

THE DAY OF THE ROPE

BOOK ONE



DEVON STACK

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ROPE**

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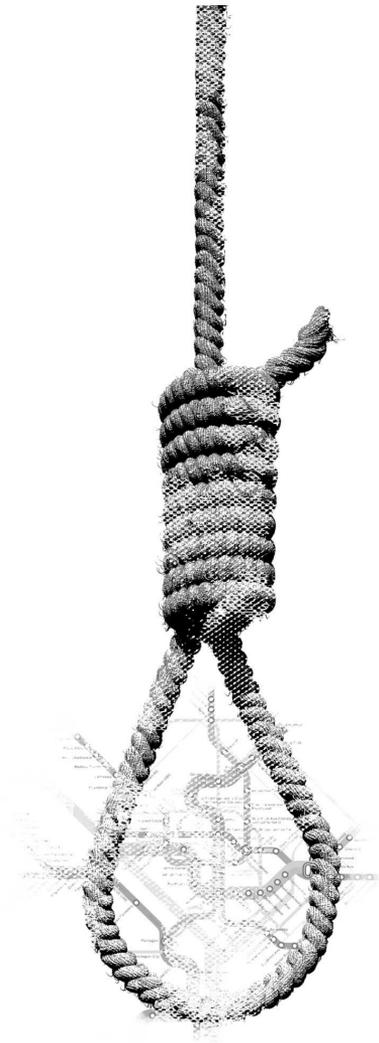
AUTHOR'S NOTE

The first thing I'd like to say is, thank you for purchasing my book. I spent countless sleepless nights writing it. I hope you find it thought-provoking and unique.

I would also like to say that this is a work of fiction.

This is not a prediction of the future or even a fantasy of the present. It's just a story, and any connection to real-world events, places, or people, are all just coincidences, and nothing more.
Enjoy.

-Devon Stack



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“Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.”

-John F. Kennedy

CHAPTER 1

Laughter escaped Ethan's lips, but it was cut short immediately. He hadn't expected to laugh like that. Not out loud. Not at all. The hysterical edge he'd detected in his unexpected outburst reignited his paranoia. He glanced around, scanning the faces of everyone inside the metro car with him. Had they noticed?

Nobody seemed to be aware that he even existed. Ethan was very familiar with this. He'd been commuting in and out of the city on the red line for years and had never had a conversation with anyone that he could remember. There were only those occasionally awkward moments when some urine-stained lunatic would try to solicit money from him, or lost tourists would ask for directions to the various monuments.

A new and increasingly common phenomenon was the sudden appearance of large groups of pushy black teenagers that abruptly performed half-baked "performance art" pieces that were supposedly about racism. The teens would loudly shout platitudes about bigotry and bias, as the train moved between metro stops. These performances always ended with mildly threatening requests for "donations" from their captive audience.

If nobody took the bait, the teens often got aggressive with whichever white passengers looked easiest to intimidate. The teens would point their phones at their victim, call them racist, and shout nonsense about "white privilege" until the mark invariably either fled the train or paid the teens off to avoid confrontation. Many of these passengers were government employees or contractors, and the last thing they wanted was to play a starring role as the evil white racist in the next viral outrage video.

Ethan avoided these situations the same way most people did. He simply avoided eye contact at all costs, even if it meant pretending to be intensely interested in the bits of left behind garbage and filth on the floor, and seats of the metro car.

He felt bad for the tourists who were intimidated into handing over their cash. Most of the time these were patriotic retired folks who had spent most of their lives getting fleeced by the ruling class that operated out of the city above. Now, here they were spending some of their savings to see their nation's capital. Seeing, but not really seeing. It angered Ethan to know that if Norman Rockwell were alive today, he'd be forced to paint an elderly war veteran wearing a foreign made "We the People" t-shirt purchased from a gift shop from someone who didn't speak English, getting shaken down by these illiterate delinquents in a graffiti-covered underground train.

All the tourists had gone now. Most of the car's inhabitants had their noses in their phones. Some were tapping and sliding their fingers across their screens as the rest of their bodies swayed rhythmically in unison to the thumping and squealing sounds coming from the wheels of the car below, as it bounced and scraped against the track beneath them. None acknowledged his presence. The hypnotic blur of brick and concrete just outside the dull windows took no notice of him either. It did, however, remind him to pay attention to the next stop. Was he out of the city yet?

It seemed like just moments ago, that adrenaline had been splashing through his veins. He had been pushing and shoving his way into the metro car alongside the others like suit-clad, tie-wearing,

salmon. He had been acutely aware of everyone around him. Now, it seemed his brain chemistry was struggling to return to normal. The adrenaline had run its course, and it had turned sour in his blood.

He suddenly found it difficult to keep his balance as the metro car bobbed up and down. His grip on the stainless steel hand railing made his arm seem stiff and corpse-like. His knuckles were white as bone. The rest of his body swayed in reaction to the car's movement, not unlike a ragdoll attempting to look dignified.

There was no reason for him to remain standing like this. The car was no longer packed full of the odd mixture of aspiring Deep-Staters and welfare recipients. The trail-mix of people that had occupied the car when he had first fought his way through the automatic doors and boarded the train at the Chinatown station had thinned out significantly. Nearly all of the sociopaths in wool suits had exited at DuPont Circle. They had filed out like well-behaved robots, never looking up from their phones.

Everyone else had all but evacuated too. The few people that remained were staring intently at their government-issued devices, playing mindless freemium games, and listening to music so loud with their earbuds it could be heard over the blaring sounds of the track coming through the floor. He knew several seats were now available if he wanted to sit by himself. Instead of sitting, he maintained his death grip on the metal handrail. The rail he had been clinging to for, how long had it been?

It strangely felt as if he'd always been in this car, in this position, and at the same time, it felt as though he had only just arrived. Both feelings aroused an anxiety about his inevitable departure from his sanctuary. Being inside the metro car was like being inside a machine capable of freezing him in time. He knew once he walked through the automatic doors, and through the turnstiles, that the world would once again resume at normal speed. He realized that he was rapidly approaching the end of the line. Soon, he would have to face this new reality that he had chosen for himself.

Tonight's work was almost done. Had it really been that simple? There were only a few things left for him to do, but for the most part, it seemed that his plan had worked. There was just the simple matter of finding a cab without the help of his phone. He wasn't completely sure cabs still accepted cash. They had to. Right?

An electronic bell crackled from the antiquated PA speaker system above Ethan's head followed by a voice grunting "Twinbrook. Doors opening on the right."

The sloppy unconcerned tone of the engineer's voice reminded him of the morbidly obese TSA agent that had felt him up earlier in the week, with her disgustingly fat fingers. Fat greasy fingers stuffed inside light blue rubber gloves, that were much too small for her bulging hands. Why had she seemed so smug? It was as if she was savoring this tiny sliver of power she perceived having over him. At the same time, there was a carelessness about her conduct that would have been comforting, had he been an actual terrorist, which of course he wasn't. Not then.

Is that what he was now? His mind wandered from the repugnant TSA agent to an apathetic cashier that had checked him out at the grocery store the day before; checked him out without saying a word. She had just glared at him expectantly, after carelessly tossing his items into the plastic bags that she then heaved unceremoniously onto the counter. The bags that he had to pay extra for, thanks to some Leftist hysteria about plastic bags. A hysteria that he didn't quite understand.

He had stopped trying to understand.

"In me, they see no real threat," he had thought. "I'm simply the piñata they lower from the

tree. They lower me down from the tree to keep these animals from climbing it. I'm the sacrificial lamb, the sedative. I'm the pacifying feast that has been prepared for these... ..people."

Maybe that's when he decided he'd be the first one. The first lamb to grow claws and fangs and feast upon those who had bred him for the sacrifice. Living in DC had given him a front-row seat to the decadence and decay. The nauseatingly seductive atmosphere of the city. The city that made the promise to its wretched inhabitants that if you just play along, and thank the masters for your miserable table scraps, then maybe, maybe, one day the masters might find you deserving of a seat at the table. Then, if you were lucky, you might be permitted to gorge yourself on a minuscule portion of the ill-gotten bread.

Wasn't that what he had been doing? Enduring all the hubris and rot in the hopes that someday he would have his turn? The steady process of degrading himself in every way imaginable had been the formaldehyde that had preserved the remains of his ambitions. He had coveted the pleasures that were advertised in real-time on the social media feeds of his superiors. In this delirium, somewhere in the endless line of compromises, he had had enough. That was when he had discovered The List.

At first, The List had seemed like the deranged fantasy of crypto-anarchists, and maybe it was. After all, this was technically the first real beta test. There was no guarantee that any of this was rooted in reality, but that was ok. He had made his peace with the very real possibility that this was all just an elaborate hoax. He wasn't doing this for the money, anyway. It was worth the risk; someone had to be the first.

The hardest part had been overcoming his obedience to the programming that had been carefully stitched into his brain. The hypocritical codes of conduct that had been imprinted on the minds of those of his species who, like him, were born into the lower classes. Which is to say, every class that wasn't the ruling class. This was the programming that included all sorts of unquestionable concepts, like the idea that decisions concerning who lived and who died, could only be made by those who had been born into the ruling class. Whether it was a decision to kill a single citizen, or hundreds of thousands, even millions, this power was reserved exclusively for the ruling class. Never mind that the upper levels of this hierarchy consisted of the worst humanity had to offer, it was they, and they alone, who possessed the authority to determine the fate of everyone else, and everyone seemed inexplicably satisfied with this arrangement.

Ethan rejected this. He also rejected the fairytale known as the "American Dream". The mirage that was nothing more than the carrot forever dangling just out of reach. This appropriately named "dream" had to be recognized for what it really was. It was an unattainable prize that held the ambitions, and the attention, of the citizens captive. A dream that prevented people from seeing where they were really headed, and who they really served. It was the cruel comfort of a violent parent, promising an abused child, that the beatings would stop as soon as they learned how to behave.

The classic American "rags to riches" tale that was promoted throughout the culture, the pot of gold at the end of the American rainbow, was complete fiction. Sure, there had been a few exceptions. There would always be outliers and statistical anomalies. However, for all he knew, even these rare instances might not be as organic as they seemed. For as long as Ethan had been alive, the White House had been occupied exclusively by millionaires, and billionaires, and it wasn't as though members of Congress were working class, salt of the earth types. They in no way resembled the men described in the storybooks read in government schools. The banking system was just a sophisticated system of slavery, that was marketed so well, that everyone was fighting to the death to

become the noble alpha slave.

It was so obvious to Ethan now. He sometimes wondered if the system had been subverted at some point in the past, or if it had always been a lie, but it didn't really matter. What mattered now was that he knew he was being exploited by people who had not earned and did not deserve, their positions; positions that were held together by imaginary frameworks. These were intangible structures that consisted of self-appointed royal bloodlines, oligarchs, and banking dynasties. Nearly every decision these sociopaths made was to secure their position of power within the architecture they had created, and eliminate any possibility of competition.

They were the divine few; always justified in their choices, no matter what the cost to people like him. It was people like him that the ruling class had been working diligently against for decades, if not longer; working to strip away any remaining residual power that might threaten their legacy.

When these autocrats weren't developing new ways to devour their own countrymen, they were sending hundreds of thousands of these ignorant wretches, sometimes even millions, to their deaths. Countless nobodies had died in wars so that the elites might enrich themselves or secure their legacy. Nobody ever called them murderers, no matter how high the bodies were stacked. Countless men, still under the spell of the American delusion, had lined up for the slaughter generation, after generation. All of them vying for the chance to have their name carved into a war memorial. This was the closest a piñata could ever come to immortality or having a legacy. It was a bitter pill to swallow, but Ethan finally understood the truth. The truth that might have saved the lives of these men with engraved names had they experienced the same awakening.

Had these dead men truly believed, in their final moments, that murdering the enemies of the ruling class was so noble? Breathing their last breath, so that there might be more oxygen remaining in the wind for the elites and their bloodlines? Was it honorable for these fallen men, to leave their offspring alone on this earth, to fend for themselves under the rule of those who had sent them to die for their own personal gain?

Ethan was appalled that this tiny minority had managed to amass so much control over the rest of the species. That they had fooled so many into believing that murder, sanctioned by them, was no longer murder. That it only became murder, when it wasn't explicitly in the interests of *their* bloodlines. What made their interests so damn righteous, other than their place in the hierarchy?

"Nothing," he had decided. Rejecting their authority and their claim to their positions in this imaginary institution had been easy. He had never ceded power to them. He had never agreed to be their servant. He never consented to the murders they committed in his name. He rejected utterly the premise that when they kill, it is noble and good, but for him, and people like him, it was forbidden. He would not submit to this system. This system that was intangible, and existed only in the abstract, and only in the minds of those who *did* submit and obey.

Having this knowledge made him ponder the methods of ruling class of generations past. The ancient ancestors of the elite, that centuries ago had sought to prevent people like him from gaining knowledge through reading the written word. That had been a power reserved only for them, and this too was a power they must guard jealously. But, the veil had been lifted, and now The List would do for killing what the printing press had done for literacy.

"Perhaps that might be overstating it," he thought.

All the same, using The List, he would claim this forbidden power and reject this universally held delusion, that murder was a weapon reserved only for *them*. It amused him that, despite their conspicuous efforts to promote moral relativism, and degeneracy, that there were still a few commandments that the ruling class needed people like him to obey. He was no longer governed by

these laws, written by others to control him. He didn't accept the title of "murderer", he had merely acquired a more complex understanding of the term. The same way the ruling class had when they wanted to achieve their goals by any means necessary. By discarding the rules branded on the flesh of the slaves at birth, and adopting the laws, that governed kings, he had evened the playing field and become one of them.

Hadn't many of these so-called "ordained" risen to power through exploiting this same loophole? Wasn't that the rush of power he had experienced, when he'd...

"Shady Grove, doors open on the left, this is the end of the line," the speaker above squawked and buzzed.

The car was empty now. He released his grip on the railing and stood unsteadily facing the door. His face was so close to the plexiglass window his nose was almost touching it. He waited in anticipation for the train to come to a stop and for the automatic doors to open. For some reason, he'd always felt a rush of power, when the mechanical doors opened. He supposed this was a tiny taste of the drug that the ruling class was addicted to.

"If something as insignificant, as a motorized door bending to your will, delivered a perceivable amount of dopamine into your system, then just imagine how the ruling class feels all the time," he thought.

He didn't have to imagine. He was now one of them, and he did feel that power. He had taken that power. He had taken it from Adam Aaronberg.

The doors to the metro car opened. He was disappointed to note that instead of the usual micro-pleasure he had felt in the past, during these moments when the physical world bent to his will in this tiny, yet satisfying way, he felt nothing. He supposed power must be like a drug, after all. Perhaps the recent dosage increase had overwhelmed his system and made him numb to the simpler pleasures like this. He wondered momentarily if this phenomenon explained why the ruling class seemed to develop an appetite for the kind of extreme depravity that had led to the creation of The List. The nightmarish lusts that justified The List's ruthlessness. He would have to remember to manage his doses. If things went well with Aaronberg, maybe he shouldn't rush right on to the next one.

Aaronberg's name was one of the first names on The List, which was arranged in alphabetical order, but that's not the only reason he'd chosen this name for the beta test. Anons had put together quite the dossier on Mr. Aaronberg, as they had for most of those on The List, but Aaronberg's bounty had reached a staggering one-point-seven-million dollars in less than twenty-four hours. The bounty had surged when he was identified as one of the men in a particularly horrifying snuff film that had surfaced on the darkweb. One-point-seven-million dollars in crowdsourced privacy coins made payable to anyone who took his name off The List, and there was only one way a name could be removed from The List. The blockchain made sure of that.

"At least, that's the idea," he mused as he exited the metro station through the turnstiles.

This was the first real-world test. Ethan wouldn't know for certain until he received confirmation that the funds had been transferred to the address he had provided the smart-contract. Until then, his only reward was the unshakable feeling that by touching one of the untouchables, and by imposing *his* rule on *them*, he had become the fire that would fight their hellish fire. He had rejected his assigned seating in the hierarchy and entered the space reserved for gods.

"Too bad I can't control the weather," he thought to himself.

It had started raining, and the only cabs he could see were working for ride-share companies that used apps that tracked location data. Just as he was about to lose hope, he spotted an old light

blue Crown Victoria, parked along the sidewalk, near a bus stop. He opened the back door to the cab. The driver, who was talking on his cell phone, looked at him in the rearview mirror. He was an Arabic man, in his forties, and seemed less than enthusiastic about having a new customer. According to the license taped to the dashboard, his name was Mohamed.

"Can you take me to Silver Spring?" Ethan asked.

"Silver Spring? I guess, ok," said Mohamed.

Ethan nodded and crawled into the back of the cab, which, because of the make and model, felt like the back of a police car.

"Just take me to downtown. You know where The Jem is?" asked Ethan.

Mohamed said that he did, and they left the metro station parking lot. The rain began to pick up, and the sound of the windshield wipers transitioned from rhythmic and almost soothing, to a level just below frantic.

"You take cash, right?"

CHAPTER 2

"Don't say it, Dave," Wayne said, holding back a smug smile.

The acoustics of the cave played tricks with his voice and made Wayne sound as if his words were being amplified through a possessed karaoke machine.

"Say what?" asked Dave, sheepishly.

Dave hated getting into these conversations with Wayne. They weren't what you would call arguments. They were more like high-pressure sales pitches. Wayne had a kind of manic charisma that he used to overwhelm his opponents. Shock and awe.

"*How does that make us any better than them??*" Wayne said with a mocking voice, "That *is* what you were going to say, right?"

"Well, it's true..." Dave stammered.

"It's true that every so-called conservative has been using that line as an excuse to lose for the last fifty years," Wayne sneered, "but it's definitely not true."

Wayne removed a pack of cigarettes from his jacket pocket and extracted what must have been the last one. He crushed the empty box in his hand and tossed it on the floor of the tunnel before placing the cigarette between his lips. The two had both smoked their first cigarette in these caves, nearly fifteen years ago. Dave had never really liked smoking, but Wayne had pressured him into it that day they had stolen a pack of Camel Wides from the corner store, all those years ago. Wayne still smoked from time to time, when he was under a lot of pressure. Dave wondered if his friend still smoked Camels. He thought it was strange that he didn't know. Despite all the time they spent together, they were both very different people, and there were many things Dave didn't know about Wayne. There was even more Wayne didn't know about him.

"That's what they need you to believe," Wayne said as he lit the cigarette, and then thrust it in Dave's direction like he was wielding a knife. "You think it's any coincidence that in every post-apocalyptic movie, and TV show, there's always some scene *dripping* with forced emotion where the good guys wrestle with the morality of doing what every single person watching at home knows instinctively *needs* to be done? Like, in *The Lumbering Dead*-"

"The what? Oh, right that zombie show." Dave had never liked zombie fiction. Something about their dead eyes rattled him. The child zombies especially.

"Yeah, and don't even get me started on why they use zombies-" Wayne's arms flew up involuntarily in exasperation.

"Why *who* uses zombies?" Dave wondered if Wayne was about to launch into one of those speeches about who *really* controlled Hollywood. Not that Wayne didn't have some good points, but it seemed like an unwinnable battle to Dave.

"The writers, the directors. There's a reason they were pushing that whole zombie meme for so long, but I don't want to go off on a tangent. Focus Dave!" Wayne's angry tone appeared at odds with his light-hearted expression. Dave had the feeling this was another of Wayne's tactics. It seemed he intentionally created socially bewildering interactions with people to keep them on their toes, but whether it was a calculated tactic, or just Wayne amusing himself, Dave would never know.

"In every single one of these zombie movies and TV shows, the *good* group always comes across some dangerous scumbag," Wayne continued, "Someone that *everyone* in the audience at home *knows* is bad news. Someone that will end up being trouble, if the group shows mercy when they have reason and opportunity to kill them."

Wayne glared at Dave expectantly, and Dave nodded that he understood.

"And then, every! Single! Time! It's the same scene!" Wayne's voice echoed in the darkness, "Bad guy does something fucked up and gets caught. Like, maybe he attacks a member of the group or uses one of them as a human shield to save his own skin when the zombies come. Something *really* fucked up that leads to people dying, and everyone at home is shouting at their television because, they *know*, the good guys just need to cut out the cancer, before it does more damage!"

Wayne seemed genuinely exasperated as if he had a particular episode in his mind's eye that he was mentally viewing at this very moment.

Dave hadn't seen many of these zombie shows, but he had seen enough horror films to understand the frustration. He figured that if the characters in these movies acted rationally, they wouldn't be very long movies. Maybe the people that liked the horror genre also enjoyed being frustrated.

"Frustration is a kind suspense," Dave thought.

"...and the *good* guys!" Wayne made it clear what he thought of the *good* guys, with his mocking voice returning briefly "These so-called *good* guys have a ridiculous crisis of conscience that takes up half the episode, where they wrestle with the morality of it all!" Wayne said in an exaggerated tone, holding his hands against his heart. "And the burden of dealing with the situation the way it *needs* to be dealt with."

Wayne's hands dropped to his sides, defeated. Then he whispered, "And every single time they hesitate," Wayne stared directly at Dave with that unnerving intensity, "And every single time the bad guy ends up doing more fucked up shit. Maybe he even kills off a main character or two, before the group finally does what they should have done in the first place."

Wayne's frustration disappeared for a moment as he took a long drag from his cigarette. His face was red with the light of the glowing cherry. He seemed to be studying Dave. Looking for something he didn't see. The frustration returned to his face slowly, and then, he exhaled with a sigh.

"But then!" he shouted, "Then, just as you start to think they have *finally* learned their lesson, the *good* guys spend the rest of the episode feeling guilty about doing what *needed* to be done! They actually feel guilty for offing the bad guy!" Wayne was shouting in disbelief, "Always so anguished, and questioning whether they did the right thing! And even *crying* about it! There is so much crying in these fucking zombie shows! It's the same formula, over, and over, again. It's literally the plot line to the majority of Lumbering Dead episodes," Wayne lamented, sounding genuinely disappointed.

"I still don't get what that has to do with what we're talking about," complained Dave.

Dave wasn't being completely honest, but he was hoping that he was wrong.

"What do you not get? It's *exactly* what we are talking about. We're the *good* guys. It's obvious what needs to be done. But here you are with your guts twisted in knots, literally saying the kind of shit these characters say before the bad guy kills their best friend because they were all too busy staring off into the distance to the sound of sad piano music." Wayne's expression radiated disgust. "And crying! And wringing their hands about becoming the *bad* guy!"

"How long do the bad guys have to win, before you admit that they have the right fucking idea? Is it so hard to admit that maybe they are *right*?"

Wayne waited for an answer.

"It's not like we can just start killing people," Dave said hoping this was all just a joke.

"Why?" Wayne let the word hang in the air until the last reverberating echo was silenced by the darkness that surrounded them. "Is that what the elites say to each other before a few witnesses shoot themselves in the back of the head, or accidentally drop barbells on themselves, crushing their windpipes? Why do you think these cases never go beyond the media calling it a suicide, or an accident, or a botched robbery? Why do you think nothing *ever* happens?" Wayne took a drag from his cigarette and raised his eyebrows expectantly.

Dave, unsure of how to respond, simply mirrored Wayne's expression.

"Because that's just how things get done, Dave. That's how things have *always* been done, and that's how things always will be done, and if you want to play at making history, then that's just what you do. That's the real secret knowledge that's kept from the public. That's the key to their unearned power."

"You're being serious. Jesus... I..." Dave stammered.

"Of course I'm being serious." Wayne exhaled another generous helping of smoke. With nowhere to go, the nicotine tendrils joined the rest of the cloud that had been forming in the tunnel over their heads. "I'm sure you're familiar with the saying, if you can't beat them join them?"

Dave nodded quietly.

"Well, I was thinking about that the other day. At first, it seemed like a shitty thing to say, to just abandon your principles and change loyalties at the first sign of defeat, but I don't think that's what it means at all." Wayne smiled and took another slow drag from his cigarette. "It means you must learn from your enemy, use the weapons they use if yours aren't working. I don't mean just how they use propaganda like we've learned to do, I mean, how do they *really* rule? What do they do to people that get in the way?"

Dave wondered for a moment if Wayne was putting him on. He let out a sigh of relief; there was no way Wayne was being serious. He was just fucking with him, right?

"Nobody can hear us, Dave. Why do you think I had you leave your phone at home? Why do you think we are here? We have big boy problems that require big boy solutions. Before you say anything, just answer this. Tell me, what's the difference between you, and Alice Green?"

"Well, for one thing, I'm not a murderer-" Dave began.

"Wrong answer! Besides, Alice Green is not a murderer," Wayne said, cutting him off with a smug look.

"The hell she isn't," Dave said confused.

"Then why isn't she in jail?" Wayne shot back.

Dave considered the question for a moment. The answer was obvious to him, but he knew that whatever he said would be wrong. Wayne had been driving him towards a conclusion at full throttle, but he was still unclear as to where this was going.

"Because some people are above the law, I guess-" Dave stammered

Wayne made a loud noise imitating a game show buzzer.

"Wrong again! You see, this is your problem. Alice Green isn't above the law; she cannot defy gravity! She cannot travel through time! She can't walk through walls! She is subject to all the same laws that you and I are subject to. You just don't understand the laws, so you are constrained by what you think the laws are," he said.

"I'm pretty sure murder is against the law," Dave said, exasperated.

"You play a lot of computer games, right?" Wayne asked.

This sudden change in subject threw Dave's mind off track, as his thoughts went from

contemplating the morality of murder to the hundreds of thousands of virtual murders he had committed in online games over the years.

"Not so much these days-"

"Have you ever had the experience, where you are playing a new multiplayer game online. You're just starting to get good at the game when you see another player do something that seems impossible? They do something so outside the scope of your experience that you are convinced that the player is cheating? You are *certain* they are cheating! You might pound your fist into your keyboard, and rage at how unfair it is that you spent so much time trying to get good at this game, and here they are, cheating! You might even rage-quit because it seems so unfair!" Wayne chuckled to himself as if remembering some distant memory. "But then one day, maybe even because you're trying to catch them cheating so you can report their account, you figure out what they were doing."

Dave instantly thought of a game he played back in college. He had always liked first person shooters and considered himself a formidable player at the time. He almost always finished games in the top three and often finished in first place. Without shame, Dave had spent hours, and hours, in these virtual worlds, developing skills that would never really translate to the real world.

He recalled a specific time in his gaming career when there had been an update pushed out that had introduced a new glitch into the game. A glitch that had somehow slipped past the beta testers. This glitch allowed players, who knew just the right spot, to crawl inside one of the walls in the virtual battlefield.

This gave the player the power of invincibility, over the other players who were playing by the rules. Shots could be fired from inside the wall, killing the players who were unable see those who had snuck inside the wall, or where the shots were even coming from.

What made the glitch even more maddening, was that the physics used in the game engine prevented any return fire from ever hitting the players that had snuck inside the wall. The players who exploited the glitch were utterly untouchable.

