people.

Homeless people in the area meandered to the auditorium.

Temperature hovered above the freezing mark while skies remained cloudy.

Driving to the back entrance of the auditorium, Jerrick saw large crowds of people, waiting to get inside.

Some people dressed well while others were covered in dirt and grime. Jerrick’s message appealed to all the people, not just one social class.

Jerrick’s security helped direct the crowd, clearing the road for Jerrick and his political party.

One homeless man wore a dark-brown hat and a dirty green flannel jacket. Years of homelessness and decades of beard growth blackened his face. Although impossible to determine his race, the white of his eyes showed through all those years of misery. Man’s eyes brightened as Jerrick’s car drove by.

Homeless man shouted, “Jerrick! Jerrick! Jerrick! ...”

Rest of the crowd picked up the cue and joined the chorus.

Crowd began shouting Jerrick’s name, and he had not spoken yet.

Driving by the homeless man, Jerrick saw the homeless man’s face brightened up as hope glinted in his eyes.

If this homeless guy had showered, wore new clothes, and started a job, he would become a hardworking, tax-paying citizen

again. Unfortunately, the U.S. legal system tossed this guy to the side as if he were garbage.

Jerrick stood on the auditorium stage behind the curtain, hearing the raucous sounds of thousands in the audience.

As he poked his head through the tall, golden drapes and walked to the stage's center, the crowd started cheering.

Jerrick waited for the crowd to become silent. Then he started his speech,

Information economy was a scam.

Politicians knew we were losing our good-paying factory jobs.

They dreamt up this idea that high-paying jobs would become plentiful.

These jobs dealt with information and high technology.

Let's analyze that!

Name a high-tech industry?

Hmmmmm, the internet.

Where are our computers made?

In Asia like China, Malaysia, and Taiwan.

Where are the computer parts made like memory and processors?

In Asia too!

Who writes the programs that run on these computers?

American corporations outsource these jobs to people in India, China, and Russia.

If you have trouble with your computer or trouble with your internet connection, whom do you call?

American corporations route your phone calls and emails to call centers in India.

You get broken Hindi English as a response.

When you pay for your computer and internet services, where does your money go?

Money goes to the American Corporations.

The CEOs and high-ranking corporate officials pay themselves high salaries and extravagant benefits.

They pat themselves on the back for a job well done.

Some of the money flows to Asia.

They pay the workers slave wages in the corporate prison camps.

Then they pay the corrupt politicians their cut.
Corrupt politicians are the key to the process.
They could have changed the laws at any time to stop this insanity.

Crowd began roaring as they shouted in unison with their voices rising in a crescendo, “Jerrick! Jerrick! Jerrick! ...”

Jerrick stretched his hands out as the shouting crowd became silent. He became the master orator, seducing the crowd, commanding them to follow him.

Jerrick continued his speech.

Politicians and CEOs tell you that outsourcing and international trade are good for our economy.

They can offer their services for cheap prices.

That is all true.

But how can people pay for these services if they have no jobs?

Crowd began shouting Jerrick’s name again, even louder.

Jerrick paused until the shouting had stopped.

You are unemployed with no job.

You sleep on a park bench and dig through the garbage for your next meal.

Then you beg and scrounge up a couple of dollars.

And pay those bastards at the corporations to surf the internet.

At least, the service is cheap!

Crowd’s shouting intensified, “Jerrick! Jerrick! Jerrick! ...”

Then it quickly died down as Jerrick continued his speech.

Information economy is a ruse.

Economies throughout any civilization are all the same.

First, people and businesses produce, then they consume the fruits of their labor.

Production creates incomes that consumers can buy their own production.

Somewhere down the line, businesses earned massive profits to outsource.

To relocate our factories in developing countries.

Our political and business leaders transformed our economy into a nation of consumers.

Problem is where do people earn incomes to sustain consumer spending?

Government and the public solved the problem by accumulating a mountain of debt.

Now, we had hit our debt limit.

That is why our economy is in shambles.

Only a radical change to our legal system can we get production going again.

All those bastards in government need to be demoted and tossed out into streets as yesterday's garbage.

Crowd exploded into another uproar. They shouted Jerrick's name so loudly, people heard the shouting from miles away.

Jerrick continued his speech for another 15 minutes. Unknown to Jerrick, the U.S. government placed him on the watch list. Several agents stood in the crowd, disguising themselves as protesters. They joined the chorus of chants, but they recorded everything for the government.

President Charles Gibson sat behind his desk in the Oval Office in the Whitehouse. He became lost into deep thought because he knew he had problems with Ben Gitlow and Jerrick Davis as their popularity grew fast.

President Gibson pondered his choices. He could have an agent assassinate them, but the public would know better. This would add gasoline to a campfire as riots erupted in the cities while people struck back at their government. Besides, democracies shouldn't be murdering their citizens because of their political views.

Other alternatives included arresting them and placing them in interment camps for inciting a riot, or trumping up criminal charges against them, and tossing them into a cold, prison cell, cutting them off from the world.

President Gibson pressed a button on his desk phone, "Please send in Agent Richard Woodland."

A few minutes later, the door to the Oval Office opened, and Richard walked through.

"Please give us a couple of minutes," the President said to his staff.

Staff collected their things and dashed out of the office.

"Please have a seat," the President said, gesturing with his hand for Richard to sit on a chair near the fireplace.

President Gibson sat in the opposite seat. He pressed a button on a remote control, turning off the surveillance camera and tape recorder.

"This Jerrick Davis is worrying me," the President began.

"I know; the people really like him," Richard said coldly, devoid of emotion.

"What do you think is a good course of action?"

"We could neutralize him, but we may experience complications!"

"Complications; what do you mean?"

"The CIA and FBI investigated Jerrick for several years, but he possesses a sixth sense. We believe he uses a team of computer hackers to hack into our computer systems, but he never contacts them directly. Jerrick always knows where we are. Plus, we think Jerrick has doubles."

"Doubles? This guy thinks he's a dictator already."

"It gets better"

The President's interest intensified as he said, "Better?"

"We think some of our agents have been compromised. Many agents and government workers believe our government is doomed, and Jerrick is the only one who can save us. These agents and government workers secretly send Jerrick information. We intercepted several e-mails, but we have never identified the sources. An agent walks into a coffee shop, uses the free Wi-Fi,

sends an email using his netbook, and leaves, slipping the netbook inside his jacket. Agents use untraceable email accounts once. Two months ago, we almost caught an agent because he kept using the same email account. We traced the account access to a large mall. By the time we had arrived, the agent blended and disappeared into the crowd.”

The President asked, “What would happen if we arrested Jerrick?”

“We could. Jerrick is violating hundreds of federal statutes. We can use a federal prosecutor to charge Jerrick with wire fraud, tax evasion, inciting a riot, and so on. Then Jerrick would fight these allegations for years, but his supporters would know. His supporters could riot.”

The President leaned forward, tucking his thumbs under his chin and cupping his hands like a prayer. The President didn’t pray, but he was thinking deeply. This Jerrick guy had turned into a pain in the ass. The President thought he could squash Jerrick like a bug, but now, he felt he would catch a bullet with his teeth.

The President leaned back and asked, “What if we brought Jerrick on board and gave him a high position in government?”

“I don’t think Jerrick would want it. Jerrick wants your job, Sir, I believe he’s honest about reforming the government and creating an empire. People would have given Jerrick all the power to reform our government, but that empire stuff scares them. When people think of empires, they think of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin.”

“I see. Find a federal prosecutor and have him trump up several charges against Jerrick. Make sure some of the crimes are tax related. That way, Jerrick doesn’t get a jury trial. Then we can put him in prison for a while. We can shut him up and dismantle his political party, member by member.”

Richard stirred a little, ready to stand and start his new mission.

The President continued, “Richard, please stay. I have another mission for you.”

Richard relaxed again in the chair.

“What do you know about Benjamin Gitlow?”

“Benjamin Gitlow’s real name is Frank Gitlow, the great-grandson of Benjamin Gitlow, the famous socialist whom New York state arrested in the 1920s. Frank legally changed his name to Benjamin and became the leader of the Communist Party. He was a college professor before he had lost his job. He is a loud mouth, and not a bad public speaker.”

“Do you think he poses a threat?”

“It is a long shot but yes. If something happened to Jerrick Davis, then the people would turn to Gitlow, but it’s hard to say. People don’t like the idea that the government would own all the property. Americans owning property is embedded into their psyche. Owning property is as American as apple pie.”

“Okay. Then it’s settled. Make sure Gitlow is neutralized.”

Both men stood up.

“Thank you Mr. President,” Richard said, and he turned to leave the Oval Office.

The President clicked a button on the remote, turning on both the camera and tape recorder again. Then he returned to his desk, sitting down.

The President was happy that Richard Woodland had left because those cold blue eyes gave him the creeps, but Richard was useful, expendable. He proved himself thousands of times since his days as an army sniper and as an agent in Homeland Security.

A couple of days later, Jerrick returned to the safe house in Michigan, sitting at his desk.

He sat behind his notebook computer and typed his next speech.

Jerrick improved his style and deliverance. Occasionally, he paused and opened video clips of his previous speeches. He studied his gestures, the way he articulated his words, and how he developed a rapport with his audience.

Jerrick didn’t want to be good. He wanted to be the best. He wanted history to record him as one of the most powerful men

who walked the earth, standing proudly with the other giants of humanity.

Jerrick placed a small TV on the bookshelf and set the station to CNN News. He turned the volume down low but just enough to hear it.

If an interesting story came on, Jerrick quickly turned up the volume using the remote on his desk.

Several words caught Jerrick's attention.

"...was shot today..."

Jerrick quickly grabbed the remote, turning the volume up.

A news reporter continued with her story, "Benjamin Gitlow was fatally shot today in an apparent carjacking."

Screen then veered towards the crime scene, where Gitlow's blue Nissan Altima stalled at an intersection. A dozen police cars had surrounded it. Driver's car door was wide open, and viewers saw the blood splotches on the seat and head rest.

Another reported asked, "Do the police know who did it?"

"No, they believe he was involved a failed carjacking. Mr. Gitlow tried to fight his attackers."

"Is this the same Benjamin Gitlow, who is president of the American Communist Party?"

"Yes, the police do believe it is the same person, but this shooting is not politically motivated."

Jerrick was enthralled while his mouth hung wide open.

Then Jerrick mumbled, "Bullshit!" under his tongue, "Not politically motivated."

His special satellite phone started ringing. His cell phone encrypts and decrypts any voices and text messages. If eavesdroppers intercepted his transmission, they would hear garbled static.

Jerrick gave only a handful of these phones to several important people.

Jerrick quickly snatched the phone, answered it, "Hello."

"Mr. Davis, I'll be brief. Government plans to arrest you. Protect yourself and go into hiding."

Then Jerrick heard a click as the caller hung up.

Jerrick knew the caller wasn't joking because he recognized the caller's voice, a high-ranking agent, named Richard Woodland, or should he say a double agent.

Jerrick shook his head back and forth, marveling over his stupidity. Government had murdered Benjamin Gitlow, and Jerrick definitely would be next.

Jerrick saved his speech and turned his laptop off, packing it away into his briefcase.

Jerrick would go underground and would confer with his top party members to boost security and his protection. Jerrick had waited for a lifetime for his revolution, and he would not miss it.

The Coup

It started as any normal day on Thursday, July 27, 2017 as the United States experienced a heat wave.

Jerrick Ray Davis awakened at 5 o'clock AM. He hadn't slept well during the night as he kept tossing and turning. This was his day of reckoning. Today would determine if he stepped into the history books as a revolutionary leader or faced a firing squad for treason. This day could become the new national holiday for his Empire.

Jerrick headed downstairs and made a pot of coffee.

After the coffee had percolated, he poured himself a cup and headed outside to the porch.

Jerrick knew it would be a hot day. Even at five in the morning, the humidity suffocated him. He felt he opened an oven door as he walked outside as his armpits dampened, and a growing spot of wetness appeared on the back of his dress shirt.

Jerrick rocked back and forth on a rocking chair, admiring the countryside at his safe house. Farmers' fields spread out in all directions. Sky transformed into bands of red, orange, and yellow as the sun peeked over the horizon. In the distance, roosters crowed while the farm animals stirred.

About 6:30, Jerrick saw the door open, and Jennifer came outside too.

Jennifer carried a cup of coffee.

Sitting on the swinging bench next to him, drinking a cup of coffee, Jennifer asked, “How are you Jerrick?”

“To be honest, I didn’t sleep well last night.”

“Are you nervous about today?”

“Am I nervous? I waited my whole life for this day. I feel like a prisoner on death row, and I’m waiting for the governor’s last minute phone call to halt my execution.”

“Luckily, you’re not in the State of Texas. Otherwise, you would never get the phone call.”

Jerrick and Jennifer exchanged nervous laughter. Then they quieted down.

Jennifer continued, “What if your plan doesn’t work?”

“Well, I’m a dead man, and I’ll be marked for the rest of my life. It would be better for the government to execute me.”

“What will happen to us?”

“I packed provisions for you, Dan, and the others. Before the hyperinflation, I cashed my money in and bought gold, and I buried it on this farm. It’s not much, but if it ends badly today, you guys take the gold, head to Canada, and start a new life.”

“You’ll actually allow the government to execute you?”

“What choice do I have? I’m about ready to poke a hornet’s nest with a short stick. If anything goes badly, where could I go? My mug shot will be posted everywhere in the world. Government will find the money to put a bounty on my head. I will be a wanted man.”

Jennifer put her coffee cup down and reached for Jerrick’s hands. She embraced his hands and added, “Jerrick; we have faith in you. We’re also putting our lives at stake too. By the end of the day, everyone will be bowing down to you, calling you Emperor.”

“Jen, you know I don’t like that title,” said Jerrick. Honestly, he liked that title, but somewhere deep in his heart, Jerrick thought he could live with the title, Mr. President.

Jennifer and Jerrick sat quietly on the porch, thinking.

At 8:30, Jennifer and Jerrick returned inside. Coolness of the air conditioning made their sweat cold, and they smelled the fresh aroma of hash browns, scrambled eggs, and toasts with dollops of butter and strawberry jam.

Jennifer and Jerrick headed into the kitchen, where Dan and Chad made breakfast for everyone. One cannot start a revolution on an empty stomach.

At 8:50, Jerrick and his team went into the family room, where they established their command center.

Jennifer sat behind the computer screen and logged on.

Jerrick sat behind a desk with two satellite phones lying on it. Phones had the special military encrypt-decrypt chips.

Jerrick reached for the first phone and picked it up. He thought it would be ironic if he picked up the phone, and it didn't work. Day his revolution started, the cell phone company's service was down.

Jerrick flipped the satellite phone open with his left hand and dialed a number. Satellite phones were working today.

After two rings, General Edwards picked up.

"Sir; are the troops ready?"

"Yes sir, we're waiting for your command."

Jerrick picked up the other satellite phone in his right hand and dialed a number to a small contingent of soldiers.

"Sir, are you ready?"

"Yes sir; just say the word."

Jerrick stared at Jennifer and asked, "Jennifer are you ready?"

"Yes, sir; I hacked into the military's communication center. I'm waiting for your command."

Jerrick thought for a moment.

Jerrick carefully placed the phones down on the desk, picked up his coffee mug, and sipped it. Then he returned the mug to the desk.

Tension was high in the room as Dan and his top leadership sat in the room. The Second American Revolution was imminent, and everyone was silent. They heard a breeze rustle through the cornfields outside.

Jerrick mumbled a famous quote from Vladimir Lenin, "Sometimes – history needs a push."

After a minute of silence, Jerrick gave the command, "Go Jen!"

Jennifer sent a command through the military communication center. 'Police are expecting riots and terroristic activities in Fort Knox, Tennessee, New York City, and Washington, D.C. Fort Knox will dispatch troops to Fort Knox, and Fort McPherson will dispatch troops to New York City and Washington, D.C. President Gibson authorized and approved this order.'

Jennifer turned to Jerrick, "I sent the command and confirmed it."

Jerrick picked up both phones in each hand. He held one phone against his ear and asked the general, "Sir; do you have your orders?"

"Yes sir, the orders just came through the FORSCOM command center. President Gibson dispatched our troops to Fort Knox, Washington, D.C. and New York City, ASAP."

"Good, please have a helicopter pick me up. Then we'll meet in Washington at 11:00 o'clock this morning."

"Yes sir," and the phone went dead.

Jerrick turned to Jennifer and said, "Okay, release it."

After several key strokes, Jennifer turned to Jerrick, "It's done."

"How long do we have?"

"Worm should infect all computer systems within two hours. Worm will grind all systems to a halt. Then Mikey's nasty little cell phone virus will take out the whole phone system. Within two hours, email and cell phones will not work in the United States and the world for a day or two."

Jerrick sat there as the room remained silent. Is this all a revolution needed, a computer virus and a couple of phone calls? Something this simple can topple the world's largest and greatest country in the world. It also helped to have the country's troops demoralized from two wars that stretch 15 years. Unfortunately, the President and Congress ignored one of Sun Tzu's important rules *On the Art of War*. A long extended siege drains both the government's treasury, and the moral and energy of the soldiers. If only our political leaders read some of the great books of humanity and made rational decisions.

After five minutes, Jerrick brought the other satellite phone near his ear and uttered, “Blow it.”

Then Jerrick flipped the phone closed and turned it off.

That last command went to a small platoon of 10 soldiers stationed on the outskirts of New York City. Platoon surrounded a small electric substation, placing explosive devices around the transformers that they packed with finely ground carbon.

Lieutenant shouted, “Men, stand back. I have orders from the President to blow these transformers.”

Men retreated to the surrounding countryside.

One soldier pulled out a radio control, “On your command sir.”

“Blow those transformers corporal!”

Then the soldier pressed the button.

Team saw the devices explode, engulfing the whole substation with a large dark carbon cloud.

ZZZZZZHhhhhhhh as explosive lightning struck the station. The 100,000 volts zapped through the carbon cloud and grounded all the transformers’ connections. Then, all the breakers clicked off. The station became dead, and the humming transformers became silent.

Many people, who still lived in homes had their air conditioners on. It was another hot, July day, and the power grid operated at full capacity. Power grid connected all cities and electric utility companies to the grid on the Eastern side of the United States.

Taking down one substation, the soldiers overloaded the system, creating a cascading blackout. Once one substation blew, then another would go, and then another.

Companies generated all that power, but they can’t deliver that power to anyone. Then the power companies did emergency shutdowns, keeping their boilers from blowing. Consequently, the blackout plunged all the cities on the east coast into darkness.

Power companies would need a day to restart the system, but it would be too late.

In addition, that nasty computer virus hit everyone else who still had electricity.

The President of the United States, via hacked orders, dispatched the troops to Fort Knox, Tennessee, Washington, DC, and New York City.

Army utilized all their resources. They filled cargo trucks with troops; helicopters flew through the air, and large trucks carried the tanks. Army would unload the tanks after they had arrived to the cities.

Two battalions surrounded Fort Knox that contained 150 million troy ounces of gold bullion.

Ten battalions headed to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York that held 175 million troy ounces of gold. After the army had surrounded the Federal Reserve, three battalions headed to Albany, New York to capture the state capitol.

Remaining 140,000 troops headed to Washington, D.C.

Jerrick Ray Davis planned to capture the head of government and cut the head off the snake. Then with the gold, he would have the resources to build his empire and more importantly, to pay his troops for their services. Jerrick did not expect anyone to work for free.

Congress was in full session as they devised ways of dealing with the financial crisis. Their foolish expansion of the money supply sent a destructive wave of hyperinflation throughout the economy. Then riots erupted in the cities.

As the Congressmen were working, the lights flickered, and then went dead. Many Congressmen fished in their pockets for their cell phones, but their cell phones didn't receive any signals.

The Congressmen remained sitting. They must deal with this financial crisis, even without electricity. Besides, they had read intelligence reports that several electric utility companies teetered on bankruptcy. Power failures were imminent.

A couple of hours later, the Congressmen felt the ground shaking, like a small earthquake, but the shaking didn't subside.

Several guards ran into the congressional chambers, shouting, "Tanks are surrounding the building."

Our political leaders didn't know that tanks and soldiers surrounded all the major government buildings in Washington, D.C. Regiments of soldiers surrounded Congress, the Supreme Court, and headquarters for all the federal agencies.

The political leaders became petrified as they realized their worst fear. They lost their power in one swoop as one man grabbed all the power. They suspected Jerrick Ray Davis, but no one knew. The U.S. government neglected and mistreated the military for decades, so it could be anyone.

Then the Congressmen heard someone scream over a large bullhorn, "We have the buildings surrounded. Walk out single file. If you do not start leaving, then we will blow up the building." Jerrick Ray Davis stood on top of a truck with the bullhorn in his hand, taking command.

The Congressmen and their staff didn't know what to think. They dropped their things and quietly formed lines. Their faces became blank as soldiers led cattle to the slaughterhouse. The Congressmen knew their lives would end shortly, but they wanted to see the sky and sun one last time.

As the Congressmen and staff walked out the main entrance, soldiers and tanks completely surrounded the buildings everywhere.

As Margaret Hayworth, the corrupt Senator from Arkansas, left the Capitol building, she saw a large cargo truck parked at the bottom of the steps.

As her line approached the cargo truck, several soldiers shoved her staff to the side while one soldier screamed, "Get the hell out of there!"

As Margaret approached the truck, the soldiers forced her up a ramp into the back of the truck. She felt claustrophobic as she squeezed in with her colleagues, standing room only.

After the soldiers filled a truck, ten soldiers with M16s climbed in the back. One yelled, “We have orders to shoot anyone if they escape or cause problems.”

Many Congressmen were sobbing with tears in their eyes while others would stare blankly into space as if in a trance. Then the truck pulled away.

Margaret didn’t know it, but the soldiers rounded up the top leadership of the U.S. government. As one cargo truck filled up, a driver would pull away, and another empty truck would take its place. The soldiers utilized 25 trucks to round up the top echelon of the federal government, taking less than two hours.

Cargo trucks drove to the foothills in the countryside of Virginia.

Soldiers forced the Congressmen and top government officials to exit the trucks and form lines again.

Then Jerrick Ray Davis began speaking on the bullhorn.

You pieces of shit did this to yourself.

You ran our beautiful legal system into the ground.

We fought 16 goddamn years in two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

You sent our soldiers to fight and die in wars that we could never win.

You starved these fine young men and women who stand behind me here in full uniform.

Now look in the position you have gotten yourselves into.

Soldiers would help and reform our corrupt political system.

Exiting one of the vehicles, Margaret Hayworth saw soldiers everywhere. Then she saw the line pass through a tent with a blonde woman sitting there with a laptop computer.

Then the line divided into two. In one line, people quickly ran through the clover fields as fast as possible.

Soldiers directed the other line up and over the hill, where sounds of large machinery came from the other side.

Jerrick Davis continued his speech:

Not all of you are corrupt.

Half of you became trapped in a corrupt system.
You did the best you could do, given your surroundings.
I cannot fault you for that.
You will be free to leave.
You can flee the country and take your families with you.
However, the other half I will not excuse.
You stole, bribed, and extorted money from every one.
You evaded taxes and violated your own rules and regulations.
You perpetuated this corrupt system for the last 50 years.
At any time, you could have changed and avoided this.
Now, I must come along and clean up all your shit.
Now I will punish you for your misdeeds.
Soldiers will lead you up and over the hill, and you will finally get
to meet your creator.

Some of the government officials began sobbing again.
They knew what Jerrick Ray Davis meant.

Margaret came within 30 feet of Jerrick. She glanced at him but then quickly looked down. She spent a lifetime, looking down upon people. Now, someone bigger and stronger came along and put her in her place.

Margaret meandered slowly to the tent. A woman with long blonde hair wearing thick glasses sat at a table. Margaret did not know the woman's name, but it was Jennifer. She was typing on a laptop, and she said only one word when she looked at Margaret, "Left."

Then the soldiers directed Margaret up the hill, where she heard the sounds of heavy machinery became louder.

Margaret thought this could be a beautiful day. Although it was hot, the sky was clear and blue while the sun shone brightly in the sky. If it were not for Jerrick and his coup, she could have sat down, right over there on the tall luscious grass.

Reaching the hilltop, Margaret's heart skipped a beat. Actually, her heart almost fell out her chest as she spotted the source of sounds.

Down on the other side of the hill, several bulldozers excavated a large, deep pit.

Soldiers lined up the government officials along one edge.

Margaret began crying. She hadn't cried in 40 years, and the tears stung her eyes as she softly mumbled, "Dear God, what have we done?"

Soldiers directed Margaret to the pit's edge.

Margaret glanced at the hilltop and saw the end of the line.

Then the soldiers lined up all the corrupt politicians along the pit's edge.

Margaret mumbled again, "God, forgive me for my sins."

A soldier shouted on a bullhorn, "Aim! Ready! Fire!" The soldiers filled the quiet countryside with machine gun fire.

Margaret felt something hot hit her in the stomach. She looked down and saw a large gaping hole in her suit, that quickly reddened. Then she felt dizzy and fell into the pit dead.

An era of American corruption came to an explosive grisly close.

President Charles Gibson attended a conference in Geneva, Switzerland to appease the European Union. After the American hyperinflation, the value of the U.S. dollar collapsed. International trade halted while international investors were furious that they held worthless American debt and worthless U.S. dollars.

It was 3:09 in the afternoon, six hours ahead of Washington, D.C.

The President sat in a large room at a long table, shaped like an elongated U. The U.S. President sat at the middle of the U while the less important people filled the legs' end.

Door opened, and the President's aid scurried in and approached the President. Aid bent downward, cupping his hands over the President's ears and whispered, "Mr. President, we just got word that the east coast lost power at this moment. National guard was put on standby. Furthermore, the army was called to Fort Knox, Washington, D.C., and New York where riots are erupting."

The President nodded his head in understanding.

The President sat next to the Prime Minister of England, who inquired, "President Gibson, is there any problems?"

"No, my aid was informing me on current events," the President said coolly and calmly. He didn't want to worry the delegates today. Every passing day, the United States looked more and more like a third-world country. Why worry them about electricity going out on the east coast, and several riots erupting in the cities?

At 5:00, the meeting adjourned for dinner as servants wheeled in carts filled with food. Conference wasted no expense on food.

All the delegates ate filet mignon with lightly fried rice with saffron, the President's favorite. Although saffron was worth more than gold by weight, it added a wonderful reddish tint to the rice, imbuing it with a flowery flavor.

Around 5:16, a commotion erupted as aids began pouring into the room.

The President's aid quickly approached and whispered into the President's ear, "Sir; we think a huge riot has erupted in Washington, D.C. , but we cannot get through to anyone."

One of the staff members wheeled a large, 52-inch flat-screen TV into the room. He plugged it in and switched it on.

A news reporter filmed large tanks and truckloads of soldiers heading into Washington, D.C.

The President started to think. This was really bad. Here I am negotiating with these Europeans, and riots are breaking out in the capitol. Don't those lousy, no-good Americans know that I am helping them? America's problems are the world's problems. I cannot solve any problems if people will make trouble.

The President slammed his fist against the table in frustration.

Meeting adjourned for tomorrow, and the President's cavalcade headed to the Hotel at seven.

The President reached his room and relaxed on a recliner while his angry subsided as sleepiness invaded his thoughts.

The President thought about those riots in Fort Knox and New York City. Why Fort Knox? He picked up his cell phone and tried to call several Congressmen, but he couldn't get through.

The President felt a deep, sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, a growing feeling of imminent danger. Something was not right. Everything felt dead wrong.

At around 3 o'clock in the morning, the President stirred and came out of a bad dream. His perspiration dampened the pillow and sheets.

Sound of his cell-phone ring tone, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, woke him up. He also heard the cell phone vibrating on the wooden surface of the bed stand.

He groggily reached for his cell phone and flipped it open.

"Hello," the President said, shaking off his sleepiness.

"Mr. President; thank god, I got a hold of you."

The President immediately recognized the voice, Sandy Witakker, the only honest politician to step within the halls of Congress.

Sandy began sobbing, "Mr. President, there was a coup." Her sobs and tears strengthened, but she persisted, "Jerrick Davis staged a coup. It was awful! Soldiers and tanks were everywhere." Then Sandy cried harder.

"Sandy, please calm down. Tell me everything you know."

"Mr. President, I don't know anything. Soldiers rounded up all the Congressmen in cargo trucks and took us to the country in Virginia. Jerrick Davis commanded the troops there, and he wore a general's uniform. He let some of us go."

Sandy paused a minute to collect herself and then continued, "I ran and ran, getting out of there. Then I heard machine guns. Then I... I... I ran faster. I ran to the nearest town and waited for the electricity to come on. Then I called you."

The President sprawled himself across the bed; feeling as if someone sucker punched him in the gut with all his wind knocked out of him. He didn't believe Jerrick Ray Davis took over, like he said he would. Jerrick had just demoted President Gibson.

Sandy's sobs ebbed while her voice strengthened, "Mr. President; I must go. Jerrick Davis said we could leave the country.

I need to return to Arizona, to get my family. Then we'll flee America.”

“Thank you Sandy,” the President said, flipping his cell phone closed.

Then his cell phone began ringing again.

Part 3 – Building the American Empire

Restructuring the U.S. Economy

Historians recorded this day in infamy. Jerrick Ray Davis staged a successful coup against the United States government and executed over half of the corrupt Congressmen and the top management of the U.S. government.

Jerrick Ray Davis' hands became drenched in blood, which he can never wash off. No matter, how much good Jerrick Ray Davis did; this day will follow with him as a dead weight shackled to his ankle. History would never forget this day.

Jerrick Ray Davis must address the nation quickly and woo the citizens over. He must hold the nation together and prevent the outbreak of a bloody civil war. He will lay out his plans and inform the people, how he will restructure the economy.

Jerrick will create jobs again and put everyone back to work. If he does not succeed, then the citizens would thwart him, rising and fighting back. He hoped the citizens would remain on the sidelines as he captured the state and local governments, consolidating them securely under his control.

Jerrick Ray Davis and General Edwards flew together in a helicopter to Albany, New York to a TV station.

Electric power companies restored power to the east coast at 8 o'clock that night, and the troops captured the state capitol.

Jerrick Ray Davis delivered his presidential address to the nation for the first time as the new President by default of course. His speech started at 8:15 PM on July 27, 2017:

As you have suspected, I staged a coup in Washington, D.C.

I succeeded.

I rounded up the corrupt Congressmen and top management of the

U.S. federal government and let the army execute them.

I had to do this.

I had to save our country.

I sat on the sidelines my whole life and watched those bastards in Washington, D.C. ran our beautiful country into the ground.

I could not take it any longer and took over.

Now, I have all the power.

I hereby declare that I am the new President of the United States.

However, I cannot do this alone.

I ask you to help me.

Together we can make a change.

I plan to take over all the state capitals and then the major cities.

I appointed members of the National Workers' Party to all the political offices in the United States.

Then we will chop our government in half.

First order of business is I am ending the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I am shocked the three previous presidents refused to admit defeat. Instead, they continuously dumped soldiers and resources into wars that we could not win.

They wanted to win those wars at any cost.

They did not care about how many soldiers would die.

Now I declare the Afghan and Iraqi wars are officially over.

We will not sacrifice more soldiers' lives in that region of the world.

Further, I end President Gibson's national draft.

I will not force military service upon our young people anymore.

Second order of business is I will deregulate many industries.

I will decimate the Environmental Protection Agency and the state's equivalent.

Other government agencies like the U.S. Postal Service will remain the same size.

I am getting government out of the education business.

You as parents, know what is best for your children, not the government.

I privatize all schools, universities, and colleges.

Parents can decide which school or university to send your children.

If you want to send your child to a religious school, then so be it.

All public money, earmarked for the schools will be put in a voucher fund.

Parents can use these vouchers to pay for their children's education.

Further, poor university and college students will have access to these vouchers to pay for their education.

I will enslave poor college students with a mountain of debt and college loans.

Further, I know the United States has the largest prison systems in the world.

We lock up almost 3% of our population and that does not include the internment camps.

As of today, I close the internment camps.

Those camps must release detained persons, allowing them to rejoin society.

I also will execute all murderers and child molesters.

I do not see the need to feed and house this scum of the earth.

I realize some courts railroaded innocent people to prison.

For court cases with shoddy evidence or overly zealous prosecutors, those defendants will get a second trial, a second chance at freedom.

For the court cases with overwhelming evidence, the prisoners' days are numbered; make your amends with the Almighty above.

You will be talking to him about your future housing accommodations for the next eternity.

I am also de-criminalizing marijuana and low-level barbiturates and amphetamines.

You are also free to smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol.

However, just do not drink and drive.

I will allow the police to arrest suspected drivers under the influence.

Hard-core drugs like cocaine and heroin will still be illegal.

I also re-introduce the gold and silver standards again.

I seized the nation's gold from Fort Knox and the New York City Federal Reserve Bank.

We will use this gold to mint our new coins.

In the beginning, my government will issue one-ounce gold and silver coins, but we will expand to other denominations. One-ounce gold coin will have a value of \$2,000 and the silver will be \$400.

If my government issues paper money, then the Federal Reserve must hold the appropriate amount of gold or silver in the vault.

Any citizen can convert their paper money into gold or silver on demand.

By putting our nation on sound financial ground, we can get our banks and financial markets up and running again.

I will take our manufacturing jobs from China.

American made products will fill the U.S. stores' shelves once again.

I have three strategies to accomplish this.

First, my government will impose escalating tariffs.

Government assesses a 10% tariff rate on raw materials and agricultural products.

This is purely for government revenue.

Government imposes a 15% tariff on intermediate goods.

Finally, finished goods and products are subject to a 25% tariff rate.

This higher rate protects the manufacturing industry.

More processing a product has, the more value it is, and of course, the workers earn greater wages.

Second strategy is to protect the manufacturing industries from local government.

All manufacturing buildings, land, machines, and equipment are exempt from local property taxes.

Manufacturing is exempt from many environmental laws and regulations.

This was one of the fatal mistakes of the American Republic.

They destroyed U.S. manufacturing through excessive property taxes and regulations.

Their policies caused an exodus of our good-paying manufacturing jobs.

As of today, I end this foolishness.

Third strategy is our new government will finance the opening of new factories.

Thus, I welcome the rich capitalists to our country again.

Please do not resent or hate them.

We need their talents and hard work to get our factories operating again.

I am not the kind of person who holds resentment.

My goal is to put all American back to work with the quickest means possible.

Returning the expertise will speed up our recovery.

Finally, I arrive to the last piece of my economic policies: taxes.

It is universal; everyone hates taxes.

This was another fatal flaw of the American Republic.

They destroyed the economy with a large, confusing tax code perpetuated by the federal, state, and local governments.

Further, they stacked taxes upon taxes until our economy had snapped from the dead weight.

As of today, the tax code became simpler.

The U.S. federal government imposes a 15% flat tax on all incomes; each state government collects a 6% sales tax on all final goods and services sold, and finally, the property tax is set into stone at \$200 per residency per year, and \$400 per non-manufacturing business per year.

For a government to increase taxes, two-thirds of the people in the appropriate jurisdiction must approve the tax change.

I believe in this fair tax code so much, it now becomes your 11th Bill of Rights.

Citizens of the United States are protected from unfair and unjust tax systems.

I know we already have an 11th amendment to the Constitution, but I am imposing a new legal code on all levels of government.

I am adopting the Field's Code of Law.

This new code has a fair balance between the government and her citizens.

And this new code is much simpler.

Whole legal code is written into one thick book.

We are jettisoning the old, Republic code of law that occupied a whole floor in a large library.

I am introducing dramatic changes.

Thus, I declare this a new beginning for the United States.

We will create good-paying jobs again.

A simple, streamlined government works with its citizens.

A government helps its citizens prosper and builds a better, stronger future.

I call this change in government a new era, a new beginning.

To distinguish this new government from the old, I hereby call the United States the new American Empire.

After the speech, President David spoke to General Edwards in a small conference room at the TV station alone.

On the conference table at the edge was a silver tray with a decanter of water, pot of coffee, cream, and sugar.

The President poured the general a cup of coffee and placed the coffee in front of the general. Then he poured himself a cup of coffee and added a drizzle of cream.

General sipped his coffee, pitch black of course and stated in a worried tone, “Mr. President; you know we don’t own that gold. Soldiers only surrounded the buildings. It’ll be hell breaking inside.”

“I know, general. I wanted my speech to be positive and give the people hope. Besides, I have faith. We will succeed. Get the word to your soldiers and tell the employees inside Fort Knox and the New York Federal Reserve that we will not harm them. After I mint the gold coins, I will personally hand them \$50,000 in new coins each as long as they do not resist us.”

“Mr. President; what about the troops?”

“Tell your troops that I will pay them five gold coins each immediately after they are minted. Then another five gold coins when I have the state and local governments under my control. Furthermore, extend this offer to the Navy and Air Force, and the other soldiers who are not under your command. As long as they do not resist me, I will compensate them.”

“You know Mr. President; you may not have any gold left after you pay the troops.”

“I know, general. That is the price; I am willing to pay for a revolution. Besides, I never owned that gold to begin with. I stole it from the American Republic.”

The General squinted a little about ready to laugh.

Then the President started laughing, and then the General joined him.

Once the laughter died down, the President continued, “I believe the U.S. economy will stabilize within a year and then start growing again. Once the people and businesses believe in me, and my intent to make the U.S. business friendly again, they will work hard and invest in the U.S. economy. Now, I want you to start reducing the troops and cut our armed forces in half.”

“In half? Why Mr. President?”

“I am not punishing the troops. I want to ensure their loyalty to me. You are to fire any commanders and soldiers, who are not dedicated to our cause. Do not worry. Once the tax revenue starts filling the coffers again, then we will build the armed forces up. I give the military the highest priority in the budget. Besides, I have some important missions for the troops. I plan to rebuild our military so it will be the best in the world and dedicated to the new Empire.”

“So, you still want to invade Mexico?”

“Yes, but I would not call it an invasion. We will not enslave the population. I will make them equal citizens in the Empire. In addition, we will build and develop Mexico and bring them up to our living standards. Mexico will become a continuation of the United States.”

President David reached into his inside pocket of his navy blue suit and pulled out the insignia for a five-star general. Then he placed the insignia in Edward’s outstretched, eager hand.

Next, President Davis congratulated the general, “General, just as I promised you. You are now the General of the Army. You are a five-star general of the American Empire.”

General’s face turned a reddish hue. He looked admirably at the insignia and then replaced his old command stripes with the

new one. General Edwards never thought he would see the day, when the President elevated his rank to the General of the Army. Then he graciously replied, "Thank you sir."

He stood up to leave.

President Davis continued, "Before you leave; please leave me a battalion of troops under my command. I want to ensure I am well protected."

"Yes sir; Mr. President."

General left while President Davis remained seated. He didn't believe how easily things went his way. Indeed, Providence was looking out for him, and his destiny was to create the American Empire.

President Davis drank his coffee, and a smile appeared on his face as the jolt of caffeine kept his sleepy mind sharp and focused. He had a long night ahead of him.

After President Davis's speech, the citizens of the United States became dazed and afraid. No American President held as much power as Jerrick Ray Davis. No one staged a successful coup against the U.S. government or executed the Congressmen and the top bureaucrats.

Now, President Davis held the power. He talked about how he would rise and save us, and he did just that. Will he keep his word and save us or become a tyrant?

Stoners became ecstatic as they ran into the streets and smoked their marijuana. Little did the potheads know President Davis's true intent. Jerrick Davis did not legalize marijuana because he smoked it as a rebellious teenager. He deregulated it because he did not want the government to waste resources arresting and incarcerating people for smoking it. He had other plans for society's resources. Jerrick Davis would utilize all available resources to build his Empire.

Of course, if the workers labored 8 to 10-hour workdays, then let them smoke and drink and pop pills. Working long hours wear people out. Let them have their artificial means to keep happy

and content in their sparse free time. Jerrick Ray Davis wants all Americans to work long and hard and be happy. If citizens need drugs to be happy, then so be it. Let the pharmacies work around the clock, pushing their assortment of happy pills.

President Davis headed to the best hotel in downtown Albany and stayed in the Presidential suite with a battalion of troops surrounding the building.

Some soldiers camped in the lobby while others patrolled the outside neighborhood, keeping the President safe.

Top officials to the National Workers' Party flew to Albany to meet with the President at a conference room at 10 o'clock at night at the hotel.

Top members of Jerrick's party became his new cabinet. He promoted Dan vice president; Chad to Secretary of Education, and Richard Woodland became Secretary of Homeland Security. He appointed Jennifer to a newly created department called Department of Information.

The President began his discussion, "Behind these closed doors, you must be honest with me. If you think, I am doing something wrong, I must hear your opinions. I may change my decision if you prove me wrong. However, to the outside world, we present a united front."

Dan took the President up on his offer and challenged him in front of the group. He began, "Jerrick; I think we shot ourselves in the foot when we reintroduced the gold and silver standard."

"Ah, the gold and silver standard. I want people to have faith in the financial system again. We need a strong financial system to get the economy growing. Besides, the previous financial system was based on paper. It crashed in 2008, and then we had that nasty hyperinflation in 2016," the President explained softly.

"But Jerrick, Dan is right. How will we build the Empire? Our financing is limited. You tied our ability to increase funding. In addition, any tax increases require a 2/3 approval from the

citizens. That is excessively high! Taxes will never go up,” Chad added in a concerned manner.

The President smiled slyly and then began, “Of course; I am imposing a new legal system. It appears the system can be changed, but in reality, I never want it to change. Guys, you must trust me. I thought about it long and hard, and I have a back door for financing the Empire.”

His cabinet scrutinized President Davis closely. Of course, Jerrick Davis was a genius, and his brilliant mind found a way to finance his Empire.

“Jerrick, please tell us. What are you planning?” Jennifer asked sweetly.

“First source is from natural resources. I will not nationalize our natural resources. However, our government goes into partnership with the petroleum, coal, and electric companies. We split the profits 50-50 with the industry. We will keep energy prices at a moderate level, where the people are happy, but we can earn substantial profits. These profits become a source to finance the Empire. Of course; the companies must pay taxes on their share of the profits too,” the President stated cunningly.

Dan burst into laughter and added, “Boy, I thought I was slick. We are double dipping on the money. What is the second source?”

The President sighed and continued, “Second source is even better. Government enters into partnership with the silver and gold industries. As you know, I set the value of our coins twice the market value of gold before the hyperinflation episode. A one-ounce gold coin has a \$2,000 value while the one-ounce silver coin has a \$400 value. We believe it costs our mines \$400 to extract the gold per ounce, and \$10 to extract the silver. Thus, we create from thin air \$1,600 from each gold coin and \$390 from each silver coin. Then we split the profits 50-50 with the mining industry.”

“Damn, you are a genius,” Chad said loudly.

“Damn, Jerrick. If we can get our mining companies operating at full steam, that will dump money into our coffers,” Dan stated in admiration.

The President continued, “The Republic had the best scam for government financing. They built the whole financial system upon paper and numbers stored in computers. That system imposed almost no cost on government, and that is why their system crashed. At least with gold and silver, the people would never lose faith in the financial system. Gold and silver will always have an intrinsic value, and they always convey confidence and trust.”

“What will we do with the money, Jerrick?” Jennifer asked.

“We will dump the money into the economy. I have two plans. First, the government uses its financing to create corporations. Once the company becomes financially sound, we will auction half the corporate stock to the public, and we give the other half to the citizens. That should be a nice surprise to them,” the President stated proudly.

“What kind of companies are you talking about?” Dan asked.

“For instance, we start a company that makes insulin and other medicine. We sell it for a good price to our citizens, creating a strong consumer demand to our corporations. That is one thing, I liked about Russia. Medications were very cheap and widely available,” Jerrick exclaimed.

Jennifer asked, “Won’t that put some of the pharmaceutical companies out of business?”

“That is the nature of competition. You either compete or go into another business. Besides, I am not talking about cutthroat competition. Prices will remain high for the companies to earn profits.”

“What about the other plan,” Dan asked, “I got to hear this.”

“Other plan is to start a massive construction spree. We will use our money to build and renovate schools, highways, hospitals, public buildings, and parks. We will redevelop poor neighborhoods, so we care for the little people too,” the President stated emotionally.

Then he continued with his voice rising in a crescendo, “Our construction boom will be so grand; it will make the housing bubble in the early 21st century look like child’s play.”

“But Jerrick, the housing bubble crashed badly. Don’t you remember the 2008 Financial Crisis? We went into a decade-long crisis. Won’t the same happen to us?” Chad asked with concern in his voice.

The President had a large grin on his face and retorted, “Chad, you have a very good point. All economic booms are temporary. Boom will probably last seven years. At the end of the sixth year, we start our invasion. We annex Mexico to the Empire. Then we invest and redevelop the infrastructure in Mexico, creating another economic expansion. Our American companies will reap substantial profits, when they supply the machines and materials for redevelopment. We also go after Mexico’s petroleum, gold, and silver mining operations. These industries will help pay for redevelopment.”

Jerrick paused for a minute to sip some water to relieve his parched throat. Then he continued, “I do have some reservations about Mexico. We only have one chance to get it right. My idea is first to invade Cuba. Cuba will be our experiment. We will do all our learning there. Once we find some good strategies that work, then Mexico is next.”

“Mr. President, what will happen with the social programs and welfare?” Jennifer asked. She wanted to ensure all citizens benefited from the change in power.

The President began chuckling and stated, “I am old fashioned. I believe in self-welfare. It involves a punch card and a time clock. Workers punch in to start work at the beginning of a shift. Thus, the government will not be generous in welfare and social programs. Everybody must work.”

Whole group burst out laughing, except Richard. He tried to feign a smile, but his smile was not natural. He sat quietly, observing suspiciously the group with his cold blue eyes.

After the laughter had died, the President continued, “I am not cruel. I will give money to help people with true disabilities and the elderly. Being an enlightened society, we are obligated to help people, who are less fortunate than ourselves. However, I believe many disabled people would work if given the opportunity. Thus, we should use our power to create that opportunity.”

Once the President stopped speaking, the room became silent. When Jerrick Ray Davis told them that they would build an Empire, he was serious. He would create one hell of an Empire.

Next day, July 28, 2017, President Davis was watching the news in his hotel room in Albany, New York.

As he sipped his coffee, the Governor of Texas, Peter Hansborough Bell, appeared on the TV next to the reporter.

Governor was a middle-aged man with a full set of black hair that he parted to the right side with a neatly trimmed beard and mustache. He also had a rough dark face that worked to his advantage. He could wear a suit and portray himself as a leader, or wear blue jeans and a cowboy hat, and step into the role of a Texan rancher. He used this trick to garner as many votes as he could garner.

On this occasion, the Governor wore a dark suit and red tie.

“Mr. Bell, what do you think of President Davis?” News reporter asked.

“First, I will not call Jerrick Davis President. He did not win the election, and he is not the official leader of the United States. Second, I dare Jerrick Davis to step on Texas soil. We are waiting for him. I called up the Texas National Guard. We have tanks and soldiers waiting for him in Austin.”

“Aren’t you worried that you are out gunned? President Davis controls most of the army.”

“Out gunned, don’t you understand? Our state slogan is ‘Don’t mess with Texas.’ I am confident many Texans will come out, fight for their freedom, and protect their state. President Davis is not the leader of the free world.”

News reporter ended with the sound bite, “There you have it. The State of Texas is standing against President Davis. Texas vows to fight him to the end.”

President Davis started laughing, almost spilling his coffee onto the floor.

He remembered the poll numbers for Governor Bell that consistently hovered around 30%. The Republicans maintained a stranglehold over the polling stations in Texas, scaring away all the Democrats and minorities, which of course, were a large segment of the population. Consequently, bad leadership cursed the State of Texas for the last 30 years.

However, the governor played a poker bluff, and President Davis needed to squash the governor and prevent opposition to his rule. If one state can rise and challenge President Davis, then the other states would follow.

The President reached for his satellite phone and called General Edwards.

The General picked up after the first ring, "This is General Edwards speaking."

"Hello General, this is Jerrick Davis."

"Yes sir, Mr. President. What can I do for you?"

"We have a problem brewing in Texas. Governor is challenging my authority, and I want several battalions dispatched to Austin, Texas. Let's take the state capitol."

"We can be there in 24 hours."

"General, minimize the damage to the city. Any buildings you destroy, we must turn around and rebuild them. However, our soldiers are the first priority. If you must destroy the city to save our soldiers' lives, then so be it."

"Yes sir. I have your orders."

"Call me before takeoff; I want to be there for the battle," and the President hung up the telephone.

A large grin formed on the President's face. No one challenges President Davis.

General of the Army, Edwards, dispatched five battalions to downtown Austin, Texas from Fort Bliss, which were 520 miles away.

Army truck after army truck filled with soldiers, forming a convoy heading straight for Austin. Convoy reached the suburbs of Austin early the next morning.

As the trucks drove along the streets, the battalions of troops noticed the people deserted Austin like a ghost town. Most citizens fled the city. City had no traffic, no cars, and no people.

As Jerrick Davis suspected, most Texans were sick of their state government, and they would not protect it. They would let Governor Bell challenge President Davis alone.

Two battalions broke away from the main convoy, and they headed to the southern outskirts of Austin. Large army trucks carried the troops and pulled 10 covered trailers.

Once the two battalions stopped, the soldiers began removing the covers from the trailers. Army had a little nasty surprise for the Texas National Guard.

As Governor Bell stated in the news, snipers from the Texas National Guard scattered themselves among the State Capitol Buildings on the upper floors. They had a panoramic view of the wide-open spaces of the state government complex. They planned to shoot as many soldiers.

Edwards's soldiers unloaded and prepared for combat at the University of Texas campus, across the street from the state government complex.

Then the soldiers advanced in formation towards the government buildings.

The Texas National Guard fired the first shots as gunfire disrupted the quietness of the city.

The Empire's soldiers took positions behind buildings and returned fire.

Windows were shattering, and shrapnel of brick and mortar flew everywhere in the air. As the battle dragged on, the soldiers on both sides shot and hit the state government buildings, covering them with holes and pockmarks from the powerful M16 bullets.

Major General Rudder called in air support.

Ten AH-64D Apache Longbow Attack Helicopters flew in. They were dark and sleek and from a distance, they looked like malicious black dragon flies. However, their tactical weapon systems were unmatched and quite deadly to enemies.

Apache Helicopters broke out of formation and flew around the government buildings. They used M230 machine guns that rained down 30-millimeter bullets upon the national guards.

Bodies began falling from the gaping holes of the buildings, sprinkling the lawn around the buildings.

They also launched Hydra-70 rockets at the buildings, destroying the facades and annihilating the snipers.

One helicopter flew to the Governor's mansion, a beautiful two-story white home. It had six majestic Roman columns that held up the front of the mansion, creating a porch on the first floor, and a grand balcony on the second.

Helicopter launched four rockets at the Governor's mansion, reducing it to rubble. Then the ruins ignited and began smoldering and burning.

Another helicopter launched several rockets at the Texas Legislature building. Rockets blew large chunks from the building, and one missile hit the majestic white dome, collapsing the dome.

The Texas National Guard launched their secret weapon. Ten F-16 Fighting Falcons took off from Kelly Field Annex in San Antonio, Texas.

They flew north to Austin, traveling 900 miles per hour.

As the fighter planes reached the outskirts of Austin, the Empire's soldiers switched on the Patriot surface-to-air missiles. A new generation of missiles used the PDB-6 software that recognized different types of aircraft and locked in for deadly accuracy.

The Patriot battalion had 10 mobile trailers with a launcher attached to them; each launcher held 20 computer guided missiles.

As the Falcon aircrafts approached, the Patriot missiles accelerated insanely to 3,800 miles per hour, destroying nine of the aircraft.

Surviving Falcon turned and headed to the air force base.

Surviving Texas National Guards saw the massacre, and they fled.

General Rudder ordered the troops to search and to clear the buildings, looking for hostile enemies, but the Texas revolt had ended.

Texas lost miserably and became firmly integrated into the Empire.

Troops searched for Governor Bell, but they found no trace of him.

Governor Bell, a typical U.S. politician, was all talk and no bite. Unknown to the troops, the governor fled before the first shots rang out. He scampered towards the Mexican border as a scared rabbit.

A news reporter captured this 40-minute battle on a camera, and the whole nation and the world watched with alarm. Almighty State of Texas did not stand a chance. It fell fast and hard.

President Davis continued taking over, and no one could stop him.

Both General Edwards and President Davis watched the whole battle from the command center on the northern edge of Austin.

The President was pleased the battle ended quickly and decisively. Now, all resistant to his leadership should melt away. Other states would not revolt.

President Davis controlled the state governments. Once his troops entered a state capitol, the governor and legislature fled like scared rats. They would not die in what they believed in. They let President Davis take over and appoint his party members to the state leadership.

President Davis kept his promise. He decimated the federal, state, and local governments, cutting them in half; he imposed his simple tax code and greatly deregulated the economy.

New law of the land became Judge Field's Codification of Law, a pro-business legal system with a fair balance of power between the people and her government. The United States became a pro-business country again, just as President Davis had promised.

The President took refuge at the Whitehouse in Washington, D.C. He met Richard Woodland, the new Secretary of Homeland Security.

Richard walked through the familiar door into the Oval Office. He was there many times and always sat across from the President on the couch near the fireplace.

“Richard, let us get down to business. How is our international status?”

“Many countries remain in a state of shock. President or I should say the former President Gibson is in Europe convincing the European Union to invade the United States and restore his presidency.”

“Does an attack look imminent?”

“From our reports, which are quite limited, he wasn’t successful. The European Union doesn’t want to intervene. They have their own problems right now. Collapse of the U.S. dollar last year sent all the world’s economies into a severe depression. However, the European Union will impose a trade embargo with the United States.”

President Davis erupted in laughter and added, “I see they are thinking. Last year’s hyperinflation destroyed international trade. Trade embargo would have no impact on us. At least they will not attack us yet. Last thing I need is an outside country to interfere with us.”

“Mr. President; what do you want Homeland Security to do with the potential troublemakers?”

“I need Homeland Security to do some housecleaning.”

“What do you have in mind?”

“We need to eliminate people who will stand in my way. I compiled a list of outspoken judges, governors, and mayors who could pose problems. Even if I replace them with my party members, they could cause future problems. I want them eliminated.”

The President handed Richard a detailed list of 1,243 names with complete addresses.

“As Joseph Stalin once said, ‘Death is the solution to all problems. No man - no problem,’ Richard said with a pernicious smile.

“He also said, ‘Death of one man is a tragedy. Death of millions is a statistic.’ Richard, I do not want statistics.” Then the President continued, “This purge is a one-time event.”

“Should we purge the political party?”

The President sat back and closed his eyes for a minute. He did not want to make this decision, but Richard was right. President Davis must strike fear in the people. He does one purge to establish his authority. One purge would squash all opposition to his rule, and then, the people would line up and follow him. Of course, he would splash more blood onto his hands; Historians would write another dark chapter of the President’s history. If President Davis ever lost power, these evil actions would return to haunt him.

“Mr. President, I have a list of party members, who may present problems.”

Richard handed the list to the President.

President Davis opened his eyes and scanned the list. He met many of these party members. One name stuck out, Glen Roane, an economist from Oklahoma. The President appointed him regional director of the southern states.

“What has Glen done that makes you suspicious of him?”

“We caught him defaming you behind your back. Another party member has reported he made derogatory comments of you, and you should be eliminated and replaced.”

“Okay, you have my authority. Purge the party.”

“What should we do about Dan, the vice president? We believe he is very ambitious. We believe he’ll try to assassinate you and take over.”

President Davis closed his eyes again and thought about Dan’s loyalties. Although the President and Dan are best friends, people quickly forget friendship during the pursuit of total power.

“No, leave Dan out of it, but I grant my approval for everyone else. Do it quickly and efficiently. Before you go, I want Governor Bell’s head. What his is status?”

“We’re not sure, but he probably fled to Mexico after the troops took Austin.”

“Okay; put a \$50,000 bounty on his head. Rest of the body is optional. I will pay the bounty in gold coins, of course.”

“Sir, that bounty is too much. Many Texans hated him.”

“Okay, let’s lower the bounty to \$20,000 payable in gold.”