Dave admitted to himself that when he had first encountered players doing this, destroying his stats by repeatedly killing him from inside the wall, he had thought they were using some kind of private cheating software. He was just about to call it quits when entirely by dumb luck, he witnessed a player crawling into the wall. The secret was out. Dave followed after the "cheater."

Once Dave was in on the trick, he abused it like all of the others. Dave had fond memories of gunning people down until he ran out of ammo. Everyone in the chat window called him a cheater. Eventually, the game developer had fixed the glitch with a new patch, and the playing field was equalized once again. After it was gone, he had to admit he missed the exploit, and the advantage it had given him, even if it had been a cheap tactic.

"They weren't cheating at all," Wayne continued, as if he was reading Dave's mind, "they simply discovered a clever trick that was available to anyone that knew about it. An exploit that gave them an advantage over those who didn't know the trick, I'll concede that, but they weren't cheating. They weren't playing by different rules, the rules of the game still applied to them, they were just exploiting the ignorance of the other players like you, who didn't know the rules as well as they knew them."

Dave was beginning to understand, and he didn't like where this was going.

"That's precisely what Alice Green, and all the other fuckers just like her, are doing. They know how to exploit the weaknesses in the system, and take advantage of the people that don't. So you can get pissed off, and call her a cheater, and cry about how she's not in jail, or you can start using the same exploits she uses to stay in power," Wayne said with quiet intensity.

"This isn't a fucking video game," Dave said.

"You're right!" Wayne shouted "This is *way* more fucking important than a video game! If this was a video game, you would be all over this! You'd be willing to do what needed to be done to win! But, because this is real life, you're going to just roll over and take it in the ass and cry about how they are cheating! The worst part is, you know I'm right!"

"You're not right," Dave mumbled.

"What's getting in the way, Dave? Is it superstition? Are you afraid Santa Claus won't bring you any presents if you're not a good little boy? Has it ever occurred to you that the ruling class invented those stories, to keep you playing by the rules? Ever wonder why so many nations implemented official religions? Do you really think it was because they were pious?" Wayne let out a genuine belly laugh that startled Dave.

"You think people, like the pope, aren't in on all this? Yeah, you know I'm right. That's why you're pissed off. You know I'm right, and you're not so innocent," Wayne sneered

"I'm not pissed off. It's just-" Dave stammered.

"You *should* be pissed off. Santa Claus isn't real Dave. Alice Green gets more presents than you do because she knows this, and acts accordingly. Meanwhile, everyone else plays by different rules! The worst part is? They do it by choice," Wayne hissed.

Wayne examined Dave's face. He recognized Dave's look of shock. It wasn't precisely what he was going for, but really, in the end, it didn't matter. This sick bastard had always played the innocent card. It wouldn't work this time. Plus, this was a good practice run. Things were progressing about as well as he had expected. This was a deal that never needed to be closed anyway.

"Remember when Green was running against Wilson in New York, and she was way behind in the polls?" Wayne's voice had shed the aggressive tone that had been building. He sounded conversational again, casual even. "People were wondering why she was even running, and why big-time donors kept giving her money, and then what happened?"

"Yeah," Dave relaxed slightly.

"Bam! Out of nowhere, Wilson's plane crashes, killing everyone on board, and Green wins in a landslide against the Republican because it was New York, and they've been demographically fucked for decades." Wayne took a drag from his cigarette, then tilted his head back and slowly exhaled.

"Yeah, people were calling bullshit even back then, but nobody could prove anything. Media called everyone a conspiracy nut that even brought it up," Dave said, remembering the headlines clearly.

"Right. Because don't you see, Dave? It *was* just an accident. Why would you go to jail if your opponent died in an accident? That's the exploit. The rule isn't that you can't kill people that get in your way when you want to be a senator. That's the rule if you're a sucker. The rule is, they just have to die in an accident."

"That's fucked up," Dave said.

"War is fucked up," Wayne returned, "In fact, in many ways, war is just a contest of who can be the most fucked up. These mental blocks that keep you in line are the only things separating us from them. It's funny because you complain all the time that there are different rules for them and that the laws don't apply to them. I'm just agreeing with you. The real red pill is, there are no laws. The laws are just self-imposed limitations we put on ourselves. If you really want to beat them, you have to free yourself from these imaginary boundaries, and this moral code they designed to keep us in line, and start playing on *their* level."

"If you can't beat them, join them," Dave whispered breathlessly. He wasn't convinced, but he

was beginning to see Wayne's point, and he had to admit there was a definite logic to it.

"It's just like speeding," Wayne said

"What do you mean?" asked Dave.

"Think back to when you first got your license, and you decided to speed for the first time. I remember when I did. It was in my mom's old minivan, remember that thing?" Wayne could still feel the embarrassment of being seen in the van.

"I remember it had wood paneling on the sides," Dave said smiling.

"I was convinced I would be caught, immediately! I was constantly checking my mirrors for flashing lights like the cops would somehow be alerted the moment I went over the speed limit. But then I realized that *everyone* speeds. You figure out it's only speeding when you get caught, and really, the only time you get caught, is when you're being stupid about it," Wayne said.

"No, some of us have morals. I'm not afraid to kill people because I think I'll get caught-

"Afraid? See! It *is* fear," Wayne said smugly.

"That's not what I meant." Dave hated these debates.

"Sure it is, and you're right. You're not afraid of killing people because you're afraid of being caught, although that's why you're *not* afraid to do some other things. With killing, it's worse than that. You're afraid of Santa Claus. In fact, here's the real fucked up thing about people like you Dave-

"People like me?" Dave tried to sound offended.

"Yeah, people like you," Wayne shot back without hesitation, "You act like you're so positive that Santa Claus exists that, not only are you afraid to do what needs to be done because you want your presents, you feel no sense of urgency in stopping evil in this life! You're convinced that it will all get worked out in the next life by some magical Jew that died two thousand years ago. How fucking convenient. I wonder who that works out for? I wonder who that philosophy could possibly benefit? Just because the ruling class is trying to mutilate the version of God that you prefer now, the version that worked for them for so long in the past, doesn't mean they aren't the ones that invented him in the first place, to keep you in line.

"So yes, people like you, hiding behind fear and superstition. Bedtime stories for the peasants. Don't worry about your life being complete shit now. Be grateful for what you have. Turn the other cheek, and things will get better when you're dead! In the meantime, do as you're told, slave! After all, the meek shall inherit the earth! So, get on your knees, and just have faith that whatever happens, is God's will!" Wayne sneered.

"What happened to you?" Dave was in shock.

"I woke the fuck up Dave. Sometimes I wish I hadn't. Do you really believe in God?" Wayne asked calmly.

"Of course," Dave said unconvincingly.

"Good."

A shot rang out and echoed loudly against the walls of the cave. It was the loudest sound Dave could ever remember hearing. Dave felt the sensation of falling, but something was different. It wasn't quite like falling; it was more like the sensation you felt just before falling asleep at your desk in class. That rushing feeling, accompanied by a jolt of adrenaline that forced your eyes back open. Where had Wayne gone? Just a moment ago he had been looking into those intense green eyes, but now, something seemed strange. He had a sense of *déjà vu* he couldn't quite place.

This was going to drive him crazy. What did this remind him of? Dave wracked his brain, and then it came to him. Years ago when he and Wayne had been teenagers, they had set up a camera on

a tripod so they could film themselves getting drunk. This was several years before camera phones, and social media had taught people the hard way not to record themselves in embarrassing and illegal situations. Things seemed so simple then.

The next morning, when Dave and Wayne had been fighting off hangovers with leftover tacos from the night before, they anxiously popped the tape into the VCR. He remembered how excited they had both been, as they waited for the tape to rewind. The two were looking forward to reliving the previous night's debauchery through the miracle of VHS video.

Relive it, they did... ...for about five minutes. That's when the tape showed Wayne getting angry after Dave had objected to one of the rules of the drinking game they'd been playing. Things quickly escalated, and Wayne eventually took a swing at Dave, but missed and accidentally hit the camera, knocking it to the floor. Apparently, in their drunken state, they hadn't noticed this. The remaining fifty-five minutes of the tape consisted only of an extreme close-up shot of shag carpet, and part of a table leg.

Dave wondered why he was reminded of that moment so many years ago. Then he wondered nothing at all.

CHAPTER 3

It was still raining when they pulled up behind The Jem. The driver, without interrupting the flow of his conversation he was having with someone on his phone in Arabic, tapped his finger on the meter in the dashboard. Ethan instantly remembered why he had started using rideshare apps. For the first time in years, he was forced to calculate a tip and awkwardly fished the cash out of his back pocket.

After settling on a number, he paid the driver, who never once bothered to pause his phone conversation or give Ethan his full attention. Why would he? Ethan was just a piñata.

Mohamed the cab driver quickly counted the money. He frowned and then made it obvious, with his dirty look, and by mumbling something that sounded suspiciously like Arabic profanity into his phone that he was disappointed. The tip had been over twenty percent. Perhaps Mohamed wanted more because of the rain. These people always wanted more.

An overwhelming rage rose up inside Ethan.

"Fuck this guy. He should be kissing my ass. My people didn't build this country or invent this fucking car we are in, or even that damn phone, so this fucker could come here, drive like an asshole, while complaining to one of his seven underage wives, on his free government phone! Is it still not enough? Now he has to talk shit about me, in his goat-fucking language because I didn't give him a big enough slice?" he thought, as his eyebrow began to twitch.

The power he had been gifted, no, it was the power that he had taken. This power surged, again, through his veins. He wanted to reach over the back seat and grab this emboldened invader by his filthy fucking beard, and let him see the power up close and personal. This uninvited, and ungrateful, piece of shit that had mistaken him for the piñata that he used to be, and not seen the god he had become.

"Who will be the piñata when I bash your fucking head against the meter, Mohamed? When I crack your fucking skull on the credit card machine and keep bashing, and bashing, until you twitch like Adam Aaronberg twitched?!" he shouted inside his head.

Adam Aaronberg.

No, he would continue to play the part of the piñata. He had to be smart. He averted his eyes and exited the cab without incident. The taxi sped away into the night the moment he closed the door. He watched as the headlights illuminated the falling rain; watched the glittering particles swirl and bounce as they pelted the ground. Ethan imagined it was blood pooling and flowing in the streets. Maybe that day would come.

It was still raining hard, but he didn't mind. He watched as a group of young women ran squealing from their taxi to the rear entrance of The Jem. He never could understand people who seemed so afraid of a little rain, especially this time of year. For Ethan, it was refreshing to feel the droplets on his hot skin. He lingered a moment longer in the rain, allowing it to calm him. He wondered if this was the kind of weather his ancestors had evolved in. Something about it just seemed right. He stamped his feet in a nearby puddle and smiled at the splash. He didn't pass up a single opportunity to repeat the process as he playfully made his way to the back of the bar. He

leaped from puddle to puddle, stamping his feet and laughing at how juvenile it made him feel.

The Jem, in many ways, was a dive bar, but it was bigger than most hangouts in the area and somewhat popular with the locals. He had been here many times before, usually trying to pick up women, but he wasn't sure why he had decided to come here tonight. It hadn't been part of the plan. The plan had been to go straight home and obsessively browse news sites, through several proxy servers, until the demise of Adam Aaronberg had been widely reported. News sites that would be watched by the decentralized oracle. The same decentralized oracle that would feed the data to the smart-contract and trigger his payment.

He knew that would take several hours, maybe even days. He figured Aaronberg's staff would find his body and report it to the police, but there was no telling how long it would take to make it to the press. Aaronberg wasn't exactly a celebrity. He owned celebrities, but most people had never heard his name. That's how people like Aaronberg liked it.

Slightly out of season hip-hop music filled the inside of The Jem, accompanied by flashing lights coming from the corner of the bar that served as a de facto dance floor. The group of women that he had watched arriving were now gathered around the bar with their faces in their phones. The loud music drowned out their chattering until he had made his way directly behind them.

"I am going to get so fucking shitfaced tonight," the Latina squealed.

"You deserve it, girl!" shouted her Indian friend.

"I'm not even kidding," the Latina said, then swallowed a shot.

"You *should* be celebrating!" screamed the young black woman that was with them.

Not long ago, this would have been music to Ethan's ears, but not anymore. Now the sound of these babbling degenerates was repulsive. It almost made him physically ill. He wondered for a moment how many of these vapid whores were mothers with children at home. How many of them would have been mothers, but instead killed their unborn baby, so they could keep being degenerates like this. For all he knew, this is what they were celebrating. The rage he had felt in the taxi began to build.

"What have they done to us?" he thought.

This systematic dismantling of the society had to be part of some greater plan. Once you saw it, it was impossible to unsee it. The evidence was everywhere.

It was clear by observing the architecture of The Jem that this building hadn't always been a dive bar. The building was old, ancient by American standards. He wondered what this place used to be. He pondered whether the original occupants, now long dead and forgotten, observed the nightly degeneracy as ghosts from the dark corners of the building; trapped between worlds, damned to watch the decay, helpless to stop it.

"Hey, what's your name?"

"Adam."

Fuck! Why did he say that? A young woman was looking up at him smiling. She might have been pretty if it weren't for all the tattoos and piercings that covered her body. You could tell by her roots that she was a blonde, but had dyed her hair an unnatural shade of purple. Her eyes were blue but dulled by alcohol.

"Well, you can call me Eve. Like Adam and Eve! Except, I haven't had the apple, *yet* ..." she slurred and giggled.

She was obviously intoxicated to the point that she was unsteady on her feet. She leaned her body up against his for support, her breasts bulging out of her low cut top. It was obvious what this girl wanted from "Adam".

He couldn't believe how much he had changed over the last few years. This was the kind of situation he used to dream of. It wasn't that long ago he would be pretending that this whore was clever and putting up with her nonsense. Maybe he'd pound a few shots of something strong, so she wouldn't seem as annoying. An hour after that, they'd be making out in the backseat of a cab on the way to one of their apartments. Rinse and repeat. That had been his social life since moving to DC.

All he felt now was revulsion and anger. Loathing for this woman that had mutilated her body and her soul. A woman, who it seemed, had concluded that maybe being penetrated by a stranger could validate her existence. Behind the flirtatious smile was a disgusting kind of pleading, a patheticness that in the past he would have taken full advantage of to distract himself from his own miserable existence.

That's where his anger came from. Anger at himself for ever having been so weak, but also anger for having been so destructive to those weaker, and more pathetic, than himself. People like this young woman. He wanted to hate her, but he knew that she was just a casualty of the war he was fighting. It was too late to save her now. She, and many others like her, would have to be left behind. Broken and helpless, lying in mud and muck of the battlefield. It wasn't fair to hate her.

"No thanks," he said as warmly as he could muster.

"What do you mean, no thanks?" her tone was playful as she pressed her body harder against his, but he could see in her eyes that she knew.

He began to turn away, and for a moment he thought she might get angry and create a scene. Drunk women were hard to predict, especially after being publicly humiliated, not that anyone had really been paying attention to their interaction.

"I wasn't going to fuck you," her tone was annoyed. The embarrassment of his rejection was setting in, and now she was trying to salvage the appearance of pride.

He turned and looked her right in the eyes, "Yes you were."

She was stunned by his forwardness. Her mouth opened and closed slowly as her brain struggled to find the right thing to say in a situation that, as far as she could remember in her drunken haze, she had never been faced with before. She sensed that, more than anything, he was disappointed in her, and for reasons she didn't understand, she felt intensely ashamed because of this.

"I'm going to leave now," he said, no longer hiding his disgust, as he turned toward the front door to The Jem.

A tear rolled down her cheek as she watched him walk away. Why did she always get so emotional when she drank? She was hit with an inexplicable, yet overwhelming, sense of loss as "Adam" walked out of the front entrance to The Jem. What the hell was wrong with her? What the hell was wrong with him? She experienced a moment of clarity, a moment of profound regret. The world didn't seem right to her anymore.

"What's wrong, Baby Girl?" said a muscular well dressed black man that had been watching her all evening, and had apparently smelled blood in the water. He must have decided to swoop in and make his move in her moment of vulnerability.

"Fuck off," she said dismissively.

She didn't really have anything against him. He wasn't particularly bad looking or anything. She had seen him here before, and she didn't like how aggressive and pushy he was with women. Most women were intimidated by his tactics, and quite frankly, so were the men. Eve wondered if "Adam" was the kind of man that would intervene. She imagined he was. Not like most men these days that seemed so... ..feeble.

"Aw, why you gotta be like that? C'mon girl, let me buy you a drink," the well dressed black man said, putting his arm around her.

"I said fuck off!" she shrieked astonishingly loud, and almost everyone in the bar turned their heads to look at them.

The well dressed black man looked annoyed, but then his demeanor became artificially disarming as he raised his hands up "It's cool, it's cool."

Turning on his heel, he shouted "Fucking racist bitch!" and walked back to the bar.

Eve tried not to pay attention to him. She was looking at the door of the bar where "Adam" had exited, just moments before. She couldn't shake this feeling that she had thrown away an opportunity of a lifetime. There was a sense of real dread building up inside her, and she began to get nervous that she was going to have a panic attack. Maybe, because of the abuse she had just suffered at the hands of "Adam", she *had* been racist.

She would text Stacy, that's what she would do. Stacy was always willing to put up with her bullshit and talk her off the ledge. She sat down at an empty table and began to rummage through her purse for her phone. Along with some makeup containers, and feminine hygiene products, a white pill rolled out of her bag and onto the table. Was that a percocet? She examined the sizeable white pill briefly, then discretely popped it into her mouth, swallowing it dry. She couldn't remember where she had left her drink.

She removed her phone from inside her purse, and after skimming through the notifications that she had missed, mostly social media spam, she unlocked it and texted Stacy.

Eve: Heyyyyyy where R U?

Stacy: At home playing momy like usual, what's up?

Eve: I don't know, I think I'm going to have a panic attack

Stacy: Oh no, why?

Eve: I don't know, I met guy

Stacy: Oh y panic then?

Eve: ok, didnt really meet him, im kind of drunk, do you think im racist?

Stacy: are you ok?

Eve: how did you and Tom meet?

Stacy: um.. ...on the internet, are you ok?

Eve: yeah, i'm going to go home i think, feeling sad

Stacy: well id invite you over if it wasn't for the kids, I have to get them to bed, lets do lunch tomorrow yeah?

Eve: ok xoxo

Stacy: be safe! xoxo

CHAPTER 4

He had passed the test.

Wayne didn't feel guilty for killing Dave. He had no regrets. Pedos deserved the bullet. He did feel a little disappointed that Dave hadn't understood, or come clean. Not only had he not been able to convince his friend of several decades the absolute logic behind his new perspective on dealing with the enemy, but he had acted emotionally and killed Dave without truly confronting him. Not that he would have given Dave a chance to redeem himself. No matter what their history was, that sick fuck had to go. It still bothered him, the way he had avoided confronting Dave about the vile things he had discovered about him. He wondered if maybe he'd acted out of weakness.

It would have been much better if he had been able to get Dave to understand why this was how things would have to be. Force him to confess, and accept his fate. Get him to admit that, aside from the pure evil, and hypocrisy of his revolting behavior; actions that, in and of themselves, had earned him the bullet that he also had put the movement in jeopardy.

When Wayne had first found the photos on Dave's computer, he had certainly felt personally betrayed, but that feeling was imperceptible in comparison to the horror of the acts depicted in the images themselves. Once the shock had worn off, his body received an overdose of every panic-inducing hormone in existence. He realized what would happen to the movement if this were discovered. Worse yet, what if it had already been discovered, and Dave was being blackmailed by one, or all, of the three letter agencies? What if this was part of the plan to normalize pedos? Wayne would have to clean up this mess. His world had seemed like it was collapsing around him, but then he recalled the words of one of their more notorious enemies. "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

Despite what Dave had thought, Wayne was not abandoning his morals. He was merely adjusting them to work with a new reality. Moral men had to make difficult decisions in times of war. Perhaps that was why Dave had not understood. Despite what he would soon be telling the press, Dave was no moral man.

"Jesus Christ, now *you're* doing it!" he shouted at himself in the cave, "You were just complaining about this shit!" he sneered, then laughed at himself.

This seemed to relax him. He listened, as the echoes of his laughter softly expired and left him in the dark silence of the smoke-filled tunnel with Dave's corpse.

Wayne decided there would be no moral crisis, or second-guessing. Things were working out, so far. He had brought Dave here because he needed his help, and Dave *had* helped him. He no longer doubted his absolute resolve. He suddenly understood why gangs, and if you believed the rumors, even the Navy seals, forced new members to commit murder as the final step in the initiation process. This would have to be implemented in the movement's elite. It just made sense.

Wayne reminded himself that he was not a murderer. They never called soldiers murderers, nor the generals with oceans of blood on their hands, murderers. It all came down to perspective, and Wayne's perspective had been sufficiently adjusted. He finally understood the evil of the enemy. The darkness that seemed so unbelievable at first, but there was a very good reason for that.

"This whole time, the enemy has been at war with us," he said out loud as he began to lift

Dave's body, "and we've just been debating them. I think you would now agree, Dave, that the pen isn't always mightier than the sword. They aren't intellectually honest because, for them, it has never been an intellectual pursuit. It has *always* been a war."

It explained everything, really. It explained the actions of the ruling class but also the hysteria of their minions. The useful idiots might not be consciously aware of what their masters were up to, but they absolutely understood that they were soldiers in a war. Something that their opposition didn't understand, or didn't want to face.

When Wayne had finally wrapped his head around all of this, everything else came into focus with a kind of clarity that had disturbed him, at first. However, once the shock had worn off, he was embarrassed about being so naive for so long. All this time he had wasted, trying to fight an infection with logic and reason. Speaking softly and reasonably to cancer, as it corrupted his body limb by limb. Asking it nicely to stop killing everything he loved, and now it might be too late.

Had the true nature of the enemy been apparent when the infection was small and localized, the body would have easily survived its removal. The maddening thing was, there had been those who had sounded the alarm in the past, tried to warn others. So many had seen this coming. Why had his ancestors not listened? Why did they not cut out the corrupt parts at the first signs of infection, to ensure that the body would survive? It would have been much easier then. Now, he wasn't so sure. Now, it might be necessary to just wait for the inevitable death, and then burn the entire diseased body and start over.

His enemy had been patient. Little, by little, wearing away at the culture of his ancestors. Exploiting the kindness of his people, and importing more susceptible hosts by the millions, to accelerate the spread of the infection. In just his relatively short lifetime, Wayne had watched his nation transformed into something he didn't even recognize, and they had done it by exploiting the trust of his people. They had been waging a secret war.

Now that the secret was out, the warfare would no longer be asymmetrical. He would see to that. He would use their tactics, and do what needed to be done. It was simple, really, these tactics had been tried and proven all around the world. Over, and over, and over, again, the ruling class had sent their agents into countries they wished to have under their rule. Every culture, every government, every population, all reacting precisely the same in reaction to taxpayer-funded methods developed by America's intelligence agencies. Starting civil wars, and toppling governments. Installing puppet-regime, after puppet-regime, so they could pillage the monetary systems of entire continents, and steal their natural resources. Expand their globalist corporations into new markets, and build a Starbucks on every corner.

Wayne was not the psychopath that had come up with these methods, but he respected the results the enemy had reaped by employing them. He was smart enough to know that it was foolish to bring a knife to a gunfight.

"If you can't beat em, join em," Wayne said, as he carried Dave's body out of the cave opening, and into the bottom of the old rock quarry where Dave's Bronco was parked.

The two of them had been coming here, ever since they were kids. First, it was to play with firecrackers, and airsoft guns, they had kept hidden from their parents. Later, when they were teenagers, it became the best place for secret keg parties. These days, the spot was just as abandoned and desolate as ever. It was one of the few places Wayne could think of that hadn't changed dramatically in the time since they were kids.

"Bodies are much harder to handle than they made it look like in movies," Wayne thought, as he buckled Dave's corpse into the driver's seat of his Bronco.

It didn't help that Dave had gained a significant amount of weight in the past few years. The rock quarry might not have changed noticeably in the last quarter century, but neither Wayne, nor Dave, were the same athletic young boys that, years ago, had performed keg stands, and had bottle rocket fights, in this exact spot. Wayne was still relatively fit, but now he wished he'd been able to convince Dave to go out to the gym every once in a while, or at least ease up on the carbs.

Once Dave's body was buckled up, and the driver's side door was securely closed, Wayne took the gun he had used to kill Dave out of his jacket pocket. Carefully eyeballing the angle through the sights, he fired a few shots into the side of the Bronco. Satisfied with his work, he walked back to the entrance of the tunnel and stashed the gun underneath a large rock. The easy part was over. Now, time for the hard part.

Wayne sat next to Dave's body, in the passenger seat, and reached over his dead friend to start the engine. He thought briefly about fastening his own seatbelt, and then, after shrugging his shoulders, he put the Bronco into drive. The truck slowly began to creep forward.

"Here we go," Wayne said to Dave's body, "How about some music?"

Dave had always kept an old iPod Shuffle, filled with his favorite songs, in the cup holder in the console. He had insisted that even though it made him feel old to admit it, he had decided that all the good music had already been made. Especially punk music, which he had declared murdered in the nineties by "cucks like Green Day." On this point, Wayne had agreed and was pleased when "Join the Race", by Sin 34, had been randomly chosen by the Shuffle's algorithm.

The song was a rapid-fire punk song from the early eighties that had been included on one of the few punk tapes he had owned growing up. The tape had once been stuck in his tape player, but he liked it so much he didn't bother trying to get it out. He had left it playing, over, and over, allowing the auto reverse function to loop the tape until the cassette deck had finally worn out completely, and begun playing songs at double speed. Hearing it now brought back fond memories of the quarry, and it seemed like as good an anthem as any for what he was about to do.

Using a baseball bat he had discovered in the backseat, he engaged the gas pedal, and awkwardly steered the Bronco from the passenger seat. He drove up out of the quarry and onto the empty freeway that wound around the mountain. There was rarely any traffic on this road, except for maybe on Memorial Day weekend. Sometimes people from Roanoke got lost and wound up driving around aimlessly through these winding mountain roads while on their way to Virginia Beach.

The coast was clear. Wayne punched the gas pedal with the baseball bat in his left hand and accelerated down the road. Once the old Ford reached sixty-five miles per hour, he engaged the cruise control and threw the bat into the backseat. Taking a deep breath, he turned up the volume on the stereo until all he could hear was the aggressive guitar riffs of the eighties punk rock song, whose lyrics he had never been able to fully decipher.

About ten miles down the road, the Bronco swerved erratically and flipped over on its side. The inertia sent sparks flying, not unlike an enormous bottle rocket, as it skid across the pavement at sixty-five miles per hour. Then, after sliding across the opposing lane and destroying most of the guard railing along the shoulder, the disintegrating Bronco slid off the road entirely and traveled end over end down the mountain in a cascade of tumbling pieces of metal and glass.

CHAPTER 5

Ethan had been watching for several hours for any news of Adam Aaronberg's death when the iconic blue and red flashing siren gif appeared on his screen. It was followed by the headline: FREE SPEECH SPEAKER KILLED IN ATTACK!

"Fuck..." Ethan wasn't surprised, but to see it there on his screen like this was surreal.

Just for the shortest of moments, he wondered if Aaronberg's body had been found and if this would be seen as justified retaliation. That would be unfortunate timing. He skimmed through a few of the articles, and there was no mention of a revenge motive from what he could find.

According to one article, David Werner and Wayne Thomas, who had become mildly famous internet personalities in the past year or so and were known for their red meat right-wing videos, were attacked and run off the road on the way to a free speech rally. Werner had been shot and killed, but Wayne Thomas had survived the attack and was expected to live. A photo of their now-demolished truck was all over the internet with hashtags like #CIVILWARNOW and #JUSTICEFORWERNER.

"Holy shit," Ethan whispered.

Over the last few years, Ethan had witnessed the rhetoric in the comment sections of news articles (until most media outlets removed their comment sections) and on social media posts, undergo a slow, but steady shift. A shift from frustrated Americans watching their freedoms under attack to people openly calling for a second revolution.

The violence in the streets had also escalated. Every time there was a casualty at a rally, or a protest, gasoline was thrown onto the fire. Earlier in the year, the left-wing terror group, ANIFAS, had given a college student, who was wearing an "It's ok to be white" t-shirt, permanent brain damage when they had beat him unconscious with a tire iron. The Right had responded by doxxing the assailants, and they were subsequently arrested, but there was beginning to be talk on The Right of taking matters into their own hands. The law enforcement profession seemed to be just as overrun with Leftists as any other government job, and all too often, the officers would let ANIFAS blatantly assault people on The Right. The Right's patience was wearing thin.

If the attack on the, now brain damaged college student, whose name had already been forgotten by the internet, had been gasoline on the fire, then the murder of David Werner and attack on Wayne Thomas, would be an inferno of napalm. Werner and Thomas had relatively small followings, but they hadn't burned any bridges and were likable enough. They'd had a modest web video channel, and ended up being doxxed after making a few anti-SJW videos.

They didn't quit the internet, like most people that got doxxed. Ethan remembered because he'd been impressed by Wayne's ability to always come across as taking the high road, no matter what he did. Some of the more ardent members of the movement called them cucks for never going after Zionists, and staying within the lines of acceptable mainstream right-wing talking points, but this was still going to fire a lot of people up. The Right had been itching for The Left to take the first shot. This made it appear as if it had finally happened.

What was really shocking, was the number of celebrities on social media that were condoning

the attack. The hashtag #ShootNazis was trending, and nobody seemed to be disavowing the murder. Perhaps The Left had also been waiting for someone to fire the first shot. This was working out splendidly.

Ethan wondered if this would make working The List more difficult, or worse yet, make it unworkable, as "normies" might decide that, they too, wanted to taste blood. Then again, maybe he was getting ahead of himself. Ethan still wasn't sure if The List even worked properly. He wouldn't know for certain until he got paid. Or didn't.

Initially, he had planned to launder the money through crypto mining services, and decentralized exchanges, but then sit on the money for a while. He would cash out only what he needed to fund his operations, and fly under the radar. After reading what people were saying online, he wondered if this thing with David Werner might actually spark something bigger than he had first thought. He might have to rethink some aspects of the plan. He might also have to stock up on supplies, and maybe even convert a portion of his crypto into gold, in case access to the blockchain became an issue.

"Shit is going to get crazy," he groaned, but it was impossible for him to stop a gleeful smile from creeping across his face.

He wanted to think he was different, but just like everyone else, he too had been waiting for someone to take the first shot. Wayne would provide that spark. He knew Aaronberg wasn't well known enough to be the first casualty that would spark a bigger war. The media still hadn't reported on his death, and he was beginning to think they never would. He might have to wait for the public records or vital statistics to be updated if it never made it to the press.

The media would be forced to cover *this* story. There did exist the risk that the media would just make it disappear like they had so many other times in the past when a Leftist with a gun went on a rampage. They had begun to realize the threat posed by the internet and would have a hard time ignoring this. It would be interesting to see how the propaganda media would frame it. The amount of coverage would depend a lot on how much time passed before Wayne could get in front of a camera. If he was too banged up to shape the narrative, the traitors in the media would write a version of events that fit their narrative and then sweep the whole thing under the carpet.

Ethan would know more in the morning. It was getting late, and he'd been awake now for over forty-eight hours. Awake, and waiting for the news that would execute his smart-contract. Waiting for the smart-contract to pay him out.

He scanned the news one more time for a mention of Aaronberg. It seemed the hit had not been dramatic enough for the press to report it, even with their policy of "if it bleeds, it leads". There were several bleeding bodies to choose from, including those belonging to people that the public had heard of. The people Aaronberg worked for might also be suppressing the story until they knew what was going on.

Ethan shut the lid to his laptop and curled up on the couch in his small studio apartment. He was exhausted, but he didn't want to sleep. His mind had been racing with new ideas and inspiration. Insomnia wasn't anything new to Ethan, but this was something different.

He imagined what it would be like to rewrite the constitution. This time the language would be more explicit and rely less on the assumption that people were basically good, or that people had a natural inclination towards freedom. Freedom was not man's default position. That was a trait unique to The Founders, and the people who had risked life and limb, by fleeing their homes, and crossing the deadly ocean, all for the slim chance that they might be free. There was a very specific set of genes that had gambled it all and survived in the New World. Natural selection had been

working overtime for generations by the time the declaration had been signed.

Now the demographics, and technology, had changed so dramatically that things might have to be revised. Handing freedom to just anyone who showed up at America's shores had resulted in an erosion of freedom for everyone. These new arrivals, who hadn't evolved in circumstances that produced freedom, often wished to do what all men do. They sought to adapt their new environment to fit them, rather than adapt themselves to fit the new environment. This unique trait is one of the more significant differences between humans and most other animals. It's a trait that separates men from beasts, and because this behavior is so unique, it is often overlooked or misunderstood.

This first became apparent when Neoconservatives decided to be the alpha capitalists, by opening up new markets in countries that didn't belong to them. They merely needed to topple the governments of these primitive countries, hand them a constitution, and then democracy would just magically blossom and grow because "all men are created equal" was misinterpreted to mean "all men are created the same, with the same abilities, and the same desires". The Neoconservatives needed this to be true, because in coordination with the globalist Left, they had convinced the CEO-class in America to promote open borders. They had assured them that it would supply their businesses with cheap labor. They had fooled the people into thinking that these new arrivals were like empty glasses. America could just pour the freedom right into them. Immigrants were simply blank hard drives, and all they had to do was install America two-point-zero, and everything would be fine. They did this without ever stopping to see if the hardware was compatible.

Ethan knew that some of these gullible out of touch Boomers were just the middlemen. They were being manipulated and managed like everyone else. Some of them genuinely believed their own bullshit, but even the most deluded politicians on the lower rungs of the ruling class, who were now faced with the horrifying reality of what they had conspired to create, were desperately trying to save face by doubling down on all their worst ideas.

This is why there must be changes made to the governing documents of the new society that would emerge from the ashes of this one. Ethan wasn't a policy wonk and didn't know how you went about fixing the problem, but he knew when something was too broken to be repaired. He knew that sometimes you had to just bulldoze everything to the ground and start fresh. He thought of himself as part of the wrecking crew, not one of the architects that would design the new building.

Ethan's mind went over every little detail of what he had done in the last forty-eight hours. Every step he had taken to make himself untraceable, or rather to leave a false trail. The surveillance state was always tracking and logging every sliver of metadata generated by people throughout the day, and he had made sure that data was still created and logged. He had avoided the anomaly of missing data that might have given him away.

He had been careful, meticulous. He had started the process of planting the proverbial explosives that would be used to implode the condemned building.

Condemned.

Was there really any better word to describe his nation? A hulking decaying shell of the glorious structure his ancestors had built. It would be bittersweet when it all came crashing down; nothing lasts forever.

Ethan was reminded of the Billy Joel song, "Only the Good Die Young". America was a young country, compared to other nations in the civilized world. He wasn't sure if it was true or not, but he had heard it said that two-hundred years was the average lifespan of any democracy. Nineteen-

seventy-six had been America's two-hundredth birthday. The party was over before he was even born.

Out of curiosity, he looked up the lyrics to the Billy Joel song he was now humming to himself. He never knew the words, just the chorus.

After a few taps on his keyboard and clicks of his mouse, the lyrics popped up on his screen and he read them quietly to himself.

(Author's note: The lyrics have been removed from this section for legal reasons.)

Ethan smiled grimly. In a strange way, this song said it all. It had been the rejection of tradition, and the embrace of hedonism that had led to the death of his society. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Ethan didn't consider himself religious, but even he recognized this.

That's the edge that Muslims and Jews had over The West. The West had rejected tradition and run blindly into the arms of decadence, in search of pleasure. In doing this, they had left a God-shaped hole in their souls that they would spend all of their free time trying to fill with sex, drugs, and rock n roll. Anything to feel the comfort that religion had provided in the past.

Humans were unique animals in that they were probably the only beings on the planet so aware of their mortality. This awareness had inspired great things, but it wasn't without its drawbacks. The knowledge that life was a temporary state gave birth to fear. The fear of missing out. It was this fear that had led many in The West to begin viewing religion as an obstacle to new experiences and new pleasures. They had been so obsessed with the aspects of religion that put limits on their individual doses of gratification that they never stopped to consider how it had been contributing to their happiness.

It may have seemed counterintuitive to those who viewed God as a superstition, but religion had been a delivery system for wisdom; the same wisdom that died in concert with church attendance and tradition. For eons, humans had packaged sophisticated ethical concepts into easily digestible proverbs and parables that even the most primitive could understand, and that had helped many cope with their mortality. Without the understanding that had guided the lives of their ancestors, the people had become lost and afraid once again. They had devolved back into the primeval cave dwellers that trembled at the sound of thunder.

When the people had stopped believing in religion, they didn't start believing in nothing. Instead, they would believe anything. Anything that made the pain go away. Ethan had to consider the possibility that this was what he was doing. Was he really fighting for a cause bigger than himself, or was he just lashing out because it felt good?

That's when Ethan decided to do something he hadn't done in many years. He awkwardly got on his knees at the foot of his bed and bowed his head. Why did this feel so uncomfortable? So, foreign? He shifted his weight and tried to block out all the sounds that, until this moment, he hadn't noticed at all.

The humming of the refrigerator, coming from his small kitchen, seemed like it was coming from inside his head. He closed his eyes and tried to remove himself from all of the distractions of his surroundings, and imagined that he was floating in the darkness.

"Heavenly Father..."

CHAPTER 6

Eve woke up with a splitting headache. She had drunk too much wine. Why was it that wine always seemed to make her feel like she had been run over by a truck? She didn't want to open her eyes. She knew her phone was somewhere in her bed close to her head because it had been buzzing all morning.

Eve's eyes flew open in a panic as she realized she wasn't one-hundred-percent sure that she was even in her bed. She didn't remember coming home at all. This was not good. She surveyed her surroundings, once her eyes adjusted to the dim light. This was not her room, and she wasn't lying in her bed.

She cautiously sat up and looked around at a dark room she didn't recognize. She had been lying on an old beat-up couch in a room without windows. The only other furniture was a beanbag chair on the floor and the cinder blocks that were propping up a large TV in the corner. Judging by the pipes running along the ceiling, she supposed she must be in a basement apartment.

When the rent had begun skyrocketing in DC, many of the historic homes had been split into several cramped apartments. The basement units were always the least expensive. She knew this because she had looked at several when she had first moved to the area, but her fear of rats made her decide against it. Whose apartment was this?

That's when she realized that she wasn't wearing any underwear.

When she had first sat up, she had felt a sharp pain below the waist, but she had been so distracted by her strange surroundings, and confused by the war that was going on between the alcohol and adrenaline in her system that the pain seemed distant and unreal. Now the pain was very real, and intense.

Her body began to shake.

"Not now!" she thought, "Not Yet! You can have a panic attack when you get home. When you get safe. But, not here! God, please not now!"

She shakily rose to her feet. These basement apartments all had the same basic layout. Because they were built underneath identical row houses that were packed tightly together above, the basements were all long, and narrow, with doors at either end. Finding a door would be simple. Where was her purse? Where was her phone?

"Ah shit, you awake?" a low voice said from behind her.

Eve froze. She didn't recognize the voice. She cautiously turned around to see a black man in his thirties, wearing boxers and holding a small dirty plastic bong in his hands.

"Where am I?"

She knew she sounded stupid and helpless, which was the last thing she wanted to project right now, but she couldn't help herself.

The man laughed to himself and then, after lighting a plastic lighter, he began to take a hit from the bong. The bong filled with white smoke as the dirty water gurgled and frothed. The green plastic of the bong looked as if it had never been cleaned, and was stained dark brown with large black chunks of burnt marijuana sticking to the sides. The man extinguished the lighter and removed the

bowl from the bong, then inhaled the white smoke until there was nothing left.

Eve stood frozen and watched, as he held the smoke in his lungs and set the bong down. Then, pounding his fist against his chest, he exhaled an enormous cloud of smoke that triggered a coughing fit.

“Damn! That’s some good shit!” he said between coughs.

He turned, without looking at her, and walked to what Eve was beginning to think was the rear of the apartment. A moment later, she heard a door close and then a muffled voice. The tone was urgent, and sounded like the man she had just seen was trying to wake someone up. Eve couldn’t articulate specifically why she felt this way, but something about the tone of the voice sounded ominous. Her critical thinking was given second priority, and the fight or flight part of her brain jumped into the driver seat. She had to get out. Now.

Eve walked as quickly and quietly as she could through the dark room, in the opposite direction of the voice. If the voice was in the back of the apartment, she needed to get to the front. There would be a door. All she had to do was get to that door and get out of this place. Fuck her phone, fuck her purse, only one thing mattered. Escape.

A second muffled voice shouted something at the first voice, and there was a sound like someone had thrown something heavy against a wall. The sound was followed by more muffled sounds she couldn’t quite identify. Eve turned her attention back to the direction she was moving. She could see the front door now. She lunged towards the exit and tripped over something on the floor. She fell hard in a heap on the cold hard concrete. The room began spinning. She couldn’t blackout again. She had to escape.

Eve heard a door open behind her. The sound shot a rush of adrenaline through her body. She leaped up off the floor and tried to fling the door open, but it only opened a crack before stopping. The chain lock had stopped the door from opening all the way, and the unexpected change in motion almost sent her crashing back to the ground.

There was shouting behind her now. She let out a scream and slammed the door shut so she could unlatch the chain lock. The shouting behind her was getting closer. She managed to get the chain unlatched from the door. Once again, she flung the door open and was momentarily blinded by the bright sunlight outside. She scrambled into the light, the rough exterior pavement cutting at her bare feet. She spotted some concrete stairs that she assumed must lead to the street, and ran up them before she knew what she was doing. At the top of the steps, there was a waist-high, locked, rusty iron gate that tore her skirt as she climbed over it.

Still panicking, she scanned her surroundings. She didn’t recognize this specific neighborhood, but she had seen many like it. The architecture in DC was, in many ways, interchangeable and predictable. Sometimes the only way to tell the difference between the good, and bad neighborhoods, was by looking at the types of cars that lined the street, or the demographics of the people who walked the sidewalk. This neighborhood didn’t have many cars, but there was a large group of young black men crowded around a charcoal colored Escalade at the corner. The sound of the blaring bass of the rap music coming from the Escalade echoed down the street, and the sickly scent of marijuana and urine filled her nostrils.

Eve frantically ran in the opposite direction of the men on the corner, hoping to see a street name or even just a landmark she might recognize. She had to get out of here. She needed to find a cab, or at the very least a metro station. She made it to the end of the block when it occurred to her she didn’t have her purse or her phone.

Gasping for breath, she swayed as she tried to collect herself. How was she going to get home?

Was she being crazy? Should she go back? Maybe she was wrong about the situation. She didn't remember how she had ended up there, but that didn't automatically mean she had been...

She started crying. She knew how it must look. A white girl, wearing a torn dress, barefoot and sobbing in this neighborhood. People would probably think she was crazy, or homeless. What had happened last night? She looked up at the street sign on the corner, but before she could focus on the letters, she doubled over and vomited.

Eve's vision blurred, and she vomited again. She wiped her eyes, and then her mouth, and forced herself to stop crying. The odd temporary soberness produced by her vomiting allowed her to focus on the street sign long enough to read it and get her bearings. She wasn't that far from the U St. metro. It was just West from here. She would head in that direction.

As Eve stumbled in the direction of the metro station, she began to calm down. Maybe it was just shock, or perhaps she was finally sobering up, she wasn't sure. The rational part of her brain was sitting behind the wheel once again. She began to have a nagging, sinking feeling that maybe she had this all wrong.

The man she had seen back at the apartment hadn't attacked her. He didn't even threaten her. She had just assumed the worst, and for the worst reasons. She had to admit it to herself. She had acted entirely out of bigotry. She was a racist.

If he had been white, would she have felt the same panic? Would she have run like a crazy person like that? She'd woken up in strange places before and not behaved anything like this. It was her unconscious bias that had made her panic. She was being a stupid white girl.

Eve stopped and turned to look down the street the way she came.

"I should go back. I should go back and apologize. I'll get my phone, and my purse, and apologize for my racist behavior. I was a guest, and I repaid their hospitality by acting like a crazy bitch," she thought to herself.

Eve took a few steps back in the direction of the apartment she had fled. Once again, the pain between her legs intensified. She felt the world spinning, and reached out to grab anything she might use to steady herself with. Her hand came into contact with an iron trash can that was chained to a tree. She gripped it hard, her hand touching something slimy that was caked on the inner rim of the bin. She fell backward, pulling the trashcan down on top of her with a bang.

Everything went black. The last thing she heard before completely blacking out was the sound of tires screeching.

CHAPTER 7

Wayne lay awake in his hospital bed, surrounded by the smattering of flower bouquets, cards, and fruit baskets that had been arriving since the news of his injuries, suffered at the hands of “militant Leftists”, had first broke. The legacy media had barely reported on the incident, as was predicted, but the internet was still abuzz with hashtags, posts, and videos demanding justice. Some were condemning the “violent Left” for escalating the tensions in an already polarized country. Others were warning of more violence to come, and others still were beginning to use threatening rhetoric themselves.

Shortly after recovering from surgery, Wayne had taken to social media to publicly mourn the loss of his dear friend, David. He had streamed a tear-filled eulogy, live from his hospital bed, to over five-hundred-thousand live viewers, which was a record for him, if not the streaming platform itself. Wayne had gained tens of thousands of new followers and was gaining thousands more each day. He had gone from being a relatively unknown voice on The Right to the subject of every meme, talking point, and monologue circulating throughout the movement.

Things were working out surprisingly well. In the months leading up to “the incident”, Wayne had made sure to warn against political violence so often that it had almost become his trademark. His pleas for peace were so synonymous with his name that the brutality of this attack that had left him hospitalized and his friend dead, had sent shockwaves worldwide. That these calls for peace were now conspicuously absent from his rhetoric in his streams and social media posts, sent quiet murmurs.

The fuse had been lit. Now it was up to Wayne to simply fan the flames. He had to be strategic though. He wouldn’t, and couldn’t, just declare war on The Left, like all those who imagined that because The Right “has all the guns” that a war could be fought and won inside of an afternoon. There was a way this would have to be done. He didn’t fault those patriots, whose only combat experience was on an Xbox, for not understanding this. Wayne knew it would take a paradigm shift in thinking. He would need to take them from fantasizing about being a character in the movie Red Dawn and make them at peace with actually using violence strategically against real live people.

Wayne had no delusions about hard it was and would continue to be, to motivate these Xbox warriors into action. That’s why he had taken the extreme measures that he had. He didn’t like having to lie to his people, but he knew, just as the CIA, who had overthrown countless governments in the past and whose methods he was borrowing, knew that sometimes the people needed to be pushed into action.

Especially the people of today. With plummeting testosterone levels and skyrocketing obesity, these new Americans didn’t know how to stand up for themselves. Humans needed leaders. They were animals that respected, and relied on, hierarchy, and Wayne would need to level-up before he would be able to wield the kind of influence he needed to be effective. Judging by some of the names on the cards he was receiving, he was indeed moving up.

Most politicians that pretended to be on The Right still hadn’t come to terms with new media and the power of the internet. They were still stuck within the confines of the old system. They

obsessed over things like ancient newspapers in New York, and in Washington DC that nobody read. They wore makeup to interviews, and guest appearances, on big-budget television broadcasts that nobody was watching.

There were a few politicians, however, that were beginning to catch on. Most of them were the same brand of cuck that had sold out the country for generations, but among these false prophets were the clever sorts, whose cunning and foresight were in line with their ambitions. They knew that in order to maintain the dynasties of their families, they would have to adapt to this new landscape, and many of them were quick learners. They knew that if they themselves were not adept at navigating the ever-changing social media game that they must attach themselves to one, or ideally several, of the new generation of digital pundits that had sprung up all over the place.

Many of these social media darlings had massive followings, but ever since the communists in Silicon Valley had begun taking away The Right's access to ad-revenue on their monopolistic platforms, it took an extraordinary amount of work to maintain their online presence. Without ad-money, the pundits either had to work a second job, ask for donations, or start selling products after each media post, like girl scouts hanging outside of a grocery store. Not only was this humiliating, it was often unsustainable, and the communists succeeded in silencing many of the voices on The Right by using these dirty tactics.

Wayne knew what it took to stay afloat, and also knew how to survive in this new climate. A climate that consisted of hostile platforms that tirelessly looked for ways to claim anyone to the right of Stalin had violated their so-called "terms of service". Additionally, payment processors had been shutting down donations to content creators, if they thought they might be getting too influential. Banking institutions were also working in concert to financially break as many voices on The Right as they could, by denying them essential services with impunity.

These entities feared no repercussions, thanks to a Justice Department that, to put it mildly, was sympathetic to the enemy. Wayne knew that many of the e-celebrities had begun taking money from large donors who could not only fund their operation, but also had influence with the hostile banks. This all came at a price, of course, but as Wayne had observed over and over, everyone had their price.

That is how the new media was slowly, but surely, beginning to resemble the old media with a digital makeover. Mouthpieces for billionaires, the way it was meant to be. They still allowed the pundits have some of their own opinions; otherwise, it wouldn't look authentic, but once these neo-pundits sold out and started accepting blood money, they would never again be allowed to stray too far from the reservation.

As long as the e-celebrities kept the pitchforks of the plebs comfortably away from the ivory tower walls, the donations would keep flowing, and they would never be deplatformed. If they flew too close to the sun, the ruling class would punish them and break them, and even their fans would abandon them once the artificial support was undermined. Their convictions were purchased for a mix of table scraps and a false sense of security, and in return, they enabled the ruling class to continue its gradual rape and subjugation of their followers.

Wayne knew that with his new found fame, it was only a matter of time before the offers began to roll in from nervous globalists. Wayne's anti-violence message would go a long way in calming a dissident Right that was becoming increasingly restless. This latest incident, involving the death of his "dear friend", had fanned the coals that were beginning to glow too bright for the comfort of an increasingly nervous billionaire class.

Wayne would play hard to get, at first. It had to look convincing. He assumed that all of the

others that the globalists had bought and paid for had made a show of their righteous indignation before eventually giving in. Wayne would do the same, but for entirely different reasons. He needed them to amplify his voice for him to accomplish what he really intended to do.

First, he would have to serve his time in his hospital bed. Wayne hadn't precisely planned his injuries, which consisted of a shattered leg and a few broken ribs. He'd also received a mild concussion from being thrown around the inside of Dave's truck, as it had flipped end over end down the side of a mountain. If he was being honest with himself, he had to admit that he had left it all up to chance because a small part of him had hoped that fate had something else in mind for him. A small part of him had hoped that he would be given the easy way out. He had left it up to chance, or God, or the universe, or randomness, but for some reason, he had survived. In a way, despite his dislike of religion in general, he took this as a sort of divine mandate to follow through with the rest of his plan. All the lingering doubts that he might have had were buried away, where they would remain forever, safely inside the same venerated casket that contained his old friend.

The door to Wayne's room suddenly swung open. An overweight woman in her thirties, wearing decorative scrubs, held the door open. An occupied hospital bed was wheeled inside the room by an equally obese and similarly dressed woman in her fifties. Wayne was surprised to see what he thought was a young woman with purple hair lying in the bed, but before he could get a better look, the orderly who had attended to the door drew closed a large blue curtain that blocked his view and divided the room into two.

"Are hospitals coed now?" Wayne thought to himself, and then immediately felt thick. If they couldn't keep men out of the women's bathroom in the current year, then why should hospital rooms be segregated? Nothing was sacred to these maniacs on The Left. Their obsession with destroying gender, because of their deep seeded feminine inferiority complex, had been wreaking havoc on the society. Wayne sometimes wondered if giving women the vote had been a mistake.

Wayne tried to make out what was happening on the other side of the curtain by watching the shadows of the nurse and orderly, and listening to their lowered voices. It was no use. They hadn't said much, and whatever it was they *had* said, sounded like muffled small talk unrelated to his mystery guest. Then, just as quickly as they had come in, they left without saying a word to him about his new living arrangements.

Wayne didn't like the idea of having a roommate. He hoped that this was a temporary situation. Executing his plan meant he would have to do live-streams somewhat regularly, and the idea of having some strange woman in the room, as he did them, wasn't exactly what he had in mind. What if she turned out to be some crazy feminist? She might start shrieking while he broadcast, or try to smother him with a pillow in his sleep.

He glared at the curtain with his eyebrows bunched together.

"What are you in for?" Wayne asked through the curtain.

He listened to the hospital bed on the other side of the room divider creak and moan, as its occupant shifted her weight.

Silence.

"Are you awake?" Wayne said louder this time.

More creeks and shuffling.

"Well, I guess we're roommates," Wayne thought of a non-threatening dog whistle he could use to try to test the waters "Thanks, Obamacare! Am I right?" he chuckled good-naturedly and made sure his tone was as neutral as possible so that his criticism of the Leftist God could easily be mistaken as sarcasm, or just as easily as the blasphemy he intended.

A groan came from the other side of the curtain. Not a groan of pain, but the kind of groan a woman makes when she's being hit on by someone below her station.

"Not just a Leftist, a fucking stuck up Leftist," Wayne thought. "Ninety percent chance she wears problem glasses. Well God, or whoever you are, you have a sense of humor. I'll give you that."

Wayne let out an audible sigh and glanced at the many notifications accumulating on his phone.

"I don't want to be rude, but I don't feel like talking, ok?" a hoarse female voice said from the other side of the curtain.

"Fine by me, I just wanted to say hello, now that we're going to be roommates... ..unless you're here for outpatient?" Wayne hoped he didn't sound too excited when he had said "outpatient."

A loud sigh came, this time, from the other side of the curtain.

"Ok," Wayne said, "Well, not to be a pain in the ass, but I'm going to be doing a live-stream in a few minutes, so if you hear me talking, I haven't gone crazy or anything, I'm just going to be streaming from my phone so..."

Silence.

"Ok then. I'll just let you know before I go live, so you have a heads up."

Still nothing.