“Yes sir; I’ll get the word out. You’ll have half the State of Texas looking under every rock and crevice in Mexico, searching for him.”

The President laughed and concluded, “Then so be it. He must suffer the consequences of being hated and vilified.”

Richard Woodland had a large grin on his face. He wavered for a moment and blurted, “Mr. President, have you considered my proposal to establish a secret police?”

“Yes I have. Let us not establish a true secret police but a network of spies. I know we are playing with definitions, but just take the recommendations from Sun Tzu and develop five classes of spies who do not know about each other. Only ones who will know about them will be you and I.”

“I see you are well versed in the classics. Few people study the classics anymore.”

“I must study the classics because people have already thought up all ideas. I must figure out how to apply those ideas to our circumstances today.”

“Very well; I will get on it.”

“Oh Richard, don’t leave yet. The Department of Homeland Security has become a powerful agency. I fused and merged the DEA, FBI, Secret Service, and CIA into your department. Just be careful with that power. I do not want you harassing loud mouth college kids. Make sure you only harass true threats. Furthermore, divide Homeland Security into three divisions. First division examines outside threats to the Empire. I grant my authority to infiltrate foreign governments. Second division searches for internal threats and violations of federal laws. Third division protects the top officials of government and the National Workers’ Party. Then create those divisions of secret spies, who do not know about each other.”

“Sir; what about funding?”

“Your department is the second most powerful department in my government after the military. Your agency has the second priority in the budget. Thus, you can hire plenty of agents to hunt down troublemakers in the Empire, or anywhere in the world, for that matter. Besides, once I start creating good-paying jobs again, the people will stand behind me. Troublemakers will be rare. I expect you’ll have many boring days in your office.”

“Yes sir, I understand.”

Richard was very pleased with a large grin on his face. As he stood up to leave, the President stood to shake Richard’s hand.

The President glanced into Richard’s cold, blue eyes. At least the President picked the right man for the job. When the President asked for fast and efficient, he knew Richard Woodland would deliver with ice-cold efficiency.

Glen Roane was a middle-age man with short blonde hair, seasoned generously with gray hair. He was on the heavy side with a gloomy personality. Of course, Glen had basic looking features that were common to both genders. One must study Glen to determine whether he was a man or women.

Several days after the President had met Richard, Glen Roane walked out of a restaurant in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

Glen walked along the sidewalk to his car. Sticky sweat drenched his polo shirt as the glaring Oklahoman sun baked the landscape, making the morning air humid and suffocating.

Suddenly, a black sedan slowed down by Glen, and one man in the front passenger side and another in the back seat fired Glock 22 handguns, filling the morning air with gunshots.

Glen had glanced at the vehicle before he fell to the street dead as a pool of blood grew around him. God had called him home.

Invasion of Cuba

Employees of Fort Knox and the New York Federal Reserve came out without any resistance, giving President Davis complete control over the nation's gold supply.

The President personally handed them \$50,000 in newly minted gold coins. When President Davis gave his word, his word was as good as gold.

By the end of the year, President Davis controlled all levels of government. With the nation's gold, President Davis minted 325 million one-ounce gold coins. He paid each soldier his or her 10 gold coins and rewarded the officers with extra coins for their dedication.

The U.S. active military enlisted 1.5 million soldiers. Then as he promised General Edwards, he cut the armed forces in half.

When the government's tax coffers filled with money again, President Davis would rebuild the armed forces to record levels, and the soldiers would be dedicated to President Davis and to the American Empire.

Finally, the President dumped the remaining gold coins into the economy to jump-start it. The President's strong pro-business policies took root, causing the economy to sprout and grow furiously. Once again, the mighty U.S. economy roared at full steam, creating good-paying manufacturing jobs again.

After the first year, the unemployment rate fell from 50% to 40%. Gradually, businesses opened again, and customers started spending and buying. People trusted the banking system again and deposited their money into banks.

By the end of the third year of President Davis' administration, the unemployment rate dropped to 15%, sinking like a rock into a lake. Unemployment rate fell fast.

President Davis also went on an investment spree that the country had never seen before. He built roads, highways, schools, dams, parks, and housing for the working-class and the poor. He reclaimed the industrial properties and re-opened the factories again.

President Davis knew he frightened the people after executing the Congressmen, the Texas Revolt, and purging his party. He would show his kind and forgiving side and rescue homeless dogs and cats. He opened large kennels in the countryside, allowing places for the animals to run around. The President granted several pardons to death-roll prisoners.

One prisoner's name was William Spry. As a young man, William became addicted to drugs and robbed stores to feed his addiction. During one robbery, he shot and killed two people.

William Spry lay on his bed on death row. He discovered Jesus 20 years ago and turned his life around. He hung a cross on the wall above his head.

On the bookshelf, he lined several books neatly in a roll that he had written. He wrote children's books and books for teenagers, warning them of the dangers of street life. Books shared a common theme – the underworld pulls people in like an undertow and drowns them in drugs, misery, and destitution.

William helped prison officers scare rebellious teenagers.

A prison guard would leave a scared rebellious kid in his cell for an hour, and William would sit down with him and scare the hell out of him. He told them how it felt to sit on death roll. Every morning, upon awakening, he wondered if this were his last day on earth.

After an hour, the rebellious teen would be pale white with trembling hands. Occasionally, a teenager would piss his pants as he lost control from the intense fear.

William quickly scooted off the bed and kneeled down to pray.

After he had made the sign of the cross over his heart, a guard stood at his cell.

“Good news! William. President Davis signed your pardon. You are a free man.”

Tears of joy began flowing down William's face. After 20 years on death row, President Jerrick had freed him.

President Davis extensively traveled across the Empire. He personally inspected his grand projects and formed a strong bond with his people, proving he kept his word to the people.

President Davis traveled to South Bend, Indiana, a major industrial city at the turn of the 20th century.

In the early 20th century, the downtown landscape was dotted with large manufacturing complexes that produced Swinger sewing machines, watches and clocks, and Studebaker cars.

Remnants of the Studebaker factories stood on the south side, adjacent to the downtown area, but the other factories had left long ago.

Decline of South Bend, Indiana started with the shutdown and bankruptcy of the Studebaker's factories in 1963. Thousands of highly paid factory workers filled the unemployment line overnight.

High unemployment struck South Bend as the good-paying jobs fled and crime soared.

All the wealthy people once lived on the Westside along Lincolnway West Boulevard. They constructed magnificent, two-story, Victorian-style homes. After the factory had closed, the wealthy fled and the poor flocked in. Then violence, crime, and poverty plagued the Westside.

A small revitalization occurred during the Housing Bubble of 2007, but after 2008, the Westside continued declining and worsening.

President Davis would change this as he checked the progress of two projects.

For the first project, President Davis allocated \$50 million dollars to renovate 2,000 new homes on the Westside.

Old Victorian homes had style and class and were worth saving. Unfortunately, the destitute and homeless came along, and stripped all the wiring and pipes out of the homes, making them expensive to renovate.

The President's cavalcade left the South Bend Regional Airport. He rode in his bullet-proof limousine surrounded by 20 Crown Victorians, keeping him secure.

The South Bend police and Indiana State Troopers stood at intersections, directing traffic around the airport.

In his limousine, the mayor of South Bend, Stephen Tallmadge, sat with the President. Stephen was a tall, large-framed man, who neared 50 years old. His hair and mustache were still black. He was a hardworking, honest man, who wanted to make a difference. The President always found the best people for the vital jobs.

Mayor would show the President the project's progress.

As the procession headed to the Westside, the President became pale. Some of the neighborhoods barely survived a war zone. Residents boarded many homes up while empty lots were filled with weeds and abandoned cars.

Mayor saw the concern on the President's face and said, "Mr. President, we haven't started on these neighborhoods yet. As you can see, the scope of our problem is quite large."

"I see. I had no idea. How many homes have been renovated?"

"So far, 500, and ah, here we are. We finally arrived at the neighborhood."

As the procession crossed the intersection, the President saw teams of busy builders and workers. Carpenters were cutting boards; workers were carrying dry wall into homes, and two workers were burying electrical cables underground.

Although the Victorian homes were over 100 years old, they appeared to be new and beautiful. Most homes were two stories tall with wooden shutters on the windows, wrapped around porches and painted in two bold colors: avocado greens, browns, and pastel yellows.

As the procession drove by, the workers and builders turned, saluting and cheering the President.

The President waved to them.

Procession stopped at a large, yellow Victorian home with the trim and shutters painted brown.

"Here is the main construction office," the mayor extolled proudly.

They filed out of the limousine while the President's security also climbed out, surrounding the house.

A couple of agents walked with the President and mayor, forming a human shield.

Walking to the house, the President shook workers' hands as he passed by.

The President saw the stunned look upon the workers' faces. It was not every day that you clocked into work, and the President, i. e. the big, big boss, walked up to you and shook your hand.

Once inside, the project manager, Chris Hammer, immediately stopped working and came to greet the President and mayor.

"May I get you any refreshments, sir," Chris asked very politely, even apologetically.

"I will take a Vanilla Dr. Pepper, please," The President asked.

Within seconds, a clerk retrieved an ice-cold Dr. Pepper for the President.

The President broke the ice first and began, "I popped in to check the progress of our projects."

"Yes sir; the projects are going well. We already rehabbed 500 homes and sold 300 of them. We have another 200 homes ready to be occupied."

"Did you use my policy that 75% must be given or sold to households with working family members?"

"Yes sir; we believe in your policy sir. Hardworking, family-oriented households make neighborhoods strong. Filling a neighborhood with poor, unemployed people guarantees failure and urban blight."

"Good! That is exactly what I wanted to hear."

"We'll hold our first raffle for the homes. Workers are excited. We'll raffle 100 homes for the workers."

"Excellent, that should be a good surprise for the workers. I would like to inspect some of these homes," the President asked meekly.

“Yes sir, right away,” the manager turned to the clerk and said, “Hold my calls. I’ll be with the President for a while.” Manager was excited and wanted to impress the President.

Manager, mayor, and President walked through the neighborhood while the President’s guards followed in formation.

Every worker turned around and cheered the President.

The President waved to them.

Group entered the first Victorian home on the block’s corner.

Then they checked several homes on the same block.

The President was very impressed to save these old Victorians. Every house had beautifully stained wooden floors, high 10-foot ceilings, winding staircases, and classic crown moldings.

Somewhere down the line, Americans lost their style and elegance, cheapening it with plastics and synthetic materials.

After the inspection, the President and mayor headed to the old Studebaker buildings on the Southside.

The President used the money to start an electronics corporation. The business owners retrofitted the old Studebaker buildings to produce flat-screen TVs.

The President was happy to see a parking lot filled with cars while factories’ smokestacks emitted white smoke and steam into the atmosphere.

The President and mayor met the president of the corporation outside the main entrance. Word traveled fast when the President came to town.

President of the corporation gave them a grand tour of the facility.

Before they had entered the production facilities, they donned on masks and white suits, protecting the sensitive electronics from dust and dirt brought in from the outside.

As the group entered the cavernous room, the President frowned when he saw the automated production line.

The President asked, “I see a lot of machines and equipment, but I don’t see the workers?”

“Mr. President; this facility is quite large. This is the automated circuit board production. Workers assemble the flat screens in the next room. Many workers also build the LCD screens across the street,” the president of the company stated proudly.

“Good, let’s go see the workers,” President Davis said excitedly.

As the group entered the assembling room, the workers turned to see who entered.

Then they began clapping and cheering.

The President shook the workers’ hands as he walked by, bestowing respect and admiration onto each worker.

At the end of the tour, the President turned to the mayor and president of the company and stated, “I am very pleased with your progress.”

“Thank you sir,” the mayor and company president said in unison.

“However, I see a lot of work ahead of us. The Republic neglected South Bend for over a half century; it will take at least two decades under the Empire to bring her back to her former glory.”

“Yes sir; I know, but at least we’re making a difference. Every job we create and each home we rebuild, we move one-step closer to our goal,” the mayor added.

“And of course, homes and jobs go hand in hand. Without the good-paying jobs, any effort into rebuilding the homes would be futile,” the President concluded.

President Davis expanded his economic plans to the other great American cities, transforming their economies. Businessmen reopened factories and employed workers while people renovated their neighborhoods.

America’s greatest cities were coming back. One of the hardest hit states, Michigan, began a massive revival. She rose up and became a great state once again under the American Empire.

President Davis was a firm believer in science and the arts, and he started the President's Award for Excellence program.

Any inventor, writer, or artist, who created a masterpiece or invention that greatly benefited society were eligible to apply.

President Davis arrived to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to pass out this year's award in 2020.

He stood on the stage behind an oak wooden podium. Behind him, one platinum medal, two gold medals, and three silver medals laid on the table's top while envelopes containing checks lay next to the medals.

President Davis began his speech:

It pleases me to stand here today in front of these esteemed scientists, inventors, and artists, and of course with the whole nation watching.

As you know, I am a firm believer in technology and progressing humankind.

I want to advance civilization, elevate our standard of living, and of course, give the people new sophisticated toys to play with.

The President paused as the crowd erupted with laughter. Then he continued,

So today, I reward these innovators for their hard work and creativity.

Six lucky people earned these awards.

I am a person who does not like to waste time.

So, I begin calling out names.

Top award goes to Michael Felton for inventing a new technology that purifies salt water.

Saltwater flows along a long tube, and special electrodes and magnets on the sides pull the salt ions from the water, purifying water.

This new technology gives coastal cities access to an unlimited, cheap supply of fresh water.

Michael Felton, please come down and claim your award.

He wins the Platinum medal in excellence and receives a \$5 million-dollar check.

Of course, minus the 15% deduction for income taxes.

Crowd laughed again, and then they began to applaud.

A heavyset man with a grizzly beard and jolly cheeks stood up and began walking down to the stage. Man wore large, black-rimmed glasses

Michael walked up the stage and shook the President's hand.

Then the President handed him the platinum medal and his check.

Next, Richard Caspian wins a gold medal for advancing the role of micro-phages as antibiotics.

His new technique allows him to engineered phages to attack specific, harmful bacteria.

Phages fix some of the problems with the traditional antibiotics.

Second gold medal goes to Ron Kenniston for developing the universal cell phone.

Here is that new toy I had mentioned.

Ron has integrated a computer, phone, GPS locator, TV, computer games, and radio into one small unit.

Units even have Windows 12 installed on them.

The President held up an electronic device that looked like an Apple Iphone, but it was slightly larger.

Crowd stared in awe at the device.

This unit allows people to write a document, balance their checkbook, locate their current position on the earth with a detailed map, and of course, someone told me it could make and receive phone calls and emails.

And it gets better.

The Windows 12 Operating System is guaranteed not to crash.

Crowd erupted in laughter again.

The President continued after the laughter had died.

These types of phones are not new, but Richard has incorporated a quad-core 64-bit microprocessor into these phones, ushering us into the sixth generation of cell phone technology.

Will Richard and Ron, please stand up and come down to get your medals and prizes?

Crowd applauded.

The President shook the scientists' hands and handed them their medals, and three million-dollar checks.

Finally, Aretha Jones wins a silver medal for writing a beautiful play filled with hope about how three inner-city youth kids growing up and triumph over poverty and urban decay.

Youths formed a bond where they promised to help each other fight the temptation of joining urban gangs, abusing drugs, and work themselves out of the ghetto.

When I first saw this play, I almost had tears in my eyes.

It greatly affected me.

Alexander Sasha wins a silver medal for his biological filter that converts carbon dioxide into oxygen.

These filters look like beehives.

As air passes through them, algae-like organisms create oxygen from carbon dioxide.

Vladimir Kaichovski wins a silver medal for developing the artificial kidney.

Will Aretha, Alexander, and Vladimir please stand up and come down to claim your medals and prizes?

Three people stood up and claimed their prizes.

The President shook their hands and handed them their silver medals and \$2 million checks.

A week after the President's Awards in Excellence, the President met the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

A new face, in the crowd, Agent Harris, was a young man in his mid-twenties with light, bronze hair and light brown eyes. He wore a red tie, a white long sleeve dress shirt, dark trousers, and a black dress jacket. He was clean cut, and the poster child for a federal agent.

President Davis asked Secretary Richard Woodland to send over his best agent, and he had arrived.

General of the Army, Edwards began, "Sir; we believe the Russians are developing a new influenza strain that is deadlier than the H1N1 strain that hit the United States heavily in 2010."

"What do we know about this new strain?" The President asked.

Agent Harris spoke up, "Mr. President; we believe the Russians developed this new strain that is fatal to 30% of the population. Other 70% will survive, but they are sick for two weeks. Sickness at some points is so bad and painful; many want death to come swiftly."

"The Russians must have invented a very nasty strain," the President added.

"What makes it worse is the Russians have a vaccine for this strain. From our reports, this vaccine is 99% effective. Russians could potentially knock out our troops and invade the American Empire," General Edwards said cogently with a worried look on his face.

"We need to get our hands on this vaccine. We need it for defensive purposes," The General of the Air Force exclaimed.

The President began his discourse, "Generals, the only difference between a defense and an offense is who attacks first. Military develops technology for defensive purposes can easily switch the technology to an offensive one. However, you are right. We need to get our hands on that new virus strain and the vaccine."

"Sir; what are your plans?" General Edwards inquired.

"That is why Agent Harris joined us today. He speaks Russian fluently and knows how to sneak secretly in and out of

Russia. Agent Harris can locate a key scientist who works on the project.”

The President looked at Agent Harris and continued, “You are allowed to offer the scientist up to \$10 million, and I will guarantee him citizenship to the American Empire. He can live anywhere he wants. You guys know my motto. If we cannot buy it, then we steal it. I want my military to have the best weapons and technology in the world, so our armed forces will be superior and impregnable. Gentlemen, we cannot rule the world with a second-class military. We must be number one in technology, education, and military weapons.”

Agent Harris returned three months later, and he brought Joseph Yelkatrin, his wife Tatiana, and his daughter Svetlana to the Whitehouse.

Joseph Yelkatrin was a Russian scientist and chief creator of this new strain of influenza. He was the epitome of a scientist with white hair and extremely skinny; his white eyebrows almost formed a continuous sash across his forehead.

His wife was slightly overweight and appeared to be 20 years younger than her age.

Svetlana was a typical Slavic woman with long golden hair, and a sleek chiseled and quite exquisite hourglass physique.

They met President Davis in the Oval Office, and he directed his guests to sit on the couch near the fireplace.

As his guests walked by, the President shook their hands.

The President sat down and began, “Well Agent Harris, did we get it?”

“Yes sir, I am happy to report that we have Russia’s new biological weapon. Dr. Yelkatrin, the main scientist, developed the new strain and vaccine. He spent three weeks at Fort Detrick, showing the military how to grow the virus and vaccines. Sir, we underestimated the nastiness of the new strain, but at least we have it.”

“Good, I am very pleased,” then President Davis turned to Joseph and said, “Sir, I owe you a lot of money. How do you want me to pay you?”

“Mr. President; thank you kindly, a bank account will be fine. My lovely wife and daughter want to live in Hawaii, but I want to remain active in my field.”

“Sir, you helped me and the Empire. I will help you any way I can. I will have my computer expert create new identities for you. They will also hack into the computer system at Harvard University and enter a record that you earned your doctorate there. Then I will write a letter of recommendation for you and send it to the University of Hawaii. I am sure they will hire you. You and your family will be very happy there.”

Joseph, Tatiana, and Svetlana radiated large beaming smiles.

Joseph said, “Thank you sir. Oh, thank you sir.”

The President stood up, walked to his desk, and pushed a button on the intercom, calling his aid to his office.

Aid appeared several seconds later.

The President said to him, “Please show my guest here to their room. They can stay at the Whitehouse for several days. Once they are situated, take them to the bank to transfer \$10 million into their account and then set up an appointment with Jennifer at the Department of Information.”

Joseph and his family stood up.

The President approached them. Then the President shook their hands again. As his guests were leaving, he stated, “Thank you for helping the Empire.”

The President shut the door and walked to the couch near the fireplace.

He sat down across from Agent Harris and said, “I see you are a rising star in my government. I am very happy with your progress.”

“Thank you sir.”

“I also have a surprise for you. I have a 10% finder’s fee. Give me your bank account number on the way out. I will wire the \$1 million in your account by the end of the day.”

Agent Harris was very happy. Most powerful man in the world approved of him and, at the same time, made him rich.

Both the President and Agent Harris stood up.

The President shook his hand, and then Agent Harris left the Oval Office.

Everyone in the world knew this day would arrive. The President sent the troops to Cuba on Friday, October 1, 2021.

Invasion was easy as if the President had sent demolition experts to implode a skyscraper because the building had several rats.

President Davis kept the naval base open at Guantánamo Bay.

The Empire's navy sailed across the bay to Miami, Florida, picked up battalions of army troops, and dropped them off on the shores of Havana.

The President chose Havana, Cuba's largest city and capital.

Cuba's military didn't show because they were out gunned and outmatched.

Platoons of American soldiers carefully walked through the bare, empty streets of Havana.

People closed and shuttered all the windows and doors, cowering inside, afraid to peek at the soldiers through the windows.

President ordered the soldiers not to shoot at anyone, unless the enemy shot first. Soldiers marched to the government complex, and again, the soldiers and government workers had abandoned the buildings.

Government officials fled as American troops were landing on the shores of Havana.

The President promised the troops. Once the Empire controlled Cuba, they could return for Christmas, which was why the President chose October 1 as the invasion date. Invasion went so well; the soldiers arrived home before Thanksgiving.

President Davis was delighted with the good news. He granted citizenship to the Cubans and made Cuba the 51st state. He appointed a new governor of Cuba, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes.

Carlos escaped from Cuba with his parents as a child and studied business in college. Then, he started a construction company in Miami, building extravagant homes for the rich. He became very wealthy and converted his wealth into gold in 2008. Then he became a member of the National Workers' Party in 2014, impressing President Davis.

The President gave Carlos three missions. First, Carlos will lead the new construction boom in Cuba. Second, Carlos introduced the Empire's laws, which could be challenging. Cuban government transferred all state property and unoccupied land to the people. Families inherited the property where they resided while collective farm workers gained shares in their businesses after the government had converted them into corporations. Finally, Carlos found three citizens, who espoused the views of the National Workers' Party. Then Cuba sent those three as two Senators and one Representative to Washington, D.C.

President Davis wouldn't re-shuffle the seats for the House of Representatives. Instead, he simply added new members to Congress.

Of course, Congress became similar to the United Nations. Translators strolled along the halls with the multilingual congressional representatives and support staff.

President Davis kept many pieces of the federal and state government intact, preserving the institutions of Congress and state legislatures, giving the appearance of democracy. However, President Davis ruled behind the scenes by an iron hand. No one could change the law or make a major decision without his approval. Consequently, Congressmen spent their time in their districts, keeping an eye on the federal projects and staying in touch with citizens.

The Congressmen and state legislators extended the eyes and ears of President Davis. If a problem occurred in a congressional district, then President Davis would know about it immediately.

President Davis addressed the nation that evening after the Empire's troops had conquered Cuba:

The Communist party held Cuba hostage since 1959.
Since that time, Communists closed Cuba to the world.
Their government held its citizens under lock and key.
Today, the American military liberated Cuba.
Today, I have opened Cuba to the Empire and the world.
It joins the Empire as the 51st state.
Cuban citizens become citizens of the Empire.
Cubans are free to move anywhere within the Empire, or anywhere
in the world for that matter.
The Empire will redevelop Cuba's cities, especially the largest,
Havana.
Before the communists took over, Havana was one of the most
beautiful cities in the Caribbean.
They once called Havana the Flower of the Caribbean.
Now Havana will rise and become the most beautiful flower of the
Caribbean again.
She will now flourish and grow like the remaining states and cities
of the Empire.

The Cuban descendants were ecstatic in Miami, Florida.
They sailed across the dangerous waters from Cuba to Florida on
homemade rafts and boats, escaping the Communist government.
Now, many returned and visits relatives. Some opened new hotels
and restaurants.

Cuba added a rich heritage and a fantastic vacation resort to
the Empire. Although its climate was tropical, temperatures rarely
soared above 90 degrees in the summer. Furthermore, Cuba
possessed beautiful beaches with white sand and clear, blue waters.

Cuba possessed large petroleum reserves located along the
northern coastline. The Empire used this petroleum to invest in
Cuba, fostering its growth.

Havana was the capital and was an old, rustic city that
Christopher Columbus had discovered. Under the Communist
regime, the government ignored the maintenance of Havana's

buildings where most buildings had fading and peeling paint for 70 years, but the buildings' structures remained in excellent condition.

Empire rehabilitated Havana into a strikingly, beautiful city, competed with Paris and Venice. Indeed, Cuba became a wonderful addition to the Empire.

President Davis greatly expanded the size of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers because they became the Empire's redevelopment agency. The President elevated the commander of the corps to a general and expanded the staff from 35,000 to a half million.

The President put Robert L. Williams in charge, who tackled the challenging public works projects. President Davis often said, "If the military can knock it down, then it can turn around and rebuild it again."

Several days after the invasion, the President was walking with Carlos and Robert along a street in Havana as a contingent of soldiers and guards surrounded and protected them.

Day was beautiful. Sun was shining, and the temperature hovered at 70 degrees. A cool, salty breeze blew through the city.

"Havana is absolutely beautiful, stunning," the President stated.

"Yes sir, we can be thankful the Communists didn't destroy these beautiful buildings. Everything looks the same when I escaped Cuba as a child," Carlos said.

"How fast do you think it would take to renovate these buildings, repave the streets, and upgrade the infrastructure?" The President asked.

"Sir, I believe the Corp of Army Engineers can finish construction in three years. These buildings look sturdy and are structurally in good condition," Robert concluded confidently.

"Ensure the Cubans understand we came here to renovate and redevelop Cuba. Soldiers can only shoot at Cubans if Cubans shoot first. Also, find those stupid House Books and use them to transfer property to the residents," the President stated.

"Sir; I do not understand," General Robert asked perplexed because he didn't know about the house books.

“Cuba is probably like the Soviet Union; bureaucrats created documents for everything. All family members living in a residence must register in the House Book. We can utilize these books to establish property titles,” the president posited.

“Oh, those house books. I remember my parent complaining about them. They said you needed a document from the Cuban government for everything, even if you were going to take a large dump in the toilet,” Carlos replied jokingly.

They exchanged laughter as they walked down the street.

President Davis loved surrounding himself with movers, shakers, and doers, especially if they possessed a sense of humor.

After they had toured several neighborhoods, the President, governor, and the general toured several schools and the University of Havana.

Group rested by the entrance, where a large fountain sprayed a three-foot water stream in the air.

The President glanced at the sign written in Spanish, 'University of Havana, 1728.'

Group stared in awe at some of the buildings because the early buildings used the Roman style with impressive columns and facades.

Although communist screwed up most of the country, the communists did fund higher education, producing a few good teachers and medical doctors.

President Davis privatized the Cuban education system and subsidized the schools, colleges, and universities for five years. He ensured these institutions grew and flourished. Unfortunately, capitalism is cruel to people, who do not know how to compete.

President Davis granted Cuba five years to adjust to the new system. Then he would unleash the cruel, cold forces of a competitive, efficient market system.

Jerrick Ray Davis knew he became a powerful man. Total power reared its head from time to time, even in small subtle ways.

For example, one day he stood on the Truman Balcony on the third floor in the Whitehouse, examining the Whitehouse lawn. He did not see the Washington Monument because a large oak tree obscured his view.

A staff member rushed towards the President, "Sir; Senator Hacket called and wants to speak with you. He wants you to join him and several other Senators for lunch tomorrow."

The President did not look at the staff but kept studying the lawn.

Then the President said, "Come closer young man."

Young man stood next to the President while the President directed him to look over the south lawn.

"Can you see the Washington Monument? Trees are obscuring the view."

"Yes sir; you can barely see the top of the monument over that tall oak tree," the staff member replied, pointing to the tree that blocked the view.

"I guess my eyes are getting old. I can barely make out the top. Very well. Tell the senator my schedule is free tomorrow. I will have lunch with them."

"Yes sir; I'll let the senator know," then the staff person trotted to the interior of the Whitehouse.

Several days later, President Davis wanted some fresh air, and the beautiful Whitehouse lawn and gardens relaxed and soothed him. Stepping onto the Truman balcony, the President noticed something strange.

He saw the whole Washington Monument. Someone had removed that pesky oak tree. Where the tree once stood, the President saw a perfectly green, manicured lawn as if the tree never had existed.

The President realized he just gained total power. His staff and workers comply with every wish and desire. Any hint, suggestion, or comments became commands.

Jerrick Ray Davis cannot crack any jokes, or say playful comments. Otherwise, someone can take these jokes out of context, transforming into commands that harm innocent people. Innocent people could vanish as if they never had existed.

Invasion of Mexico

The President met Jennifer and James Gordon at Jennifer's Office, located at the end of a spacious work area. Workers arranged a hundred desks like an elongated classroom, and Jennifer placed her office where a teacher would stand if she were teaching her pupils.

At Jennifer's department, everyone shared the same facilities. To the left of Jennifer's Office, workers used a small kitchenette with a microwave, refrigerator, and a sink while on the right were the bathrooms.

At each desk, a person sat and stared at a computer screen, occasionally typing something on a keyboard.

As President Davis passed a desk, he greeted the worker.

Jennifer stood and watched the President, wondering how long he needed to reach her office.

The President would meet everyone because that was his nature. He treated everyone with dignity and respect.

After several minutes, the President strolled to Jennifer's Office.

Jennifer closed the Venetian blinds and shut her door. She usually kept both the blinds and door open, so any employee could pop in any time to talk to her.

President Davis was anxious and started, "Have the military contractors finished the Star Wars Program?"

"Yes, NASA began launching the first rockets at Cape Canaveral, Florida. Astronauts will assemble the first Star Wars satellite. Then they will assemble two more by the end of the month. They will place the first satellite along the U.S.-Canadian border above Detroit-Windsor. Another satellite will hover above the Gulf of Mexico, 100 miles off the shore from Miami, Florida, and the third will be off the West Coast, 100 miles away from San Francisco."

"What is their predicted accuracy?" The President inquired.

"We predict the satellites have a 99.9% accuracy when activated. Special intelligence chips control the weapons. Satellites use two defenses. First, a powerful, computer-guided x-ray laser

locks onto a rocket or satellite and blasts it. Second, each satellite contains 500 rockets that are fast and can destroy any rockets or satellites in space. Rockets have a range of 1,000 miles. You can also use the Star Wars defense system as an offensive weapon. Satellites can blast their weapons down onto cities and armies, destroying dams, electric power plants, or battalions of soldiers.”

“Those intelligence chips are very accurate. How do we know these chips will not malfunction? Do you trust these chips to control these powerful weapons?”

“Occasionally, these chips go haywire. We have an override that disables the rockets and lasers, when this happens. Override first resets the chip. If a chip still has problems, then the override permanently disables the chips and the weapon.”

“Why do the chips go haywire?”

“These are analog difference chips, which are different from the regular computer chips. Regular computer chips use two states: on or off. These chips in theory have an infinite number of values between 0 and 1. It introduces randomness into its calculations?”

“Why would we do that?”

“These chips process 100,000 times the information as a standard 32-core processor that most computers use today.”

Then James reached into his pocket and pulled out a small clear plastic case containing a little square-shape black chip and handed it to the President.

On the bottom side, it had 100 gold pins. The President removed the chip, gently turning the chip over in his hand inspecting each side. Then he handed the chip to Jennifer.

The President stated, “Amazing! What do you think Jennifer?”

“I have seen the specifications. They do work. They process 100,000 times the information as our standard computer chips. Some psychologists are experimenting with these chips to form intelligent neuronal systems.”

The President chuckled and said, “So, you think we are on the verge of mimicking human consciousness?”

“We believe in another 50 years, we’ll be able to replicate the brain.”

“God, help us,” the President said amidst several chuckles.

Jennifer and James were puzzled.

The President noticed the confused expressions on their faces and added, “Don’t you guys remember the classic movies, like the Terminator and Matrix series. Those movies came out 25 years ago. Man invents robots and machines with intelligence. Then they decide man is the problem and attempt to exterminate mankind.”

Then Jennifer and James joined in the laughter.

“I know I work everyone to death, but you guys need to get out more,” as the President chuckled.

President Davis gave the military the highest priority in the budget. He expanded the U.S. military to 3 million active troops by 2023. He also promised the military the best toys, like his Star Wars Defense System.

The President promised he would plan his invasion of Mexico. He built new army bases in San Diego, California, Tampa, Florida, and Laredo, Texas. He also expanded the naval base in San Diego and constructed a new naval base in Corpus Christi, Texas.

President Davis knew the capabilities of Mexico because he studied them for years. Mexico enlisted 200,000 troops, dispersed among 12 military regions. Government stationed most soldiers at the Mexican army base in Mexico City, the Distrito Federal, Mexico’s capital and largest city.

The President would capture each region one by one until he controlled all Mexican states.

Although Mexican government was modernizing its armed forces, the 2008 Financial Crisis struck Mexico hard like a sucker punch to the stomach. Consequently, the Mexican government never modernized its armed forces and used ancient equipment and hardware from the United States. Some equipment was relics of

World War II. Thus, these aging weapons should be on display in a museum and not on a modern battlefield.

President Davis remained suspicious of Canada and kept a watchful eye on them. The Canadians didn't have a large military, but they stationed troops from other countries.

The President placed a new military base outside of Detroit, Michigan; Watertown, New York; and greatly expanded the army base in Fort Lewis, Washington. He expanded the naval bases in Brunswick, Maine and Everett, Washington.

President Davis greatly expanded the Empire's navy. He wanted the best navy in the world and added 20 amphibious assault ships. These ships appeared like aircraft carriers but no airplanes. Decks held battalions of soldiers and their equipment, and the ships transported them across the oceans and seas. Then sailors would unload the soldiers, so they can carry out their mission. The Empire had 30 of these monstrous ships.

President Davis added 21 new Nimitz class nuclear aircraft carriers, giving the Empire 32 mighty floating fortresses. He also expanded the Los Angeles class nuclear submarines to a fleet of 146. They carried the infamous Tomahawk missiles that strike fear and terror to any opposition.

Finally, the President split the Navy into two: one for the West coast and the other for the East coast. The navy protected the Empire's coastal waters as these metallic beasts sailed up and down the coast, searching for enemies.

President Davis invaded Mexico on Monday, January 9, 2023. The troops spent time with their families for Christmas, resting before the invasion.

The President believed the invasion would be quick and decisive, but complications can arise. He planned carefully, but unexpected problems always popped up.

President Davis showed his big stick to the world, when he stood in full uniform on a stage's center in Laredo, Texas, on the

day of the invasion. He saluted the troops as they marched by in formation.

Government officials sat on bleachers along the stage's back wall.

Large 50-foot American flags draped downward on the back wall of the stage, blowing in the wind.

Spotlights illuminated the stage and flags, impressing all the spectators and audience.

The President stood in a firm salute as the soldiers marched across the border into battle. This marked the day the President Jerrick Davis joined the ranks of the great conquerors.

The President sent the Empire's troops, stationed near Mexico across the U.S. -Mexico border.

Soldiers from the army base in San Diego crossed into Mexico at the base of the Baja Peninsula. They conquered their first city, Mexicali, being next to Tijuana. Mexicali, the capital of the state Baja California, is one of Mexico's military districts with a million residents living in this urban sprawl.

Army traveled along Interstate 2, known as the La Rumorosa Highway. This scenic, magical highway cuts through mountainous plateaus and desert terrain. On clear days, the sky is a beautiful, pure blue.

Soldiers crowded on benches on the large Light-Medium Tactical Vehicles (LMTV). Thick camouflage tarps covered the truck beds, protecting the soldiers from the sun's intense rays.

Other trucks transported the Paladin tanks, the weapon of choice for President Davis. These tanks were fast, mobile, and used computerized weapons. Computer-controlled guns locked onto unfriendlies with precision and fired. Furthermore, these tanks could quickly stop, fire the artillery gun, and speedily move again, thwarting any attacks.

Army transport truck after truck drove through the customs stalls on the border. On the U.S. side, the customs stalls were empty as the customs officials received a warning not to report to work.

As the army drove through the stalls, the Mexican customs officials scrambled, running away. Small buildings shook as the procession of large army trucks drove through.

The Empire's army headed straight to the government complex buildings, flanked on both sides by Blackhawk helicopters.

Mexican army soldiers stood behind makeshift barriers and started firing at the Empire's army trucks with FX-05 assault rifles, the choice of rifles for the Mexican army. Mexico produced their own weapons, the FX-05, so Mexico didn't rely on foreigners.

Soldiers of the Empire quickly unloaded and took positions behind buildings, returning fire.

Other soldiers unloaded 20 Paladin tanks that approached the government buildings menacingly.

They fired artillery shells at the buildings, causing massive chunks of the buildings to fall as the powerful shells punched large gaping holes into them.

As the Blackhawks approached the buildings, they broke formation and surrounded the buildings, firing their M230 machine guns and Hydra-70 rockets.

Blackhawks continued firing their powerful rockets and guns, blowing large chunks in the buildings like Swiss cheese.

After an hour of mayhem, the Mexican government buildings lay in ruins.

The Empire's soldiers did a last sweep, cleaning out the buildings for hostile fire.

Once the soldiers cleared the buildings, they reloaded onto the trucks.

Unfortunately, 20 soldiers of the Empire were shot while Mexico suffered over 1,000 casualties.

A battalion remained behind to control the state government until President Davis appointed a new governor for the State of Baja California.

Procession of army trucks drove along the Trans-Peninsula Highway through the Baja Peninsula. After 8 hours, they reached La Paz, the capital of the State Baja California Sur. Empire's soldiers approached the abandoned, government buildings.

Government officials fled hours ago and hid after they had heard the news that the United States invaded Mexico. Mexico was losing badly.

A battalion of soldiers remained at the state capitol, maintaining control over it.

Remaining troops drove to the southern tip of the Peninsula, Los Cabos, a famous resort for Americans on the Pacific coast.

Los Cabos has a large harbor that can dock massive ships, usually cruise ships. However, it docked the Empire's naval ships today.

The Empire's army rendezvoused with the Empire's Navy, where five amphibious assault ships were waiting for them.

Sailors quickly loaded the army's trucks, soldiers, and tanks onto ships.

By the next morning, the army unloaded at Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. The Empire's soldiers would take Guadalajara, Mexico, being Mexico's second-largest city.

The Empire's army kept its position five miles away from Mexico's army base.

Occasionally, the Mexican army fired artillery rounds from Howitzers, which were ancient artillery guns used by the U.S. during World War II. Howitzers were extremely reliable and lethal, although not accurate.

The Empire's Army returned fire with M252 Mortars, firing high-explosive rounds with extreme accuracy from 3.5 miles away.

The Empire's army had besieged Mexico's army base and waited for their commands from headquarters, staying out of Mexican Howitzers' range.

President Davis ordered soldiers not to be heroic. He would take Mexico with as few casualties as possible.

Battalions after battalions of soldiers at Tampa, Florida loaded onto 15 amphibious assault ships.

President Davis sent troops across the Gulf of Mexico to Veracruz, a picturesque coastal city with a half-million residents.

As these mighty ships departed, they formed a v-formation.

Nuclear submarines sailed further ahead, clearing a path for the ships, hiding in the deep murky waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

The Mexican navy consisted of several Bronstein frigates and several old class destroyers, which are ships made in the good ole United States. Both ships were 400 feet long, equipped with torpedo launchers, anti-submarine rockets, and large artillery guns.

The Mexican navy usually sailed the Gulf of Mexico waters, protecting Mexico's petroleum resources.

The Empire's navy reached its destination early the next morning.

Waters and skies were clear, and no ships were sailing today. Word spread fast that the American Empire invaded Mexico.

As the Empire's formation of submarines and ships approached the city of Veracruz, two Mexican destroyers guarded the entrance to Veracruz bay.

Massive explosions echoed in the air as Mexican destroyers fired large artillery shells at the Empire's navy.

However, the two ships never stood a chance. The Empire's submarines returned fire with several rounds of torpedoes that punched large, gaping holes into the hulls of the ships.

Plumbs of smoke billowed from these holes as these old, mighty ships descended to their resting place at the ocean's bottom.

Mexican sailors began jumping into the gulf's waters.

President Davis ordered not to kill or harm unarmed soldiers. Building of an Empire is not about destroying and killing people. It's taking over and consolidating governments.

After the ships had docked at Veracruz, the Empire's soldiers unloaded their equipment and vehicles.

Veracruz housed one of Mexico's military districts.

A procession of the Empire's soldiers and vehicles maneuvered to the military base. Along the way, people hid in their homes; dogs didn't bark, and no one drove their cars. Streets of Veracruz were deserted, like a ghost town. A soft, salty ocean breeze blew through the town, evoking an eerie feeling of loneliness.

As the troops approached the base, the Mexican army deserted the base and transferred the soldiers to Mexico City.

The Empire's troops headed west to Puebla, Mexico, which was 131 miles west and the fourth-largest city of Mexico.

As the Empire's Army approached Puebla, the Empire's army broke into three sections. Middle section headed straight for Puebla. Other two broke off at diagonals as one section headed northwest while the other headed southwest.

As the middle section of the Empire's army reached the outskirts of Puebla, the Mexican army fired their assault rifles and launched artillery shells.

The Empire's army returned fire.

Both armies kept firing at each other for 30 minutes, staying out of range of the Howitzers and M262 mortars.

Then the Empire's army began retreating.

The Mexican army thought they held the upper hand and pushed forward.

The Mexican army didn't know the other two sections of the Empire's army were encircling them and were approaching from their rear.

Before the Mexican army had realized what happened, the Empire's army surrounded them on three sides.

The Mexican soldiers knew they must to fight to the death or to surrender. The Mexican soldiers threw their guns down, raising their hands high in the air. They wanted to see their families again than have the Empire's soldiers slaughter them like cattle in this war.

The Empire's army stopped firing, and an announcer said in Spanish over loud speakers, "Soldiers, please put your hands in the air and walk towards us. If you comply, then no harm will come to you. Our war is not with you, but with your government.

Once we take over your government, you will be citizens of the American Empire. We will be brothers under one flag. You can even join our army and earn better pay.”

The announcer repeated the message over and over again until the last Mexican soldier surrendered.

Half the Empire’s army remained outside of Puebla, detaining the Mexican army.

The Empire’s army pitched tents, and let the Mexican soldiers sit inside while the Empire’s soldiers guarded the outside. They also fed the Mexican soldiers and gave medical care to their injured.

After the Empire had captured Mexico City, the President will let the Mexican soldiers go home.

Other half of the Empire’s troops marched to Mexico City, which was 70 miles further west from Puebla.

Troops from the Laredo army base headed to Monterrey, Mexico, the industrial base of Mexico and third-largest city.

Troops drove along the Inter-American Highway that started from Laredo, Texas and ended in Panama City, Panama. Troops would drive along this highway to capture Monterrey and Mexico City.

Monterrey didn’t prepare for the invasion, and the city government fell quickly.

A battalion of the Empire’s troops remained, controlling the government.

Rest of the troops loaded onto trucks and headed to Mexico City, the grand prize of the Empire. It was Mexico’s largest city and seat of the National Mexican Government. Troops would reach Mexico City by the next morning.

The Mexican army waited outside the northern suburbs of Mexico City at dawn.

Sunrise emanated bands of yellow, orange, and a bloody red as gunfire erupted early in the morning. Machine guns and the

explosions of artillery shells deafened the calmness and peacefulness of the morning air.

The Empire's troops dug trenches about four miles from Mexico's front line.

Several Mexican tanks, the Lynx Armored Fighting Vehicles, approached the frontline. The Lynx, a small French armored vehicle, looked similar to a Ford Pinto dressed with armor. However, these tanks fired the powerful 90 mm rounds.

Several Lynxes appeared and drove within the firing range of the Empire's army.

Troops annihilated these vehicles with the M252 Mortars.

The Mexican army retaliated by firing with Howitzers, halting the Empire's troops' advance.

A battalion set up a launch site for the Patriot missile system further up north using 30 trailers. Each trailer held a launcher that fired 20 deadly surprises.

As the satellite honed in over the battlefield, the Empire's soldiers launched 100 cluster bombs into the sky.

Several minutes later, death fell from the sky as the cluster bombs broke apart into a hundred little bomblets. Once they hit the ground, they exploded sending metal shrapnel into the air.

Cluster bombs struck fear into the Mexican soldiers' hearts as the bombs killed their comrades or severely injured them.

Cluster bombs rained down upon the Mexican armies in Guadalajara and Mexico City.

The Mexican Air Force entered the battlefield. They flew the U.S. made Blackhawks helicopters and Northrop F-5 Freedom Fighters. The Freedom Fighters were light and traveled at supersonic speeds around 1,000 miles per hour.

A formation of 9 Mexican Blackhawks maneuvered around to the east side of the front while 5 Freedom Fighters flew in from the western side.

Both carried pods of cluster bombs and napalm. However, the Mexican Air Force couldn't match the Patriot Missiles System.

Missiles appeared from the sky, honed in, and destroyed the Mexican fighters and helicopters.

Rain droplets of metal began falling from the sky.

An hour later, Patriot System launched another wave of cluster bombs against the Mexican army in Mexico City and Guadalajara.

The Mexican soldiers had enough as survivors packed into their High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (Humvee), and fled.

By noon, the U.S. Army smashed through the Mexican army's defenses, defeating the Mexican army.

The Empire's soldiers climbed onto trucks and drove to the federal government complexes to claim the grand prize.

As the Empire's army traveled through the battlefields, the soldiers coughed and gagged from the stench of death and carnage clinging to the air.

Three Empire's army divisions converged and descended at the federal government's complex in Mexico City.

The Empire captured Mexico.

Empire's medical corp trailed behind the army, sweeping through the battlefields, searching for injured soldiers and victims.

American Empire added 31 states and 100 million citizens.

President Davis dissolved the Mexican federal government and appointed the governors of the new Mexican states.

The President expanded the House of Representatives to 581 members, the original 435 members of Congress, a representative from Cuba, and 145 from Mexico. The U.S. Senate rose to 164 members.

On the eve of Mexico's defeat, President Davis addressed the nation:

Yesterday, the American Empire invaded Mexico.

She fought back bravely, but she fell.

We lost a total of 1,200 good men and women to this invasion.

Their blood and sacrifice are not lost in vain.

They become heroes of the Empire.

We will always remember the fallen soldiers for their hard work,
sacrifice, and dedication to the Empire.

Now we integrate Mexico into the Empire.

All Mexican people living anywhere within the Empire now
become her citizens.

We will treat them fairly under the law.

They are as equal as you and I.

Although the Empire claims victory, unfortunately, her school
children must suffer.

I remember the pain as a child, when I had to memorize all 50
states and their state capitals.

Now our children must know 82 states and their capitals.

Casting all humor to the side, we were victorious today.

However, we must be cautious.

American Empire has entered dangerous times.

I believe the world is nervous over a strong and powerful Empire.

I believe the world will strike back at us.

I am putting the whole American Empire on red alert.

Thus, keep a close eye on your surroundings.

Remain vigilant.

If you see anything suspicious, do not hesitate to contact the
authorities.

After the Empire controls the Americas, we will be safe.

We have sophisticated satellite system, aka Star Wars Defense
System that shoots missiles out of the skies.

Great oceans surround us, making any invasion into the Empire
impossible.

Do not be afraid.

This red alert will be short.

American Empire will grow and prosper, becoming more
powerful.

American people have become richer and more prosperous under
the American Empire.

We have united all Americans under one flag.

As a new symbol of the Empire, we redesigned the American flag.

The 13 red and white stripes still sweep across the flag from left to
right, just like the old flag.

However, the blue rectangle is placed in the center with 82 small silver stars lying on the top, forming an outline of a larger star.

Each small star represents a state in the Empire while the outline of the large star represents the aggregate power of the Empire. American Empire will become one of the most powerful empires the world has ever seen.

As the President concluded his speech, all the Empire's citizens stood up, and started clapping and hollering. President Jerrick Ray Davis pulled it off.

President Davis sat at the center of a table with four generals sitting on the sides in the map room at the White House.

The President kept the U.S. military branches intact, and each military branch had its own general: General of the Army, General of the Navy, General of the Air Force, and General of the Marines.

Although the President wanted to combine all the military branches, he knew the consolidation would undermine soldiers' morale. Soldiers are proud of their branch, and they would resent the President.

The President started, "I will expand the military using Mexican citizens. We will reopen and rebuild the 12 Mexican military districts."

President promoted General Edwards to the General of the Army after he had helped President Davis take over the federal government. General's face reddened and uttered, "Sir; may I interject; I know we need more soldiers, but isn't this a dangerous policy? New Mexican recruits may not be loyal to you, sir. Their hearts and minds are loyal to Mexico. They could resent you and the Empire. If we had placed traitors and saboteurs in the wrong positions, they would wreak havoc on our military."

"You raise a good point, but we must build up our military at any cost. However, we will spread out the new recruits among

the army bases to reduce sabotage. I am worried Europe will invade, and I want to be ready for them. I can feel a bigger battle brewing on the horizon.”

“Yes sir, we’ll get right on it. We’ll reopen Mexico’s military’s districts.”

Although the President was worried, he displayed his poker face, emanating strength and intelligence. However, the general raised a good point. New recruits may not be loyal to him because he invaded a free and sovereign nation.

President Davis continued, “What is the status of Europe? We must be prepared for them.”

“Sir; it’s not looking good. We have reports that Europe is stationing troops in Canada. Canada and Europe think you’re becoming too strong, and you’ll invade Canada and then cross the ocean to Europe.”

The President sighed and added, “This is something I did not want to hear. I would leave Canada alone. Don’t the Canadians understand that?”

“Mr. President, Canadians don’t know because our troops are busy in Mexico. This is the perfect time to strike us, at our moment of weakness. We must open two fronts. The Canadians know after the Empire had conquered Mexico and South America, then they can’t stop us. The Empire will be undefeatable,” General Edwards stated poignantly and then added, “We’ll become invincible.”

“What about Europe using nuclear weapons against us? Will Star Wars protect us if they launch missiles from Canada?” The President asked.

“Sir, our scientists believe we’re vulnerable to a nuclear strike if the Canadians launch them close to the border and fly them low. Otherwise, the Star Wars satellite can blast them out of the skies,” the General of the Air Force with a beaming smile.

“Mr. President, what do you think our course of action should be?” The General for the Navy asked.

“We have no choice; we must invade Canada.”

“Invade Canada? Sir, then we’ll open two fronts. We don’t have the resources,” the General for the Navy added. He felt acid

building in his stomach, like the feeling at a mechanic's garage, when a \$30 oil change turned into a \$600 engine overhaul.

"Yes, I know. Fighting multiple fronts leads to defeat as we spread our resources too thinly, but he halt our expansion at the southern border of Mexico. We will station 25% of our troops there, maintaining our authority and protecting the border. We should have enough troops to thwart any approaching armies from South America. Remaining troops we secretly and subtly station at the army bases along the US-Canadian border. After we had invaded and conquered Canada, we break it up into small states" the President stated while he pounded his fist on the table, emphasizing his words.

The President inquired, "Do we have any reliable intelligence from Canada? Does Quebec want to secede from Canada?"

"We believe the Quebec Sovereignty Movement is serious, and they support Quebec's succession from Canada. Leader of the movement, Pierre-Marc Johnson, has always supported succession," General Edwards stated.

"Good, send our diplomats up there to talk with them. If Quebec is serious, then it becomes an autonomous country free from the Empire. This meeting is adjourned."

The President stood up and dashed out the Map Room.

Generals created a commotion as they gathered their things and departed. The President gave them a new mission. They must defeat Canada quickly. Otherwise, the American Empire becomes vulnerable to an invasion.

Hell would freeze over before President Davis allowed such a thing to happen.

Canada Collapses

President Davis mobilized the Empire's troops and invaded Canada because he wanted to prevent Canada from invading the Empire.

The President used his navy to form a blockade around Canada's waters. His fleet of 20 aircraft carriers sailed along the

east and west coasts of Canada, isolating Canada from the rest of the world.

Submarines filled the waters as they traveled up and down the coast. They would shoot anything that resembled a military vessel.

The President distributed the remaining battleships along the coastlines of the United States and Mexico.

Europe or any other country would be foolish to send any ships near the waters of North America because the Empire's navy protected them well.

President Davis activated the Star Wars satellites and blasted the Canadian communication satellites from the orbit. Powerful x-ray lasers burned large, gaping holes in the satellites, causing them to fail. The President wanted Canada and Europe to enter this war without communications, leaving them in the dark.

The President ordered the Empire's troops to march.

Troops from Everett, Washington headed straight up taking Vancouver, British Columbia while soldiers from Detroit, Michigan crossed the bridge into Windsor, Canada. Finally, the troops from Watertown, New York headed north for Ottawa, the capital of Canada.

The Detroit army planned a rendezvous with the Watertown army just south of Ottawa. After Ottawa had fallen, then Canada would be defeated.

Unfortunately, the President's advisors were wrong. European's troops protected Ottawa well, waiting for the Empire's army. Canada and Europe wouldn't repeat the same mistake as Mexico. They planned to thwart President Davis and stop his growing Empire.

Toronto and Detroit were separated by 244 miles, and the troops would be there within half a day to capture Toronto. Then they would meet the other army division just south of Ottawa.

Trucks carried troops and tanks through Detroit, crossing the main bridge to Windsor, Canada. Troops traveled through Windsor until they reached Toronto where Europe stationed thousands of troops there.

Unfortunately, the United European armed forces constructed deep trenches with metallic covers for their trenches. Soldiers fired their rifles through the slots, but then they could slam the slots closed, protecting them.

Covers protected the soldiers from the cluster bombs. A direct hit from a cluster bomb would take out a soldier directly underneath a cover, but neighboring soldiers were protected well from the shrapnel.

The Europeans fired an assortment of weapons. The Germans fired the Heckler & Koch G36 assault rifles; the French shot their FAMAS popup style rifles, and Canadians fired the Colt Canada C7 rifles, a copy of the M16s.

The Empire didn't advance, and the soldiers dug trenches out of the range of European artillery shells, holding their position. They waited for instructions from the Empire's headquarters.

The Empire's troops from the Watertown army base moved along I-81 into Canada to take Ottawa, Ontario. Distance was only 130 miles.

A half-mile bridge connected the two countries on the northern tip of Lake Ontario.

The February air was still frigid and cold. Upper New York State was scenic with woods and beautiful lakes. Leafless trees cast an ambiance of loneliness and isolation. Trees wouldn't come to life until the end of March, being a month away.

As the Empire's armies approached the bridge, they saw the wreckage of the bridge in the water.

Although the Canadian side of the bridge appeared to be deserted, the sounds of machine fire erupted the quietness of the woods.

Through binoculars, the Empire's soldiers saw the armed forces using the same metallic covers that protected the troops from the cluster bombs. The European forces also hid within the forests across the border.

The Empire's troops hunkered down and set up trenches out of range of the enemies. They waited because exchanging gunfire would do no good.

The U.S. army set up their Patriot missile command 20 miles south of the Watertown troops. Command received reports that the Canadians and Europeans used metallic covers to protect themselves from the Patriot missiles. However, they fired 10 test rockets.

Troops on both sides of the border heard the supersonic whiz of the Patriot missiles flying through the air.

Several Empire soldiers with binoculars watched the missiles strike the targets on the Canadian side. As they suspected, a direct hit penetrated the covers, but the neighboring soldiers were protected well.

After the battlefield had become quiet, the Europeans and Canadians began firing their assortment of machine guns.

The French launched their 120 mm Mortars. Soldiers dropped 41-pound chubby mortars with fins into the launch tubes, blasting them 8 miles over the river to the Empire's side of the battlefield.

Luckily, the mortars didn't hit the Empire's troops.

The Empire's troops from the army base in Washington succeeded because Europe concentrated its forces around Ottawa, Ontario, leaving Western Canada unprotected.

The Empire's troops drove across the border to Vancouver, the third-largest city in Canada.

Troops reached their destination within half a day, and Vancouver fell quickly as the troops surrounded the government buildings in the city.

Half the troops descended into the bay to rendezvous with the Empire's navy.

Navy transported them across the bay to the southern tip of Vancouver Island, the location of the provincial capital, Victoria.