Wayne rolled onto his back and stared up at the tiles in the ceiling. He supposed this was better than being roommates with a Chatty Cathy. He looked back at his phone and continued to scroll through feeds in the various social media apps he frequented.

Wayne was happy to see that even in just the short time since he had last checked, he had gained another two-thousand or so followers. He also noticed a few more direct messages from various e-celebrities that wanted to interview him. Wayne had to choose wisely when selecting interviews. He only wanted to talk to the people that would drive more people to his feeds, and not the personalities where there might be significant overlap in audience because that would cannibalize the views on his own outlets.

There were messages from a handful of producers from the controlled opposition, "right-wing", legacy media outlets. As much as he wanted to ignore these people, their audience was going to be crucial. Not only were these outlets run by the very billionaires he wished to court, but they catered to an audience that typically wasn't tech savvy, and had probably never heard of him. None of the major communist networks had contacted him. They were quite content pretending he didn't exist and were probably running fluff pieces on how ANIFAS, despite what people may have heard, wasn't violent at all. They were merely standing up to fascism and trying to stop the next Hitler.

Wayne responded to a few of the producers that were most likely to get him the most exposure. He had to strike while the iron was hot. Given the incessant pace of disinformation coming out of the twenty-four-hour propaganda giants, if Wayne didn't get on camera soon, they'd be moving onto all the stories designed to keep everyone just pissed off enough to keep watching the theater, but not mad enough to burn it to the ground. He'd be lucky to get just a few minutes between commercials, but that's all he needed. He'd show them he was willing to tow the line. For now.

CHAPTER 8

Ethan stared up at the white painted spackling that textured the ceiling of his apartment. He liked to imagine that he saw shapes in the irregular bumps, much like he saw shapes in the clouds when he was a young boy. Ethan wondered if the reason he never saw shapes in the clouds these days was a product of getting older, and losing that part of himself that had believed that the Tooth Faerie was real, or if he just no longer took the time to look at the clouds. None of the specks on the ceiling looked like anything in particular, but the longer he stared, the shapes gave off the illusion that he was moving.

He relaxed his eyes until his vision separated into the two separate images that the mind typically combined into one, to establish depth perception. He noticed the subtle differences in the images, caused by the subtle differences in the strength of his eyes. Ethan had worn glasses as a child, but during his teen years, he had decided that he didn't like the way that they made him look.

As he got older, he noticed he had trouble reading street signs, and after getting lost a few times, Ethan had gone into a discount one-hour eyeglass store and purchased a pair of spectacles. He still remembered walking out of the store with his new glasses and marveling at the crisp detail of distant scenery that before had just been a washed out haze. By the end of the day, Ethan was suffering from a severe headache that he assumed must have been brought on by his brain processing all the new visual information that had for so long been filtered by his imperfect eyes.

Some of this new information was beautiful, like the details of remote mountaintops, and the sunsets that before seemed unimpressive, but there were also new grotesque things he had been happily unaware of. The grime and filth that adorned so much of the city that he had been blissfully unable to perceive was now painfully evident and all around him.

It had been a similar process when he had first realized the extent of the lies that had been told to him. When the truths he had taken for granted were revealed as deception, with intent and design, he had felt a righteous indignation that evolved into anger, then into despair.

How was it that such a small group of people could deceive the rest of humanity with ease? It wasn't just the ease at which they had constructed the false reality or even the ease at which the public at large had accepted it. It was the complete lack of decency that these perpetrators of lies were demonstrating that astounded him. It was an inversion of nature. How long had the world been systematically rewarding and enabling its most depraved inhabitants?

Ethan's glasses had revealed the unseen beauty in the world that was eventually tempered by the ugliness his eyes had overlooked. His awakening, by contrast, had overwhelmed him with the repulsiveness of his species, without antinomy. There was no newfound grace, or benevolent force, to modulate the wave.

He was reminded of a video he had seen several years ago of a coastal town somewhere in the South Pacific, right before it was annihilated by a tsunami. Beachgoers stared in amazement, as the ocean withdrew from the shore. They murmured, awestruck, as the water receded further and further. It seemed as if some colossal drain at the bottom of the sea had opened up. Very few people understood what was happening. They stood frozen, astounded by this extraordinary anomaly.

This is how the public was acting now. The people, overwhelmed by the increasing degeneracy of the world, were watching with a confused mix of wonder and dread. Very few people understood that Newton's third law of physics applied to human behavior, just as surely as it did a swinging wrecking ball winding up before it's inevitable rebound. They were so overwhelmed by the extreme forces of nature taking place around them that they were unable to conceive of the looming certainty that an equal, and opposite, reaction was imminent.

In the tsunami video, Ethan had observed that a few people snapped out of their paralyzed state. They shouted at the others in vain to run to safety, clutching their children, and fleeing the beach in a panic, but these people were in the minority. Most remained frozen on the beach, unable to move. They watched as the water continued its retreat from the shore. They watched as the water hung motionless for a moment, defying their sense of how oceans should behave. They even watched as the water reversed course, and began rushing back towards the shore as if they thought that the phenomenon had completed its performance and that now the ocean was returning to normal.

Then came the screams.

The water swallowed up the bewildered onlookers without hesitation or remorse. Unforgiving in its fury, it consumed the shoreline, and its inhabitants, with terrifying ease. Expensive beachfront property was swept up by the violent momentum and instantly reduced to splinters, turning the water into an appalling soup of rubble and human debris.

Ethan wondered which role he played in this metaphor. Was he one of the onlookers that knew of the danger, and was desperately attempting to warn the others? Or, was he the wave that would consume them? Did it matter?

After some thought, he decided that he was both. He had already played the role of the good Samaritan. He had tried to warn the others of the doom that lay ahead. He had done his part in sounding the alarm and understood that those who hesitated too long wouldn't be spared. His only chance for survival now was to be the wave.

Ethan supposed that that was the beauty that had been absent from his awakening. The knowledge that the wave would correct itself. He would have to work diligently to try to provide the forces at work with direction and purpose to prevent them from indiscriminately consuming them all. He wasn't powerless, like the petrified beachgoers, and he wasn't afraid, like those who fled the wrath of nature that was upon them. The beauty was the glimmer of sunlight on the crest of the wave. The beauty was his to create.

Ethan got himself out of bed and began listening to a podcast as he made himself breakfast. He listened, as the host warned of the escalating violence at recent political demonstrations and called for peace and unity. He listened, as the host repeated ad nauseum that the country needed to heal. Ethan chuckled at the idea that the nation was merely suffering from a bad cold or a scraped knee. That if, America would just calm down and take an aspirin that the country would be good as new in the morning.

He shifted his gaze to his laptop.

"It won't be there," he mumbled, as he lazily stretched and then reached out and grabbed his computer.

He lifted the screen, and the laptop came to life with a soft buzz. A moment later, the login screen appeared, and he typed in his password. He activated his various VPNs and loaded his crypto wallet to check the balance of his address.

"Holy shit."

There it was. The List had delivered.

He was using a fungible privacy coin that was supposedly perfectly secure, but he decided not to leave anything to chance and began laundering small amounts through decentralized exchanges. He would keep the bulk of his payment spread out in different wallets, but he needed to cash some of it sooner or later to fund his next operation. He wasn't sure what it looked like when prayers were answered, but he was willing to suspend his disbelief and allow this to be one of his first spiritual experiences.

"Thanks," he said, looking back up at the ceiling "Maybe, there is something up there."

CHAPTER 9

Amanda watched herself on the monitor that was mounted beneath the glass of her news desk as the cameraman began to adjust her shot. She hated how he always zoomed all the way into her face, magnifying every pore of her skin, when adjusting the focus for the broadcast. She frowned at the cameraman, Roy, who like every cameraman she had ever known was inexplicably fifty pounds overweight and was in no position to criticize *her* looks. Nobody looked perfect under a microscope, no matter how expensive the makeup. She had a sneaking suspicion that Roy was taking his time on purpose, just to antagonize her. After Roy zoomed back out to a medium close-up, she returned her gaze to the monitor.

Amanda's hair was pretty and blonde. If it was a requirement that every cameraman be fifty pounds overweight, then it was surely a requirement that every news anchor be thirty pounds underweight, and blonde, with pretty hair. This didn't bother Amanda in the slightest. So what if she got the job by sleeping with disgusting producers when she was an intern, and blowing all the sponsors when they threw their clandestine yacht parties. She wasn't a good enough actor to be in movies, and she was too pretty to be in porn, and this job paid better than either of those two.

She inserted her earpiece and waved away the production assistant that attempted to clip her microphone to her jacket. She had no problem with powerful men putting their hands all over her, but she drew the line at being touched by creepy production assistants named... ..what was his name? It didn't matter; he wouldn't be working there once she got a chance to complain to Todd about how he creeped her out.

She finished arranging her microphone and looked at the teleprompter. After her eyes adjusted to the bright studio lights, she read a few lines to give the audio engineer a chance to improve her sound levels. Satisfied she'd given him enough to work with, she shifted her gaze to the control room, where the technical director was sitting just on the other side of the soundproof glass.

"Todd! Who's this *Wayne Thomas* guy that just got added to the rundown?" she asked annoyed.

Amanda hated it when they made changes to the script right before going live.

"That's that guy that ANIFAS shot, with the truck," Todd's voice crackled in her earpiece.

"I thought he died." Amanda was confused.

"No. David Werner was the driver, Wayne survived the crash," said Todd through the earpiece.

"So, David Werner shot Wayne Thomas?" she asked. This was getting complicated.

"No. David was driving. Wayne was in the passenger seat. ANIFAS, allegedly, and we *have* to say allegedly because nobody has owned up to it, and nobody has been arrested, so, make sure you stick with *allegedly*, but ANIFAS, or better yet, just don't say ANIFAS."

"Don't say ANIFAS? Then what the fuck *allegedly* happened, Todd?" Amanda was getting annoyed.

"So, let's just go with David and Wayne were driving to a rally, and they were attacked by *unknown persons*, but it's believed to have been an act of *political violence*. But don't say that, just ask Wayne if he thinks it was an act of political violence, and let him do all the talking. If he accuses anyone, just make sure to say that police still don't know for sure *who* carried out the attack," Todd

said.

“Ok, make sure you get all that on the prompter. I don’t want to just be up here looking like a fucking idiot,” she said, “You don’t know what it's like being out here like this when you just add stuff to the script last minute.”

“It’s already loaded on the prompter, standby, we go live in thirty.”

Amanda adjusted her jacket and once again inspected her image on the desk monitor. Why was her forehead so shiny? She hadn’t changed her makeup. Someone must have been fucking with the lights in here again. If her forehead looked shiny on air, she’d find out who.

The bumper music playing in her earpiece indicated they were back from commercial. She gazed into the camera and smiled and waited for the music to die down, as Todd counted down from ten in her in her earpiece.

“Eight, seven, six, five, four...”

“Welcome back to the High Impact segment, I’m Amanda Ross, and tonight we have a special guest with us who will be joining us from his hospital room just outside our nation’s capital. Wayne Thomas, who as you may already know, was involved in a tragic incident this week with his friend David Werner, who were on their way to a free speech rally when they were, well, they *allegedly* were, well, let’s just hear what David has to say.” Amanda smiled into the camera.

“Hi Amanda, thanks for having me. This is Wayne actually-” came Wayne’s voice into her earpiece.

“Oh, I’m so sorry-” She was going to fucking kill Todd.

“No, no, it’s Ok. I’d like to think that David *is* here with us. In spirit. It's my hope that Americans will hear what David *would* have had to say. What he would have said at the rally we were supposed to speak at, which was a message of liberty and freedom for *everyone*. And, you know, it's just sad that some people want to tear this country apart, and that they want to take away our God-given freedoms so badly that they will do anything to stop that message of liberty, because now that they can’t win using words, they are trying to win using violence,” Wayne said.

Wayne was sitting in his hospital bed using a video chat app on his phone to talk to the studio. The network had placed his feed in a box with a giant red, white, and blue, American flag animation, looping in the background behind him. Despite his hospital gown, Wayne’s smile was charming and unassuming, and he looked like he belonged on camera. He smiled widely as his social media information flew onto the screen beneath his face, along with his name in big bold lettering.

“Well yes, that’s quite the message. Why don’t you tell us a little bit about what happened this week.” Amanda was flustered, but she was a pro and tried not to show it. She *knew* something was going to go wrong. She’d called him by the dead kid’s name! This was Todd’s fault.

“Sure thing Amanda, first I want to send out my love to David’s family. I know they must be going through a difficult time right now. David was a good man, and I know how much I feel his loss, and I know that for them it must be even more devastating.”

“Yes, our thoughts go out to his family as well,” Amanda said. She hated all this ad-libbing shit. She couldn’t wait for this interview to be over so she could get back to reading the prompter.

“Thank you, Amanda, I’m sure that means a lot to them, and it means a lot to me. You know David and I, we’ve always been big supporters of free speech and have been working together to unite this country with our message online, and on social media, and it wasn’t that long ago that we decided to get everyone together in our nation’s capital so that we could show our support for the founding principles of this country. So, we helped organize a rally at the Washington memorial, where we planned to speak, and unfortunately, there are those who don’t love this country as I do,

and like David did, and after we were doxxed, we began to receive death threats.”

“Doxxed?” Amanda was genuinely at a loss. She hoped it wasn’t some new slang word for getting high, although, she thought if it was, she probably would have heard of *that*, and Wayne didn’t seem the type to just casually mention he was doing drugs on national television.

“I guess I should explain it for some of your viewers. Like most people in the movement that make their voice heard on the internet, we used to go by aliases. The Left has this nasty habit of trying to get you fired from your job, or threatening you and your family, just because you don’t think like them. That’s the problem with The Left, they are authoritarian and want to force you to be like them, or destroy you if they can’t. Getting doxxed is when they find out your real name and address, and put it out on the internet so all their little minions can harass you at work and try to destroy your life. Just like every Leftist who has ever come to power. It destroys the lives of however many millions of people that get in the way of their agenda. That’s the destructive nature of The Left.”

“And you say, they did this to you?” Amanda sounded slightly skeptical.

“That’s right, Amanda, they did. That’s what they always do. They tried to get me fired, and sent David and I death threats, and to be honest, I guess we should have taken them a little more seriously. I knew The Left was violent, but I guess, having gone from harassment to assault, they are now graduating from assault to murder. It’s not safe for people on The Right anymore,” Wayne said.

“When you say *they* and *The Left*, who exactly do you mean? I also want to remind the viewers we don’t know exactly who did this *alleged* attack,” Amanda said smiling prettily.

“Well, ANIFAS is one organization that actually specializes and trains for this kind of a thing. They never want to engage with our ideas because they don’t have any ideas, so instead they just lash out violently and because, and I’m not blaming you or your network, but maybe some of your competitors, because they whip these people up into a frenzy, and they encourage violence against people, like David and I, and call us Nazis or anything else that they think will dehumanize us. They just escalate the violence until now, we are at a point where many people don’t feel safe expressing their opinions. And if David died for anything, and I know its a senseless murder, but *if* he died for anything, I’d like to think that he died so people would continue to have the courage to speak their mind, because I’m not backing down. I’m not going away, and our ideas are not going away. We will not be intimidated by anything, and David would tell you the same thing.” Wayne had begun to tear up.

“Why don’t you tell us what happened the day of the alleged attack,” Amanda said in soothing tones.

“Sure thing, Amanda. First, let me say that some of the details are still a little bit foggy, and I also want to thank the good people at the FBI, and the local, and state, police that have been really good to me throughout all this. I hope they bring David’s killers to justice, and I’m confident they will, because if they don’t, who knows what else they will do? They are trying to start a war, and some people think maybe they already have-” Wayne was saying.

“Well, we’re not at war, I just want to make that clear to the audience that is watching that we are *not* at war,” Amanda interjected nervously.

“No, we are not, and I am here to promote unity! Not all this divisiveness that comes from The Left. We are not violent. *We The People* need to unite together as a country!” Wayne said resolutely.

“That’s a good message, I think, let’s just move on to what happened,” said Amanda approvingly.

“David and I were, as I mentioned, on our way to the rally we had planned in DC. We had

been receiving death threats ever since we announced the rally, and we knew we might be followed, and about halfway to the rally on highway four-sixty, a car pulled up next to us and just started shooting into our vehicle!” Wayne was holding back his emotions, but his voice had begun to crack.

“Did you see who it was? Who was shooting at you?” Amanda said with awe.

“No, and in fact, the only reason I know that part is that’s what the police told me. They said that someone had shot David through the driver’s side door, and that’s when David lost control of the vehicle, and we rolled off the road. I wasn’t hit, but I wasn’t wearing my seatbelt, and I guess when the vehicle flipped over, I hit my head pretty good, a couple of times, and broke my leg, and some ribs, but Amanda, I’m just thankful that I’m alive, and for people watching, especially kids, if you’re watching, make sure you wear your seatbelt, because if I had been wearing my seatbelt, I might have-” Wayne began to well up, and his lower lip trembled.

“This is gold!” shouted Todd, into Amanda’s earpiece.

“It’s ok Wayne, I don’t think anyone is blaming you,” Amanda said in her best reassuring motherly voice.

Wayne wiped several tears out of his eyes and wiped his face with his hospital gown. He slowly looked up at the camera.

“I just wish we didn’t live in such a divided country.”

CHAPTER 10

“There’s something about him that I don’t trust,” Jacob said, leaning back in his chair.

Jacob was sitting at a large conference table on the sixty-third floor of the Silverman and Malone building, next to his mentor, and the owner of the Manhattan high rise, Eli Silverman. Jacob had worked for Silverman for over twenty-five years and had great respect for the man that had tripled the size of his empire over the last few decades. He had done it by being ruthless with his competition and having incredible instincts. Although, to be perfectly fair, many of his investments, which included everything from commodities to world leaders that had seemed to have been made by a man that could see the future, had in reality been the work of a man who *dictated* the future.

More precisely, Eli was *allowed*, b y families that *really* dictated the future, to manage the Americans. That said, they had been pleased with his efficiency and rewarded him with a large measure of autonomy when it came to operations in this part of the hemisphere. Jacob had learned at an early age how the world *really* worked, and right now it worked how ever Eli told it to work. Or, at least, it had.

Ever since the total disaster last year that was the presidential election, Jacob’s faith in Eli had suffered a blow. He was worried that the families in Europe, and elsewhere, might also be questioning their faith in Mr. Silverman. In the meantime, Jacob would have to be extremely careful. He didn’t like second-guessing his mentor, but something about this Wayne Thomas didn’t sit well with him.

“What’s not to trust? Look at him! He’s like an all American boy. You look up poster child in the dictionary, and that’s him that’s who you see. This is a gift. The natives are getting more, and more, restless, Jacob, and they love him. He’s good on camera, and he had a perfect opportunity to turn this friend of his into a martyr that would have been bad. But, he didn’t do that Jacob, not yet. But, he could. Yes, he could. It’s better we take control of this now before he figures that out,” Eli said.

Eli’s voice was energetic and gravely. He was well into his seventies now but had put on a significant amount of weight in his old age, and now his stretched, wrinkled skin, gave him the appearance of a younger man with a rare disease that had prematurely aged him. He wore a suit that cost more than most people’s cars, but, because of his oddly shaped, and lumpy body, the suit appeared as ill-fitting as his skin. He jabbed his plump, yet inexplicably gnarled, finger at the image of Wayne Thomas that was displayed on Jacob’s laptop.

“He’ll come cheap too. You can just tell by looking at him. Never had nothing, won’t ever have nothing. That boy will jump, Jacob.”

Jacob shifted uncomfortably in his chair. He never liked to go against Eli’s instincts, but he also trusted his own.

“Our people still don’t know who was behind the shooting. We just know it wasn’t our people,” Jacob said.

“What? So what. They’re *all* our people. I told you that those ANIFAS brats were getting too enthusiastic. They weren’t supposed to start this kind of stuff until we are ready, Jacob. You think

we're ready? You know how ready we are? We're not ready, Jacob. It's going to take more time. This isn't how things were supposed to happen, so we need more time. This kid will give us more time," Eli said as his jowls jiggled about.

Jacob frowned silently.

"What? You think this is a trick? You think that kid has some kind of plan, Jacob? You're being paranoid. Everyone is being so paranoid. After Aaronberg, I don't blame you, but fear makes people make mistakes. What's the news with Aaronberg anyway? Was he mixed up in something he didn't tell us about?" Eli asked.

"We don't think so. Langly has their heads up their asses, but our friends in Tel Aviv found a video..."

"A video? How can there be a video? The stupid fuck made a video, himself? No, he wasn't that stupid. How do we know that some rogue spooks didn't make this video? You say they have their heads up their asses. Maybe they don't," Eli said.

"We think it might be worse than that. We think maybe Aaronberg might have wired his place up," said Jacob.

Eli frowned and tapped his finger on the table.

"Show it to me."

Jacob minimized the image of Wayne Thomas that had been on his screen and opened up the encrypted folder containing his more sensitive files. After a few clicks, a video window opened up, and the two watched in silence for a moment.

"He didn't make this. That's his place he has in, in..." Eli scratched his head trying to remember.

"Maryland," said Jacob.

"Yes, I recognize that stupid fucking painting on the wall. He didn't make this. Not unless he had the place wired up recently. This is no good, Jacob. Did our guys do a clean up before the feds showed up?" Eli's tone was dangerous. He wanted someone to blame.

"Yes, and Eli, we can't be certain that Aaronberg didn't make the video, or that there aren't more. We do regular sweeps, and the last time we checked his place in Maryland was about six months ago. The video first appeared on the internet two months ago. When the cleaners ran a sweep, they didn't find any cameras, but they found pinholes, and they found a few other possible areas that might have had cameras. Tel Aviv scrubbed the video off the darkweb, and have bots keeping an eye out for it if someone with a local copy connects to the web. It's hard to know how many copies might be out there, or if there might be more. The date on the file suggests that the video was made a few weeks before it surfaced, but that's all we know right now," explained Jacob.

"This is no good, Jacob," Eli said, leaning back in his chair.

"Tel Aviv said they ran the video through an AI program, along with images from the other locations where there might have been cameras. If another video appears, it will get flagged and scrubbed automatically, and we'll be able to track the source," Jacob said.

Eli was no fool, but he was from a time before the internet, and sometimes had trouble grasping the problems related to this new information age.

"You think this could be Alice and her people? They've pulled shit like this before," Eli said frowning.

Alice Green had been the candidate that Eli had supported for president. Or rather, she was the candidate they had *chosen* for president. His family, at the behest of the families in Europe, had succeeded in their hostile takeover of the American political system nearly fifty years ago. Not that

the Americans ever really had a say in who occupied the Oval Office. His family had simply wrestled control from the WASPs that had been calling the shots the previous fifty years, and restored the power where it rightfully belonged. It had been a messy affair, and the WASPs hadn't gone down without a fight, but after some clever maneuvering, and surgical bloodletting, things had been settled.

The matter had been overseen by Eli's father and dictated, as all things were, by the families in Europe. The last few decades had shown that the WASPs had learned to play ball, and things had been running smoothly. He had perfected the system. Deals were made well in advance. Everyone who mattered was in agreement that, the people, if left to their own devices, would destroy themselves and take those that mattered down with them. This was unacceptable to everyone, especially the families in Europe. The families who, to Eli's resentment, really called the shots.

Eli thought they had misjudged the changing attitude of the American people, and he had been right. The families in Europe still blamed him, and now it was up to him to clean up the mess.

He wasn't worried about the dark horse candidate that had trounced Alice in the election. He owned most of the cabinet and had managed to get most of the appointees he needed in place. He was confident that this was merely an unfortunate setback, in a long line of setbacks that he had rolled right over with the might of his benefactors, and the collusion of the elites nestled under their wings. What worried him was that the world was changing faster with each passing year, and some of his peers, even those he had always been able to depend on, were proving slow to adapt to the changes.

The internet had made many of their tried, and true, social engineering tactics ineffective. They owned Silicon Valley, just as surely as they owned Washington, but they'd been unable to wrangle and adequately suppress the free flow of information. Certainly, they had ways of suppressing the undesirable voices, but these undesirables were getting clever, and the old institutional media had been utterly incompetent. The people were playing outside of the sandbox, like unruly children trampling all over his delicate garden. The narrative had split into unmanageable fragments. People like this Wayne Thomas were beginning to have more influence than the approved thought leaders. People like this Wayne Thomas had told the people to vote for the other candidate, and the people had listened.

They had overplayed their hand. They had been overconfident, and now their soft underbelly was exposed. They had to pacify the people and buy some time, so they could regroup, and then define a new monster to frighten the children back into their parent's arms. Then, they must punish the children.

Eli looked at Jacob and said "Find out if this is Alice. Let her know this is unacceptable. We can't have this kind of thing happening, Jacob. She is of no more use to us. I would burn her as a sacrifice in an instant. That would oil some of the squeaky wheels, but she would take too many down with her. Maybe she's not so certain of this. Make her wonder."

Jacob nodded, and asked "Wayne Thomas?"

"You say you don't trust him. Do what you do, Jacob. If he can't be trusted, make him go away. The kindling is very dry, and he is holding a match. But, I also think he is holding a glass of water. Do what you do, Jacob. I'll leave this to you, but I say he is useful to us," Eli said.

Jacob knew that meant that Eli wanted Wayne and that he should stop expressing doubt about his superior's intuition. He nodded, and left the boardroom, then began making the necessary calls to acquire Eli's new pet.

CHAPTER 11

They were losing control. Despite having to stay out of the public eye, after losing the election. The election he had managed against a so-called “long shot” candidate. Despite the donors that had all turned tail and ran from him since the election, Brad Valentini still had some influence.

He could plant stories, and book guests, on news networks that would push his narrative, but this isn't what it was supposed to be like. They were supposed to be doing a victory lap right now. This was going to be the final phase of a plan that had been in motion for a century, if not longer. He wouldn't allow it to end like this, no matter what the others were saying.

Brad felt robbed. For his entire life, he had been the errand boy for kings and queens. If they had a problem, he made it go away, and they had handed him some pretty monumental problems over the years. Some of those problems had been people. People were easy to make disappear. The law enforcement in this country was on a leash and rolled over when they were told, and the press were always eager to please. Even now, with the election over and lost, this hadn't changed. They knew they had as much to lose, if not more, if things kept going in the direction they seemed to be going.

That's why what had been happening had been so perplexing. It was now his people who were disappearing. He'd talked to his men at FBI, CIA, DoJ, and every other relevant agency under his employers' thumbs and nobody had a clue. He had come to the realization that after being on the offense all these years, the decades they had spent to repurpose these so-called investigative agencies, as more of a security force that protected their interests, and occasionally shut down competitors that they had gone for so long without any opposition that they had lost the ability to perform their publicly stated function. Investigating. Who was it that had said, “secrecy breeds incompetence”?

He thought of it like a pizza parlor front that was set up to launder money. For decades, it laundered the money without a hitch, but then, once the money had dried up, the pizza parlor was expected to actually make pizza, and make it well enough to turn a profit.