Victoria fell quickly with no loss of life for both sides of the war.

President Davis was not shocked, but South America joined the Europeans.

Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and the Presidents from Brazil and Colombia teamed together. Although Chavez neared 71 years old, he kept an iron hand over his people.

Three countries struck at the Empire in the south.

Their combined troops headed north through Central American and upward into North America. They hoped the Empire's resources were scattered thin, so they could bust through. Then they would force the Empire's troops to retreat north.

Venezuela sent 100,000 troops while both Brazil and Columbia each sent 50,000 troops.

Four Nimitz class nuclear aircraft carriers were waiting for them off the coast on both sides of the Panama Canal.

As the combine troops started crossing the Panama Canal, the Empire's military launched the Tomahawk missiles with the BLU-97/B. The missiles moved at a snail's pace of 500 miles per hour. After they had reached their destination, they separated into clusters of bomblets, raining down to the earth.

Then the bomblets explode on impact, filling the air with shrapnel – a cruel, crude device to kill masses of people or soldiers.

Around the Panama Canal, screams filled the night as monstrous missiles killed, hurt, and terrified soldiers.

Some soldiers fell into the canal dead as shrapnel left gaping gashes in their flesh.

Other soldiers lost legs and limbs.

Surviving soldiers turned and fled home; some helped their injured comrades, dragging them to safety.

Battlefront with South America quickly ended. Soldiers didn't bust through the Empire's defenses, not unless they wanted to suffer massive casualties.

The President, generals, and several advisors hunched over a large map of North and South America, sprawled over a massive maple table.

The President rubbed his chin using his thumb and index finger, "I see the plot thickens."

The General of the Air Force asked, "Sir; what should we do?"

“Naval blockade pulled a protective curtain around North America. I am not worried about the navy. Our army should take over British Columbia with no problems. I am still debating whether to send them inward to the state of Edmonton, but it is too remote. I see South America made their last stand, but I am not worried about them. It’s taking Ottawa. I think the Europeans want to wear us out. Then they can march their troops into New York, and head down to take Washington, D.C. How long do you think their military forces can hold out?”

“Sir, I imagine they are similar to ours. They probably have enough supplies for a year, even though they cannot get any new supplies through the blockade,” General Edwards said.

The President continued with his plans, “Good, here is what we will do...”

After President Davis had stopped speaking, the generals and advisors smiled gleefully. This plan could work.

After a week, the battlefield didn’t move an inch.

Then the Empire’s troops received orders to retreat from the battlefield five miles. The President planned something wicked.

Then it happened. Invisible lighting came from the sky.

Soldiers saw wavy distortions in the air as something strong, violent, invisible traveled through the air at light speed with tremendous heat energy.

The Empire used a new weapon. After the beam had hit something, the object disintegrated. Metal turned into red-hot lava while trees and people burst into flames.

Occasionally, a breeze drifted over the battlefield towards the Empire’s troops, carrying a burnt meat smell.

A fine mist of soot rained down upon the Empire’s soldiers and their equipment. Soot was the infinitesimal remains of soldiers struck by the invisible death ray.

President Davis launched a new Star Wars satellite into space above the battlefronts.

Satellite used two powerful x-ray lasers that fired down upon the troops. One laser shot while the other laser stood on standby. A satellite would pummel one battle front outside of Toronto for 15 minutes, and then the laser cooled for a half hour. Afterwards, it blasted the other front for 15 minutes.

Satellite kept firing until either it burned up or the enemy had surrendered.

After several hours of torture and death from these wicked lasers, the Europeans began retreating. They ran from the battlefield, screaming.

Through binoculars, the Empire saw the European troops break formation. However, they waited for the scientists to turn off the powerful lasers before they could follow.

Troops from Detroit headed into Toronto. Passing the trenches, they saw they released hell upon the earth.

As the X-ray laser touched a spot, it burned that spot into a black char, destroying traces of life. Tanks and those metal covers had large holes burned through them. In some places, the molten metal formed metallic icicles as it cooled.

President Davis ordered them to help any survivors.

Scores of soldiers lay dying on the battlefield as the laser grazed them, burning a limb or two cleanly off.

Army medical units followed behind the Empire's soldiers, scouring the battlefields for survivors. Medical unit stayed with the fallen European soldiers and aided the sick and dying.

War with Canada had ended, and she belonged to the Empire.

General Edwards came running into the President's office, screaming, "Sir; you're not going to believe our good news. Canada and Europe have surrendered. We got them sir."

"That is excellent news. I guess they did not like our new weapons system," the President retorted, displaying a sly smile.

“Sir, if you give the command, we can have the navy cross the Atlantic Ocean and start landing troops in Europe. We can take them.”

“General, please sit down. Remember our war is a poker game. Now, we are ahead and had beaten the house. At some point, we must rise from the table, cash in our chips, and go home. If we continue to play, we can lose everything.”

“Sir, please come out with it. Don’t use any analogies.”

“All conquerors have faced the same situation we are facing. When do you stop expanding an empire? I do not think we have the resources to annex Europe to the Empire. We could take several countries but only temporarily. If the people revolt and have armed protests against us, then we will lose them. A nation’s spirit can rise and unite against an invading threat, and then they kick us out. Then, we cross the ocean with our tails between our legs while all our work becomes unraveled.”

“What do you want to do then, sir?”

“Let Europe take her troops home. They may land any vessels, except military airplanes and war ships. We will show them respect, feed them, help their injured soldiers, and let them return home.”

“Sir, the troops can retrain and then return.”

“That is not going to happen in our life time. After we control the Americas, two great oceans will protect us along with one hell of a network of Star Wars satellites. Empire’s boundaries would be well protected.”

The President stood up and approached a mini bar, hidden in an old globe of the earth. Globe was a dark brown, map from the Middle Ages, when explorers started crossing the oceans.

The President opened the globe and pulled out an old bottle of Dom Pérignon as a frosty mist rose over the sides of the bar, disappearing into the air.

The President grabbed a couple of Champaign glasses and returned to his desk.

He pried open the cork to the bottle and poured the general and himself some Champaign.

“Let us celebrate our victory, general.”

General grabbed his glass and raised it for a toast.

“We give a toast that the big battle is over. Now, we can start building. Cheers,” the President replied,

They both clinked glasses and drank the sweet, bubbly contents.

“Don’t worry general, I still need you. After we had developed Mexico, then Central and South America are next.”

“Yes sir,” the general exclaimed. Then he placed his Champaign glass down gently on the desk and turned to leave the office.

The President began working and unraveled several large blue prints of new buildings that he wanted constructed in Mexico.

He laid the blue prints over the desk’s surface and studied them.

Blue prints soothed and quieted the President’s mind. He needed to relax because tonight, he would address the nation and let the citizens know that we have won. The Empire had succeeded.

On the evening of Canada’s surrender, President Davis addressed the nation:

Today is a glorious day for the American Empire.

The Canadian and European armies surrendered.

Canada has six provinces and three territories.

Territories are free to join a province or become an independent province.

They will become independent states of the Empire.

They will be just as they were before the war.

Only difference is we eliminated the Canadian federal government.

Further, the provinces are not allowed to build up a military or station troops from a foreign country.

As I promised, the Empire is at peace.

We have much work ahead of us.

The Empire will develop Mexico, bringing them up to our standards.

Mexicans are full citizens of the Empire.

They may work, live, and study in any state within the Empire.

Mexico will adopt our legal system, but they can retain their
language and culture.
They will grow and prosper.
We united two great cultures in America under one flag.
Now we are truly Americans.
We are free to travel between any region in North America and
eventually will include South America as well.

Nation rejoiced, and the invasion had ended. Canada fell,
and the Empire firmly controlled Mexico.

Canada was already a developed country, and the Empire
didn't need to develop it. Provincial governments were always
strong and large, providing most services to their residents. On the
other hand, the Canadian national government was small and
weak, thus, eliminated the national government would have little
impact upon the Canadian provinces. Then every province was too
weak to stand up to the Empire.

Economy grew furiously at 8% per year before the invasion
of Cuba. Then it started slowing down.

Adding 31 states to the Empire, the economy grew at a
phenomenal 30% per year for several years. Furthermore, the
Empire's population climbed from 300 million citizens to 400
million citizens.

President Davis jumped started the Mexican economy by
investing trillions of dollars. The President would build new roads,
schools, hospitals, and bridges. He would upgrade the fresh and
wastewater treatment plants, the electric power lines and
distribution system, and remodel abandoned buildings.

Unfortunately, President Davis did something dishonest by
allowing the Federal Reserve to inject more money into the
economy, exceeding the amount of gold and silver in the Fed's
vault.

The President knew Americans would keep their faith in the financial system and not convert their money into precious metals.

Conquest of Mexico, unfortunately, came with a large price tag, but after the Mexican economy had rebounded, the tax revenues would flow into the Empire's coffers. Then the government must shore up the gold and silver in the Federal Reserve's vaults, hoping the citizens would never discover his financing scam.

After the successful invasion of Mexico, the President met with the top officials in his government.

All cabinet members sat in the conference room, next to the Oval Office in the Whitehouse.

Agent Harris who handled secret projects attended.

Everyone quickly sat down, and President Davis began, "Invasion is going well. Now we come to a crossroad, where I must take a Mexican wife."

Everyone in the room had a blank face because the President never talked about marriage.

Jennifer was angry, but she hid her anger well. She wouldn't hesitate to marry Jerrick if he had asked.

The President continued, "I must prove to the Mexican people that I am honest about integrating Mexicans into the Empire, granting them as citizens. I do not want the people to think a superior race conquered them and will enslave them, forcing them to work the crappy jobs in the Empire. One way I can prove I am serious is by a taking a Mexican wife."

As usual, Dan started, "Mr. President, what features do you want your wife to have?"

"I am open to outside appearances. I want her to be beautiful but a natural beauty. If she is not wearing makeup, she is still attractive, but the important thing is the people must love her. When she enters a room, then everyone brightens up and becomes excited, electrified, hypnotized," the President stated.

“What about love?” Jennifer asked.

“It would be nice that she would love me, but love is optional. Unfortunately, I am a very powerful person, and 99% of the women in the world would marry me because I hold a position of power and large reserves of wealth.”

Chad asked, “What do you want us to do, Mr. President?”

“I want you to select her. I want her to be perfect. She must represent the softer, feminine side of the Empire. She must be my complement, and all people of the Empire must love her and just not Mexicans.”

Room became silent because they knew President Davis was right. He must unite two cultures.

The President uttered, “Why are you guys silent? I brought you here for feedback. That is why I pay you the big bucks. Agent Harris, what do you think?”

“Sir, I’ll have agents scourer Mexico and find your perfect wife.”

“Thank you, Agent Harris. I have confidence in you. Meeting is adjourned.”

Cabinet members collected their notebooks and began departing.

“Agent Harris, please remain seated,” the President asked.

Room cleared as everyone scrambled for the door.

President Davis closed the door and returned to the head of the table.

Agent Harris remained seated.

“This must remain confidential between us.”

“Yes sir.”

“I understand you speak Russian.”

“Yes sir. My parents emigrated from Russia 20 years ago. We still speak Russian at home. I also majored in Russian in college for an easy A.”

“Good, like I said, this information must remain confidential. A long time ago, I fell in love with two Russian women. One was Russian, and the other was Tatar. Your mission is to find out, what has happened to them. Under no circumstances are you to talk to them. I just want to know how their lives turned

out. Some pictures would be nice, and this assignment is off the record. I will pay you for your expenses and a \$100,000 bonus for a good job. Is your mission clear?"

"Yes sir; I'll take a personal leave and sneak into Russia. I'll find out what happen to them. What are their names and addresses, sir?"

The President wrote down their names and approximate addresses, drawing a rough map of the neighborhood and apartments' locations.

"Hopefully, this will be enough information for you to find them."

Agent Harris took the maps and information and exited the room. He must complete two missions for the President.

After the meeting, Jennifer escaped to the ladies' room, struggling to hold back her tears.

She rushed into a stall and sat down on the toilet, crying. She always wanted to be with Jerrick and stand next to him as the First Lady.

Now Jerrick is talking silly. Pleeeeeeaseee, a Mexican wife! What is Jerrick thinking? How can a woman hold together an Empire? Why are men such stupid creatures? Which century do they think they're living in?

A month later, Agent Harris returned to the Oval Office.

President Davis invited him in and asked, "Would you like a tea or a coke?"

"Sir, I'll take a coke."

The President opened his small refrigerator under his desk and retrieved an icy cold can of coke for Agent Harris. Beads of moisture formed on the can.

Agent Harris began, "I found Lidya easily. She married a construction manager and then divorced him six years later. She

still lives in the small apartment in south Moscow. She has one son and one daughter.”

Agent pulled out a photograph of Lidya and handed it to the President.

Jerrick recognized her, but she had aged. Mother Russia was still cruel to her women. She almost transformed into one of those decrepit Russian grandmothers, who hobbled along the streets as they walked.

“What did you find out about Amaliji?”

“Sir, please don’t be mad.”

“Why would I be mad?”

“I talked to her.”

“Really; what did she say?”

“I had trouble tracking Amaliji down. Her parents still live in that apartment you gave me directions to, but Amaliji moved away, and married a rich Russian businessman. She still lives in Moscow, and she had caught me taking pictures of her house. She knew I worked for you.”

Agent lay several pictures on the table in front of President Davis.

Jerrick studied them. Amaliji was still beautiful, even after all this time.

“She is still married but doesn’t have any children. She told me to give you this letter, and made me promise that only you would read it.”

Agent passed the President the sealed letter. On the front of the envelope she wrote, ‘To Jerrick from Amaliji’ in Russian.

The President opened the letter and saw she wrote the letter in Russian. He handed the letter to the agent and asked, “Please translate it. It has been a long time since I studied Russian.”

Agent read the letter aloud,

“Dear Jerrick. It has been a long time. After all these years, I still love you. That offer is still open. You can still join me in Moscow, or we can compromise. We can run away to a tropical island. I’m tired of the long, cold Moscow winters, but I know it is too late. Michigan reclaimed its lost son. You kept your word. You

wanted to make Michigan and the United States great again, and you did it.

I tried to get a visa to enter the United States in 2005 and again, in 2006, but the U.S. Embassy turned down my request. I tried twice to come and get you, but I failed. A rich Russian businessman proposed to me in 2007, and I accepted. I try to love him, but I can think only of you, and that special one year we had together. I stay with him because he is a good man, and he has been good to me. In time, I'll love him with all my heart. If I never do, I still plan to stick by him to the end.

Then I got a surprise in 2017. I saw your picture in the news when you overthrew the government and declared your presidency. I cried for you because I knew you would never return to me. Russian agents combed through all the neighborhoods that month. I know they found Lidya and talked to her. The Russian government wanted to know everything about you, but I managed to slip through. As far as I know, nobody knows about us except you and me, and your agent friend. I plan to keep it that way.

Now you have grown up, and you made everyone scared in Russia. Our government believes once you are done in America, you'll cross into Russia through Alaska. Government is doing everything to thwart your future attack. I know the government probably will never let you enter Russia again.

Whenever you finished building your Empire, you can return to me. I'll be waiting for you. I enclosed a picture of me, so you would remember me always.

Love Amaliji”

Agent handed the President the picture.

The President examined Amaliji's picture in the café, when she was a young woman in 2005.

The President placed the picture next to the recent pictures. Amaliji gracefully aged. According to these photographs, she barely aged five years, although the pictures were 15 years apart.

“She's a beautiful woman, Mr. President.”

“Yes, I know. I wondered what life would have been like if I stayed in Moscow with her.”

“Sir, you’re the President. You can do anything you want. If you want her as your wife, just say the word. Several agents and I will have her in your office in three days, tops.”

The President chuckled lightly and said, “That is a tempting suggestion, but I must marry a Mexican woman. I must unite two great cultures. I will spend time in Mexico, ensuring the transition goes smoothly.”

“Yes sir, I understand.”

“You are dismissed agent.”

Agent left the letter, pictures, and documents behind.

The President placed Lidya’s pictures and documents into the shredder because he harbored bitter feelings over their break up.

Then he placed Amaliji’s pictures into his top drawer of his desk along with her letter.

Agent did make a good point. He is the ruler. He could marry Amaliji, but she does not speak English and Americans may not fall in love with her.

The President knew he must marry a Mexican woman. He wanted to ensure his Empire stayed intact for at least 500 years. He did not want his Empire to crumble, when he lay on his deathbed. Jerrick wanted to build something that will stand for centuries.

Agent Harris and his agents found President’s Davis’ perfect wife. The President sat behind his desk in the Oval Office, when Agent Harris brought in Thalia for the first time.

Thalia Morales was both beautiful and intelligent with long, black, curly hair that almost reached her waistline. Her complexion was a light creamy, brown with the brownest, olive eyes. Her personality complemented her beauty. As she walked into a room, she was a powerful magnet, emanating excitement and radiance. Everyone would turn and notice her.

As they entered into the Oval Office, the President stood up, walked to the door, and greeted them.

The President took Thalia's hand and lightly kissed it. Then he gestured for both the agent and Thalia to sit near the fireplace on the sofa.

The President sat across from them in a dark leather armchair.

"I must say, Agent Harris, you found exactly what I wanted." Then he turned to Thalia and added, "You know why Agent Harris brought you here?"

"Yes, Agent Harris explained everything to me, and I accepted the proposal."

"Good! Let me ask you one question; why did you agree to marry me?"

"I wanted to ensure no harm comes to my people," Thalia said nicely, but the President detected a little coldness in her voice.

"Good, then it is settled. My staff will move your things into the Queen's Bedroom for the time being."

The President stood up and walked to his desk to call for his staff.

Several staff members arrived and guided Thalia to her accommodations, where royalty once slept in the Whitehouse.

Agent Harris remained seated.

The President sat down and began, "Where did you find her?"

"We found her in Mexico City. She completed a MBA at the Universidad of Mexico. She comes from a rich, powerful family. Her father owned several maquiladoras along the U.S. - Mexican border, but then he bankrupted after the 2016 Hyperinflation."

"Does she have any personality flaws?"

Agent chortled and stated, "She can be a little feisty."

"Feisty, uh?"

"Yes sir, I guess she always gets her way. She doesn't hesitate to give her opinion either, whether or not if you ask for it."

Next day, Jerrick Davis and Thalia ate their first, formal dinner in the Family Dining Room in the Whitehouse.

Dining room emanated wealth and status. Yellow silk curtains hung on the windows, a large crystal chandelier dangled

above the dining table, and the fireplace had a white marble mantel, carved with eagles and festoons.

Dining table was small, and they sat across from each other while Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* played softly in the background.

One servant stood by the door, who kept their drinks full.

Another servant brought in the food and removed the dirty dishes.

"I thought it would be nice to have a Spanish dish. So, how do you like the paella?"

"Paella is not bad. I see the chef added saffron, which adds a soft, flowery aroma to the dish."

"How are your accommodations?"

"Room is charming. I see you wasted no expense on me. Room is fit for a queen."

"Good! I want to ensure, you are well taken care of."

"Should I call you Mr. President or Jerrick since we'll marry?"

"You can choose, but Jerrick is fine."

"Jerrick, what are your intentions for Mexico?"

"I thought my intentions were clear. I am uniting two great cultures."

"Come on Jerrick, I know from history when two cultures clash, the superior one always takes over and assimilates the weaker one. Then usually the weaker culture becomes slaves."

"Thalia; I am being sincere with you. I plan to develop Mexico. People can keep their language and culture. Besides, does your father own several maquiladoras? I thought those were Mexican slave factories that forced young Mexican women to toil hard on products shipped to the United States."

Thalia's started blushing and lowered her face in shame.

Then she raised her face again, and her facial expression softened. She stared at Jerrick, "I've never seen a maquiladora. My father forbid me to come near one."

Jerrick interjected, "Thalia, do not get me wrong. I am not here to pass judgment on you. We made mistakes on both sides of the fence. Before the 2008 Financial Crisis, we used illegal Mexican workers to build our houses and to cut our grass. We paid

them meager wages for their hard work. After the Financial Crisis, we rounded the Mexicans up by the millions and deported them to Mexico. Then the geniuses in Washington, D.C. constructed a fence along the border, like a fence would stem the tide of illegal workers coming to United States. Some blamed the Mexicans for the financial crisis, which is really ludicrous.”

The President sipped his wine and continued, “Let’s put these mistakes behind us. I plan to build a great country. All citizens will be equal in the Empire, and you will be their queen.”

The President noticed that Thalia reddened again.

Everyone treated Thalia well, like a princess, but no one had ever elevated her to a queen’s status.

The President set his wedding day on Friday, March 8, 2024.

They held the wedding in the Virgen de la Asunción, Veracruz, Mexico. Builders constructed the cathedral in the 17th century. In the building’s center was a large dome or cupola that loomed three stories above the church. Under the dome, the audience could stare upward at the religious murals and frescoes of god and Jesus or glance at the stained, glass mosaic windows during sermons.

A large crystal candelabra that held 82 candles, dangled from the ceiling in the foyer near the entrance. A narrow tower with a small dome stood next to the church with five levels, complete with Roman arches and columns.

Thalia and the President chose the wedding to start at 5 o’clock in the afternoon.

All top leadership of the National Worker’s Party, the state’s governors, and officials of the Empire’s federal government paid homage to this grand event.

Thalia wore a long white wedding gown designed by Yumi Katsura, a famous Japanese designer. Gown was modern, and the arms and shoulders were exposed. A light-blue sash was tied around her waist while her veil had a slight bluish hue.

The President had dressed into a traditional Morning dress, reserved for British royalty. He wore a black tailcoat, white waistcoat, and brown-striped trousers.

His best man, Dan Bigler, stood to the President's right. He wore an identical, tailored British Morning suit.

In the corner of the church, an orchestral began playing the famous bridal march from Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin*.

Audience and the nation watched as Thalia and her father meandered slowly down the church aisle.

Her brides' maids followed close behind.

Everyone turned to stare at the bride.

Dress complemented Thalia's nature beauty. Wedding gown had several expensive gems that sparkled as Thalia strolled to the altar.

After a minute, Thalia joined Jerrick Davis at the altar.

A Catholic priest started the ceremony, "Father, today in heaven may we join this couple in holy matrimony, do you Jerrick Ray Davis take Thalia Morales to be your lawful wedded wife, whom you will love and cherish? Whom you will take care of through sickness and health, through joy and sorrow? Whom you will face your life's experiences together and share one another's goals and dreams for as long as you live?"

"I do," President Davis said.

"Do you Thalia Morales take Jerrick Davis to be your lawful wedded husband, whom you will love and cherish? Whom you will take care of through sickness and health, through joy and sorrow? Whom you will face your life's experiences together and share one another's goals and dreams for as long as you live?"

"I do," Thalia said.

"Then I may pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride."

President Davis gently lifted Thalia's veil and kissed her sweetly for the first time.

Then President Davis led Thalia outside the church.

Orchestral began playing the wedding march from Felix Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Guests stood up and started applauding.

An old-style Landau royal carriage waited outside. Two white horses pulled the 19th-century British convertible carriage.

Two aids helped the First Lady and the President climb into the vehicle.

Driver thrashed the horses, signaling them to start walking. He drove the carriage to the wedding reception.

A battalion of soldiers in dress uniforms walked in formation on all sides of the carriage.

Military marked this special occasion, honoring the Commander and Chief of the Empire's forces. Off to the side, military soldiers fired a five-gun salute. Along the shoreline of Veracruz, several naval vessels fired large canons, exploding massive booms into the air.

As dusk approached, fireworks lit up the skies.

Carriage pulled to the front of the Municipal Palace in downtown Veracruz, one of the oldest buildings in Mexico. Architectural style was Baroque, and builders constructed it in 1608.

An entourage led the President and Thaila into the interior courtyard. Many looked at the impressive arches that followed along the inside perimeter of the courtyard, and they held balconies. The group entered a five-story tower and into the dinner hall.

Guests began filing in.

The President and his wife sat at the head table on the stage with his cabinet and top party leaders.

Dan sat to the President's right and raised his champagne glass for a toast.

Jennifer and Chad sat at the table's end. Jennifer squinted at Thalia a few times, but Thalia never noticed.

Guests quieted down and raised their Champaign glasses in unison.

Dan began, "May today be a glorious day. Our leader has married a beautiful, intelligent woman. May they live happily together and prosper along with the Empire, and as a side note, to my best friend, Jerrick, buddy, you really did it. Some moments I had my doubts, but you pulled it off. You did something that very

few leaders of all humanity have done. History will record you as one of the greatest leaders of all humanity. You're the best of the best. Cheers."

Guests raised their Champaign glasses in a salute, and they sipped their Champaign. Then they cheered.

After the toasts, everyone ate a magnificent meal fit for a king.

Waiters brought several entrées, starting with a light-green salad, then plates of veal, steaks, and shrimp with couscous, wild rice, and roasted potatoes.

Then everyone topped off the meal with wedding cake, stood three feet tall, resembled the Tower of Pisa. Cake had five levels, and white, snowy frosting covered the cake with pearl-like beads outlining the edges and sprinkled with white and red roses. Every piece of the cake was edible.

Jerrick and Thalia had the honors of cutting the cake and distributing pieces to their guests.

Then the party danced the night away in the wee hours of the night.

After the wedding, the President and First Lady spent their honeymoon in his small hometown in Michigan.

The President knew they would spend time in Mexico because Mexico needed their presence to ensure a smooth transition to the Empire.

The President and First Lady stayed three days on the upper floor of a hotel, overlooking Lake Michigan.

The President and First Lady rented the whole floor. They occupied one room while their security took the other rooms.

Thalia loved the sandy shores and view of Lake Michigan. Unfortunately, the waters were too cold for a swim in March.

However, Michigan's shorelines offered a breath taking, panoramic view. Water was a beautiful blue while the beaches had light brown sand that looked clean and inviting.

On the first night, the President and First Lady attended a grand feast at the Hotel. They invited Holland's mayor and party officials from the regional office of the National Workers' Party.

They attended a pig roast, a Hawaiian tradition that caught on in Michigan. Cook built a large fire in a pit. After the fire had turned into hot coals, he placed a pig on top and buried it in the pit for several hours, ensuring the pig's meat became tender, succulent, delicious.

On the second day, the limousine driver drove the President and Thalia around his old hometown.

Memories flooded Jerrick's mind as he described everyone and everything in his hometown.

At the end of the tour, the President asked the driver to drive to the Bell Road Bridge that spanned the Black River.

Driver stopped half way on the bridge.

Jerrick quickly got out with Thalia trailing behind him.

He looked over the rail and at the water, recollecting about the good ole times.

"Jerrick, what is it. What is so special about this bridge?"

"I have many memories of this bridge. I used to drink and party with my two best friends from high school under this bridge. Their names were Larry and Tommy."

"What happened to your friends?"

"They disappeared in 2016 without a trace. They could still be alive. With all the chaos, people could re-emerge in society with new identities. With all the government's information stored in computer systems, those systems became useless after the programmers had fled and stopped working. Government couldn't verify people's identities and histories. After I had re-structured the government, we got those systems back up. Luckily, most people were honest, but some people slipped through."

"Jerrick, I had no idea."

"Thalia; don't worry about it. We grew apart after high school. I grew up, and they didn't. I had dreams while their dreams were to act like children and mooch off their parents."

Then Jerrick walked to the end of the bridge and peered underneath it, scanning the area, where the gang once hung out and partied.

Then they returned to the limousine and climbed in.

Towards dusk, Thalia and Jerrick walked along the shores of Lake Michigan, holding hands.

Setting sun cast bands of yellow, orange, and red over the land while clouds on the far horizon were a pinkish hue.

The President's armed security walked ahead and behind them.

Jerrick paused for a moment.

Then he pulled Thalia close to him, embracing her tightly, "How do you like the view, Thalia?"

"View is beautiful, almost magical. You grew up in a very beautiful and scenic area."

"That is one thing you can say about Michigan. She is a beautiful state if people would stop and enjoy her beauty. When I was young, I didn't care. Now that I am older and more mature, I can stand here in awe over her beauty. Of course, it helps when a beautiful woman accompanies me."

Thalia began blushing.

Then they started kissing.

All the armed security guards turned their heads away, granting the couple some privacy.