That was bad enough. What was worse, he didn't think that all these “senseless tragedies” were coming from the current administration, as some of his colleagues had been assuming. There just wasn't any infrastructure for these kinds of operations that would allow them to take place out of his earshot. Something this big couldn't possibly evade his people, and something about it just seemed kind of... ..chaotic, random. If the opposition was taking people out, there didn't seem to be any strategy to it. Additionally, the manner in which some of his former colleagues were meeting their ends seemed just a little too theatrical to be the work of the kind of professional hit teams that his opposition would be using.

Mel Cohen had been found hanging from a chandelier with his genitals shot off. Shot off! He had seen the photos. Brad still couldn't figure how they had got Mel's fat ass up there.

Figuring it was better to be safe, than sorry, they had retaliated. It was still a remote possibility, however unlikely that the administration *had* grown too bold. A new senator, who was starting to be

a nuisance, was tragically shot in front of his office in DC. The press, of course, had blamed it on a crazed lone gunman, and then immediately started pushing gun control.

This was always very effective on the cattle, and more important now than it ever had been. This sort of thing would spook inept representatives of the opposition that might be emboldened by their recent election win, and try to upset the order of things. It would also give the controlled opposition an excuse to act feckless, and blend in with those whose incompetence wasn't an act.

Brad was operating in a state of perpetual extreme measures. People who were untouchable were dropping dead on a weekly basis. It was starting to make the people he worked for panic. This was an unusual circumstance, and in some ways it was unnerving. These were the kind of people who were who they were, precisely because they didn't panic. They were cold, and calculating, just like him.

With any luck, these unfamiliar emotions might make one of them sloppy. He would be ready to take advantage of any slip-ups they might make. Errors in strategy created opportunities for him, but he was uncomfortable with the abundance of opportunities he was being given.

Brad's phone buzzed. Someone had sent him an encrypted text. Since all the recent data breaches, they had been forced to move to more secure systems. He hated all the steps that were now required to unlock his phone and access his messages. After verifying his identity, he opened the new message.

The message was from his assistant, Rory. It was a link to an Arlington Times article. Right after the link, Rory had simply typed the word "fuck."

This couldn't be good.

Brad couldn't remember the last time someone had sent him good news. He opened the link and began to read the article. As he read it, he felt a tightness in his chest. By the time he had finished the article, it was like he was being pressed between the thumb and forefinger of some giant toddler that didn't know its own strength.

The story was about the murder of a former colleague of his. Randy Bishop. Randy had been fired from the campaign when he had been caught with child porn on his computer. Of course, they didn't fire him for having kiddy porn. They fired him for being stupid and getting caught with kiddy porn. That had taken up the news cycle with accusations of pedophilia for about forty-eight hours, until his friends in the media could shut it down.

That was one subject that, at least for now, still outraged the cattle, but they would accept that too, eventually. As for now, if the cattle really knew what went on at the parties that Brad and these media people went to, they would have strung them all up, and hung them all from the Ellington Bridge.

Law enforcement wasn't exactly innocent either, which is why it was so stupid that Randy had been caught. He'd been picked up in a sting run by some uppity local cop, trying to fuck an eleven-year-old girl that had turned out to be a cop. What made this so infuriating was, if Randy had wanted eleven-year-old pussy, he could have had it. Hell, Brad had arranged for them to have younger than that on several occasions in the past. But no, Randy wanted the thrill of the hunt, and he had fucked them all over. Well, for forty-eight hours.

Sure, the rumors on the internet persisted to this day, and this story wasn't going to help anything, but the media had done their jobs when the story had first broke, insisting that it was all a conspiracy theory. They would merely have to do that again. In fact, this time the story wouldn't reach a single corporate media outlet. He would make sure of that. It still gave the "alternative media" personalities, on the internet, more ammunition. His bosses still didn't fully understand the

impact that was having.

According to the article, Randy had, once again, been chasing after young girls. But this time it wasn't the cops that got him. Apparently, Randy, and six others, whose names he didn't recognize, were lured to the home of a man named Marcus Taylor.

Initially, the police thought that Mr. Taylor had operated his own kind of sting operation. It appeared that Taylor, was posing as young girls online, and then inviting men to his home with the promise of sex. One by one, he had executed the men who showed up, until someone had called in an anonymous tip claiming there had been a murder.

When police arrived at the scene, they searched Taylor's home and found the bodies of the men stacked up neatly in a bedroom. However, Taylor was no longer a suspect. Upon further investigation, they had found *his* body in the basement freezer. The police now suspected the unknown person, who had called in the tip, had run this rogue operation themselves.

Marcus Taylor had been on the sex offender registry for kidnapping and raping a couple of kids back in the nineties. The current theory was that some vigilante had killed him first and then used his house, and his internet accounts, to get Randy and the others.

What the fuck was happening? There was no way this was organic. He had doubted that the administration had been behind the recent assassinations, but this was getting... ..scary.

There needed to be some high-level discussions to figure this out. He would have to coordinate a conference between, his people in the various agencies, and his bosses. Randy was expendable, and no significant loss to the cause, but there was an unspoken rule about who was fair game, and it had been violated too many times now. Maybe the opposition really did want a war.

That was impossible. Both sides needed the status quo. That's what was so perplexing about this escalation. The public had always watched the political theater and imagined what they saw was real. The gullible voting public believed the fiction that there was a never-ending battle raging between The Left and The Right. Indeed, there were power struggles within the establishment, but they were two sides of the same coin. One of the sides of the coin was always going to be on top, at any given moment, but to destroy one side, was to destroy the coin. That's what didn't make sense.

Sure, there were new faces right now. More than usual. The elections had also culled a large number of the establishment, but most of the new blood was already bought and paid for. It just didn't make any damn sense.

"Hands where I can see them!" a voice shouted.

Brad suddenly became acutely aware of his surroundings. He had been so lost in thought that he'd almost forgotten where he was. He stood frozen in the middle of his spotless designer kitchen. This was his private home, in Chevy Chase that he had secretly operated out of, from time to time. It was one of the seven different properties he owned, and until this moment, it was the property he considered the most secure. Nobody, outside his closest of circles, even knew he owned the home. He had purchased it using several shell corporations, and an anonymous LLC, registered in New Mexico. The only people that knew about this house were also the people that knew about the secrets that it held.

That's what terrified Brad most. He hoped that this was just a burglar that had happened upon him by pure chance, because if it wasn't...

"Hands where I can see them!" the voice shouted again, this time it managed to sound even more menacing.

"Who-" Brad began to turn to face his assailant.

"Look at the fucking wall! Hands where I can see them, or so help me, I will drop you right

here, right now!" the voice shouted.

Brad's face darkened. Whoever this was, he doubted they were law enforcement, and quite frankly, they had picked the wrong time to fuck with him. He turned on his heel and was met with a bright flash, followed by a loud popping sound that took him by surprise. His right arm had flung back violently for some unfathomable reason, and he almost lost his balance.

"What the fuck-" Brad began.

Another flash, followed by another pop, spun him around and sent him face down to the cold tile floor. Gasping for air, Brad fumbled about on his stomach. He tried to push himself up off the floor, and that's when he noticed his hand. His hand!

Brad let out a shriek that sounded like nothing he had ever uttered before. He wasn't even sure if the sound had come from him. Nothing seemed real, after seeing the mangled mass of flesh where his hand had once been.

"What did you do to my fucking hand?!" Brad screamed.

"You know, I was hoping this would go down differently. Not that I wanted to take my time, although that seems like the right thing to do, considering it's you. I had this weird scenario in my head, where I'd threaten you, maybe hurt you a little bit, and make you confess to every last thing you've done. Maybe, you'd have some kind of insurance file you'd try to bargain with or something like that, but once I saw you, I stopped caring about all that," Ethan said, stepping out of the hallway where he had been standing, and into the dimly lit designer kitchen.

He was aiming a large revolver at Brad; his face was remarkably relaxed and passionless. He looked like what indifference would look like if it was pointing a forty-five at your head.

"Who the fuck are you? What are you going to do? What the fuck!" Brad said, gasping for air, still face down on the floor, but feebly trying to look over his shoulder at Ethan.

"You know, you're way smaller in real life. All you people are," Ethan said.

Brad was small for a man with such an imposing presence. He clocked in at about five foot and two inches. People were often surprised when they first met him in person, though, they dare not express it. He knew what they were thinking when he saw their eyebrows lift, ever so slightly, upon meeting him face to face for the first time, and each time it aggravated him. All the same, he knew it was another one of his assets. It caused people to underestimate him. This mistake had been made by many, and many had paid dearly for that mistake.

"You don't know what you just did," Brad screamed into the blood pooling on the floor by his face so loud it rippled.

"I don't know what I just did? That sounds like a threat, Brad. You're in no condition to be making threats. Get up," Ethan said coldly.

Brad managed to push himself up into a sitting position while cradling his injured right hand. He'd also been shot somewhere in the torso, but the shock he was experiencing made it difficult for him to localize the pain. He looked at Ethan and was surprised at what he saw. An unassuming young man, maybe in his thirties, wearing what appeared to be the kind of cheap suit worn by interns on The Hill, when they first moved to Washington.

In fact, Ethan looked just liked one the many, faceless, suit wearing, clean-shaven, young men, who blended into the scenery of Washington. The only difference was, these cookie cutter congressional aids usually weren't pointing a gun at him. Did he know this man?

"Listen to me. You fucked up. You fucked up bad, and you know it," Brad said, coughing up blood, "But, you can still get out of this. Its all out of your system now, yeah? So, why don't you fuck off before the Secret Service or my private security-"

“You don’t have Secret Service protection anymore, Brad. You don’t have any protection. You think I don’t know how soundproof this place is?” Ethan fired a shot into the floor between Brad’s legs and smiled a quiet smile as Brad began screaming again “You think I don’t know what goes on down there?”

Brad was still screaming as Ethan pointed to the floor with his gun.

“Shut up Brad. I’m talking! You think I don’t know what you do down there?” Ethan’s eyes were dark and piercing.

“Listen! Just listen!” Brad shouted.

“No, you listen, Brad!” Ethan pressed the smoldering hot barrel of his gun against Brad’s temple. It radiated so much heat it singed Brad’s eyebrow. The smell of burnt hair was overpowered by the strong odor of gunpowder, blood, and urine that already filled the room.

“You listen to me,” Ethan said.

Ethan reached down with his free hand, and picked Brad’s phone up off the floor, then pointed the camera at the dying man.

“You’re going to tell me exactly everything you know, and I mean everything,” Ethan hissed.

CHAPTER 12

Wayne had made the rounds on all the mainstream outlets he had expected would contact him, and even a few that he hadn't expected that, seeing the ratings of their competitors, had bit the bullet and briefly invited him on their programs. Of course, the left-wing outlets had predictably gone to great lengths to try to blame any political violence on people like Wayne and almost went as far as saying that he had been asking for it, for having such unpopular opinions. These interviews had all backfired, of course. He had said all the right things, and the internet savvy Right had quickly cut up these interviews into viral clips to highlight the media's bias.

Wayne still hadn't received any offers from big donors, and there were only so many live-streams people would watch of Wayne spouting off platitudes in a hospital bed. He had to keep the momentum going, and as much as he hated to admit it, he would need sponsorship to get his message out beyond the politically active, and red piller corners of the internet, and in front of the fluoride addled minds of the normies.

Were they vetting him? Perhaps they were hoping he would just be the flavor of the week. This would be a significant setback, but he'd adjust his plan accordingly if he thought he might have to make headlines again. What gave him hope, was that the media machine hadn't tried to destroy him yet. Even if they were going to destroy him, they would still have to build him up first. They would make him a household name, and then right as it seemed the public at large was about to embrace his message, they would perform the predictable public execution of his character.

"So, I guess you're the famous Nazi everyone's talking about," a woman's voice said, from behind the curtain that divided his hospital room.

"Why do you think I'm a Nazi?" Wayne asked.

"Well, at least you're not denying it," said the woman's voice.

"No, really, why do you think I'm a Nazi?" Wayne asked, his tone pleasant.

"Because I know who you are," the female voice said, in disgust.

"Not if you think I'm a Nazi. You know that's the mistake you people made. You weren't content with trying to make your case. You decided it was just easier to demonize people you disagreed with, and you stopped trying to make the case intellectually. If you never have to deal with other people questioning your ideas, and just turn everything into us versus them, you stop questioning your own ideas yourself, and just lash out emotionally."

"Oh, look, the Nazi is also a sexist, why am I not surprised?" the woman snarled.

"What did I say that was sexist? You see, this is what I'm talking about. You didn't address a single thing I said. You just demonized me with another label," Wayne said.

Wayne heard a loud sigh come from the other side of the curtain.

"What's your name?" Wayne asked.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me. A fucking Nazi is hitting on me, just kill me now," said the woman.

"How could I resist? Oh, I probably shouldn't use that word, you might start making a protest

sign. Look, we're both stuck in here, you think you know who I am, I'm starting to gather who you are, but I'm not going to just dismiss you with a label."

"It's Eve. We're not going to be friends, ok? I don't make friends with Nazis. I'm *glad* you're in here. You deserved what you got, and it *almost* makes it ok that I have to be stuck in here with you, even if I do have to listen to all your lies, while you go on your phone, and do all your little sob stories, and lie, and lie, and lie. You literally make me sick!" the woman shrieked.

Wayne heard Eve's hospital bed creak loudly.

"Wait, are you streaming this?" she shouted.

The curtain dividing the room violently slid back, revealing Eve, angrily staring at Wayne from her hospital bed. She was bandaged nearly entirely from the waist down, and awkwardly positioned so that she could reach the curtain.

"Fuck! I should've been! That would have been awesome," Wayne said grinning at her. "It might violate HIPAA, but still awesome."

"Fuck off," she said, as she positioned herself more comfortably on her back.

"So, did you deserve that?" Wayne asked, pointing at her bandaged legs.

Eve said nothing. She stared at the ceiling, her face contorting. Wayne thought for a moment she was going to start crying. As much as he thoroughly disliked this unpleasant, and misguided, woman, he wouldn't enjoy making her cry.

"How about, in the spirit of redistributing the wealth, I let you have whatever you want, out of that pile of chocolates and fruit baskets?" Wayne pointed at the stack of baskets, flowers, and balloons that had accumulated in his corner of the room.

Eve still said nothing.

"Suit yourself. You'll change your mind. After you've had what they try to pass off as mashed potatoes," Wayne said.

Wayne's phone buzzed with an alert, and he removed it from its charger on the nightstand, next to his bed. On the phone's home screen was a notification, for a text message from a number he didn't recognize. He unlocked his phone, and read it.

202-555-4982: Hello Wayne, hope your recovery is going well. My name is Anne Ornstein, and I work for Ziacom - would love to speak to you about your future plans. You have my personal number now, and I sent you an email as well. Please let me know when we can have a chat! Thanks, Get well!"

This could be good. Ziacom was one of the largest media companies in the world and probably owned about half the networks he had done interviews with. He didn't want to get too ahead of himself, but this might be exactly what he was looking for.

"One of your adoring Nazi fans? Do they end every message with *heil Hitler*?" Eve said, in mocking tones.

"Yes, it's a Nazi youth group in Fort Lauderdale, inviting me to speak at their next Klan rally." Wayne smiled, realizing that Eve wasn't sure if he was joking. "Jeez, you really do think we're Nazis. Maybe if you didn't push so hard to censor us, or if you didn't shut down our speakers, you might learn a thing or two about what we actually think."

"I don't listen to hate speech," Eve shot back.

"Who defines hate speech? You think I don't hate having to listen to Leftists, in pop music, movies, and schools? We're surrounded by people like you, spouting off your views. I can't go a day,

without having some Leftist talking point shoved in my face, or worse, the fruits of your ideology affecting me directly. The difference is, we don't spurg out, and start lighting trash cans on fire. You want to know why?" Wayne asked.

"Because we don't use hate speech," Eve said.

"Well that depends on how you define hate speech, which is what is wrong with the idea of hate speech in the first place, but no that's not why. It's because I don't fear your ideas being expressed because I know my ideas are better. I know that if I'm allowed to speak, and you're allowed to speak that my ideas will win," Wayne said.

"Of course, your ideas sound good to the same patriarchy that thought slavery was a good idea!" Eve screamed at him.

"So, now I'm promoting slavery? You see why it's so hard for us to have just a basic dialogue? All I said was that I want the freedom to express my ideas, and you jump right to blaming me for slavery," Wayne snorted.

"Oh, I must be an emotional girl that can't handle your ideas," Eve said.

"I'm starting to think you're right," said Wayne.

"See, I knew you were a sexist. You just admitted it," Eve said, crossing her arms.

Wayne had often wondered what the world would be like if the men in America had never given women the power to vote. How many elections would have had different outcomes? Privately, he admired the way Muslims had managed to preserve their gender roles and thought that if there were any silver linings to a Muslim takeover in America, or in Europe, it would be the end of women like this. The irony, of course, was that it was women like this, who were doing everything they could to make a Muslim takeover possible.

What made women so short sided, and quick to turn on their people?

A testament to the power of women was that despite how politically incorrect The Right was as a movement, and no matter how much they thrived on controversy, very few within the male-dominated movement would openly speak on the subject of women in politics. Wayne knew his perception of the damage caused by women voting, wasn't a fringe notion. Most of the men within the movement had expressed similar feelings privately, but one of the sad realities about this modern feminized world was that, despite all their complaining to the contrary, women had a disproportionate amount of power in the political world. For now, it would have to be enough to oppose radical feminism.

"Yes, I suppose I am," Wayne said, and turned his attention back to his phone to check his email.

CHAPTER 13

Jacob needed to relax. He'd been dealing with this nonsense with Aaronberg's video all day, and it had made him too paranoid to indulge in his own extracurricular activities. It vexed him how he'd let it become an addiction. It really was like a drug, in every way. From the need to increase the dosage regularly to experience the same tranquil effects, to the withdrawal symptoms he was currently suffering from being deprived the experience. He was no better than a junky.

The security team had swept his place several times and found nothing, which made him feel slightly more at ease, but he couldn't shake the idea that maybe he was being followed. Unlike Aaronberg, and many of the others, he didn't have the facilities required to indulge his appetite in the comfort of his penthouse. Not that he couldn't afford it. He could afford anything. Jacob just preferred using one of the many external services available to people with his particular tastes.

Especially those located safely outside of the city. In addition to the psychological aspect of being physically removed from his home, and far away from his office, it allowed him the opportunity to mingle, and sometimes even engage more intimately, with those who enjoyed similar activities. Everyone knew who he worked for, and was always happy to grant favors, but there were just some things that genuinely brought people closer together. Unspeakable things had a way of generating a solid bond between men, a bond that was free of all the artificial smiles that his proximity to Eli granted him.

But now, these safe houses seemed less safe. If he were followed by the wrong people, they would blame him. Jacob wasn't sure why he thought he might be followed, or even who might be doing the following, but he trusted his instincts. His instincts that also told him that he would need to satisfy his craving before it drove him mad.

The Governor had been one of the men Jacob had cultivated a bond with, and he had graciously offered a solution. The proposed arrangement involved state troopers delivering a package directly to his penthouse. People who knew anything about how state troopers were chosen, knew that they could be trusted not to talk, but he still couldn't shake the fear that he was being surveilled.

Jacob wouldn't risk it. He could wait a few more days. He planned to go to California to talk to Alice Green, and deliver Eli's message in person. One of Eli's medium-sized Boeing jets had a secure, and very private, room explicitly built for in-flight distractions. The state troopers could deposit his package on the plane just before takeoff, and he could dispose of the remnants before they landed. In the meantime, he would just have to suffer. He would let his suffering build, and relish its release at thirty-thousand feet above Pennsylvania, all the way through Arizona.

Just the thought of it was giving him an erection, but he was brought back to reality with a jolt when his phone began to ring.

"Yes?" Jacob spoke into his phone.

"Are you sure?" he said a moment later.

Jacob's face grew dark, and his erection became flaccid as his heart pumped adrenaline, and

cortisol, through his veins like acid. He almost dropped his phone as he made his way to the nearest chair. His knuckles went white, as he pressed the phone hard against his head, and listened intently.

“Thank you,” he said a few moments later then hung up the phone, and let out a deep breath.

Someone, who now he very much doubted was Alice Green, was fucking with them. Green’s campaign manager had been found tortured, and killed, at one of his unlisted properties. Not just any property, but a property that had existed for a particular reason. A property that nobody should have known about unless he had been followed there. What the hell was happening?

Green had naturally blamed her campaign manager, for having lost the election, but almost nobody had really taken the allegation seriously, not even the naive public. Brad had been useful and had done the best with what he had to work with. There was no bad blood, and besides, there were rules about this sort of thing. This was, in some ways, more shocking than what had happened with Aaronberg. For the most part, the unwashed masses had never heard the name Adam Aaronberg, but Brad Valentini was a household name. This was going to cause problems for everyone.

And, torture? Jacob didn’t know all the details yet, but the phrase “signs of apparent torture” was still ringing inside his head. He would need to clean this up before the press caught wind of it. The mainstream media followed orders, but they would likely look to Alice’s people for direction on the narrative, and God only knew what *she* would tell them.

Jacob unlocked his phone, scrolled down to Alice Green’s secure line, and started a call. The line picked up automatically with a tone, and Jacob entered his code. Another tone sounded, and then a moment later he heard the voice of Green’s assistant.

“Please hold for Ms. Green,” the assistant said.

A moment passed, and then Alice was on the line.

“Yes?” she said.

“Do you know who this is?” asked Jacob.

“Of course, I wasn’t expecting to hear from you, what is it that I can do for you?” Alice’s tone was silky smooth.

“What do you know about Valentini, and don’t fuck with me,” growled Jacob.

The line was silent for a moment, and then Alice said, “Brad’s in DC right now, what’s the problem?”

“Don’t fuck with me, Alice,” Jacob shouted into the phone, his body shaking with fury.

“I’m not fucking with you. I haven’t talked to Brad since yesterday. If this is about the thing with Randy, we have it under control. I appreciate your concern, I really do, but we have people on it and-”

“You do not have it under control!” Jacob screamed into his phone. He rarely lost his cool, even with Alice, who could be an insufferable bitch that seemed to delight in making people lose their cool. “Brad is fucking KIA that’s how under control your people have things. But, you knew that, right? Since you have everything so under control, you must know that right?”

“Thank you for the update. I was unaware of this. What can I do to help?” Alice said coldly.

“You’re not helping me, let’s get that cleared up right now, Alice. You’re going to do what you’re good at. You’re going to help yourself. If you fuck this up like you’ve managed to fuck everything else up, then we might not need to have our chat this weekend, and believe it or not, I was looking forward to that chat, so, I really hope you don’t fuck this up.”

Jacob opened up his laptop and began forwarding his intel regarding Brad over to Alice’s people. Alice, despite what most people thought of her, didn’t micromanage these kinds of things. She was really good at discovering people who were good at what they did, and paying them what

they were worth, and disposing of them the moment they disappointed her. Only those cold-blooded, and ruthless enough to survive under these, at times highly rewarding, but always relentlessly demanding, and dangerous working conditions made up her inner circle. At their best, they were like a well oiled deadly machine executing her demands through any means possible. At their worst, they were a platoon of paranoid sociopaths, viciously focused on self-preservation.

The media was terrified of Alice. They too were very focused on self-preservation. Alice would get them to say what they needed to say. Jacob began to calm down. This wasn't like him. Alice still needed to be put in her place, but he had been genuinely teetering on the edge of losing control, and that could be perceived as fear or panic. Worse still, it could be perceived as weakness.

"I've sent over what your people need to know. Take care of this now. I want so much disinfo on this that even the alternative media can't figure out an angle. In terms of broad strokes, push gun control. Suggest this might be the work of someone inspired by white supremacists, and their hate speech that sort of thing, and Alice..."

"Yes?" she said quietly.

"Don't use this to push your book, or whatever else you're scheming. Stick to the fucking program," Jacob said.

"I'm insulted that--"

"Shut up, Alice. I'm coming to see you," he said, and then disconnected the call before Alice could respond.

CHAPTER 14

Ethan didn't want the slice of pizza he was standing in line for. Moments ago, he had been walking down U St., when he noticed a man he could have sworn he'd also seen earlier that day at the White Flint Mall, in Maryland. Ethan had noticed the man when he'd been waiting for the metro train, and he'd seen him board the car next to his. An hour had passed since then.

There was nothing necessarily remarkable about that, which explained why he wasn't panicking. Ethan had taken his sixth name off The List earlier that morning. He thought it was a good idea to be extra cautious. After all, his handiwork had taken place just a few blocks from the White Flint Mall.

The man was in his late twenties and wearing a long grey peacoat. He had on black slacks, black leather shoes, a white shirt, and a red tie. In other words, he blended right in. Ethan himself was similarly dressed. What made Ethan suspicious, was that the man had an awkward body language about him. It was as if he'd just been caught looking into the girl's locker room, and was now trying to appear as innocent as possible. His demeanor was that of a shoplifter, who was about to exit a store with a coat full of stolen goods.

The chances that this man would get off, and change trains, at the same exact metro stop where Ethan had changed trains, were actually very high. Gallery Place was a major hub on the red line, so, Ethan had thought little of it when he had seen the man exit the train after him. He didn't even think it was that odd when he'd spotted the mystery man, once again, in the U St. metro station, riding on the escalator behind him. It wasn't until Ethan had walked several blocks, in no direction in particular, and still, he spotted this same man, about half a block away that alarm bells began to go off in his head.

Ethan ducked into the nearest doorway, as casually as he could. Now it was Ethan that felt as if his body language was that of a thief. He had walked inside a pizza shop that sold pizza by the slice to the evening bar crowd. A jukebox in the corner was blasting loud dance music, and a disco ball hung from the ceiling, providing the only source of light in the long narrow lobby. Several drunk people were standing in line and shouting at each other over the loud music. Behind the counter, an Ethiopian woman was screaming orders over her shoulder to the Ethiopian men dancing to the music in the kitchen.

Ethan looked through the large windows that faced the street and examined the people walking by. All he could see was the expected mix of homeless people, and intoxicated young people dressed in business attire. No mystery man.

He waited several minutes, until it was his turn to order, and then acted as if he'd forgotten his wallet. The Ethiopian woman seemed very upset by this. He couldn't understand exactly what she was saying, because of her thick accent, and the loud music blaring out of the jukebox, but the look on her face communicated her displeasure with ease. She shouted something unintelligible at Ethan, as he apologized, and walked out through the entrance of the pizza place, and back out onto the street.

The man from White Flint was nowhere in sight. Ethan relaxed a little bit. He decided he would still have to make sure that he took the scenic route back to his apartment if he wanted to be on the safe side. After walking several blocks, to a random metro station, and then, changing trains unnecessarily a handful of times to see if he was being followed, Ethan made it back to his apartment without encountering the strange man, or anyone else suspicious for that matter.

Once inside his apartment, he began to take off his coat.

All at once, every muscle in his body burned and contracted. Ethan fell to the ground with a thud. His muscles were spasming out of control. Was he having a seizure? That's when he noticed the clicking sound. It reminded him of the sound his bike had made when as a child, he had taped a playing card to the frame of his bike, near the back wheel. The card would make a clicking sound, as it struck the spokes of the spinning wheel. Now, it was the room that was spinning, and this clicking sound was so loud, he couldn't identify its source.

Two men were lifting him up off the ground. The clicking had stopped. His hands had been bound behind his back, and a gag placed in his mouth. His ankles also seemed bound together. The men placed Ethan in a sitting position on his bed. He could see now that there was also a third man. This man was pointing a handgun directly at his forehead.

"So, this is it?" Ethan thought. He smiled as much as he could smile with a gag in his mouth. He hadn't died on his knees, like all the rest of the world seemed hell-bent on doing.

"Totally worth it," Ethan tried to say, but his gag made it impossible to understand him.

The man pointing a gun at Ethan looked to be somewhere in his mid-thirties. Something about his build, shaved head, and demeanor, made Ethan think he was military. The other two men looked slightly younger. The man to his left was blonde, with a blonde curly beard, and grey eyes. He didn't look like military or law enforcement. He was pudgy, and unkempt, like an overgrown dwarf. The man to his right also looked out of place. He was too skinny to be law enforcement and seemed nervous rather than menacing.

"I apologize for having to do this, Ethan," said the man with the gun "I hope you understand, this is for our protection. We know what you're capable of, what you've been up to."

Ethan shrugged his shoulders. He didn't care about what they would do to him. He only wished he'd be able to see the public reaction to the confession he'd managed to get out of Brad before he'd finished him off. Along with the video confession, there would be a massive data dump of verifiable emails, between Brad, members of Alice Green's team, and Alice Green herself. The data, which implicated several members of Green's team in involvement with illegal activity, of almost every sort, was safely stored in several different locations, including, a little-known blockchain that would self-publish to various public whistleblower sites, when Ethan failed to reactivate the dead man's switch. The timing wasn't right, but it would still be a shit storm, and he was going to miss it.

"The List has been compromised," the man with the gun said, "Charlie here, found an exploit," he looked at the skinny man to Ethan's right, and the skinny man, Charlie, smiled with embarrassment. "He tipped us off. We're on your side, Ethan. That's why we're here because we need to talk. If I take out your gag, you have to promise not to scream, or yell, or any of that. I'll put you down if I have to, but I don't think I'll have to. We're on the same team here, Ethan, you understand?"

Ethan wasn't sure what kind of trick this was, but if they knew about The List, then they also knew he'd been taking people off of it. He shrugged his shoulders. What did he have to lose?

The man with the gun nodded at the overgrown dwarf, who nodded back and then removed

Ethan's gag.

"Sorry man," the bearded man said, "they started doing it this way because of me. I almost blew his head off," he said, pointing at the man with the gun, "I mean, we're killers. Not a good idea to just sneak up on a killer."

"You can call me, Brian," the man with the gun said, "Let's get you up to speed."

Brian explained that he had begun working The List, shortly after Ethan had taken out Aaronberg. The chubby man with the beard, who went by Arrow, had been the third. That's when Charlie, who had been a contractor for the NSA, had come across a flaw in The List that allowed him to trace the location of people completing the contracts.

Charlie had been tasked, by the NSA, with finding a vulnerability in The List, but after researching the names of the people who were on The List, he had realized he didn't want the people working The List to be stopped. The List was unconventional and operated outside the law, but Charlie knew of far worse things that were perfectly legal, and believed that The List was objectively good for society.

When he discovered the exploit, he extracted the data necessary to identify some of the more successful operators. Charlie knew that if he'd found the exploit, it was possible someone else might find it too. He needed to warn The List operators before that happened.

He'd found Brian first. Brian was ex-military. His wife had started cheating on him, while he was deployed in Afghanistan, and he'd become exceedingly reclusive and bitter, when he discovered her infidelity,

"Only reason the bitch told me was, she got knocked up, and the daddy wasn't white. She let me believe it was mine, almost the all nine of the months. As we got closer to the due date, she kept acting weirder, and weirder. I just thought it was because she was pregnant. Then, she started getting nervous that I'd find out in the delivery room, so, she finally told me. I kind of lost it after that."

Brian had spent day, after day, on the internet. He began hanging out in anonymous message boards and researching the people who had sent so many of his brothers to go die in the desert on the other side of the planet. He realized the world was nothing like they had told him. He had watched his friends die, to keep a handful of people rich. When The List first appeared on the internet, he was determined to knock every name off himself.

"When you took out Aaronberg that put my butt into gear. I didn't want someone else to have all the fun," Brian said smiling.

Charlie and Brian had then tracked down Arrow. He lived in an RV, in Nevada, which made him tricky to find. They finally traced his IP while he was parked behind a house, in Henderson Nevada, stealing someone's wifi. Arrow had seen Brian snooping around his RV, and thinking he was a fed, had blasted a hole the size of a grapefruit through the door of his Winnebago.

Ethan found all of this hard to believe.

"Assuming you guys are who you say you are, how do you know he's for real?" Ethan said, pointing at Charlie. "Couldn't he just be some fed, tracking us all down? I mean, even if you believe him, he was fucking NSA."

Brian smiled, "That's exactly what I was thinking, so I made him prove himself."

"How?" Ethan asked, skeptical.

"I made him take a name off The List," Brian said.

Charlie smiled, and again looked embarrassed, "Katherine Lemlin," he said sheepishly.

"Ok, well that's all well and good for you, I guess, but I don't have any proof of this," said Ethan.

“Trust no one. That’s a good philosophy in these times,” said Arrow.

“We are prepared to demonstrate our loyalties. In fact, we’re going to have to see how committed you are, before we can trust you with what comes after The List,” Brian said, “The List is compromised, but our work is far from done. Even if nobody else discovers the exploit, and soon they won’t be able to. Charlie here just submitted a patch that clears it all up. We just wanted to find you before we closed the door. Even so, they know about The List. Security is going to get tight. They’ll set traps. The element of surprise is now gone.”

“So, what’s phase two?” Ethan asked.

“War,” the three said in unison.

CHAPTER 15

It had been several weeks since Wayne had first arrived at the hospital, and his physical therapy sessions had been going along nicely. Soon, he'd be able to walk out of here, and take advantage of all the resources his new benefactors at Ziacom had promised. In return, for maintaining a "reasonable" stance on a handful of issues, of course.

The most critical issue, he had been told several times, was the issue of political violence. There had been an outbreak of violent incidents, and not just at political rallies, but in quiet wealthy estates, and expensive high rise condos. Wayne didn't know what to make of it, but it seemed the elite, and in some cases, their families, were being assassinated one by one.

Wayne's contact at Ziacom only spoke to him about the violence at the rallies. In fact, the whole world was pretending that these, clearly coordinated, assassinations of Deep State operatives, and war profiteers across the country, weren't even happening at all. Not a single mainstream outlet had breathed a word about any of them, not even when Alice Green's former campaign manager was found murdered in a suburb of Washington. The mainstream media omitted the reports that he'd had been tortured for hours. The coverage only lasted for about twenty seconds of airtime, while the news readers had spoken softly, and in reverent tones, about Brad's excellent service to his country, and photos of Brad, smiling his creepy smile, crossfaded, and drifted, gently across the television screen.

They called it a "botched robbery", despite the fact that nothing had been stolen. Nothing to see here.

"If only, the country had reasonable gun control, this tragedy might have been avoided," they had all said.

Wayne's new handlers would send him on a tour of all the mainstream media outlets to celebrate his recovery, and to calm the masses. This time, he was promised that all of the outlets would be significantly less combative, and maybe even receptive to his message for peace. More importantly, they would help promote the book that Ziacom was having ghostwritten for him, "Freedom from Violence". They would purchase a new wardrobe for him, and give him the keys to a conveniently located upscale apartment, in Manhattan, where they had built him a small studio.

Once his book tour was complete, he would have a ghostwritten blog that would be fully staffed by Ziacom approved writers, meme artists, and of course, there would be merchandise. Wayne would be flown out to various events, sponsored by his donors, and he would keep in constant contact with his fans via daily streams. His benefactors had every detail of his media strategy carefully planned out, he just needed to show up, and do what he was told.

Now that the shadowbans had been lifted from all of his accounts, and they were no longer hidden from search results, and trending topics, Wayne's audience, and engagement levels went through the roof. Wayne had a new appreciation for the suppression tactics the tech giants stealthily employed. The day they had lifted his shadowbans, his audience had grown nearly twenty percent in twenty-four hours. He wondered what the political landscape in his country would have looked like

if these companies hadn't sold out to their globalist overlords in the first place. Would America have even fallen as far as she had?

Ziacom never provided Wayne a script, and his new handler would, without a doubt, pretend to be scandalized if Wayne even suggested that they influenced what he said. She would also deny that she was his handler until she was blue in the face. Her constant flirting gave Wayne the impression that she was the kind of woman who would resort to sexual manipulation if he seemed unsatisfied with his illusion of choice. Wayne always pretended to be flattered, and embarrassed, by her compliments, and played by the rules. He never once set foot outside the reservation. That would change when the time was right.

Wayne didn't mind that the revolutionaries in the movement didn't understand his long game. For his strategy to work, the more extreme elements on The Right would have to hate him and call him a shill. They were not the ones that needed to be coaxed into action. There would always be those, who would try to shift the Overton window by force, but those were the people that didn't understand people.

When Obama had run for president in 2008, despite being a closeted bisexual himself, he ran on a platform in support of traditional marriage. Had he made his true views public, let alone if he had shoved his views down the throats of the voters, he would have never been a serious candidate. He would have never won the presidency, and he would have never been in a position to subvert the culture for eight unrelenting years. The Left played the long game because they understood people.

Wayne understood people too. It had taken decades to lull the American public to sleep, and it was foolish to think that reversing the process was as simple as being the loudest alarm clock. The people had become complacent, and they had learned to love their prison cells. They feared change, and the kind of change that would be required to bring their civilization back from the brink wouldn't come without pain. The prison cells would have to become so unbearable that even the timidiest of slaves would be driven to revolt.

This process would happen on its own. The hordes of immigrants pouring into the US, and in Europe, were bringing the problems of their home countries with them. They would, as all humans do, try desperately to adapt their new environment to fit themselves, rather than adapt themselves to fit their new environment. The Europeans behaved in the same manner when they colonized the globe. This was basic human nature.

Once the demographics in The West gave non-westerners the political power to enforce their way of life on the shrinking European minority, war would be inevitable. The descendants of the founding fathers would find themselves in an unsuitable environment, and would, as all humans have since the dawn of man, seek to adapt their environment. However, deprived of political, social, and financial, power, to affect this change peacefully, they would be forced to turn to the only methods left available to them.

Fleeing to the New World was no longer possible. The ancestors of European Americans had risked life, and limb, to escape their environment. They had found a new land where their oppressors had no power, and they had conquered it for their own. They had shaped the environment to fit their biology. Their descendants would be willing to do the same, only this time there was no New World to flee too.

Wayne saw the writing on the wall. The fuse was already lit. It was only a matter of how long the fuse was. With every passing day, the chances of survival decreased. Wayne was confident that his people could survive, but their numbers were plummeting, and their power was declining, at an ever-expanding pace. At a certain point, their extinction would be a mathematical certainty.

Wayne had to play the complex game of measuring his sense of urgency, against the slowness of the Overton window. The Overton window that moved ever so slowly, until suddenly it didn't. There were always watershed moments. The pressure building behind the shift sometimes behaved like the intense pressure that built up along fault lines. Exploding with energy, without warning, once the pressure reached critical mass. Just like earthquakes, these events were almost impossible to predict. Wayne just needed to be there when it happened. At the first sign of a spark, he would pour the gasoline.

Meanwhile, he would have to protect his access to the public. If that meant that people he admired, and respected, called him a philosophical lightweight, or a shill that was fine by him. He knew what his true legacy would be when the final curtain came down.

It was now, as Wayne lay in his hospital bed considering these things that he decided he needed to do something to protect his objectives. In a strange way, he felt as if he was being compelled to act by some intuition deep inside of him. Was it instinct? Was it God? Was there a difference? He still believed that religion had been used as a tool of control. It was likely an invention of the ruling class, used to keep the peasants satisfied with their shitty lives, by promising them a mansion in the clouds, or seventy-two virgins, waiting for them in the afterlife. Best of all, the rich people weren't invited. Every slave's fantasy.

The slaves were told that faith was a virtue. They were instructed to serve unquestioningly under the bootheels of the ruling class. If they behaved themselves for the full duration of their mortal lives, they would finally be rewarded. There would justice when they were dead and buried. The perfect scam.

All the same, he had felt a new kind of awareness, since his recent brush with death. He supposed it could be described as spiritual, although he hated that term. It reminded him of low IQ Instagram whores, or some pedophile celebrity accepting an award. He supposed in some ways he was a social media whore and a celebrity. Maybe, the term was more appropriate than he cared to admit.

Armed with this new awareness, and feeling inspired, Wayne decided to record a message to the country. The message. The message the people weren't ready for, but needed to hear. If he recorded it now, he could guarantee it would be delivered.

He waited until Eve had been wheeled out of the room for a bath, and change of bandages. Then, using his crutches, he managed his way slowly, and painfully, into the bathroom. He knew it was unlikely that the room would be bugged, but after what he had learned about American intelligence agencies, he also knew you could never be too careful. He turned on the shower, and the exhaust fan in the ceiling, and leaned up against the bathroom counter. He took a deep breath, and then, after collecting his thoughts, he recorded the message that nobody was ready to hear.

A few moments later, Wayne hobbled, with his crutches, back to his hospital bed. He uploaded the video from his encrypted video app to a server he used, from time to time, for web hosting files he didn't trust leaving on big corporate cloud providers. When the upload was complete, he set up a script that would publish the video automatically to his social media accounts and his millions of subscribers, unless, he logged in and postponed the upload daily.

He had just logged out of the server when he was startled by the door to his room opening with a crash. Eve, his roommate, was being wheeled back into her side of the room. The way the orderlies handled the hospital bed reminded him of angry teenage grocery store employees, collecting shopping carts in a parking lot, for minimum wage. Eve had become increasingly hostile

over the last few days and had even begun chanting ANIFAS protest slogans during some of his streams. The viewers ate it up, but it was starting to annoy Wayne, and his patience was wearing thin.

After the orderlies wheeled Eve's bed back into place, they left without saying a word to Wayne. Wayne got the impression that, they too, thought he was an evil Nazi. There was no telling what Eve had told them, in an effort to get her own room. Wayne was beginning to think she would smother him in his sleep if she thought she could get away with it. All the same, he liked the challenge she posed to his charisma, and thought perhaps he could still win her over eventually.

CHAPTER 16

Ethan sat at the kitchen table located inside the house the group had purchased, just outside of Washington, in the Virginian suburb of Ashburn. The group had pooled some of the money that had been earned working The List, and bought several properties across the country to serve as safe houses. The houses were used as local staging areas for their various ops, but were also fully equipped to sustain them, if the shit hit the fan. Each property was stocked with several weapons, ammunition, water, and enough food, to keep twelve people alive for at least three years.

The homes also had stealth ham radio antennas installed, and high powered transceivers, capable of reaching one another on multiple frequencies. Solar panels were installed on each of the rooftops, and discreet rainwater collection systems were in place at each location. At least one vehicle, fully gassed up and packed with emergency supplies, occupied each garage. Charlie had also installed surveillance systems that allowed the group to keep an eye on things remotely. All of the cameras were outdoors, and facing outwards. The video streams had just enough encryption to prevent people from snooping around, without raising any eyebrows.

The group had decided to set up the various safe houses, shortly after their first meeting with Ethan. After they had told Ethan their plans, he had suggested they begin slowly cashing out their crypto. If it got out that The List was compromised, he had argued, the price of the cryptocurrency, used to pay out The List operators, would crash.

Another consideration was, due to the massive amounts of crypto they had accumulated by taking names off The List, they could potentially trigger a crash if they all cashed out at once. There was also no telling what would happen to the economy if civil war broke out. Would the dollar crash? Better to prepare for the worst case scenario now, while the economy was doing relatively well. They systematically liquidated the majority of their crypto assets and turned the proceeds into gold and property.

After purchasing the homes, and stocking them up with supplies, and weapons, they had begun executing their plans. These new plans, Brian had explained, meant taking things to the next level. The group had to start thinking in terms of starting and winning a war. The outcomes of wars always favored those who were able to inflict the most damage; it was simple math. Not just military targets, but civilian targets as well. By that, he didn't mean the group should just start bombing schools or randomly targeting people, but that the families of the enemies and their employees were all fair game.

"You think when the U.S. does a drone strike to kill one enemy combatant and ends up killing eighty people at a wedding that it's just an unfortunate accident or unavoidable collateral damage?" Brian had asked the group, "Of course not. The truth is, the planet is ruled by different crime families, constantly fighting over power, in different parts of the world. Some of those crime families end up with access to high tech weapons, and they use them. Killing your enemy's entire extended family, while they celebrate a wedding, sends a message."

"What message is that?" Ethan asked although he knew the answer.

“Same message the mob sends when they erase a rival family they can’t control. You fuck with us, and we’ll end you, and just like with the mob, sometimes that message sparks a war that goes on, and on, and on, for generations. Which is another reason it’s a good idea to get the whole family. Nobody is going to try to avenge uncle Vinny if you wipe out his entire bloodline. Which, speaking of bloodlines, these people are obsessed about their bloodlines. You start threatening their legacy, and that’s going to be a powerful psychological weapon.”

Brian had studied each of them carefully. Looking for any hint of weakness, or indecision, before he continued.

“These congressmen and senators that we know are dirty, and not just the stereotypical shit, like accepting bribes kind of dirty, but the real treasonist baby raping scumbags that have priority. These guys are usually pretty difficult targets. They know about The List, and they have security details, and underground tunnels that take them between the different buildings in DC. You might be able to get lucky and pick a few of them off on the street if you knew their schedule. Kind of like how they shot Reagan, but you’d probably wind up being just as effective. The opportunities are there, but the risk is high, and it would most likely amount to a suicide mission, with no guarantee of success,” Brian said.

“I think in cases like this it’s easier to look at how they kill each other. Taking their plane down when they fly back home seems like it would be doable,” said Arrow.

“Very doable, and something we should look into further,” Brian agreed, “but what I’m suggesting is we don’t even focus on them right now. We should begin identifying some high-value collateral damage. Maybe they have an elderly parent stashed away at some home somewhere, with zero security. Maybe we can make it look like natural causes. Most of these guys have wives back home who go out in public, without security. Accidents happen. Or what if we identify a boarding school where their children go? Very light security. Sometimes, no security at all. Maybe we arrange for a gas leak that takes out several of them at once, and still looks like an accident so they can’t use it to grandstand.”

“They’ll still use it for sympathy,” Charlie said.

“Of course they will, but this late in the game, even with dead kids, they’re only going to get sympathy from people that don’t matter anyway. Our side knows the last thing these people care about is dead kids. We just have to avoid anything that looks like it was intentional because most of our side doesn’t have the stomach for this kind of a thing. We need just enough plausible deniability so that they look crazy if they blame it on us, but at the same time, when it comes right down to it, they know it was no accident. Perfect way to fuck with them, and send the kind of message we want to send,” said Brian.

“Not only that, but just imagine the resources they would have to shift around, once they start to think that their families aren’t safe,” Arrow said, scratching his beard.

“Exactly,” Brian agreed.

“You know what’s fucked up?” Ethan said.

“You mean, besides all of this?” said Arrow.

“I think I know what you’re going to say, but let’s hear it,” said Brian, a grim smile on his face.

“Once you make the connection,” Ethan said, “really, shake all that programming they pumped into us our entire lives, the programming that says that for some inexplicable reason it’s ok when the ruling class starts unnecessary wars that kill millions of innocent people in far-off places, places you’ll never even see with your own eyes-”

“Unless you’re the one they’re sending to do the killing,” Brian interjected.

Ethan nodded at Brian, in acknowledgment, “Yes, but even those that do the killing under orders from these people, you might even say *especially* the people that do the killing for the ruling class, nobody calls it immoral. It’s just what they do. Wars just happen sometimes, and it’s just accepted that several innocents will just die. Most people don’t think about it at all. They might see on TV that one-hundred-thousand children were killed, and for some reason it’s ok. It’s just something unfortunate that can’t be helped.

“Once you’re able to, really, put together in your head that if they say it’s ok when they do it, if they say what they do is justified, then their families are also fair game. They didn’t just agree to the rules. They *wrote* these rules. Time, and time again, they have asserted over, and over that killing hundreds of thousands of children, is perfectly acceptable. This is on them.”

“Trust me, I know. I’ve seen it,” said Brian, “We’re talking about the children of people that pose no threat to them. They’re fair game, simply because they’re in the way of some oil pipeline, or maybe some opium fields, or maybe they just want to boost weapons sales. Hell, some of these fucks just want to adjust the population numbers, and don’t care how it’s done, as long as they can turn a profit.”

“Right,” said Ethan, “and if those are the rules that they have laid out, then it logically follows that killing their children isn’t just an act of self-defense, it’s probably the most ethical thing you could ever do.”

“Once you take that pill, there’s no real coming back,” Arrow sighed. “This is how they have managed to hold onto power for so long. It’s so dark, most people can’t comprehend it, and if they do, they are unwilling to accept what must be done. So, they just allow themselves to be ruled by these people because the alternative is fucking...”

“Yeah, I don’t lose sleep over killing them. I lose sleep over the people they ordered me to kill, in Afghanistan, before I woke up, and saw who the real problem was. It’s like Ethan said, they have brought this on themselves, and their families,” Brian said.

“And their employees,” Charlie said. “Honestly that’s why I jumped ship. I knew if I didn’t, I would be fighting on the wrong side. Lots of guys that work at the alphabet agencies think they’re doing the right thing, and that’s sad. Maybe, as things heat up, they might rethink where they stand, but most of these guys just don’t want to see it.”

“It’s war. Some people like to excuse it by saying good people die in war, but that’s just avoiding the truth. The truth is that these so-called good people have had their chance to wake up, and be on the right side of this, and if they don’t get it, because they were too busy watching reality TV, and playing games on their phone, or they were fooled by the lies the media was telling them, well, how good are they really? This is natural selection running its course. Most powerful force in evolution is death. Removing the genes of the people that got us in this mess is just as important as getting rid of the ones that enabled them. There really isn’t a difference. They’re still part of the problem,” said Brian.

“Let’s hope, we’re the solution, and not something worse,” Arrow said.

Ethan hated that the enemy had forced them to play by their rules, but they all knew it was necessary. For too long, the strategy of taking the high road had led them to failure. Sometimes, to defeat a monster, you needed to be a bigger monster.

They had spent the rest of the week identifying targets.

Sometimes Ethan thought about what Charlie had said, about some members of the Deep State being good people who were just unaware of the true nature of their masters. He had an idea of how he could extend an olive branch. It would be akin to dropping leaflets on a city, to warn the

inhabitants of a coming bombing raid. If they ignored his warning, it would be on them. This would be his final warning, to the people standing on the beach, staring at the water.

CHAPTER 17

“Are you Catholic?” Ethan asked his waitress, pointing at a cross she was wearing around her neck. She looked as if she had been pretty once, but maybe after having children, and hitting the wall, or just working here in a truck stop diner, for god knows how long, she’d grown too plump for her uniform, and lost the spring in her step. She still possessed the professional charisma of a seasoned waitress. Her name tag said her name was Suzy.

“What? Oh, not really. This was my grandmother’s. She was Catholic I think. Are you?” asked Suzy, with a smile.

“No, I do like the cross though,” Ethan said, nodding his head in approval.

“Thanks, can I get you anything else?” She wasn’t being rude, but the diner was unreasonably busy, and she had tips to chase.

“No, coffee is fine. I hope you don’t mind me waiting here for someone,” Ethan said.

“Don’t mind at all, just holler if you need anything,” Suzy said, then after wiping down the table next to his booth, she disappeared behind him.

Ethan had mixed feelings about religion, but he knew Americans on The Right, even those who shared European heritage, were too diverse to properly form a close-knit and effective community, as long as they lacked a shared religion, traditions, or ideology, in the same way, the Muslims, and Jews had. That was the problem with the diversity lie. America had already been diverse. Even at its founding. Making it more diverse did not strengthen the country, it undermined the birthright of its inhabitants, by introducing new immutable groups, with their own religions, traditions, and ideologies. Uncompromising groups that would not assimilate. Instead, they would band together, and work for common interests that were often in opposition to the founder’s ideals. They would slowly work to dismantle America, and fight to remake it in the image of the countries they had come from.

To make matters worse, any time the descendants of the founding fathers sought to band together, or demonstrate pride in their ancestors, or foster a sense of community among their extended European family, they were shamed by the media and all of the other groups that had been trained to distrust Europeans.

They never tired of raising the specter of Hitler, as an example of European evil. Anyone who worried that the interests of ethnic minorities, entering the country by the millions, might not align with the culture that the majority had descended from, and been entrusted with, were immediately smeared as the reincarnation of Hitler. The Baby Boomer generation, who had been raised by television networks, and rock and roll record labels, also had fathers or uncles that had died fighting Nazis. Invoking Hitler’s name was particularly effective on Boomers, but there was also a religious aspect that nobody wanted to talk about.

Growing up in the nineties, Ethan had witnessed all the name brand Christian denominations profess their undying support for Israel, and love of the Jewish people, whenever they had a chance to do so in public. After all, it was a great way to get good press. The term “Judeo-Christian” was

thrown around endlessly as if it hadn't just been made up recently, and fraudulently represented as a term used by the founding fathers. Ethan had never thought much of it. He had been told that Jews were basically like Christians that just didn't believe in the New Testament. Other than that, they were basically the same as Christians. At least, that's what he was told.

Most Christians seemed to have this same basic, and fundamentally ignorant, view of Jews. It wasn't so much the result of some trick being played on the Christians, but it was because, unlike Jews, Christians were very open about their religion. The Bible was available in every language, whereas, the original Jewish texts were only available in Hebrew. Christians would discuss their faith with anyone that would listen. They would send missionaries all over the world, to spread their message, and convert people. They would jump at the opportunity to invite new friends to their church, and there were no real big secret differences between the numerous sects.

It was because of this openness that Christians practiced in the public space that they naively thought that members of other religions, like Jews, and Muslims, behaved in the same way when it came to transparency. In fact, many Christians believed that these other religions were probably about the same as Christianity, in terms of morals, and principles, but that they just had different customs, and different names, for the same ideas. Ethan's mother had been one of these foolish Christians.

Ethan's mother was a Baby Boomer, and it was something she had said to him back in the late nineties that had come back to him recently. It was the missing puzzle piece that really led to him understanding the Christian Baby Boomer devotion to Israel, and Jews in general that ignorance alone could not explain.

Ethan's mother, like many Christians in the nineties, had actually believed that Jesus might be returning in the year two-thousand. She believed that The Second Coming was right around the corner. For two thousand years, Christians had been faithfully waiting for their savior to return, and this was finally going to be it.

And then, nothing happened.

That's when Ethan's mother had remarked, "We still have a lot of prophecy to fulfill, I guess."