On the last day of the honeymoon, Jerrick went to see his hometown alone. Opening the hotel door, Jerrick turned to Thalia and said, "Thalia, go and ahead and pack. I want to take a last cruise of my hometown. I probably will not see it again for a long time.

"Okay, I should be ready in a couple of hours."

Jerrick headed out the door and bought a large bouquet of red roses in the flower shop in the hotel's lobby.

He instructed the driver to drive to Morning Glory Cemetery.

Going around a hill, Jerrick instructed the driver to stop. Next, he jumped out with the bouquet of flowers in his hands.

Driver almost followed him, but he didn't see anyone around. He wished the President were more cautious with his security.

The President walked to two flat head stones and looked down.

He read the first stone, 'Here lies Dorothy G. Davis. Born on December 2, 1959 and died on May 20, 2016.'

Then he glanced down at the other head stone and saw 'John B. Davis. Born on September 25, 1946 and died on May 20, 2016.'

He brushed the dirt and debris from the head stones, using his hand, and then placed the roses on his mother's grave.

He visited their graves for the first time. Then he whispered, "I am sorry mom and dad; I did not mean to get you killed. My dream was to become a great leader. I wanted you to go underground and hide, but you would not listen to me. I knew those bastards were dirty, but I did not think they were that dirty."

Jerrick made the sign of a cross over his heart and turned to leave.

He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket to dry one of his eyes, where a half tear had formed there.

Then he returned to limousine to pick up Thalia and return to the Whitehouse. He had much work to do and so little time.

He glanced at his parent's grave as a tinge of sadness invaded his heart.

After the honeymoon, the President spent little time with the First Lady. He sent her off to the corners of the Empire to speak at opening ceremonies for new schools and hospitals. She also spoke at numerous colleges and universities.

As President Davis predicted, the people loved the First Lady. She was a natural who projected confidence and strength and charisma. He could not have asked for a better, more perfect wife. She represented the feminine side of the Empire, and the people loved her as a queen.

On one occasion, the President invited the First Lady to inspect a maquilador on the border.

The President invested with Thalia's father, and they re-opened his factories, re-tooling them to produce electric cars.

The President was not an environmental leader, but he portended the future. The Empire grew furiously, rapidly consuming its resources. The President allowed petroleum companies to drill offshore in the Gulf of Mexico, but the Empire's petroleum production kept declining, even capturing Cuba's and Mexico's petroleum reserves.

The President would wean the Empire off petroleum. Petroleum would be available for large transport trucks and machinery, but he encouraged Americans to drive electric cars in their communities and gas-powered vehicles for long distances. He upgraded the electric transmission system by investing trillions in building brand new coal and nuclear power plants. He wanted nuclear energy to supply at least 70% of the Empire's electrical energy needs.

President Davis had other motives. The Empire's strong demand for energy fueled large petroleum imports from the Middle East. He did not want the Empire's gold leaving the Empire and accumulating in the coffers and vaults in the Middle East. He also did not want the Empire at the mercy of foreign governments. A supply disruption can wreak havoc on a society, cracking the foundations of a strong Empire.

The President, the First Lady, and her father inspected the father's factory in Matamoros, Mexico.

The First Lady became horrified because she never saw such large, noisy machines.

They paused in front of a large machine.

A worker placed a flat sheet of steel into the die of the machine. He pushed a button, and a two-ton press came slowly down, molding a car part.

Thalia saw the worker's hands fastened to cords. As the press lowered, the chords pulled away the worker's hands from the machine.

"That worker is chained to the machine," Thalia stated with a surprised expression on her face and her eyes widened.

"He is chained in more ways than one. That worker works hard at this job to feed his family. Plus, those chords make sure the machine doesn't crush the worker's hands," Jerrick explained.

After the press had risen, the worker removed a new panel for a car door.

Worker noticed the viewing guests and waved.

The President gave the worker a salute while the First Lady smiled.

Then they strolled to the manager's office.

Factory manager stood and greeted the guests and offered everyone a seat in front of his desk. Then he sat down behind the desk and opened the bottom right drawer, pulling out three shot glasses and a bottle of exquisite tequila.

Thalia frowned angrily. She hated it, when the important men in her life drank the hard stuff.

Manager began, "These cars are hot commodities that people are buying faster than we can make them. Thus, Mexican custom dictates we celebrate our success. Gods are looking down upon us favorably."

Manager poured everyone a drink and placed a shot glass in front of the President and Thalia's father.

They raised their shot glasses, clinking them gently together, so the valuable contents would not spill. Then they gulped down the fiery brew.

The President winced and glanced at the First Lady.

Thalia had a large angry frown on her face.

Jerrick shrugged and thought, what could he do? He must respect the powerful forces of culture and traditions. Disastrous consequences like uprisings and rioting can erupt if government alters or opposes culture.

For instance, he allowed the Mexican states to retain Spanish as their language.

Two southern states, Chiapas and Oaxaca, rebelled against the Mexican federal government several times. Thus, President Davis allowed them to speak their native tongues as their state's official language and granted concessions to the law.

The President respected culture and traditions and wanted everyone to be happy, and, of course, build his empire.

Expansion into South America

President Davis inspected a new saltwater treatment plant at Puerta Vallarta, Mexico. This new plant converted millions of gallons of salt water into fresh water for the residents of Guadalajara, Mexico.

Water desalination plant also pumped water further inland, converting barren deserts into thriving, green forests and agricultural lands.

Water plant had several large storage tanks that towered five stories tall. Several large box-shaped structures that were two-stories tall filtered the salt from the water.

Whole plant resonated and hummed from the sound of the powerful electric pumps.

The President strolled with the company president and an engineer along a network of large metal pipes.

Company's president was tall and easily overshadowed the other two. He wore an impeccable, black Armani suit.

A short, stocky, engineer wore a yellow helmet and orange jumpsuit.

The First Lady ran to the group with several bodyguards trailing behind her. She approached the President and hopped into his arms.

Then she pulled Jerrick away from the group.

Engineer and company's president stood, watching silently.

She cornered Jerrick near a large network of pipes and out of earshot and shrieked, "Jerrick, I just returned from the doctor's office. I'm pregnant."

Thalia was smiling and very happy.

"That is great! Is it a boy or girl?"

"I don't know. Does it matter?"

"Well, yes and no."

"Let me guess. You need a boy, an heir, for the Empire?"

"Well, a boy would be nice."

"What happens if she's a girl?"

"I will still love her, but a boy carries the father's name."

Thalia began frowning.

Jerrick tried to be smart and added, "I am happy for you. Go ahead; return to Washington, D.C., and rest. You can invite your mother and sisters. Just put them as far away from my room as possible."

Jerrick noticed Thalia was smiling again.

Jerrick became good at defusing the explosive mixture of a woman's emotions. Then Jerrick pulled Thalia close, hugging her tightly. He caressed her abdomen. Then he bent down and kissed it.

Jerrick's company noticed because no one could mistake that gesture in any culture.

The First Lady strolled to her limousine while the President rejoined his group again.

The President motioned with his hands for a staff member to come over. He whispered in his ear to bring a bottle of Dom Pérignon, several Champaign glasses, and Cuban cigars. He always kept a couple of bottles of Champaign and cigars in the limousine for special occasions, and this was definitely a special occasion.

The President just blurted out, "I have good news. The First Lady is pregnant."

Engineer asked solemnly, "Is it a boy or girl?"

"Unfortunately, the First Lady would not tell me."

"Hopefully, she has a boy, thus establishing a blood line for the Empire," water company's president said poignantly.

Company's president did raise a good point.

Eventually, the President must choose a successor to his Empire. Whom could he trust to lead his Empire? Who would be strong and smart enough to do it? If the President had a daughter, could she become a good leader for the Empire?

Engineer added, "These Mexican women today are strong and independent. They want to be superior to men. Of course, they don't hesitate to take money from a man's pocket when it suits their interests."

Men exchanged laughter at the engineer's joke.

Seven months later, Thalia bore the President a son, who was born on February 21, 2025. First lady named him Aric Benito Davis.

Aric derives from Old Norse that means forever, alone, or ruler.

Aric looked like just like father, except he was a little darker, a little more Mexican. Aric would gaze at everyone from his crib with his hypnotic, fiery brown eyes. Baby was another Jerrick Ray Davis.

Several months later, Thalia caught an exhausted, tired Jerrick hiding in the map room.

As she entered the room, Jerrick sat in an armchair, reading a novel. He placed a hot mug of cocoa on a stand next to his armchair. Marshmallows had melted into a layer of white foam, and while wisps of steam vaporized into the surrounding air.

Jerrick tilted his book, getting a better view of the first lady.

“I see you’re hiding from everyone up here,” Thalia began.

“Thalia; I am just tired. I have been traveling and traveling, and I am really tired. I thought I could get away from everyone, and curl up to a good book. I am so tired of reading economic reports. If I see another report, I will just scream.”

Thalia sat on Jerrick’s lap, and he wrapped his hands around her, still holding onto the book.

After her first child, Thalia still possessed her attractive, slim figure. She remained a beautiful woman, even though the slavery of motherhood tugged at her daily.

“What are you reading?”

“I am reading *1984* by George Orwell. It’s an oldie but a goody.”

Thalia spotted a French article on the floor by the chair with the translation into English, lying next to it.

“What’s that?”

“An article from a French tabloid claimed an alien flew down to earth and impregnated my mother. Thus, I am half-alien. You are married to a human-alien hybrid.”

Thalia laughed so hard, she almost fell from the President's lap.

“Don't laugh. Richard at Homeland Security is furious. I told him to let it go. Who cares about France? We have plenty of problems here to fix.”

“What is Richard going to do?”

“Who knows? He would feed the journalist into a meat grinder, feet first and slowly grind him into hamburger meat. Richard can be quite cruel if he is upset.”

“Why do you keep that creepy guy around?”

“He helped me before I took over the government. Without him, I would not be sitting here on this chair with you.”

Thalia glanced at the article and saw the common photo of an alien with an elongated head, bald, and large black, buggy eyes.

“Then I guess that's supposed to be your father?”

“That is what the article said. Actually, the alien is more handsome than my real father.”

“What happened to your parents?”

“During the chaos of 2016, a burglar broke into their house and shot both my parents. It was very tragic. I could not go to their funeral.”

“Why?”

“I thought the government purposely killed my parents to draw me out, so they could assassinate me.”

“Jerrick, I'm so sorry. I didn't know.”

“You should not apologize. That is the price. I had to pay. Any government will murder its citizens if a government can maintain control. I knew the U.S. government would resort to dirty tricks, but murdering a person's family is low. Creepy Richard told me their dirty plans and set up the meeting with General Edwards that led to the revolution. Richard was instrumental to my plans.”

Thalia rested her head on Jerrick's shoulders and mumbled, “Jerrick, I had no idea.”

After several minutes, Thalia poked her head up and added, “Jerrick, you’ve really been through a lot. I know you are working way too hard. You have been a leader for nine years, 24 hours every day. You have a lot of responsibility. Let’s you and me sneak out for the night. We’ll pretend we are regular people and go out for hamburgers and then a dance club.”

“I don’t know if that is a good idea.”

“What? Do you need permission from Richard before you can go?”

“No, of course not.”

“Okay then, let’s go! Take me out. You never take me out anymore!”

Thalia stood up and pulled Jerrick from the armchair by his hand.

Jerrick let the book fall to the floor, and he followed Thalia to his bedroom to change.

Jerrick found his blue jeans, buried at the bottom of his drawer, which he hadn’t worn in years. Luckily, he slid into the jeans, but they were a little snug around the hips.

Next, he dressed into a simple polo shirt.

An agent helped the President comb his hair differently, and the President put on a fake mustache.

Thalia changed into a simple, long black dress and pulled her hair back into a ponytail. When she appeared in public, she always styled her hair, never in a ponytail. She touched a little makeup to her eyes, cheeks, and lips.

Before they headed out, Thalia and Jerrick checked on Aric. He slept soundly in his crib with grandma standing sentry nearby.

Thalia and Jerrick both bent down and lightly kissed Aric on the forehead.

Little Aric stirred a little and kicked his feet. Then he went back to sleep soundly.

Thalia and Jerrick left the Whitehouse and passed through the guard shack.

Guards immediately stood up and saluted the President.

The President said, “You guys can sit down. The First Lady and I are going out for a hamburger.”

Guards were stunned.

One of them stated, “But sir, shouldn’t you have some bodyguards with you.”

“No, I think we will be okay.”

“Sir; we are concerned about your safety.”

“Okay, send one guard with us and please fit in. I do not want to draw attention to us.”

“Yes, sir,” one guard said while grabbing his thick coat that hid the bulge of his firearm.

Guard stood at 6 feet 2 and packed 300 pounds of lean muscle onto his frame. He was still young in his 20s with a well-trimmed black moustache and beard while he slicked his jet-black hair back.

Three walked down Pennsylvania Avenue three blocks from the Whitehouse.

They walked into Fat Burger, an old styled mom-pop shop.

Owners converted an ancient gas station into a small restaurant. Restrooms were still located outside in the back of the building. Rumors abounded that Fat Burger made the best hamburgers in town, and the whole east coast.

They smelled hamburgers cooking over grill containing smoldering wood, imbuing a bacon flavor into the burgers.

Group strolled to the counter.

Sales clerk asked, “May I help you?”

“Yes; I will take a cheeseburger, fries, and a Pepsi,” the President stated.

“I’ll take a chicken salad. Please put the dressing to the side and a diet Sprite,” the First Lady said.

Then the President gestured for the bodyguard to order.

“I’ll take a double cheeseburger, French fries, and a strawberry milkshake,” the agent said. Then he reached into his pocket for money, but the President shook his head no.

“Your total is \$25.30.”

The President reached into his pocket and pulled out a new, crisp fifty-dollar bill.

Sales clerk took the money and returned the change to the President.

The President searched the girl's face for any recognition, but the girl obviously didn't watch the news channel. She had no idea, who stood in front of her.

The President and First Lady sat in one booth while the bodyguard sat in the adjoining one, keeping a watchful eye.

The President took a large bite of his hamburger, and then chased it down with a swig of Pepsi.

Thalia stabbed at her salad with a fork, eating one piece at a time. She ensured every shred of food had a drizzle of salad dressing on it.

A few tables over, a little girl piped up and pointed at the President and stated, "Mommy; the President and First Lady are sitting over there."

Then the little girl waved, and both the President and First Lady waved back.

Mother continued eating her French fries and hamburger. She never glanced at the people her daughter said was the President and First Lady.

Mother replied, "Oh sweetie, don't make things up. The President and First Lady live down the street in the Whitehouse. They have their own gourmet chef who cooks them delicious food. They would never eat here in this restaurant. You can write a letter to the President or First Lady, and invite them to your school. I hear they are nice and buy all the kids ice cream."

Little girl peeked at the esteemed guests.

The President and First Lady smiled at the little girl.

Finishing their meals, they headed outside and walked across the street. Then Thalia pulled Jerrick to a side street.

She stopped and pointed at a shop window. Although the shop owner closed the store, they peered through the display window.

"See Jerrick. People love you. Look at the oil painting of you hanging proudly on their wall. Look at the inscription on the bottom, 'The People have a right to pursue their dreams unhindered by their government.'"

Jerrick studied the painting that represented a strong, powerful President in the portrait. Then he added, “That is a really nice painting.”

“I agree. Shop owner spent a \$1,000 for it from his own money, unless you have a law, making all the people buy paintings of you?”

“No, of course not. They are free to paint whatever they want.”

Then the three continued walking down the street.

Thalia pointed across the street to an opened Laundry Mat to another portrait, hanging on the wall. From this distance, they didn’t see the exact details, but they knew the person in the portrait. The President wore a military uniform in the portrait.

“See; if the people didn’t love you, they wouldn’t be spending money on these expensive oil paintings. In Mexico, you opened some deep wounds in the Mexican psyche. In time, if you keep doing well, they’ll forgive you. Those wounds will heal, and the Mexican people will love you too, just as I love you.”

Jerrick turned to face Thalia, using his hands to reel her in.

Then they started kissing on the street.

Jerrick rarely showed public displays of affection, but he made an exception. He stood with Thalia and a bodyguard, standing on a dark, deserted street. No crowds of people chanted his name.

Bodyguard looked away as the President and First Lady kissed.

Jerrick and Thalia strolled to the nightclub with the bodyguard following behind.

They approached a nightclub, and they heard the thumping bass of an extremely loud music system that pumped out Cuban salsa.

They saw a one-story nightclub that spanned over half a block. Owner painted it in pastel yellow, bright orange, and an occasional red. Several fake palm trees lined the sidewalk outside the building while red neon lights illuminated the building.

They stood in line to enter the discoteca.

Approaching the bouncer, the bouncer stared coldly at Jerrick and then Thalia. Next, he snapped, "Sorry, we have a strict dress code. We don't let men wearing blue jeans to enter the place."

"Please, he's my husband," Thalia pleaded with a large smile. Then she showed him her wedding band and engagement ring. Engagement ring contained a sizeable sparkling diamond.

Thalia can charm anyone. When she turned on the sweetness and charm, people never said no to her.

Bouncer studied Jerrick, and then his extremely large companion. Subsequently, he stated, "You should have married your own kind, but I'll let you in. However, if you guys cause any trouble, then I'll toss you out onto the streets personally."

"Thank you," Jerrick said. Then he smiled and handed the bouncer a new crisp fifty-dollar bill.

The President's bodyguard sized up the bouncer, and thought who will be throwing whom out. However, the bodyguard displayed his best behavior in front of President.

They entered the dark place with flashing lights, and people were everywhere, reeking of alcohol and hot sweaty bodies.

They approached the counter, and Jerrick shouted, "I'll take a margarita, and the lady will have a wine cooler." Then he looked at the bodyguard and asked, "What do you want?"

"Sir, a coke will be fine."

"Don't you want any alcohol in it?"

"No sir, I'm working. I must return you home safely."

"Okay then, my friend will have a coke."

"That will be \$15.50."

The President handed the bartender a \$20-dollar bill and added, "You can keep the change."

They sat on bar stools near the dance floor, sipping their drinks.

Bodyguard scanned the crowds, inspecting everyone and anyone nearby.

Then Thalia pulled Jerrick onto the dance floor, teaching Jerrick to dance.

Occasionally, a Latin woman would bump into Jerrick, and then she smiled at him when Jerrick looked at her.

Thalia squinted at her and placed herself between Jerrick and the woman, daring the woman to continue.

Around midnight, Jerrick fished his phone from his pocket because someone kept calling him. He glanced down onto the cell phone's display, seeing Richard Woodland calling him.

Thalia giggled, and Jerrick returned the phone to his pocket. Then he danced with Thalia again.

Thalia and Jerrick returned to the Whitehouse at three o'clock in the morning.

Unfortunately, Aric was crying because he missed his mother.

Thalia retrieved him from her mother, gently rocking him to sleep in her arms. Then she placed Aric between her and Jerrick on the bed, and they all fell asleep.

Around seven, Aric, the natural alarm clock, woke everyone up, crying furiously.

Thalia carried Aric into the bathroom and emerged 15 minutes later.

Aric was happy and all smiles.

Thalia placed Aric on the bed between them again.

Jerrick leaned over and said, "Hey little guy, you sure cry loudly." Then Jerrick kissed him lightly on the forehead and tickled his belly.

"He's fine now. I changed his diapers and breast-fed him. He should be good for a while. "

Jerrick continued tickling Aric's stomach.

Aric giggled, moving his arms and kicking his feet.

"I guess I would be happy too if I wore clean underwear and filled my belly with fresh food."

"So, how do you feel Jerrick?"

"I must admit; I feel great even with little sleep. I feel I am ten years younger."

"You know Jerrick; I've been thinking. One way you can appease the Mexican people is to relocate the capital to the border of Texas and Mexico. That way, both peoples can share you."

“That is a great idea, but we thought about going further. After South America joins the Empire, the federal government will become too large, and we’ll have problems administering the Empire. We thought about breaking the federal government into three districts. One government represents the English-speaking people; the second one represents the Spanish-speaking people in Mexico and South America, and the third for the Portuguese-speaking Brazilians. Then we build the headquarters for the top layer of government in Mexico City, towards the Empire’s center.”

“You are actually thinking about moving the whole capitol to Mexico City?”

“Yes, that puts the top piece of government at the Empire’s center. We thought about building the government campus around the Aztec ruins, so two great Empires can stand proudly next to each other.”

“I see. That means you’re returning to work, aren’t you?”

“Of course, I must check the progress of my Empire. I am like Charlemagne. He traveled across his kingdom, keeping everyone in check. He always traveled on the road.”

“Charlemagne? I guess you are a history buff?”

“Not really. I only studied the famous dictators, emperors, and kings. I wanted to know what worked, and what didn’t work.”

“Did you learn anything?”

“Of course, the power went to their heads, and they started stealing property and money from the aristocrats. Finally, they started mass executions of their people?”

“Do you ever get those thoughts?”

“No, of course not. I keep my mind occupied. I build things, like my large public works projects and buildings. I have no time to think how many pennies the wealthy squirrel under their mattresses. My tax agents just ensure they pay their taxes. That is it. I also do not worry about rivals or troublemakers. I let Richard at Homeland Security worry about them.”

“Well Jerrick, Aric and I’ll be waiting here until you return. If you return too late, then I can’t promise you that I’ll be in a good mood. Besides, if you are gone too long, then I’ll have your creepy friend Richard track you down and return you.”

Jerrick burst into laughter and replied, "I am sure Richard will love that. He will do the job personally."

Then Jerrick leaned over Aric and kissed Thalia, and he kissed Aric on the forehead again.

Jerrick slid from bed and rushed to the bathroom. He showered, changed and headed to work. He felt like a new man again, and he must continue building his empire.

First Lady and Aric sat in an armor-plated limousine in 2030. Aric was already five years old, and they would meet the President at a ceremony in Monterrey, Mexico.

The President spent \$1 billion to build a state-of-the-art hospital with thousand beds and an impressive intensive care unit.

The board has christened the hospital as the Davis Medical Center after the President's honor. The President peered at the ten-story building, shaped like a bracket. On one end of the building held the doctors' offices while the emergency rooms were on the other end. The President believed strongly in training and education, ensuring the hospital had plenty of classrooms to train the next generation of doctors and nurses.

As the limousine approached the hospital, Aric stood on the back seat in the limousine, pushing his face against the window, watching the crowds of people standing on the sidewalks.

People cheered and waved at the limousine as they drove by.

"Look mommy! People are waving," Aric said. Then Aric waved at the crowds.

Crowds went ecstatic.

"Yes; I know son. You are sitting in the President's limousine." Then the First Lady smiled and waved to the people as they passed by.

"Mom; what does the President do?"

"You read about kings. A President is like a king; he leads a country. Your dad is the leader of our great country."

“But mommy, I do not see daddy do anything. He only talks to people.”

Thalia laughed a little and then replied, “Your dad does a lot. You see that new hospital there. Your dad gave money to help build it.”

“Wow, I guess that’s why dad is always gone.”

“Yes, he is always working.”

“Mommy, will I ever be President?”

“Of course you will. Someday your dad will become too old to lead, and you can take his place.”

Aric smiled widely. Then he sat down next to his mom.

Thalia wrapped a loving hand around Aric, hugging him. Then she planted a soft kiss on his forehead.

“Mommy, the president’s job is the best job in the world!”

Guards let the limousine through, and it parked near the main entrance of the hospital.

The First Lady and Aric climbed out the limousine. Then Thalia walked to the main entrance while Aric ran to his dad.

Jerrick scooped him up and held him in his arms. Then he handed Aric a large pair of scissors and said, “Aric, will you do the honors and cut that large ribbon on the door.”

Aric cut the ribbon in one snip, and the crowds cheered.

“The Davis Medical Center is open for business,” the President exclaimed to the crowd. Next, the President grabbed his son and embraced him. Then he held his son high above the crowds while Aric waved to them.

The President had the best job in the world.

On May 14, 2030, the President’s cabinet called for an emergency meeting in the Cabinet Room in the Whitehouse.

The Cabinet Room contained a long, huge mahogany table with rounded oval corners. Table stood on top a large red rug, speckled with yellow stars. Surrounding the table, were dark, reddish leather armchairs.

Meeting started at nine o'clock at night, and the President sat at the head of the table while his generals sat in a row to the President's right while his other staff sat to his left.

Off to the side of the room, the President had an assortment of drinks, snacks, and simple finger food for his staff.

After everyone had seated, the President began, "Okay guys, you got me here. What is the emergency? What is going on?"

Agent Harris started, "Sir; our agents just returned from South America. Chaos erupted in Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama. They know the Empire is coming, and their governments stopped providing services. Government officials are stealing all their country's resources."

The President retorted, "This situation is dire. Mexico drained our investment funds. We are not ready to annex new states."

The President's face reddened, and he pounded his fists on the table and screamed, "Damn it."

Everyone at the table jumped because the President rarely used profanity. He never had to.

Everyone became silent, sneaking glances at one another.

The President inhaled several times and cooled down. Then he began, "My hand has been forced. I wanted to wait a while before we added South America. Obviously, we do not have a choice. We cannot let their countries erupt into chaos and violence that would immensely increase the development costs. Protestors will destroy the buildings, and workers and managers flee their employers. We must invade, whether we want to or not. Does anyone here have any other ideas to fix this situation without an invasion?"

Room remained quiet.

The President turned this head to study each face around the table.

Everyone remained silent.

Scanning around the table, the President continued, "Then invasion it is. Tomorrow generals, let us meet in the Map Room at 7:00 AM sharp. I want detailed plans for the invasion. At 8:00, I want the cabinet, and your best and brightest financial wizards.

Unfortunately, we will win the war, but then we become bankrupted.”

The President stood up from the table and ran out.

Staff collected their things and scrambled to leave. They had a long sleepless night in front of them. No high-ranking official would sleep that night in the Empire.

At seven in the morning, the generals and the President met in the Map Room.

The President hunched over a massive table, studying a large map of South America as a hot cup of coffee laid on the edge with wisps of steam floating from the top of the coffee.

The President noticed his generals and invited them in.

“Generals, come right in and join me. Unfortunately, I had a sleepless night, so I have been here all night. Get yourself some coffee. A chef long ago hooked me on Indonesian Kopi Luwak.”

Coffee maker laid on a table near the corner of the room next to a large leather armchair. Coffee mugs, sugar cubes, and fresh cream were placed on a silver tray next to the coffee maker. On the other side, the President stacked several large, ominous-looking books of the Empire’s finances that would intimidate any reader.

Generals grabbed themselves some coffee and joined the President at the table.

“Troops are mobilized, and they’ll be in South America by tomorrow,” General Edwards stated.

”Good, how do you plan to invade?”

“We will load the amphibious war ships with equipment and soldiers and sail them right up to the capitals and see what happens,” the General of the Navy added.

“That is a good strategy. If they do not shoot, then no one should die.”

The President sipped his coffee again.

Generals also drank theirs.

“Generals, I am not worried about the invasion. It is paying for the cost of redevelopment. I expect little resistance, but you never know. Let me know if you experience any complications. Oh, by the way, how do you like the coffee?”

“Coffee is excellent, sir. It’s the best I ever had,” the General of the Air Force stated loudly.

“Good, my chef turned me onto this coffee years ago. I thought he was crazy, but he is right; this is the best coffee in the world. We are drinking coffee made from the excrement of a weasel-like animal, the civet. Their digestive systems remove the bitterness from the coffee beans, adding lots of flavor.”

General Edwards smiled and added, “Sir, I had eaten and drank a lot worse, when training for Army Rangers.”

Other generals smiled because they remembered some of their military training as young men and learned to subsist on raw food from the wild that would make a wild dog sick.

Generals finished their coffee and returned their coffee mugs to the silver tray.

“Do you men want some breakfast?”

“Sir, we can’t. We have a long day ahead of us. We must go.”

“Generals, let me know about any complications, immediately.”

“Yes sir,” the generals stated in unison, and then they filed out of the room.

The President poured himself another cup of coffee, adding a small drizzle of cream and one sugar cube. He stirred the mixture and sat down in his armchair.

He sipped his coffee, put it down on the table, and grabbed one of the thick books of the Empire’s finances. He had plenty of time before his next meeting.

At eight, the President ran into the Cabinet Room and sat at the head of the table, scanning the faces sitting at the table.

Everyone had a sleepless night with dark circles surrounding their eyes.

The President announced, “Ladies and gentlemen, how will we pay for this expansion? We do not have the money.”

“Can’t we call the new states - territories and insert exceptions into the law. We can issue special money that people and businesses can only use there but not in the Empire. Some day

in the future, they can exchange this money for real money from the Empire after we had shore up our finances,” Chad stated.

“I do not like it because we mimic the democracy that we replaced. We start bending and shaping the laws to what we want. Danger is if we bend and manipulate the laws too much, then they lose meaning. Nobody will understand them, and eventually not follow them,” the President explained eloquently.

“Couldn’t we pass a temporary tax to pay for the expansion? People of the Empire will benefit from it too,” Jennifer added.

“That is the last option, but you know me. Taxes are never temporary. We become use to that money flowing in, and we never want to give it up.”

A sheepish, feminine voice spoke up and uttered, “Sir, we’re assuming we must pay for the expansion of the Empire. Why don’t we force the world to pay for our expansion?”

Everyone turned to see who had spoken.

A new face sat at the table, hidden in the corner. She was petite with short brunette hair. She parted her hair to one side and wore a dark, navy business suit with a white dress shirt underneath. She wore polished shoes somewhere between high heels and hush puppies. Her name was Lauren Woschiff.

The President stared at the new guest because he did not recognize her.

“Go on, I want to hear this,” the President said calmly.

“Can’t we counterfeit other countries’ money like the Euro, the Chinese Yuan, or the Russian ruble, or have hackers open bank accounts in those countries. Then we use their money to buy our materials and equipment. Finally, we use dealers in small countries like Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey to buy the equipment and materials and deliver the materials to us in their ships. Of course, we cut them in on the profits. Then we face the labor costs of development. However, they work indirectly for the Empire, so they must pay income taxes.”

“Your plan is devious, but I like it. The Empire has no friends in the world, so we need not worry about anyone being angry with us. First, find some of those small countries and enter

agreements with them. Second, scrap Russia, but add South Africa because it supplies the world with gold. We can buy their gold at a discount and add it to the gold in our vaults. Then we can legally expand the money supply. Finally, Venezuela's petroleum industry should help pay some of the cost. We can finance the expansion of the Empire. Now ladies and gentlemen, I am really tired. I am going back to bed."

Staff gathered their things, returned their coffee cups, empty plates, and silverware to the serving table, and rushed out the door.

The President waited until everyone left.

However, Dan, the Vice President, remained seated.

After the room had cleared, Dan started, "So, how do you like my new financial wizard?"

"She is brilliant and original. I like her. What is her name?"

"Her name is Lauren Woschiff. I know she's brilliant; I saw her do some amazing stuff."

"Where did you find her?"

"She was an intern from an Ivy League School. She was working for one of my managers, who always turned in mediocre reports. Then one day, his reports became good with specks of cleverness. I knew he didn't do it. All I had to do was look at the employment records. His intern had started a week before he turned in his first good report. I stole her and put her to work for me."

"Good, let's create a new position for her where she can attend our cabinet meetings regularly. We can expect good ideas from her. I also give you the authority to raise her pay. As you know, I pay good money for good talent. I want the best and the brightest working for me."

"Great! I knew you would like her. That's why I snuck her in today."

The President gathered his documents, slipping them into his leather folder, and starting to rise from his chair.

"Ah Jerrick,"

The President sat down in his chair because Dan rarely used his first name anymore.

The President looked at Dan in surprise.

“She also found out something else. She developed an algorithm that cross-references our budget numbers. Do you know we found evidence that someone skimmed billions of dollars from the budgets, a million here and a million there? After a while, those millions add up.”

“Oh, I see she is very clever. Yes, Dan I did skim the budgets. I needed to fund several projects off the books. You know I am a firm believer in technology. I used a slush fund to pay for new inventions. I do not want anybody to know about them. I want the Empire to develop the technology first before anyone else.”

“Is there anything I need to know?”

“Most of these projects were duds, except for three.”

“Really,” Dan said with a hurt tone in his voice. His best friend had kept secrets from him.

“One is we can reverse aging. Pills work great, and they make everyone turn back the clock to 20 years old. Unfortunately, the medicine does not stop and continues working on the body. Then it starts unraveling the body’s cells, and their bodies begin to fall apart. After we had figured a method to shut off the medication, then we will call it a success.”

“What are the other two?”

“You would not believe me if I told you. Let’s just say the Empire is not confined to the surface of the earth. Many new possibilities will open up for us in twenty years.”

Then the President gathered his things and returned to the bedroom, trying to fall asleep.

On June 1, 2030, the Empire sent its naval ships to Caracas, Venezuela first. This invasion differed from the previous invasions.

Crowds of people started celebrating as the Empire's soldiers unloaded tanks, and equipment.

Next, the army drove its procession of trucks through the streets slowly.

Crowds of people formed parades and moved to the sides of the street, allowing the military vehicles to pass. People stood on balconies, throwing confetti while crowds of people tossed flowers at the troops.

Stress and tension racked the Empire's troops because they scanned the crowds, looking for unfriendlies with assault rifles. Soldiers didn't want to shoot at the civilians because one or two gunmen hid in the crowds.

As luck would have it, no gunmen hid in the crowds that day, and no innocent people were shot.

Procession of soldiers reached the main campus buildings of Chavez's government.

Buildings were vacant, and all offices were empty. Here and there, a dead body lay on the ground or occupied a chair in the office. They were high-ranking officials in Hugo Chavez's government.

One squadron cautiously made their way to Hugo Chavez's office.

Chavez's assistants worked in a large ante-room before the President's Office. El Presidente didn't spare any expense. Room screamed wealth and opulence. Floors were marble; the room was painted a soft red pastel while the doors, desks, and crown moldings were a reddish mahogany.

Squadron carefully entered the President's Office. It was identical in style and size of the first room. A large dark wooden desk was in the room's center of the room.

Then the troops spotted a person sitting in a chair on the balcony. They only saw the chair's back.

Person sat in a chair, looking out the balcony.

"El Presidente? El Presidente?" A soldier called out.

Person didn't move.

As the soldiers approached slowly, they saw why.

Hugo Chavez was dead as his right hand fell to his lap, holding the gun with a rigor mortis death grip. He had a small hole on his right temple, and a large exit wound at his head's back.

Hugo Chavez committed suicide hours before the invasion. He sat at this chair, watching his country from the balcony. As the

Empire's troops landed on the port, he stuck the gun to the side of his head and pulled the trigger.

As the soldiers turned to leave, a corporal approached Hugo Chavez's desk, which was large, at least 4 feet long and 2 feet thick, and made from a darkly stained wood. Along the front of the desk, were four carved lion heads jutting outward in a row, and the sides of the desk had one lion head. Draped around the lion's heads were banners, carved into the wood. Then a soft dark-green velvet covered the desk's surface.

Another soldier turned and asked, "What is it?"

"This desk is quite exquisite, carved by hand, and must be a 100 years old."

"You know Chavez had contacts with Russia. This could be a gift from the Russians. This desk probably came from Russian royalty passed down in a family for hundreds of years."

Corporal announced on the radio, "We found Chavez. He committed suicide. We also found a gift for President Davis. Get some movers here ASAP."

"Smart move! I heard the President collects knickknacks from dictators and kings. I'm sure he'll love this desk."

"Yes, corporal, the President will be very happy."

Although President Chavez's policies caused economic disaster, he had many dedicated followers.

President Davis granted Hugo Chavez a hero's burial because one dictator admired and bestowed respect onto another.

President Davis paid for the construction of a massive, granite mausoleum for El Presidente, granting his followers a place to respect their fallen leader.

President Davis hid Hugo Chavez's suicide, claiming El Presidente fought honorably to the end.

Colombia and Panama fell just as quickly. The Empire's naval ships docked at the ports and unloaded the army.

One army sped towards Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, in jeeps and cargo vans while another army rushed to Panama City that lies on the southwest tip of the Panama Canal.

Along the way, the people stood along the streets, hollering and cheering as the Empire's army had passed by. The Empire had arrived, bringing jobs, wealth, and prosperity. Their lives would become better.

Kahil Kafkas, the ship's captain, was a typical Turk. He was tall, thin with black wavy hair, and a dark complexion. Kahil as usual for the Turks was also handsome.

Ship and crew were waiting for dockworkers to load the cargo in Istanbul, Turkey. A crane carefully stacked 9,200 metallic 20-foot long containers on the deck like piles of bricks.

Captain hired a new first mate, and they stood in the control room, watching the activity on the deck.

"Captain, are we going to take this freight to the American Empire?"

"Yes; we are. We'll drop this shipment in Venezuela, South America."

"Aren't you worried about sailing into the Empire's waters? I heard President Davis has a large fleet of naval ships and satellites that blast ships out of the water."

"They do, but we'll be safe. They only fire upon military ships. We're delivering freight for the Empire?"

"Aren't you worried that we are supplying the enemy?"

"No, a job is a job! Plus, they pay well! That's why I hired you. You're supposed to be a good first mate. Besides, I inspected some of those shipping containers."

"Really! What's the Empire buying?"

"Just plain old construction materials: power tools, metal and wood studs for walls and ceilings, nails, screws, drywall, and

furniture. I found no guns or computers. It's all construction materials."

"That's odd. I thought the Empire manufactured their own products. I thought the Empire isolated itself from the world?"

"You got me, but they pay well, so I'll deliver this shipment on time. That's why my conscience doesn't bother me. We're not shipping tanks and guns. Besides, I plan to use my savings to retire someday. Oh, I have a special treat. After we deliver our cargo, we'll dock at Cuba."

"Cuba, I heard about it. People claim Havana is one of the most beautiful cities in the world."

"It's a nice bonus for a job well done. Nightlife is fantastic too. In the clubs, they dance a neat salsa, where all the couples form a circle. Then you dance with you partner, twirl her around several times, and then pass her to the guy behind you. Then you get a new girl from the guy standing in front of you."

"It sounds complicated."

"It isn't once you get the hang of it. Then the best part is after the evening is over, you grab a woman you like and take her home with you."

After a moment of silence, the captain asked, "So, do you still think we're traitors?"

"I guess not. It sounds like you found a good thing."

"Best part is the Empire pays in brand new Euro bills with sequential serial numbers."

"Wow, I wonder where the Empire is getting all that money?"

On October 20, 2032, the President of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank, Arthur Wellesley, called for a special meeting with all the top European leaders.

Arthur began, "Dear ladies and gentlemen, let start this meeting. I called you here today because we found irregularities in our monetary system."

The Prime minister from France, Léon Blum, asked, “What kind of irregularities are we talking about?”

“Someone is counterfeiting the Euro on a massive scale. Something we have never seen before.”

“What are talking about, a few million?” The Prime Minister of England, Ramsay MacDonald, asked.

“No, minister, we’re talking about billions, or even trillions. Counterfeit money is an exact copy. Only way we know it is counterfeit is when we destroy our old money, we register the serial numbers. Now we have destroyed money this year that we had destroyed years ago. Our experts examined the money, and the copies are perfect. We also discovered evidence where computer hackers break into banks’ computer systems and open accounts with millions of Euros in them.”

Everyone paused to ponder the speaker’s words.

Several ministers sipped water from their glasses.

President continued, “Have you noticed something strange about our economic expansion? All our construction industries have rebounded strongly. They are hiring workers. Yet, I examined our construction permits, and we are not building anything in Europe. New construction remains flat. Where are all these construction materials going?”

President paused for a minute to allow this information to sink in.

“Well chap, please continue,” the Prime Minister from England replied.

Arthur Wellesley of the Central Bank continued, “I asked the European Council of Foreign Relations for satellite photos. Apparently, the construction materials are loaded onto barges and shipped to ports in the Mediterranean. Then the cargo is transferred to other ships, delivering the cargo directly to the American Empire. Our satellites cannot see the destination point, but their destination is South America. Amount of cargo ships is astounding, forming almost a continuous line of ships that stretch from Europe to South America.”

The Prime Minister from Britain, Ramsay MacDonald, quickly stood up and hurled his empty glass at the wall behind him. Sharp shards of glass exploded along the wall.

“God damn him.” Ramsey screamed. Then he sat down and regained his composure. Then he added, “I apologize for my rude interruption, but Jerrick Davis had turned into one pain in the ass. He has a stranglehold over the world, and we cannot do anything about it. If we shut down the cargo export, then we hurt ourselves. Our construction industries shut down, and we throw a bunch of people out of work. If we allow Mr. Davis to continue, then he plays us like a bunch of suckers, building his damn Empire with our own workers, with our own money.”

Arthur Wellesley continued, “The Prime Minister is correct. We face that dilemma. We have more disturbing news. Many unemployed Europeans are sneaking onto the ships heading to South America, searching for work. They think construction jobs will be plentiful for a long time because the blasted Empire will add more countries in South America.”

The Prime Minister from France, Léon Blum, asked, “What do you propose we do?”

“Right now, we go along with it. We tax the construction industry and tax our exports of construction materials. Then we use that money to expand our armed forces. Ladies and gentlemen, I hate to say it, but sooner or later, the Empire will expand into Europe. We take this bad situation and use it for our gain. If we do nothing, then we’ll be working for Mr. Davis. Eventually, Mr. Davis will set his sights on Europe.”

President studied the stunned faces sitting in the room. He warned them that he would toss bad news into their laps. They thought it would be a hot potato. Instead, it was a red, hot piece of molten steel.

Colombia has been a hot bed of terroristic activities since the 1960s. Radicals used guerrilla warfare against the Colombian government. They hid in the thick, dense jungles, and,

occasionally, crawled out to assassinate government officials or blow up a government building.

One infamous group was the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as FARC by its Spanish acronym. Commander of FARC, Manuel Marulanda, sat behind his desk in his jungle hut and stared at everyone with fiery hazel eyes. He stood at five feet five with black curly hair that touched the lapel of his green military uniform. He always donned a Green Beret cap on his head, and regularly trimmed his black beard and mustache.

Towards his right, a poster of Che Guevara hung from the wall. Jungle's humidity and dampness caused the poster to blister and blemish.

Manuel Marulanda looked exactly like Che Guevara while his followers thought he was the reincarnation of Che Guevara.

Manuel was not angry about the invasion per se. He became furious that President Davis harmed his organization financially. After President Davis had legalized marijuana and low-level barbiturates and amphetamines, FARC lost their main income source because Manuel controlled the illegal cocaine drug trade and supervised the drug labs, scattered throughout the jungle.

Now, Americans avoided cocaine and used the legal drugs instead.

His captain burst into the hut, "Sir, I have great news. Our contact in the Colombian government has just confirmed President Davis's visit to Colombian. Sir; he's coming to Colombia."

Manuel just sat there while his eyes became fiery and crazy ideas swam in his head.

A large beaming smile slowly crept across Manuel's face, and he uttered, "Captain, you know what to do."

The Captain saluted Manuel Marulanda and dashed out of the hut to round up his men.

FARC had planned a nasty surprise for the President.

On Monday, April 4, 2033, President Davis arrived in Bogotá, Colombia to inspect his projects.

The President's procession left the Tequendana International Airport in Bogotá. The Empire's army surrounded the President's limousine with jeeps and trucks, forming a protective shell.

Colombia's paramilitary organizations circulated rumors they would strike and kill President Davis if he came to Colombia.

The President's procession rushed by a neighborhood filled with abandoned buildings.

KABOOM! A large explosion filled the silent air.

FARC planted explosives inside one of the buildings. They also constructed a metal wall inside the building that directed the blast outward into the street. Subsequently, they placed boxes of nails on one side of bomb so the explosive force would fling these nails into the air, converting them into debris of death.

Jeep to the left side of the President's limousine took most the impact. The explosion killed four soldiers instantly and shredded the jeep into ragged pieces of steel.

Flying shrapnel injured and killed several soldiers sitting in the other jeeps. Pockmarks and dents from the flying shrapnel covered the left side of the President's limousine.

However, the President sat safely in his bullet-proof limousine.

After the explosion, the procession turned around and sped to the airport.

The President's phone immediately rang, and the President picked it up.

"Mr. President?"

The President recognized Richard's voice immediately.

"Yes, Richard."

"Are you okay? I just heard about the bomb explosion."

"That was fast. It happened 30 seconds ago. I am okay, but my ears are ringing badly."

"Mr. President, please get on a plane and return home."

"Richard, I cannot do that. I must oversee Colombia's development. Please do not tell my wife."

"Sir; it's too late. Everyone in Washington, D.C. knows about the attack. Word travels fast about your safety."

“Richard, I’m okay!”

“Mr. President; please return to Washington. You’re our leader. Your safety is important to the Empire because you’re the Empire. What will become of us if terrorists kill you?”

The President let out a long sigh and mumbled, “Okay Richard; I will return.”

Richard was right; he was the leader, who kept everyone and everything together. American Empire would be doomed if the leader had perished.

Then Richard asked, “What do you want us to do?”

“Put a \$10 million bounty on the heads of the people, who did this. Then have the military systematically sweep the jungles with infrared cameras and detain anyone they find in the jungle. If they shoot at the soldiers or helicopters, then I grant you the authority to shoot back.”

“Yes sir; I’m coming down there as soon as possible and personally oversee the mission.”

“Thank you Richard,” and the President hung up the phone.

Then the President’s phone rang again.

“Hello.”

“Jerrick, are you okay?”

Jerrick heard the first lady’s voice, crackled from fear and tears.

Jerrick tried to soothe her, “Thalia; I am okay except my ears are ringing.”

“Jerrick, please come home.”

“Okay, I will come home. Please stop worrying about me. I am okay.”

“Here, Aric wants to talk to you.”

Thalia passed the phone to her son.

“Hey little guy, I am okay.”

“Daddy, are you coming home?”

“Of course, I am. I should be there in 15 hours.”

“Daddy, mommy and me are worried about you. Come home, daddy!”

“I know. That is why I am returning home. Just hang tight, and I will be there in no time. I love you Aric. Please put your mom back on the phone.”

“Jerrick?”

“Thalia, please do not worry. I am fine. Richard will come down to search for the culprits. Okay! Everything will be fine!”

“I love you Jerrick.”

“Yes; I know Thalia. Ditto! I will be there shortly,” and the President hung up the phone.

Richard Woodland arrived to Colombia and combed the jungles for the armed guerrillas. He always shook his head at their stupidity. Richard conducted night raids, commanding a fleet of 20 helicopters and flying in tight formation over an area.

Jungles provided a dense protective cover for them because the Colombian government couldn't afford infrared technology. However, the Empire didn't have a problem. Rebels made their worst decision by hiding in the jungles.

Infrared cameras were sensitive; any warm object brightened up the dark screen of the camera with a red dot. If a jungle cat crapped in the woods, the cameras would pick up the steam from the excrement.

Occasionally, the helicopters flew over an area, where a group of men camped out. For some reason, they always fired up at the helicopters as if this act would bring down the almighty flying death machines.

Then the helicopters returned fire with their M230 guns as the 30-millimeter caliber bullets left large, cavernous holes in their body.

That suited Richard just fine. He admired their courage to leave the world fighting. At least, the Empire wouldn't waste money for their court trials. Empire's troops would slaughter the rebels like pigs for attacking their Great Leader.

Richard sat at the gunner's bay and fired at the rebels. After he had shot the rebels, the helicopters would land, and Empire's

troops would search the area. Richard saw the dead never had identification. They photographed the rebels' faces and confiscated their weapons. Then they buried the rebels in the jungle in unmarked graves.

One night, Manuel camped with his soldiers in the jungle because it was too dangerous to stay at his hut in the jungle.

Jungle was pitch black. Birds chirped in the trees while small animals scurried along the ground.

In the distance, Manuel heard a strange buzzing sound, becoming louder as a group of helicopters approached his camp.

In Spanish, Manuel screamed at his soldiers, "Get your guns! The Empire is coming!"

Next, the Empire's soldiers filled the dark jungle night with rifle fire as bullets rained down on Manuel's soldiers. Bullets whizzed angrily through the air, illuminating their path with a red glow.

As Manuel turned, he saw the chest of his captain explode as a large 30-caliber bullet penetrated through his flesh.

Manuel dropped his rifle and ran.

He ran for several miles in the cool jungle night until he hid in a small cave. Occasionally, those fiery eyes peeked from the hole, searching for signs of the Empire's troops.

President Davis had won this round because he was alive and still breathing.

After a month, Richard gave up. No one turned the culprits in to get the reward money, and they no longer found gunmen roaming in the jungles.

Jerrick's special force shot and buried 111 gunmen in the jungles of Colombia that month.

It didn't matter. An organization like FARC was finished because they earned no income from the illegal drug trade. They

couldn't import illegal guns anymore because the Empire controlled all trade coming in and out of the Americas.

The FARC soldiers left the jungles and searched for good-paying jobs. Economic prosperity always chills the violence and hatred of men, converting them into hard-working citizens again.

After three years President Davis invoked his policy of hacking into Europe's banks and counterfeiting the Euro, the Europeans shut down their construction industries.

The Europeans leaders became sick to their stomachs because they didn't want to finance the expansion of the American Empire. They collected taxes to fund their military expansion, but a recession swept through Europe after their construction industries shut down.

President Davis did not mind one bit.

Mexico grew fast and started contributing tax revenue to Davis' government. American Empire's brush with bankruptcy disappeared as the Empire's finances grew strongly again.

The President no longer needed European products to fund their expansion, and he added Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador to the Empire.

Similar to Venezuela, Panama, and Colombia, the Latin Americans liked the change in the management because they grew tired of their own corrupt politicians, who always said things became better while they stole everything that wasn't nailed down.

With the new leaders, they did not steal or expropriate other people's property. President Davis paid his people well, and, in return, he demanded dedication and hard work.

On December 23, 2034, the President returned to Washington, D.C. for Christmas. He sat on the sofa in the center in the Yellow Oval Room, a private room for the President and his family. His wife and son sat with him.

Logs in the fireplace hissed and crackled as the fire consumed them.

The President observed Aric and was surprised he was already nine years old and quite inquisitive. He always asked questions.

“Daddy, what’s an Empire?”

That question threw Jerrick Davis off because he never thought about the definition of an empire.

He paused and scratched his chin. Then he answered, “An empire is a country with a strong military that adds more land and people from conquered countries. I guess an Empire is a school bully who beats up the weaker kids.”

“But dad; my teacher says bullies are bad. They shouldn’t do that. My teacher says it’s wrong.”

Jerrick glanced at Thalia, and she smirked.

Jerrick continued, “It is wrong, but that is what an Empire does. It expands, so it can grow and become bigger. It becomes a means of survival.”

“A bigger bully means it can beat up on more people.”

“I guess it does.”

“Dad, does an empire ever get weak?”

“Yes, they do. In time, our Empire will crumble, but hopefully that will happen centuries after our deaths.”

“Mom says you’re the king of the Empire. What do you do?”

“I tell other people what to do, and they do it?”

“What happens if they don’t do it?”

“Let’s just say I do not have a problem in that area.”

“But dad, some kids in class don’t listen to the teacher.”

“What does your teacher do?”

“She punishes them.”

“There you go. I can punish people too, but people are afraid of my punishment.”

“How do you punish people?”

“Let’s just say some years ago, I did some terrible, evil things. Everybody knows about it, and they are scared of me.”

“Do you want people scared of you?”

“Yes and no. Fear is there, but I can also be kind and generous too. That way, they love me like a strict father, who looks out for them.”

Aric slid off the couch, opened a large, translucent plastic box containing hundreds of dominoes, and started arranging the dominoes to construct a small city.

Thalia scooted next to Jerrick, and she laid her head on his shoulder. Then she stated, “He takes after you.”

“I do see a strong resemblance. He is just like me when I was a kid except the problems I had in school.”

After Jerrick and Thalia had watched their son put together a small city, Thalia spoke up, “Jerrick, I know you are always busy, but why don’t you take Aric outside and play in the fresh snow. He wants to build a snowman.”

“I guess you are right. I am always away or always working. Come on Aric, let’s go outside.”

His boy was excited and ran to his room to get his jacket, hat, and gloves.

After 15 minutes, a sniper from the Homeland Security announced into his microphone, “Sir, we have activity on the South Lawn at the Whitehouse, roger.”

Dispatch relayed a message to all agents in the area, “Please be advised for suspicious activity on the Whitehouse lawn.”

Sniper looked closer through his binoculars and added, “Sir, it’s the President and his kid. They’re throwing snowballs at each other. Ooh! Kid nailed the President in the face with a snowball.”

“I wish I saw that,” the dispatcher replied and then continued, “End the alert. The President is playing with his kid.”

Dispatcher thought if anyone else had hit the President in the face with a snowball, that person would never see the next sunrise. No one can disrespect their leader, and then live to talk about it.

If the President did not want that person harmed, people have a way of disappearing around here.

American Empire continued to thrive and grow.

President Davis added the remaining South American countries to the Empire, except Argentina and Chile. He kept these last two countries as a gift.

As the President predicted, the government had trouble administering. He divided the Empire into three districts based on language. Brazil formed their own district; Mexico and Spanish-speaking countries became the second district while the third district became the English-speaking people of the former United States.

President Davis opened a new chapter in history by building a new government capitol in Mexico City that encircled the Aztec ruins. He relocated the top level of his government there.

President Davis thought about moving the Whitehouse from Washington, DC to Mexico City but decided against it. The Whitehouse had historical significance to U.S.-Americans, and he left it there. Besides, he loved roaming the hallways and corridors in the Whitehouse, lost in deep thought as he passed portraits of the famous U.S. Presidents.

The President's top people aged, and some had died. General of the Army, Edwards, died in 2040, and Secretary of Homeland Security, Richard Woodland in 2043. They both died of natural causes. The President conferred both of them, Distinguished Citizens of the American Empire and gave his companions a hero's burial.

Although the Empire had achieved peace, the rest of the world was building up their militaries. Eventually, the Empire's military would cross the oceans, expanding the Empire.

World's leaders put their countries and militaries on red alert as they waited for the first signs of the American Empire's ships to appear on the horizon. World would constrain the American Empire to the North and South American continents.

The Great Leader Dies

President Davis lay back on a doctor's examination bed, wearing a hospital gown on August 4, 2058.

Jerrick saw the best doctor in the country. The doctor managed an upscale clinic that only saw the top party officials of the National Workers' Party.

Doctor performed numerous tests on him for his annual checkup. Then the doctor requested President Davis to dress and wait in the VIP lounge.

Lab needed an hour to perform the various tests.

After 40 minutes, the doctor quickly popped in the lounge with a concerned expression on his face. He politely requested, "Mr. President; please come with me."

President Davis stood up and followed the doctor into his office.

Doctor sat behind his mahogany wooden desk and gestured for the President to sit in a beautiful, dark red, leather armchair on the other side of his desk.

Sitting down, the President smelled the foul, subtle stench of death circulating in the air.

The President slowly exhaled and said, "From the concerned look on your face, you are about to give me bad news."

"Yes, Mr. President. I do not want to be the one to inform you, but we found a cancerous growth."

"Okay; spill the beans; is it treatable?" The President's voice crackled from the obvious bad news.

"We found a growth on the pancreas. Unfortunately, we do not have much success in treating pancreatic cancer."

"Is it treatable?"

"No, Mr. President. I wish I could tell you differently, but this cancer is particular nasty. I wish I could treat you."

The President bowed his face into his hands. He did not want to hear this bad news.

After several minutes, President Davis raised his head with a sad grimace spread across his face.

“Okay doctor, tell me honestly. How much time do I have?”

Doctor’s hands trembled a little as he told the most powerful man in the world how much time he has left. Then he stated in a wavering voice, “Sir, you have anywhere from a year to two years.”

The President asked softly, “Will I suffer?”

“In the beginning, you’ll appear normal. Once the cancer has almost consumed the pancreas, then the cancer will become painful. Then death is imminent.”

Doctor’s eyes became watery while the tears were ready to flow. He wanted his famous patient to live.

Then the President exclaimed, “Doctor, thank you for this news. You do not need to shed tears for me. It means my mission on this earth is almost over, and I still have time to prepare for my death. I must pass the leadership of the American Empire to the next generation.”

The President jumped from the chair and shook the doctor’s hand. Then he added, “Please keep this a secret from everyone. I want to appear strong and potent until the very end.”