This perplexed Ethan. When Ethan had asked what prophecy she meant, she had said, "Well the tribes must be gathered, in Israel, for one."

There it was. Finally, he understood why Christians would fight to the death to keep Israel Jewish. Why they had gone along with the Rothschild plan, to take Israel from the Palestinians in the first place, and why Christian Boomers would eternally cuck for Israel. They ignored the hypocrisy of Israel, as an ethnostate that promoted multiculturalism everywhere around the world, except within her walls. The Boomers were literally trying to fulfill biblical prophecy. They had been convinced by others, and themselves that in order for Jesus to come back, they had to support Israel. If only they knew what some Jews believed would happen when that same "prophecy" was fulfilled. If only they knew that they were destined to become the slaves of God's Chosen People.

Leveraging Christianity to produce a common bond between the ancestors of the founding fathers was crucial. It would help forge the kind of bond necessary to fight the degeneracy of the culture, the erosion rights, and transformation of demography. The trouble was that it came with significant drawbacks.

Ethan sometimes wondered if Christianity needed another reformation. The kind that Mel Gibson would get behind. A reformation that was aligned more with the interests of the Gentiles, and not so closely with the Jewish view that Jews were God's chosen people and the interests of Christians came second if they came at all. A Christianity that promoted the idea that God favored

the followers of Christ, and not the people who crucified him.

It amused Ethan, thinking about all the establishment right-wing hacks that have been complaining for years that what Islam really needed was to be Westernized, when really it was Christianity that should be taking notes on how to preserve its values, traditions, and autonomy. Islam can't modernize. These fantasies of a Westernized Islam do nothing but further highlight the Christian ignorance of other religions. The Quran came straight from Mohamed's mouth. It wasn't like the Bible, which was a collection of books written by various people, some whose names we don't even know. Books have been added and removed over the years because they were written by mortal men. If the Bible had been written by Jesus himself, it too would be taken literally, like the Quran. To alter the words of the Quran, was to alter the words of God. No imam had ever presumed to change the message that came directly from Mohammed's mouth. It was an act punishable by death, which was why the Quran had never changed and never would.

"Morning, Preacher Ryan," Ethan said, to a middle-aged man wearing khakis, and a shirt that seemed to clash with his expensive shoes, and sunglasses.

The man looked like someone who was accustomed to wearing expensive suits, but had on this day, lost his luggage, and was forced to buy whatever was available in the airport gift shop.

"Don't call me that, people might recognize me," the man said, nervously.

"Well, if you don't sit the fuck down, I can guarantee that everyone in this restaurant is going to recognize you." Ethan's voice was ice cold.

From his reaction, one might get the impression that the middle-aged man was used to giving orders, not taking them. But, the way he obediently sat in the booth in front of Ethan, made it just as clear that he was afraid.

"Jesus, take the sunglasses off man. It's like you're trying to look like a pedo or something," Ethan said with disgust.

The man was aghast. He had frozen completely when Ethan had said the word "pedo." Now it looked as if he might flee in terror at what Ethan might say next.

"You leave, you will wish you hadn't. I can promise you that. You walk out that door before I say its ok, I swear to you that if you don't believe in hell now, you will. I will destroy your life and your legacy. As God as my witness, you will kill yourself to escape the shame--"

"I would never commit the sin of--" the man stammered.

Ethan slapped the sunglasses off Preacher Ryan's face, and they clattered to the floor. Ethan's eyes stared unblinking, and unconcerned, through the preacher's soul, as he gasped and looked around, to see if anyone had witnessed the altercation.

"Oh, you *would* kill yourself, to escape the shame Preacher. Maybe, even after killing that pretty wife of yours... ..Madeline, right? Maybe, in a panic, after you realize what you've done, you burn it all down to the ground. Have you ever seen what fire does to a body? They'd need to get both your dental records, just to make sure it was you, and the photos they'd find at your office? Well, that's all the motive they'd need to try to get this case behind them as quick as possible. A murder-suicide. Isn't that what they call them, Preacher?"

Preacher Ryan's lip quivered as Ethan stared unblinkingly at him, through him.

"Isn't it?" Ethan asked, again.

"Yes..."

"You know, Preacher, you don't understand how lucky you are. Usually, when I find out a man is fucking kids, we don't exchange so many words, you understand? I am offering you a kindness you don't deserve. That makes me your new God, and I need to know that you understand that,

Preacher. So, I'm going to have to hear you say it." Ethan's voice was cold and smooth.

"Say what?" muttered Ryan.

"Who's your god now Preacher?" Ethan asked menacingly.

"You are," Ryan said pathetically.

"I am what?" Ethan said, maintaining his intense posture and gaze.

"You're my God now," Ryan said defeated.

"And, what's your first commandment?" Ethan asked smiling.

"Not to touch kids," Ryan muttered quietly.

"That's good, good. You want to know why?" Ethan sat back in the booth and seemed to relax.

"I deserve this..." Ryan began to cry.

"Stay with me, Preacher. It's because your God is a vengeful God, and like hell, you deserve this! The things you've done. You probably never thought you'd get to sit down face to face with God, after what you've done. Yet here you are. Face to face. You and I both know what you deserve, and it's not this," Ethan hissed.

It took every ounce of willpower that Ethan had, not to execute this subhuman piece of filth that was blathering in front of him. He had to fight fire with fire, and it was hard for him to adopt some of the methods of the enemy, but the most challenging aspect of this strategy was to be in such close proximity to evil, without being able to snuff it out. These individuals that had no principles, and betrayed their own people at the first opportunity, all so they could indulge in their ugly pleasures. This was the poison that needed to be purged from the system. The modern world had upset the natural order of things, allowing these devils to thrive. He wanted to remove them all from the earth. But, just as the enemy had learned, sometimes the people that were most adept at controlling others, were the kinds of people that were easiest to control.

Ryan would help sew the seeds of revolution with a valuable demographic. The alpha slaves who kept the Deep State running. It was important, however, that Ethan remain mindful of the risks. The risks that had become a reality under the reign of the enemy. Like the risk that all of your game pieces become the kind of hideous creatures this man was; a beast of exploitation. A kiddy fucking reprobate who lived off the kindness, and innocence of others. The risk that they would outnumber those who played the game for the right reasons. The risk that the system itself would become so saturated with parasites that if the rot and decay were removed, there would be nothing left.

Ethan decided that from now on, he would need to specify what he needed to gain from these monsters, before using them in this way. If he became dependent on them, or if their usefulness was open-ended, they would cease to be disposable, and instead, become vital pieces of the new system, as they had in the old. He needed them to serve their purpose, and then be properly disposed of, before they contaminated the system.

In the preacher's case, he would need to set milestones, objectives, timelines. If the preacher failed to deliver, he would be removed from the game board without hesitation. More importantly, if the preacher succeeded, he must be removed, to prevent the new system from developing a dependency on such filth.

Right now, the objectives were pretty simple. The preacher was the head of the megachurch of choice, for the bureaucrats of the swamp. Ethan was initially surprised that such an institution existed but had learned that the church had been a byproduct of the Hansen administration. Hansen was a Christian conservative, with strong evangelical support. After he was elected, he brought in

several of these evangelicals to staff the various agencies. Eventually, the church had become a great place to network and had grown into this sort of new age social club, with charismatic preachers, who were more like motivational speakers, than clergy.

Ryan was one of these speakers and had taken over the main stage about five years ago. He had helped the church expand massively into the surrounding areas. This was easy to do, thanks to the surge in federal employees, and the creation of so many new agencies.

His congregation numbered in the thousands. There was a massive complex that resembled a cross from space, near the shopping mall in McLean VA. Bureaucrats gathered in such numbers that a shuttle service between all three of the six-level parking garages, and the “church”, was required to get everyone into the stadium-sized chapel. If that wasn’t enough, there were also several satellite churches throughout Maryland, Virginia, and two in DC that broadcast Ryan’s sermons to his flock.

Ethan knew that many of these bureaucrats were decent people that either didn’t know or didn’t want to know, the evil they were supporting. They didn’t know the extent of the crimes they helped cover up on a daily basis. Some of them, undoubtedly, were aware, and most likely, some even participated, and that made them the enemy, but Ethan himself had worked with some of these agencies. He knew there were good people, and he had to at least try to reach them.

CHAPTER 18

Eve stared at the curtain dividing the hospital room, and listened in a fury, as her Neo-Nazi roommate spouted his disgusting propaganda to his racist fans on his phone. She couldn't believe that the hospital was subjecting her to this abuse. She had complained to everyone, and they all had told her the same nonsense about budget cuts. She had threatened to sue and even thrown a tantrum in her last physical therapy session, but the sexist therapist had just told her to "tough it out."

"Tough it out?" she had screamed at him, "You try recovering when you're sharing a room with the next Hitler, and then tell me to tough it out!"

Typical of men to stick together like that, even if it meant tolerating Nazis. Anything to make women look emotional and irrational. The therapist wasn't even white. Didn't he understand that people of color, like him, would be the first to be sent to the camps? Maybe, even worse.

While researching the evil incarnate on the other side of the curtain, who was currently ranting and raving about how vital hate speech was to their cause, she had found a few groups online, run by The Resistance group ANIFAS. They had mountains of evidence against this Wayne Thomas person that he was actually working with Russian agents. The Russians had been funding his whole operation, and even faked his so-called accident to get people to feel sorry for him. Now he was taking orders from Moscow, and it was only a matter of time before they took over the country, and suspended elections, so they could exterminate all the undesirables. It was history repeating itself.

Russian hit squads had already started executing essential philanthropists, and thought leaders, across the country. The media was wholly taken over by the Russians, so they weren't reporting any of it. Eve had found this hard to believe at first, but one of The Resistance groups she had been participating in had compiled lists of humanitarians, and professors that had been murdered, or who had disappeared. The list also included a few progressive journalists, probably the ones that the Russians couldn't threaten or bribe that had died mysteriously in the last few months.

A few ANIFAS members had even been killed while standing up to Nazis that tried to spread their hate speech. Violence was erupting at all of their Klan rallies that had been popping up across the country, as women, the gender advanced, and people of color, lead the fight against fascism. In response, several cities had banned public gatherings altogether, and social media companies were finally starting to ban hate on their platforms. It was about time they did something. Eve felt so helplessly stuck in here, while the fight of her generation was being waged outside.

After participating in several chats associated with the ANIFAS groups online on her phone, she let it slip that she knew where the infamous Wayne Thomas was located and was willing to help The Resistance. At first, they didn't believe her and called her a larper, whatever that meant, so one night she had waited until Wayne had fallen asleep, and then after some painful maneuvering, snuck a picture of him with the camera on her phone. She shared the photo with the group, but even then some thought the photo was faked. They wanted more proof, so in response, she interrupted one of Wayne's Hitlerian speeches.

"No fascism! No K.K.K.! No white supremacist U.S.A.!" she had shouted, over, and over

again, until he had ended the stream.

Everyone believed her now.

She had done this now a few times. The problem was that the fascists on the internet, and their Russian bot accounts, had gone right to work making her look like some kind of lunatic. A lunatic for hating fascism? What was the world coming to?

The ANIFAS groups online advised her to stay quiet, for now, because it was more important to have her there, to keep an eye on Wayne. She was their deep cover agent, and they feared that if she kept disrupting his streams that somehow it would make him look sympathetic. This was something Eve very much disagreed with, but they urged her to be strong so that the hospital wouldn't move her to a different room. They probably wouldn't have used this reasoning with her, had they known that's all she really wanted in the first place, but she now felt as if she had a purpose. She could participate in the war against the Russian fascists trying to take over her country.

"I will make this sacrifice for The Resistance, and for women, and people of color, and all of our LGBT plus, and gender diverse allies, everywhere!" she had told the group.

They had showered her with compliments and thanked her for her sacrifice, but the struggle was real, and she hoped she'd be able to endure this pain.

The worst part of the situation was that Wayne remained unphased by her behavior, and in fact, continued to hit on her relentlessly. What was wrong with men like this that thought everything with a vagina belonged to them? She knew, thanks to the intel that ANIFAS had provided her that he was a serial rapist. He was practically raping her with his eyes every time the curtain was pulled back. It terrified her that she might wake up in the middle of the night, and there he would be, right on top of her, forcing himself on her. Would she still be expected to just go along with the plan? Let him fulfill his violent fantasies, and just allow him to violate her over, and over?

Wayne was still recovering and wasn't able to walk, just yet, but he had solid arms, and she imagined he might still be able to do it. He'd hold her down with his muscular body, and she would be expected to just give in.

Eve thought about what she might do in this situation often. She decided that if Wayne tried to force himself on her that she would let him. Then, she would wait until he was asleep, and that's when she would cut off his toxic manhood. The fascists wouldn't follow a eunuch. They were all just a bunch of walking talking penises, looking for things to fuck. That's why they hated women so much; they feared the female power that they were too stupid to understand.

Eve decided she would need to find something sharp to use in case she needed a weapon. This was a hospital; there had to be scalpels, or something, capable of cutting through a Nazi penis, lying around somewhere. She would have to keep an eye out for something to arm herself with next time they wheeled her out to therapy. Her secret chats with ANIFAS had made her feel like a warrior, but all warriors needed weapons.

For now, her weapon would have to be her eyes, and ears, which she would use to report back to the secret groups. She made very detailed notes about everything he did, which, admittedly, wasn't very exciting most of the time. He never left his phone unlocked, and most of what he said, when he wasn't hitting on her, he was saying live to his audience on the internet, or to some fascist television network.

Eve unlocked her phone and signed into the app that allowed her to chat with her ANIFAS comrades.

EveRESIST: He's still doing his awful stream, I think I need a weapon

mungpie69: I'll protect you

b00tilyfluid: OMG you inspire me so much

hulksmashfash: death to fascists!

Zed0ng: Why do you need a weapon?

mungpie69: He better not try anything with you or he'll have me to deal with

EveRESIST: I was thinking it would be funny to cut off his cock

bootilyfluid: LOL on stream?

hulksmashfash: Make him post-op! Then they would really hate him!

mungpie: lol

Zed0ng: What if we smuggle a weapon to you? What is security like there? I thought they had cops watching the room?

EveRESIST: no not really, i mean sort of they do but it's not like they search any of the packages all the nazis send him

mungpie69: WTF? what are they sending him?

hulksmashfash: copies of mein comp for him to sign?

mungpie69: fucking pisses me off

Zed0ng: I know you don't want to dox yourself but send me your info in a private message and I can make sure we get you something to protect yourself with.

Eve's heart began to race. Up until now, she hadn't told the group her real name, or even which hospital she and Wayne were in. She knew that once she doxxed herself that the war would move from the virtual world, and into real life. She was angry with herself for being so nervous to take the next step. So many had been willing to, and had, given their lives for their cause. She could do this.

Her fingers were trembling, and she could hear the sound of blood pumping in her ears. She steadied her hands, and tapped the screen to create a new private message.

EveRESIST: ok i'm here

Zed0ng: hey

EveRESIST: I feel nervous like the first time I sent someone nudes

Zed0ng: you don't have to send nudes

EveRESIST: normally i wouldn't care but i'm still wrapped up like a mummy

Zed0ng: i'm sure you're beautiful

EveRESIST: Maybe i'll send you some i have saved, IDGAF, so.....

EveRESIST: My name is Eve IRL

Zed0ng: I'm Laurence

Zed0ng: no pressure btw, but like you've said, we must be ready to stand up to fascism and it would be good to just make sure you are safe. I can send you a package and be discreet so they never find anything even if they do check. If for some reason they find something (they wont) you can just say you don't know where it came from.

EveRESIST: What would you send?

Zed0ng: nothing illegal, just something to keep you safe. It's really no big deal. I think you should do it though

EveRESIST: do what?

Zed0ng: let me know where to send it

EveRESIST: ohhh ok, thought maybe you meant something else

Zed0ng: like what?

EveRESIST: like inglourious basterds it up

Zed0ng: well you can't exactly do that with a hospital spoon

EveRESIST: I would do it by the way. People always say shit like would you go back in time and kill baby hitler like there's more than one answer to that question, but now i guess there is because look at all the baby hitlers running around now.

EveRESIST: i mean, im not like planning something that's not what this is, i just want to feel safe you know, it suuuuuucks being in here with him, fucking scary

Zed0ng: I bet

EveRESIST: ok, I'll send you my info, but this better not get me in trouble

Zed0ng: it wont, this is not my first rodeo

EveRESIST: no nudes if i get busted

Zed0ng: nice

Eve took a deep breath. Zed0ng/Laurence was the admin of one of the larger ANIFAS groups and had been organizing ANIFAS protests, and online campaigns, for years. Even before the rise in fascism had even been on her radar. Eve had spent hours chatting with Laurence since she had first found The Resistance groups. He had been the first to believe her story, and she felt like they shared a bond. She knew she could trust him.

Eve gave Laurence the name of the hospital and the room number, and he said he would be sending a package soon.

Eve made Laurence swear to keep everything between them a secret, and not to do anything other than what they had discussed. If Wayne's location leaked out, then the hospital would be swarmed by armies of protesters, and she just didn't have the energy for that sort of a thing. Laurence agreed.

Wayne was wrapping up his live-stream. It was all very exciting plotting against him like this, right under his nose. Very exciting. She hadn't been joking about sending nudes to Laurence. She couldn't tell exactly what he looked like from the tiny photo in his avatar, but she could use some attention. Maybe she would make good on the nudes if Laurence came through. He'd been extremely vague about what he was sending, and that was exciting too. She was literally a secret agent.

CHAPTER 19

“You have to remember why we’re in this position in the first place,” Arrow said to Ethan, as the two made their way through the dark sewer tunnel.

Ethan was exhausted from pushing the heavy wheelbarrow through all the muck and mud that covered the floor of the cavernous shaft. The weight of the wheelbarrow’s contents made it awkward to move on dry land, and pushing it through this sludge in the dark was backbreaking work. It seemed as if they had been wandering in the dark for miles now, but Arrow had assured Ethan that they had almost reached the pipeline. Ethan hoped he was right. They had been working all night and were cutting it a little close with this last leg of the plan.

“Since the invention of mass media,” Arrow was saying, as he shined his flashlight down the tunnel, “even before the internet, people have been becoming not just more propagandized, but also more isolated. Not just socially, but also just going out in the real world, applying all this theoretical knowledge. They don’t go out and interact with the world, their understanding of broad issues all comes from media, and subversive fiction. What they need to know for their job is very specialized, and narrow. They also don’t discuss philosophy with others, they just search the internet for answers, and watch garbage TV.

“Once everyone had the internet in their pocket, their long-term memories became like obsolete parts of their brains. A place to store worthless information, like, sports statistics, and reality TV episodes. If they need information, they just take out their phones and look it up, but they never remember it.

“Just think about it. People just search for the answer to a question to solve a dispute at the dinner table, and then, a week later the tech companies can just change the search result to something completely different. This is a big deal because this means that the next time people searched for it, since it never got stored up here” Arrow pointed at his head, “they don’t even notice the change. They just accept the new truth. The real dangerous thing is they’re not just altering historical facts. They’re altering statistics, biology, I mean, fifty-seven genders? Race is a social construct? They control reality for a large portion of the population.

“Regarding the specialization problem, most people have become just a small piece of equipment on an assembly line. You might think that’s for efficiency, but that’s not really why jobs have become so narrow in their scope. They want it to be as easy as possible to swap you out for another piece if you don’t work out. That’s one reason they want to keep the amount of training required to do your job simple. It needs to be simple enough for the average idiot, so they can replace you with some low IQ dipshit, without slowing down production.

“That’s not the only reason though. Now, it’s getting less about maintenance, and more about future proofing. The ultimate goal is to swap people out with automation. Because, machines are stupid, so, they can only replace stupid people. So, designing a process that is made up of several stupid people that can be phased out over time, makes the most sense. And, making people stupid has lots of other benefits. It’s really worked out for them. I mean, it’s all about simplicity, and it’s

pretty simple to control stupid people. Not as easy as it is to control robots or software, but they'll take what they can get for right now."

They had both smiled at this. Arrow was preaching to the choir. Everyone in the movement understood all of this. Even the general public was starting to figure it out. But would they wake up in time?

"That's one of *our* problems. We need to acknowledge that our greatest weakness might be that we aren't naturals when it comes to controlling people," Ethan said, "The idea doesn't appeal to me. I was raised to look after myself. Live and let live. I was only motivated to get involved in politics because I wanted to run my own life and be left alone by the government, and all the stupid people they've been making.

"The stories are probably all bullshit propaganda, but I liked hearing about how George Washington didn't want to be president. That's how I feel. I feel like it would be easier for me to just take my money, and go live somewhere far away. Just watch the world burn. But, I don't know, maybe it's a sense of duty or something. Or, maybe it's just being practical. In order to be left alone, we have to first take control of the society that has been completely subverted, infiltrated, and invaded, by people who *do* like control. People that value control over all else. These people we trusted to run things, while we focused on our families, and our personal lives, failed to hold up their side of the social contract, and now if *we* don't fix this shit, nobody will."

Ethan smiled a dark smile and then shook his head and laughed as he continued to maneuver the heavy wheelbarrow through the tunnel.

"Naw, they didn't fail. They succeeded in betraying us," said Arrow.

Every now and again, Arrow liked that he could see that there was still an innocence that was kept alive inside Ethan's mind. Sometimes, it would peek out into the darkness, and you would catch a glimmer in his eye. But, Ethan was no fool. Every time that glimmer took one look at the world, and it retreated right back to where it came from. He hoped someday they would live in a world where Ethan could indulge that part of himself again.

"So, here we are," Ethan said, "Patriots with no desire to control or rule over others. No desire to take advantage of those weaker, or stupider, than ourselves. We are faced with this fucked up paradox that for our society to survive, and for freedom to exist in our children's' lifetimes, we have to seize control. Wrangle the mob by force, and, if we want to succeed, we can't just match the level of brutality of our enemy, we have to *exceed* their cruelty, and become better manipulators."

"We just need to get people to understand that we are at war," Arrow said, "Not some rhetorical war, but an actual real life, and death, war. Formally declared, and not just some figure of speech. Once we do that, things will get easier."

"And that's why we're in a fucking sewer, in the middle of the night," Ethan said laughing, "We'll get the people behind this. Honestly, the reason we need people to call this a war, and accept that we are in a real, legitimate, war, a war as real as any other war Americans have fought, and died in, is that, once we get people to accept that, the entire population of the country will radically change their moral code. We're programmed to operate with a different moral code when we are *at war*. This whole ethical minefield you and I have had to run through, to get to where we are, isn't easy for most people. It wasn't even easy for us. War bypasses all that.

"We can turn countless intelligent, gentle, empathetic, men into cold-hearted killers, just by convincing them that they are at war. Families will sacrifice their fathers, and sons, to support a war, and those sacrifices will have to be made. We just need them to snap out of their trance.

"I guess we should thank our enemy for the instruction manual on how to get there. People

don't like war. So, we just do what they've been doing for eons. It doesn't stop them, so, we can't let it stop us. They know if the people don't want to go to war, they simply do a false flag. That's what they do, and it works. The people are already programmed, and ready to go. After tonight, we'll have people that are ready to accept that we're at war, and if they aren't, we'll just have to turn up the heat."

"Yeah, I hope this does the trick," Arrow said.

"We have to be prepared to take things to the same extremes they do," Ethan said softly, "Nine-Eleven is the perfect example of the lengths at which our enemies are willing to go. These are the rules they have written, and even though I hope we won't *need* to kill thousands of people to get support for our war, we need to understand that our enemy is willing to do *exactly* that. As distasteful, horrific, even evil, as we might find tactics like this as individuals, we have to be prepared to do what must be done."

"Amen, brother," said Arrow, "Hopefully it doesn't come to that, but it is, what it is. By the way, I think we're here." Arrow pointed at a series of large pipes.

Ethan looked at his map, with the help of Arrow's flashlight.

"Yeah, this is it," he agreed.

The plan had been Charlie's idea. He had the idea after seeing a communist meme that was complaining about the lack of clean water, in Flint, Michigan. Flint's water supply had become contaminated. The city was bankrupt and lacked the funds to restore clean water, and so, for the last few years, the residents of Flint had been forced to use bottled water. Of course, the meme made no mention that the city government, county government, and really the entire state, had been under total Leftist control for decades. No, instead, it was the rest of the country's fault, and greedy right-wingers, who hated black people.

Charlie had suggested that they contaminate the water in another Leftist stronghold, San Francisco. Then, they could pose as communist terrorists, who were trying to demonstrate to the world that rich white people in San Francisco would have their water restored, while the poor blacks in Flint, would have to continue to go without.

Not only would this drive a wedge between the Leftist elite, and their unemployed foot soldiers, and force The Right to take the Leftist threat more seriously, but, it would also likely be extremely costly to California. The state had been going through a drought for several years, and in addition to losing a portion of its precious water supply, the state's hypersensitive environmental laws would mean the cleanup costs would be astronomical.

The Bay Area was also home to a large percentage of the state's economy. Depending on the severity of the contamination, and the length of time it would take to complete the cleanup, and restore water to the densely populated area, the operation could easily cost the state tens of billions of dollars.

After studying San Francisco's water sources, the group had identified a few weak spots in the system. A surprising amount of California's water actually came from Arizona. It was delivered to California through a canal system that was fed by the Colorado River. Another canal system, coming from the North, supplemented much of the rest. Because these canals spanned nearly the entire state, there were several pipelines, delivering everything from raw sewage, to gasoline that in certain places, traveled under, or over, the water supply.

The plan would be to rupture as many of these pipelines as possible and to do so simultaneously. Not only would this produce the contaminated water supply, but, if done correctly, it would deprive the state of things like fuel. If the group succeeded in shutting down the pipeline

that delivered gasoline to the southern half of the state, there would be riots for sure. This could be explained away as the communists giving the middle finger to the oil companies. The plan was perfect.

Arrow and Ethan finished planting the explosives that would rupture the massive fuel line, and then made their way back out of the sewer tunnel. They returned to the motel they had rented, about twenty miles south of what they thought would be the danger zone, but they really weren't too sure what to expect.

This was the biggest, and most complicated, operation they had ever attempted. The explosives had two different stages. The first stage was simply a large amount of thermite that would be ignited directly on the various pipelines, where they intersected the waterway. This would ensure that the thick metal of the pipes would be penetrated, even if the second stage failed to perform at the level they had calculated for. The second stage was basically the equivalent of several giant pipe bombs. Charlie had been responsible for devising the explosives, and Ethan had been very impressed by the tests they had performed in the middle of the Nevada desert.

Ethan and Arrow had placed their timed devices on six different pipelines, in five different locations, up and down the state. They had the materials for a sixth location, however, they were unable to gain access to the pipeline.

Not wanting to let the explosive devices go to waste, Arrow had spotted a huge electrical transformer, located outside the fencing of a nearby electrical substation, and strategically placed the thermite, along with the secondary device, where he thought it might do the most damage. The devices were activated by timers, and in theory, would be detonated at precisely four-twenty in the morning.

It was now four-fifteen, and Ethan began pacing back, and forth, in the motel room.

"What if they don't go off? Are you sure you didn't leave anything behind?" Ethan asked.

"Positivo. If they don't go off that will suck, but I don't."

A loud rumbling boom rattled the windows of their motel room. Ethan started laughing hysterically. For some reason, this had made him more nervous than anything he'd done, concerning The List, or any of their other operations. He was glad to be past the point of no return. Now, he could relax. It was time just to sit back, and enjoy the show.

He turned the motel television on and scanned all the local channels. Local news would be first on the scene, but there would be social media posts from people in the immediate vicinity before any camera crews showed up. He took out his phone and began to look for signs of their handiwork. There weren't any photos yet, just people talking about a bright flash or a boom. It seemed as though the last explosive they had placed had gone off a few minutes early. There were no other reports of explosions.

Ethan checked the time. It was four-nineteen. He had wanted to use remotely triggered devices, but that would have added a layer of complexity, and risk, he wasn't comfortable with. Remotely triggered devices would also involve the use of burner phones, and a network, which opened them up to even more risk. The timers were simple, as long as they worked.

Just then, the lights in the motel room flickered and died, along with the TV.

"Oh shit," Arrow said laughing, "this is going to be an interesting week."

"Just wait 'til I call the preacher," Ethan said.

CHAPTER 20

Jacob was pleased with his meeting with Alice. She might be a terrifying bitch to her underlings, but she was no match for him. Especially, now that he was focused again. He had finally broken his fast and regained the strength that had dwindled in this time of constant crisis. He was replenished now. The Governor had delivered.

She had been blonde, female, probably about seven years old, and completely unmarked. The state troopers had brought her on board, and spirited her away in the secure chamber located in the rear of his 737 before he had taken off. She would have been perfect if she hadn't been sedated. This meant that he would likely have to give her adrenaline shots to make her fully alert, and Jacob hated needles.

The sight of blood didn't bother him in the least, but there was something about needles entering flesh that was unsettling to him. He found that it helped if he avoided administering shots, in any kind of conventional way. He developed a method that eased his queasiness that involved placing the syringe in the palm of his hand, and then making a fist like he was holding a knife. Then, he would just close his eyes and forcefully bring the needle down with a stabbing motion.

Of course, this introduced new problems. For instance, if he used too much force, or got the needle out of alignment, it resulted in bending or breaking the needle. Another problem was that this method sometimes left unsightly marks on perfect skin. Marks were inevitable, of course, but it was in poor taste to make them prematurely. It was like being seated at the best table in an exclusive restaurant, but when the waiter brings out your favorite dish, you notice a bite missing. Even if it's just a nibble, it ruins the whole experience. Presentation is everything.

Jacob was pleasantly surprised when he managed to deliver the adrenaline without marring the perfection of his prize. He needed her alert, with plenty of limbic system activity.

For the next five hours, Jacob released his suffering into his guerdon. As he deconstructed and fed on her purity, he rediscovered the serenity of sacrifice. He'd left his body completely. Left it behind at thirty-thousand feet. He hovered above the earth, allowing his physical self to consume the offering the world had brought him. He'd felt the power that had been waning in him, drained by his self-imposed fast, surging through him once again. Filling up the emptiness, and returning him back to the state of ascendancy he deserved. He was back in control.

Alice must have felt it too. The next day, he had gone to see her and was amused to see her quivering, as they had stood together alone in her bedroom. At first, he thought it might be her Parkinson's, but her eyes revealed the fear behind them. She was fearful, but obedient when he ordered her to summon the two most faithful, and loyal members of her inner circle. To her credit, she hadn't hesitated. She made no complaints or pleas. She just obeyed.

Molly was a young woman in her late twenties and had been with Alice since her days as an intern. She was pretty and had been more than Alice's assistant, and confidant. The truly faithful understand the real nature of their masters, and Molly understood better than anyone.

The man Alice had requested to join them, his name was Phillip, was someone Jacob had met

during the campaign, and he'd had very little interaction with him. He was young, in his thirties, and had been a fixer for Alice in the same way that Jacob was a fixer for Eli. He rarely left Alice's side during the campaign, but still managed to remain relatively anonymous. The entire campaign, he could be seen standing just off camera, taking note of reporters who strayed too far from the script, so he could later make sure they never strayed again.

These were Alice's most faithful. They would have the choice to serve as proxies for Alice and receive her punishment in her place. If they accepted, and they would have to do so willingly, Alice would be atoned. This would ensure that justice had been served, and it would also prove to Jacob whether, or not, Alice really was in control.

Alice retrieved a small plain wooden box from inside a drawer next to her bed. She opened the box and held it out to Molly. Molly had stared inside the box for several moments, and then, reverently removed a blood stained dagger with a decorative serpentine handle. She held the knife in both hands and looked at Alice for reassurance. Alice had nodded quietly, and Molly began to cut away the straps of her blouse with the deceptively sharp blade.

The fabric had fallen to the floor in clumps, as the knife severed her clothing from her body with ease. Moments later, she had stood naked, and trembling. She looked at Alice, and Alice had motioned towards Phillip. Molly bowed her head and handed the blade to Phillip, who likewise, had cut his clothing until it lay in a heap at his feet.

Alice looked at Jacob. He remembered watching her, as her last hint of pride evaporated, replaced with the cold resolute poise that had preserved her for so long. She had held out her hand, and Phillip had placed the dagger in her palm. Alice had rolled the handle of the blade in her hand as if she was inspecting it for flaws. Like a museum curator, appraising a priceless artifact of immense significance. She stroked the serpent that was engraved on the handle softly with her thumb and began to whisper quietly to herself. Her grasp tightened around the handle, and she had raised the blade over her head.

The voice had spoken to Jacob in that moment, perhaps they all heard it. It had been so loud in Jacob's head he couldn't fathom how they couldn't have heard it. He had floated out of his body, and watched in amusement, as Alice partook of her redemption.

When she had finished, the room smelled strongly of iron and bile. Alice was no longer shaking. She stood steadfast, eyes wide, still clutching the dagger in her hands, while warm blood dripped from her matted hair, and down her aged, and wrinkled, body. Jacob saw the Alice, albeit an older, and frailer, version, whose eternal ambition had first made her a rising star. That star had since faded, and would never shine as bright as her ambition, but she had proven her loyalty and managed to confound the fates once again.

He'd only left Alice's estate a few hours ago, and Jacob's feeling of elation that had been conjured up in those blissful moments had already gone. Now, there was a slight sense of emptiness that always followed the incredible high. He sat in the back of his limo, staring out the window at the airplanes on the tarmac. His driver had stopped at the security gate, which just now occurred to him, was highly irregular. He watched, as the airport security guard, who was shaking his head, spoke to his driver. Usually, airport security just waved them through, something unusual was happening. Jacob was tired of unusual things happening.

The driver nodded to the security guard, and then lowered the glass divider that separated them.

"I'm afraid they won't let us through, Sir. Everything is on lockdown because of the terror

attack. They've grounded all flights and shut off all access. The closest airport is Phoenix International. I can take you there, but it would take at least 5 hours. You could take a flight from there, or I can take you back to the hotel. Traffic is going to get worse, as soon as people start to figure out how serious the situation is, so I would suggest leaving as soon as possible."

"How serious what situation is?" Jacob asked, annoyed.

"Sorry Sir, I thought you knew what was going on out there. Seems as though about an hour ago there were several terror attacks. They attacked the jet fuel lines and took out part of the power grid. They are declaring a state of emergency, grounding all flights. People are going to start rushing the gas stations if they think there's going to be a temporary gas shortage."

Jacob was stunned. They hadn't planned any terror attacks. Why would they conduct terror attacks? Who was conducting terror attacks? In California of all places?

"I was not aware. Very well, I don't care where you take me, just get me back to New York."

The driver nodded and said, "I'll have you in Phoenix in about 5 hours," He raised the glass divider, and began turning the limo around. Jacob opened his laptop and started reading through the various alerts that his intel people had apparently been sending him.

Starting some time just before five this morning, several pipelines had been damaged in targeted bombings. They had managed to take out many of the fuel lines in the southern part of the state, but a big concern was that all the attacks had taken place in close proximity to the canal system that provided much of California's water supply. There had been massive contamination, as a result. To make matters worse, the suspected terrorists had also succeeded in shutting the power off to about ten percent of the state. Riots were already breaking out all over LA county.

Another alert arrived in his inbox. Jacob's eyes narrowed as he read through the brief in disbelief. A faction of ANIFAS was taking credit for the attack, and The Right's massive army of online pundits was already creating memes and spinning the attacks to their advantage.

"Fuck!" he shouted at his laptop, and then dialed up his assistant, "I need all hands on deck on this. Get me in a conference call with all our media people, top level only. This mess can't get out of hand, and we can't trust them not to fuck this up."

"Yes, Sir," his assistant said, followed by some clicking sounds, as Jacob's call was routed to a newly created conference call. One, by one, Jacob heard a beep followed by a last name, as people were added to the call. After a few minutes, the beeps had stopped, and Jacob's assistant came back on the line, "We have everyone, except CBZ. Bensinger is MIA."

"Then Bensinger is out of a job, this is an all hands meeting!" yelled Jacob angrily.

"I've got Lisa Sussman from CBZ, she wants to talk offline about Bensinger," said Jacob's assistant.

"There's nothing to talk about. He's finished," Jacob said.

Jacob's phone buzzed, and he looked down to see that he had received a text message from his assistant.

202-555-9251: Bensinger missing as of yesterday. Wife said he never came home from the studio. Network is keeping it quiet until instructed otherwise.

Jacob read the message, then smashed his fist into the minibar. A bottle of expensive vodka shattered and filled the back of the limo with the pungent scent of alcohol.

Bensinger wasn't the first network journalist to "go missing" in the last few days. Three days ago, the White House correspondent for TFN had gone out for drinks in Adams Morgan and never

returned. They found his body yesterday, face down in the fountain on Meridian Hill. A few days before that, an editor for the New York Reporter had been thrown in front of a train by someone witnesses claimed was a homeless man, who had fled the scene.

Jacob knew better. If it was a homeless man, it was the same “homeless man” that had killed Aaronberg, and the others.

“Very well,” Jacob said, “We’ll talk about that later, get her on the call.”

Jacob scanned his alerts one last time and then took a deep breath.

“Nobody gets off this call until we work this thing out. I’m sure by now you’re aware of what is happening in California. It seems there have been several attacks on fuel pipelines across the state. This would include consumer gasoline, natural gas, as well as airplane fuel, or kerosene. It also now seems that the real target may have been the water supply.

“An ANIFAS group is already claiming responsibility, on the internet. They are saying that this is all to demonstrate how differently the privileged people in California will be treated, in contrast to the poor in Michigan, who haven’t had clean water in years, due to problems with their infrastructure. Of course, we all know the real problem is the right-wing racists, who have been blocking all our attempts to send them aide.

“The claims of these, so-called ANIFAS, are false. It is a right-wing group disguising themselves as their enemies, to shift the blame of these attacks onto us. These attacks were carried out by these right-wing extremists, and I believe this is the message we should be putting out immediately,” Jacob ordered.

“Stacy Eisenstadt with RBC,” a woman’s voice said, “My concerns are that the only people who are going to believe us, if we push out a theory like that, not that I doubt that it’s true, but that because we don’t have any tangible proof that we can wave in front of them yet it’s just going to further erode our credibility and-”

“You don’t have any credibility, Stacy,” growled Jacob, “I’m going to fix that. Since you people have proven entirely incompetent, when left to your own devices, I am simply giving you orders now. You push the story the way I tell you to push it, and you let me worry about evidence and credibility. We have intel that proves all of this. By the end of the week, we’ll have all sorts of evidence, and you’ll be able to paint the new media as crazy reactionaries that blame everything on those who stand up to their fascism, and the professionals in the real media.

“You’re going to push the usual reasonable right-wing personalities. They, of course, are all very shocked by this rise of violent fascism and will make appearances on your shows, to explain how their side has become dangerous, and extreme. We’ll have someone who fits the profile in custody for you to parade around soon enough. Stop acting like we haven’t done this all before.

“Get the story out. Make sure your audience hears the term ‘right-wing extremists’ as many times as possible. I don’t care if they ridicule you, and cut together montages of our people saying ‘right-wing extremist’ like its all some joke. We want that. Let them have their fun because it will backfire spectacularly when we bring out their terrorist, so the whole world sees just how dangerous they are.”

“Then, we can focus on the real danger. The real danger is the right-wing extremists on the internet, and the Silicon Valley billionaires that have been letting this kind of extreme speech take place on their platforms. In fact, I want you to plant that seed right now. They had their fun, and now they have become dangerous to democracy. When you’re not saying ‘right-wing extremists’, I want you saying ‘dangerous to democracy’, preferably in the same sentence.

“The blood is on the hands of the platforms that are allowing the hate speech to spread. Don’t

worry about dragging them through the mud too much, they are ready to play ball, and they get it. This is exactly what they needed to shut this cancer down. What the public wants now is healthy speech. Free speech is sick. We are all for healthy speech. Healthy speech is the bedrock of our democracy, but hate speech has no place in our society.”

Jacob continued to give out talking points in real time, monitoring all the major networks from the back of his limo as it traveled East on I-10 towards Sky Harbor airport in Phoenix. He had been forwarding updates to Eli all morning but had yet to receive a response. This was out of character for his mentor, and the radio silence was unnerving.

CHAPTER 21

Wayne had received several messages about the incident happening in California. The Right was blaming The Left, and The Left was blaming The Right. His handler had called him, her usual flirtatious demeanor conspicuously absent, and made it extremely clear that he was expected to blame it on “right-wing extremists” that were “dangerous to democracy” and to not only promote his message of peace and harmony, but apologize for the actions of the extremists on his side.

When Wayne had asked his handler if they had any proof that the attacks had been carried out by “right-wing extremists,” the response had been vague, and the conversation had returned back to how urgent it was that he began speaking on live streams and on television, about the dangers of right-wing extremism.

Wayne was no fool. He knew, as did many of the people online saying the exact opposite that it very well could be people on The Right who had carried out the attack, and just like them, he hoped that it was. It was about time his side stopped reacting to attacks from The Left, and from the globalist mafia that ran the government. About time, they gave them a taste of their own medicine.

The genius of this attack, assuming it really was the work of people on The Right, wasn't just the expertly chosen targets. It wasn't even the fake ANIFAS accounts that had been claiming responsibility all morning. It was that whoever had carried the attack out had correctly identified the public's tipping point. The timing had been perfect. The perpetrators knew that the media, and the government's, credibility was so damaged, beyond repair that even if they were caught, and confessed on live television, nobody would believe them.

They had reached the historic moment in the divide. Sides had been chosen, and The Right was finally prepared to do what The Left had been doing for decades. The Right was now prepared to defend anything their side did, even terror attacks if they thought it ultimately helped them. The Right and Left were no longer two sides of the aisle, but completely separate entities, seeking to undo the other. This was the event horizon. The great mitosis of his nation.

It was time to feed the fire. This was the moment he had been waiting for. He was about to go live, and pour the gasoline he'd been storing for months when he received a flurry of messages. There was something else happening, this time on the East Coast, not far from Wayne's hospital room.

It wasn't a terror attack, like what was happening in California, this was far stranger. A famous pastor, at the largest megachurch in Virginia, if not the country, had played a video confession from Alice Green's campaign manager to all his parishioners, and over all of his satellite feeds, and internet streams, to the thousands that watched around the world. In the video, Brad Valentini made the claim that the government had been subverted by Satanists. He claimed that ritual abuse, and human trafficking, was common and that he'd seen it personally, and even participated in it. He said he had video evidence of several top people, and claimed that all of the intelligence agencies already had the evidence, and had covered it up for decades. That's when the satellite feed had gone down.

Wayne watched the video that someone had recorded from the satellite feed and posted online.

The video looked real, but it was grainy and dark, and Valentini looked as though he was under duress. The Left would explain this away as the work of his sadistic killer, without taking a moment to think about how that contradicted the whole “botched robbery” narrative. Wayne hoped that these videos Valentini had mentioned existed and that someone had them. Even with video evidence, The Left would never believe it. That didn’t matter anymore. The divide had already taken place. What the videos *would* do was wake up the remaining drones on The Right, and stir them into action.

Extended versions of the video were beginning to appear from members of the congregation that had recorded the full confession, and parts of the blackmail videos, on their phones. The videos were being taken down almost as fast as they were being posted, but there were thousands of them.

Wayne couldn’t figure out why so many in the audience, which was in the thousands, had thought it necessary, or had the wherewithal, to record a video being played at their church. That was until he found a longer version, which included the pastor *instructing* the congregation to do precisely that. It was brilliant.

The videos had been recorded from numerous devices, and from several unique vantage points. The censorship software that was typically used to scrub videos from the internet couldn’t recognize all the different videos as coming from the same source. The differences in the copies made it impossible to automatically identify each of the individual versions that were being uploaded. What made the videos even more difficult to shut down, was that they were being uploaded to thousands of different accounts, all at once.

This cat was completely out of the bag.

Wayne watched just enough of the blackmail videos to get sick to his stomach. The version he had seen was low quality, and the person who had been recording it had started shaking and crying halfway through it. In fact, many of the videos didn’t make it too far into the really disgusting stuff, because the crowd at the megachurch, where most of the videos were originating from, had become unruly, and many had fled the building in rage, disgust, and disbelief. Wayne understood the rage, and like many of them, he had seen enough.

Wayne took a deep breath. This was it. This is what he had been waiting for. This was his chance. The censors would probably be so busy with the Valentini videos that they wouldn’t be able to stop his broadcast before it was too late.

Wayne tapped the camera Icon in his streaming app, and an image of himself appeared on his phone. He looked like hell, but that wasn’t important now.

“It’s been a crazy day folks, crazy day,” Wayne said to his live audience, as the numbers began to swell “I’ll wait a few moments for more people to tune in but, wow. First California, and now this thing with Valentini. This changes everything folks. That might not be what you expected from me, but-”

The curtain that divided Wayne’s hospital room was suddenly flung aside, revealing Eve, who was lunging at Wayne with a knife raised over her head.

“Die, you fucking Nazi!” she screamed, as she slammed against the side of Wayne’s bed, ripping the curtain down from the railing in the ceiling as she fell.

The knife slashed Wayne’s arm, and then slid squarely into his belly, just below his rib cage. He dropped his phone, and reflexively reached for the blade. It sliced through his hands as Eve brought it up over her head, once again, and then plunged it back down into his chest. Wayne tried again to wrestle the knife from his attacker, and the two of them crashed to the floor. Somehow, the curtain had ended up wrapped around Wayne’s head. He couldn’t see anything. He felt the knife enter his

body again, this time somewhere near his left shoulder. He felt what he thought might be Eve's hair in his hand, and he grabbed at it. He yanked as hard as he could and heard her scream in pain.

Then, Wayne felt the tip of Eve's knife pierce his Adam's apple. Warm liquid filled his mouth and nose. He sputtered and coughed, and feebly tried to untangle himself from the curtain. He heard the voices of the orderlies yelling and screaming, he felt the knife penetrate his chest again, and again, but then finally, it stopped.

For a moment, Wayne thought the orderlies must have separated him from the curtain because everything became extremely bright.

There was a high pitched sound. It sounded like the sound that old tube TVs made when they were warming up. He remembered when he was a kid. He used to get up early on the weekends before his parents were awake so he could have the TV all to himself. There was this kid's show, he couldn't remember the name of it, but kids would bring inventions onto the show, and they would compete for the title of best kid inventor. Wayne loved that show. What was its name? He always wanted to be on that show. What was the name of that show? Doctor, something.

As Wayne struggled to remember the words to the theme song, he was convinced they had said the name in the theme song, he heard a familiar sound in the distance. It seemed as if it were coming from the other side of a tunnel, and Wayne found it hard to focus on it. It was a reminder he had set on his phone, where was his phone? It sounded so far away. He was supposed to have done something when he heard that sound.

"Oh shit, I forgot," was the last thing he thought.

CHAPTER 22

Thousands of miles away, from where Wayne lay bleeding on a hospital floor, a simple script running on a little-used Linux server counted down the seconds. Every day it counted down, and every day the countdown was postponed for an additional twenty-four hours.

Sometimes, time would be added while there were still twelve hours remaining in the countdown. Once, the countdown had made it all the way down to two hours. Now, the countdown, for the first time since the script had been implemented, had only seconds left.

Wayne's violent murder had been live-streamed to millions of people. After the stream had cut off, the recording had been viewed by millions more. Wayne had the gruesome distinction, as having been murdered in front of more eyewitnesses than any other human in history.

That's why so many people were startled by the notifications on their phones that said Wayne had just uploaded another video. A video entitled "The Time Has Come."

While an orderly at the hospital silenced the reminder buzzing on Wayne's phone, just inches from his still warm body, millions of people around the world watched and listened in silent wonder.

"My fellow Americans. If you are watching this video, before you do anything else, I need you to archive it immediately. This video will be removed as soon as it is discovered, which will probably be any moment now. Do not waste time watching this video first. Archive it now, and then share it to as many mirrors as possible, after you have it safely stored on removable media.

This is not a joke. This is not a gimmick. This is not a drill. This is the most important and last address I will likely ever make. I say this to you now, hoping and praying to God almighty that you have already done as I have asked, and saved, and shared this message because if you are watching this, my friends, my fellow patriots, then I am either in custody as a political prisoner, or more likely, I have become the first casualty in a war that you must now fight.

If this is the case, then I can tell you with certainty that while I am not a perfect man, as no such man lives today that I have died doing what is right, and I have died doing what the Lord above commanded me to do, and if I'm lucky, I'm watching you from heaven above, as a witness to the greatest moment in our nation's history. The moment we step into the footprints left by our forefathers, and once again we dispatch the tyrants among us.

You've always known that something was wrong. That the media was lying to you that politicians were lying to you, historians, and professors, all lying to you. You wondered why it was that no matter who you elected into office that the policies never changed. The direction of the country never changed. The wars that the ruling class sent our sons and daughters to die in, never changed. Our children, but never theirs.

No matter who you elected, the promises were never kept. Clearly, they knew the will of the

people, because they knew what promises to make, so why? What accounted for this complete disconnect between the will of the people, the people whose right it is to govern this nation, and the actions of those who presumed to rule over us? What explained the complete lack of accountability, when the crimes of the ruling class went unprosecuted? What happened, when the war profiteers committed mass murder, in nations across the globe, in your name, with your children's blood? What happened, when our so-called leaders, and our so-called allies, committed acts of terrorism on American citizens, on American soil, in terror attacks that murdered thousands, and traumatized a generation, so, like genocidal maniacs they are, they might justify yet even more atrocities around the world, committed in our names?

Nothing ever happened. Never to them.

They are not just liars. They are not only parasites. They are not just murderers. They are monsters that cannot even be called human. For too long they have evaded prosecution. For too long they have gone unpunished. A nation that does not apply the law equally to all has ceased to be a nation and has instead become a battlefield. What can a government that is complicit in these high crimes against the people, be called other than the illegitimate government, of hostile occupiers? You are not citizens, you are prisoners, in their labor camp.

How long have we prepared, and even bragged, of the heroic things we would be called to do, should things continue down this path? My friends, we have reached the end of the path. Now is the time we either live up to these visions ourselves, or we prove to the world that we are cowards not worth saving. That our extinction is merely natural selection, removing our inferior genes. If you fail to act now, you justify our extinction, and the world will be right to celebrate, for it will be the extinction of a pathetic race of slaves.

Do not be afraid to send these monsters back to hell where they came from. Is it murder to kill a plague-infested rat living under the bed? To draw their blood is no different morally, or even in function than it is to shoot a rabid dog that is gnawing at your throat. Those among us, who are truly committing the unforgivable sin, are those who understand the danger, and fail to act out of cowardice!

These monsters, who have anointed themselves superior to you, decided that they, and only they, are worthy of power. They hate you because, in their hubris, they have the delusion that, even though they have been chosen to be your masters, they are still burdened with the duty of managing you like cattle. Managing the wealth, generated by your labor, managing how to distribute the table scraps, once they have finished feasting on your confiscated fruit. They openly commit murder with impunity, and why not? Is it really murder to kill cattle that is your property?

In the shadows, they indulge in the most depraved behavior. No longer is it a secret that these monsters, who consider you their property, after having been allowed to indulge in every form of consumption, have now developed an appetite for destroying the innocence of young children, and then discarding them like garbage. How far have we fallen, when the monsters feel free to rape, and murder, our children without conscience, or even fear.

They treat us like livestock, only because we behave like livestock! Livestock doesn't complain when their young are slaughtered, and feasted upon, at the table of the master. Livestock pulls the plow, and if it doesn't pull the plow, it gets the whip, and if after it gets the whip, it still does not pull the plow, then it too is slaughtered, and feasted upon, at the table of the master.

We are not animals, but those who behave like prey will be prey, and will be ruled over by those, who behave like predators!

Now is the time! Right now! Not tomorrow! Not next week! This moment right now! Now is

the time that you have been waiting for!

To my brothers, and sisters in the military, turn your arms against those who have no legitimate right to give orders to brave men, and women. If you choose not to act, then you have chosen your master, and you will suffer the same fate.

To my brothers and sisters in federal government. You have had your chance to enforce the law against the lawless, and you have made your choice. Join, and fight, with your people to eradicate the cancer that has infected this nation, indeed much of the world, or God have mercy on you, for we will not.

To the state, and local, law enforcement, protect the countrymen you are sworn to protect. Fight side by side with them, as they expel the demons within your midst. If you chose instead to serve evil, then you too, have chosen the path of doom.

Every man, who calls himself a man, who hears my words, and does not act, is a liar, and a coward, and cannot be trusted, with the sacred contract we all make with each other that we will not tolerate illegitimate kings. If you fail to act, then you too, have chosen your fate!

What we must do will not be easy. We are not like the monsters who denigrate life. We hold life sacred. We cherish life, and freedom, God's two greatest gifts, and it is our solemn duty, as men of God, to defend both from those who presume to take his place, by claiming dominion over both.

Act now! Do not be afraid! There are people just like you, and I, who do not take pleasure in savage bloodshed, even when it is necessary, and it has never been more necessary. These are men who have known this day was inevitable; they have been preparing. They prepared, and they waited for when the moment would come that they would be called upon to take their country back, and my fellow Americans, who I love and I desperately wish to see free, whether I lay broken, and bloodied, in some subterranean prison cell, or in heaven with the Lord our God that moment is now.

Godspeed patriots.”

Incredibly, the video uploaded automatically by Wayne's server and the stream of Wayne's murder had remained live long enough for the people who had watched them, to watch them again. Thousands had made copies and posted them to their own accounts on every obscure hosting site on the internet.

Ethan had watched dumbfounded, on his phone, as Arrow drove their car into the garage of their safe house, in Casa Grande, AZ. Arrow quietly turned off the engine, and the two sat in silence, as the garage door slowly closed behind them.

“I guess it's on now,” said Arrow.

“This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or exercise their revolutionary right to overthrow it.”

Abraham Lincoln
First Inaugural Address, 4 Mar. 1861