“Yes sir, I understand. This conversation will remain strictly confidential between us.”

President Davis exited the doctor’s office with his head bowed down.

A few days later, a strong, healthy President addressed the nation.

It saddens me to give you this speech today.

I was your ruler for 41 years.

Unfortunately, I will not be here forever.

I am only a man.

God gave me a limited time on this earth.

Now I know I am approaching the end of my life.

Thus, we must prepare for the day, when I will no longer be your ruler.

I do not want you to be sad.

I did many great things.

But I also did many terrible things.
I used this limited time prudently and built this almighty Empire.
However, in all honesty, it was never my Empire.
It was always the people's Empire.
I only sat at the helm and told people what to do.
Your hard work and effort allowed this Empire to grow and
flourish.
I could not have done this alone.
That is why I am going to let you decide.
I give you the right to vote.
You have two choices.
You can vote for a republic.
If the majority of the people support the republic, then I will allow
the political parties to reform.
I will open all public offices to the voters.
If the majority wants me to appoint my successor, then I will abide
by your choice.
I will caution you.
Choose your decision wisely.
After I have relinquished power, I will lose it forever.
I am way too old to get it back.
Furthermore, cast all your emotions and feelings to the side.
Base your decision on which choice will give you the longest
prosperity, the brightest future.

Country was in an uproar.

Members of the National Workers' Party were shocked.
Has our leader gone mad? He wants to bring back the Republic.

If the Republic returned, the new government would go
after the members of the National Workers' Party. This party never
legitimately held power; it seized it. The new government would
lock them up and charge them with crimes against humanity.

Jerrick sat in the Oval Office on the couch near the
fireplace. He stared at a stack of documents on the table in front of
him, gathering dust. He poured a tumbler of scotch that sat
precariously on the table's edge.

His furious wife entered the room, and she immediately started in on him.

She screamed, “Jerrick, what are you doing? I thought we agreed Aric would be your successor.”

Jerrick looked up at Thalia with a blank expression on his face as he replied dryly, “Thalia, I never agreed to that. Besides, I do not know why you are worried. I believe the people will make the right choice.”

“What do you mean? What is the right choice?”

“Thalia; trust me. I know what I am doing. When times are good, people never like change. For people to want change, they must be unhappy with their current circumstances. They must be unhappy with the current leadership. People in the American Empire are happy and content.”

“But Jerrick, what about Aric?”

“Aric resembles me; he talks like me; he is smart and has half my DNA. If the people cannot have me, then they will take the next-best alternative, which is my son. I am sure my son will be an excellent ruler.”

Thalia approached Jerrick menacingly as if she prepared to attack him.

Jerrick continued, “Besides, if Aric is approved by the people, then he has legitimacy. I never was a legitimate ruler. I never asked the people for their approval. I just seized power and never looked back. Then I expected the people to fall in line and obey me.”

Thalia stood two feet away from Jerrick. She was a cat ready to pounce on its prey.

“Thalia, I am dying.”

Thalia’s anger melted away, and she asked, “What?”

“I am dying. My doctor thinks I have from one to two years to live.”

Thalia sat next to Jerrick on the couch and rested her head on his shoulders.

Then Jerrick slid his left arm around her to pull her in close.

“Jerrick, why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

“I did not want anyone to know. I want to appear strong, all the way to my last breath.”

Thalia whispered, “Do you really think the people will vote for our son?”

“Thalia, have faith in me. I put a lot of effort into constructing my Empire. Do you think I would allow someone else to come along and screw it all up? I am serious about my Empire lasting for five centuries. I built something that will stand for centuries.”

The President picked up his scotch and sipped it.

Thalia wrapped her loving arms around Jerrick and scooted her head closer to Jerrick’s face. Then she sobbed with tears running down her cheeks.

Jerrick returned the scotch to the table and caressed Thalia’s back as she cried in his arms.

President Davis allowed all Americans to vote on the first Tuesday of November, November 5, 2058. Over 90% of the citizens voted on that historic Tuesday.

Poll lines stretched several blocks away from the polling stations. People stood happily and calmly in lines, waiting for their right to vote.

American Empire came to a crossroad, and the President allowed the people to choose their fate.

As the President expected, the people of the Empire were happy. Good-paying jobs were plentiful; the great cities of the North and South Americas were flourishing and growing rapidly. Eighty percent of the people wanted the American Empire to continue.

Aric Davis won by a landslide with 70% of the votes; Dan the Vice President got 10% while the rest went to the third-party candidates.

People wanted the American Empire to continue and thrive, and Jerrick’s son would take over. A second generation of Davises would rule the Empire.

The President's doctor was correct. By September 21, 2059, the pancreatic cancer hit President Davis hard. He remained strong and potent until September. After September, the cancer just sucked all the life from him.

The President appeared pale and weak and aged 20 years over one night. Large deep wrinkles formed over his face as his strength and vitality surrendered to the cancer.

Doctors segregated the President into a separate wing by himself, giving the best medical care for their most prestigious patient.

President lay weakly on the hospital bed with various tubes and wires connecting him to a stack of machines, surrounding his bed.

Jennifer, Dan, Chad, and many others stood around the leader's bed.

"Jerrick, you can't die," Jennifer shrieked as tears streamed down her face. She grabbed the President's right hand, holding it in her hands.

"I am sorry. This cancer is ravaging my pancreas; my body becomes weaker by the day. Doctors cannot do anything about it. Plus, I am old," Jerrick stated apologetically.

Chad asked, "What will become of us?"

"A transition of power is imminent. You guys are marked. A new leader can purge the party members. Most likely, my son will replace me, but the military could stage a coup and appoint one of their own as President. Thus, all of you are in danger. That is why I gave you all new passports with new identities. You can go anywhere in the world and would be forgotten. You can disappear and live out the rest of your lives in peace and tranquility."

"Do you think your son will start a new purge?" Dan asked because he was concerned about their safety.

“I do not know. I utilized a purge to establish my leadership and strike fear into people’s heart, so they would obey me. He may do it as well to define his leadership.”

Chad inquired, “Do you think your son will make a good ruler?”

“I do not know. Only history can answer that question. I raised my son right and taught him everything I know about leading. However, he is not me. My son grew up in luxury and privilege. He had everything handed to him. I grew up with modest means. Having little money defines a person. Poverty defines a person’s character.”

Dan persisted, “Jerrick; you didn’t answer the question. Do you think your son will be a great leader?”

“You know, I think he will be fine. If my grandson or great grandson becomes ruler, then probably not. My family tree will forget their roots. They will forget where they have come from. Eventually, my family tree will start producing bad leaders who become too rich and spoiled.”

President Davis looked around the room and saw everyone’s sad face.

The President continued, “Guys; don’t be sad! We accomplish something great! We did something few people could accomplish in their lives. We built something that will last for centuries. Don’t worry about my imminent death. Remember all the things we have accomplished, when we built this magnificent Empire. We have made history together!”

The President grabbed a tissue and wiped the tears from Jennifer’s cheeks.

After his cabinet and top officials had left, his wife and son entered the room. They ran to Jerrick’s bed and hugged him.

Both his wife and son were crying as tears flowed down their cheeks.

“Aric, do not cry. You must be strong.”

“Dad, I don’t want you to die.”

“I know, but my time has come. I cannot do anything about it. You must be strong. You will be the ruler. People have elected you.”

“Dad; I do not know what to do. I do not know how to lead?”

“I prepared you for this day. I taught you everything you needed to know. Besides Aric, you have one thing I never had, legitimacy. People never elected me as ruler, but they elected you. You must continue my work. I also drenched blood on my hands. This blood will never wash off. I executed people, innocent people. Your hands are clean. I will go down as a controversial leader, but you can become a great ruler with clean hands. All your deeds can be good while my misdeeds do not become yours.”

His son leaned down to hug his dad while Jerrick hugged his son.

Then Jerrick continued, “I love you son, take care of my Empire, or should I say our Empire. Be strong! Tomorrow, you must give a speech in front of the Senate. Then they will confirm you as the legitimate ruler of the Empire.”

His son pulled back. His eyes were watery, but the tears stopped flowing. Then his son turned to leave.

Before his son had opened the door, Jerrick shouted, “I left you two South American countries you can easily conquer: Chile and Argentina. Add those countries to the Empire. Remember, be strong; you will make a fine ruler. Remember everything I taught you. Then history will record you as a great ruler.”

Then Aric walked out the room and returned to the Whitehouse to prepare his speech.

Thalia stayed in the room, sitting on the edge of the Jerrick’s bed, leaning over to hug him.

“I love you, Jerrick,” she whispered with tears streaming down her face.

“I love you too, Thalia.”

Thalia pulled back and looked at Jerrick surprised.

“This is the first time you ever told me,” She replied while she studied him, to see if he had made a cruel joke.

“I know, but I was never really sure you loved me.”

“What? Jerrick, how can you say such a thing?”

“I never was sure because I represent wealth and privilege and power. Many women would marry me, but few would love me truly.”

Thalia laid her head on his upper chest and whispered, “In the beginning, that was true. I married you because of your power and prestige. I was also angry with you because you invaded my country, but then I fell in love with you. I saw you were doing good. You built new schools, hospitals, and housing for the poor in Mexico; you restored law and order, and brought plenty of good-paying jobs to Mexico. Then I madly fell in love with you.”

Thalia just laid there for several minutes until Agent Harris entered the room.

“Mr. President; I have some important information for you.”

That was Thalia’s cue to leave the room. She kissed Jerrick on the cheek and walked slowly out of the room. She turned to look at her president before she closed the door.

Jerrick never allowed Thalia to be around, when the boys talked shop.

Agent Harris began, “Sir, I have one last guest for you.”

“One last guest? Who could it be?”

“Sir, please give me a couple of minutes.”

Then Agent Harris left the room and returned five minutes later, helping an older lady come into the room.

The President looked at the old lady, and his face brightened. He said, “Amaliji, what a surprise. I thought I would never see you again.”

Then the President turned to Agent Davis and added, “Aren’t you full of surprises.”

“Jerrick, I wanted to see you one last time. Agent Harris came to Moscow to get me and told me about your condition. I came as soon as possible.”

“Amaliji, you are speaking English. It has been a long time since our days in Moscow.”

“After you had left Moscow, I took courses in English. I tried to come to Michigan twice to get you.

“I know Amaliji. I received your letter a long time ago. I still have it with your pictures.”

“Jerrick I just want to know, are you done building your Empire?”

The President became silent for a minute as he closed his eyes pondering that question.

Then he answered, “In all honesty, I think I am done. I accomplished everything I set out to do, but Amaliji, we cannot run away. I am dying. God is calling me home. I had fulfilled my destiny.”

“I know, Jerrick,” then Amaliji bent down and hugged the President, resting her head on his chest.

The President wrapped his arm around her.

“What about your husband?”

“He died four years ago.”

“Amaliji, I am so sorry. Did you ever love him?”

“Yes; when I realized he would be gone; I fell in love with him.”

Amaliji became silent for a few minutes, and then she asked, “Jerrick, have you ever wonder how our lives would have turn out if you didn’t leave Moscow?”

“Yes, some days I was quite alone at the top. I dreamt of you many times. Several times before I married Thalia, I thought about sneaking out the Whitehouse and never return. Then I would sneak into Russia to find you.”

Then the President began crying. He stored a lifetime of tears for this occasion.

Amaliji pulled a handkerchief from her pocket and wiped some of the tears away.

“You know if you did make it to Michigan and asked me to return to Moscow, I would have done it.”

“I know, Jerrick. Fate would not let me take you away. When I first saw you in the café with Lidya, I knew something was special about you. God would not let me keep you. Now I see why. He had a mission for you.”

Agent Harris looked at the President, and saw him crying. Most powerful man in the world was reduced to an old dying,

crying man. If the world only knew, but Agent Harris would never tell anyone. He would take this secret to the grave with him.

Agent Harris didn't believe in divine Providence, and God touched the President. Answer was simple. Jerrick Ray Davis wanted to build an empire, and that was what he set out to do. He fought for his ideas and plans, and he won. Jerrick Davis had beaten the odds.

History only remembers the winners while everyone forgets the losers. Nobody remembers the leaders, who almost snatched total power. People only remember the dictators who grabbed complete power.

President Davis became a dictator who took total power. He used his power to put Americans back to work, and Americans built Jerrick Ray Davis's Empire. Building empires require hard work, creating plenty of good-paying jobs for everyone.

Amaliji bent down and kissed the President on the cheek.

As Agent Harris helped Amaliji leave, the President stated softly, "You have made an old dying man happy. Good bye, Amaliji."

"Bye Jerrick," and Amaliji left for the last time.

Agent Harris returned 15 minutes later.

"Agent Harris, thank you. I feel I completed my life, and I have come full circle."

"Mr. President, please don't talk that way."

"Many times you went beyond the call of duty and proved yourself to me. I left you a gift."

"A gift?"

The President reached over to the side table and opened the drawer and pulled several documents out."

"I own several properties throughout the Empire. I kept a couple of properties secret like my small house on a tropical island just south of mainland Cuba. They call the island the 'Isle of the Youth' and the view is spectacular. I left the property deed as a gift to you."

"Mr. President; I don't know what to say."

“You do not say anything. You have earned it. I have one question and one more mission for you. My question is what will you do after I die?”

“Mr. President, please don’t talk that way.”

“Please, Agent Harris. I want to know.”

“If your son renews my commission with Homeland Security and allows me to work with him, then I’ll do it. If not, then I will go start a private security business. I could start my business in Cuba.”

“I wish you the best, Agent Harris.”

“My last mission for you is to sneak into Russia and find the first love of my Lidya. Give her this bank account information that contains several million dollars. If she is not alive, then give it to her children. If they refuse it, then the money is yours. After all these years, I finally forgive her. I am finally found peace with myself.”

Agent Harris accepted the property deed and bank information. Glancing down at the property title, the agent noticed the property title was already in his name. He should go to Cuba.

Agent Harris tucked the documents safely inside his jacket pocket and sat in the chair, reading a newspaper. He kept a good eye on the President.

After a little while, he heard the President sleeping soundly.

At 3:33 in the morning, Agent Harris awakened to a loud shrieking noise from the heart-rate monitor.

The President’s heartbeat stopped.

All the doctors and nurses ran into the President’s Room, resuscitating him but to no avail.

Jerrick Ray Davis had died.

Agent Harris ran into the hallways screaming, heading straight for the men’s restroom. He cried in the toilet stall and thought he should retire.

God made only one copy of Jerrick Ray Davis, and now he was gone.

He will complete his last mission for the President and will sneak into Russia before he retires to Cuba.

Next day, the Empire mourned its emperor.

Many people missed work, and they gathered in street parades. Crowds of people walked along the streets, holding candles and grieving the loss of their leader.

In the parks, people stood behind pulpits and proclaimed the accomplishments of the leader. How he rescued America and brought the good-paying jobs back to America.

Elsewhere in the world, leaders and heads of state were meeting. They were happy President Davis had died, but now his son held the reins of power. They knew they had little time before the Empire sent ships across the ocean to conquer new lands and people.

Everyone knows empires always expand until they hit their limit. After they had peaked, they rapidly disintegrate and disappear into the sands from whence they came.

World's leaders knew the American Empire had not attained its limit. It had plenty of room to grow.

Jerrick Ray Davis constructed his Empire to last for centuries. Historians would record him in history as a famous person with several chapters devoted to President Davis and his American Empire.

A strong, vibrant Aric Davis stood before the Senate with the nation and the world watching as he delivered his first speech to the nation. He resembled his father.

It saddens me to stand here today.

Like all citizens of the Empire, we loved President Davis.

He was a great ruler.

He brought the manufacturing jobs back; he made the Empire's military the strongest in the world, and added many new states to the Empire.

However, the Great President Davis is gone.

God called him home.

Citizens of the Empire elected me to take his place.

Now a new chapter opens for the Empire.

A new age is born.

Younger generation is taking over the leadership of the American Empire.

Unfortunately, my father left some very large shoes to fill.
However, I will continue his work.
Under my leadership, the American Empire will thrive and grow.
She will become mightier and stronger.
No one can stop the American Empire or the strong working
values of the American people.
First order of business is we establish a holiday to honor President
Davis.
Every citizen takes a day off on his birthday, January 7 and pay
homage to the first great leader of our glorious Empire.
We owe our lives and future to President Davis.
Without him, the United States would have collapsed into a third-
world country after the 2026 Hyperinflation.
Now, Americans will dominate the world for centuries.
Honoring President Davis on his birthday is the proper thing to do.
He made Americans great again and united them under one flag.
Now we are truly all Americans!
We are the most powerful people in the world, and nobody can
stop us.
Americans will rule the world for centuries.

After Aric Davis' short speech, the members of the Senate stood up and clapped vigorously.

The Chief of the Supreme Court and head of the Senate trotted to Aric Davis. They started the ceremony to swear him in as the second President of the American Empire.

Aric promised the citizens that he would fulfill his father's destiny. American Empire continued growing and prospering for several centuries.

Epilogue

Agent Harris traveled to the Isle of Youth, Cuba to see his new home. President Davis did not exaggerate one bit. His house was built on a hill, overlooking the bay. He saw the palm trees covered the hill, and the hill descended to a rocky shoreline along the Caribbean Sea.

When he first saw the house, he opened the front door, ran across the living room, and stood on the deck.

Harris watched the waves of the Caribbean Sea softly crashing on the rocky shore below. Sparkling under the sun's rays, water was a light blue, pristine.

Agent Harris stayed at his home for two weeks. He sat on the patio every morning, drinking his favorite coffee, French roast coffee with two spoons of sugar and cream. Then he watched the morning sunrise, savoring his favorite brew.

Agent Harris completed his last mission, sneaking into Russia and finding Lidya. He could steal the money from the bank account, but it never crossed his mind. He loved President Davis like a father. Besides, Agent Harris became rich working for the Empire, and he already stashed several million dollars away at his bank.

One thing about the American Empire, it continually created new billionaires by the day. President Davis was not upset as people became rich from his Empire. Wealthy people indicated everyone was working hard and creating wealth.

Besides, Agent Harris remembered the old stories. He remembered he was a teenager when the U.S. economy collapsed in 2016. Then times became tough. As a young man, Agent Harris showed his parents his acceptance letter during one supper. He started working for the Department of Homeland Security. His parents were so proud, and they always said if Jerrick Ray Davis never came along, then America would have collapsed. Americans would fade from history, but President Davis ensured Americans would dominate the world for centuries.

Agent Harris snuck into the Russia for the last time and found Lidya with no problems.

Lidya was alive and happy that Jerrick Ray Davis remembered her. Of course, she snatched that bank account information. She planned to give her grandchildren a bright future where they could travel and study in America one day, like her.

Before Agent Harris returned home, he visited the café at the universal state store, GUM, one last time. Strolling through the door, he shook his head in disgust at the old, ugly, Soviet concrete buildings that will stand for centuries.

Agent Harris went to see where President Davis found love, where he first met Amaliji. He sat down, drinking his coffee and peering at the beautiful Russian blonde working behind the counter.

Agent Harris looked under the table to see if President Davis had carved his initials there because everything in the café appeared ancient.

Then the agent's eyes returned to the counter, studying the woman who took his order of cake and coffee.

Occasionally, she glanced at him as he sat at the table, sipping his coffee.

Agent Harris went to the counter and flirted with her. Besides, if their relationship worked out, he owned a beautiful house on the beach that he could share with a beautiful woman. Besides, she would be crazy to turn down a chance to live in luxury and tranquility in the Caribbean.

Dan, Jennifer, and Chad retired after President Davis' death. Assuming new identities, they lived in Cabo San Lucas in Mexico, in the State of Baja California Sur. San Jose Cabo was located at the bottom tip of the Baja Peninsula on the Western side of Mexico.

All three fell in love with the mountainous, desert climate, surrounded by the Pacific Ocean.

One night, all three went to Dan's million-dollar condo on the west side of the mountains. They sat on the balcony, drinking Coronas with a perfect panoramic view of the deep-blue waters of

the mighty Pacific Ocean. If a tsunami wave rolled onto the shore, the wave would never touch his condo.

As dusk approached, they watched the sun set over the Pacific Ocean.

Chad asked, "So Dan, tell us the truth, did you ever want to assassinate Jerrick and take over the Presidency? You were the second in command."

"Many times. As you know, total power has no friends, but only enemies. After each time, I came to my senses," Dan explained mysteriously.

Jennifer asked succinctly, "What do you mean you came to your senses?"

"Have you ever noticed everything went Jerrick Davis's way? He stayed three steps ahead of everyone. Everything he did, he used little effort," Dan uttered poignantly.

"I know what you mean, in some ways it was always eerie. At any step along the way, million things could go wrong, but they never did for Jerrick," Jennifer added.

"Jerrick Davis was always meant to be a leader. He became the key to the revolution, and the building of the Empire. Without Jerrick, we would never see the American Empire. That was his destiny and sole purpose in life. He saved the United States by converting it into an Empire."

Dan paused to take another swig of beer and continued, "If I assumed power, I was afraid I would fuck it all up and everything would collapse."

Jennifer uttered, "Yeah; I know; you would have screwed everything up, but you're right. Everything worked out for Jerrick. Jerrick stopped his bus in front of us, and we all hopped on. Then Jerrick drove us to the top with him."

"Do you think history will remember us?" Chad inquired softly.

"We stood next to Jerrick as he built the American Empire, so we will be remembered. However, everyone will know Jerrick Ray Davis while we'll be footnotes in history," Dan explained.

"We do have hospitals, schools, and airports named after us. We'll not be completely forgotten," Jennifer bellowed.

Chad asked, “What about his son, Aric? It’s hard to believe that little boy grew up to become the Empire’s second ruler. Do you think he’ll be a good ruler?”

“I do agree with Jerrick. I think Aric will do well. Jerrick designed the Empire to survive several bad rulers, but we’ll never see a bad ruler in our lifetime. Aric probably will be President for at least 30 years, and he’ll do well,” Dan concluded confidently.

Jennifer asked, “Do you think the Empire will ever crumble?”

“Of course, it’s inevitable. All empires will fail, but we will never see ours fail because that’s at least two centuries away,” Dan explained.

Chad asked, “Did you ever think that Jerrick might have us purged, when he assumed control of the Presidency?”

“I’m sure he considered it. Remember, at the top, you can’t trust anyone.”

Dan paused for a few seconds and added, “I’m sure Jerrick had everyone watched too. I heard rumors that Jerrick planted spies everywhere, hiding them deeply within our government.”

Jennifer became exasperated and asked, “But Dan; you were second in command. You would have seen all the budget reports.”

“I did see all the budget reports, but one of my bright assistants accidentally found traces, where someone skimmed money from the budgets. At first, we thought we found a mistake that added to several trillion dollars over 30 years,” Dan added with mystery and awe in his voice.

Jennifer asked in complete surprise, “Wow! You don’t think Jerrick stole that money?”

“Of course not! Jerrick was the leader. He could ask Congress for that money, and they would have given it to him with no questions asked. One day, after we had a meeting, I just blurted out my discovery.”

Chad voice rose in pitch, “Well, what did Jerrick say?” Chad was anxious and wanted Dan to answer.

“He laughed it off. He said he was funding some important projects that will lead the Empire into the 22nd century as a technology leader.”

Jennifer stated in a hurt tone, “If he didn’t tell us, then he had to tell someone. I thought I was his key person for technology?”

“He told his son,” Dan said sternly.

Both Jennifer and Chad asked in surprise, “What?”

“One day I was waiting for Jerrick. His son was seven and played with some toys. He had this weird aircraft. I asked him what it was. He said his dad and him are making new space ships that will take the troops to outer space.”

Jennifer stated in surprise, “What? Are you kidding me? Jerrick told his boy his secrets?”

“That meant Jerrick always planned for his son to succeed as ruler. The election was a complete ruse,” Chad stated.

“Of course it was. Jerrick always meant Aric to be the second ruler of the Empire. Jerrick gave the appearance the people had a choice, but he was the consummate poker player. He was the best of the best,” Dan said with admiration in his voice.

Then Dan raised his bottle of beer to propose a toast, “To Jerrick; buddy, may you rest in peace. Thank you for taking us with you on your journey, for saving America, and building something that would never be forgotten.”

Bottles clinked together, and they took large swigs of their beer.

Tears started to swell up in Chad’s and Jennifer’s eyes.

Then Chad held up his bottle for another toast and added, “Jerrick; I wish you were here with us. Thank you for being our friend. Perhaps you found peace in the afterlife.”

Then they clanked bottles again and drank more beer.

Then Dan added, “May Jerrick is in heaven, helping God build his Empire.”

“But Jerrick did many misdeeds too. I’m sure he’s resting in a very warm place now,” Jennifer retorted in jest.

“Well, wherever he is, I’m sure he’s taking charge and building something. That’s Jerrick’s nature. Jerrick gives

commands; he doesn't take them," Chad said sadly, remembering his good ole friend.

Thalia Davis moved out of the Whitehouse after her husband died, returning to Mexico City to retire. She kept busy, speaking at public events or reading books to school children.

People still loved her, and they called her the First Lady of the Empire.

In her palatial home, Thalia always walked past the portraits of Thalia and Jerrick Davis hung prominently on the walls. She felt a tinge of sadness, glancing at Jerrick's portraits. His death left a void in her heart.

Thalia wished she spent more time with her son, but he was always busy. Aric always was working. If he weren't working, then he paced in his office in deep thought. Similar to his father, Aric was a workaholic, dreaming about a bigger and better Empire.

Thalia moved out of the Whitehouse because she didn't want to pester Aric. Besides, if she needed him, she knew she could pick up a phone and call him. Aric would answer his mother, no matter where Aric was in the world. Once Aric marries and fathers children, Thalia would return to the Whitehouse, raising her grandchildren, preparing the next generation of rulers.

President Davis the Second paced around the Oval Office in deep thought. He pondered his next course of action. He thought about purging the malcontents in his government and the National Workers' Party but decided against it. His dad made the Empire's government one fast and efficient working machine. Aric did not want to interfere with it.

Now Aric knew what he must do. During the elections, opponents crawled out from under the rocks and voted against the American Empire. Aric would go after them and make them as

examples, solidifying, establishing his authority. No one dares question the President.

Aric wondered if his dad granted a free election to help Aric find dissidents and protesters of the Empire, placing their heads on silver platters. He knew his dad was quite clever.

Then President Davis trotted towards his dad's desk to the Whitehouse's Oval Office.

As Aric approached the desk, he lightly patted the head of a carved lion that jutted out from the side. This desk was his father's favorite, and a former possession of Hugo Chavez, and even a Czar from Russia.

Aric loved the hand-carved lions and banners, and the dark-green velvet top. As a kid, his father let him sit behind this desk on his lap while he pretended he was a ruler. Now, he had become the new ruler of the American Empire.

Aric already sent the military to conquer the last two South American countries: Chile and Argentina. They were easy pickings, just like his father said. They fell within hours of the invasion if you can call it that. As the armies strolled onshore, the people celebrated in the streets with parades and parties.

Aric kept his dad's staff and professionals. They were experts at annexing and developing invaded countries, turning it into an art form. After each conquest, the Empire added millions of more citizens while the Empire's military became larger, creating more jobs and redeveloping the large Latin cities. The Empire constructed new housing, government buildings, schools, highways, and dams.

However, President Aric Davis wanted history to record him as a great conqueror like his father. His picture would lie across the page in history books from his dad, recorded as a great ruler and doubled the size of the American Empire.

Aric unrolled a map of the world, sprawling across the whole surface of the desk. His finger slid over the map, searching for new conquests.

Aric settled on Africa, a continent brimming with natural resources and minerals. However, violence and civil wars plagued Africa for the last century. Annexing Argentina and Chile, he

would send the Empire's military across the Atlantic Ocean to Nigeria and South Africa.

The Empire would pursue Nigeria's petroleum and South Africa's gold and diamond mines. Then Aric would spend his remaining life conquering and developing Africa, forming new rich states of the American Empire.

Afterwards, he would send the armies to the Middle East, seizing their petroleum. In time, the Empire would own the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

After that, who knew? If Aric marries and has a son, his son would lead the Empire's armies north into Europe. Europe would make a fine addition to the American Empire. Since many Americans' roots originate from both Africa and Europe, the powerful son would return home to take care of their aging, ailing parents.

The End